

A Warming World

We are currently destroying our only home. Last year, California had its largest water shortage in 1,200 years. Global sea levels are constantly rising, and increasing temperatures are giving tropical storms more energy than ever before. Evidence of global warming is all around us: the record-breaking temperatures, corroding shorelines, melting ice caps, and fierce forest fires are all clear signs of how we are devastating our planet. The most disturbing part of this alarming predicament is that despite all of the statistics and palpable impacts of climate change, many people still deny its existence.

Although global warming is considered to be one of the greatest existential threats humanity has ever faced, there has been a horrifying absence of action to prevent it. Many elected politicians have significantly abated the movement to end global warming, by claiming that global warming is not a real thing. These people are not willing to accept the truth, claiming that global warming is nothing more than a normal occurrence. Those who believe climate change is a hoax often find reassurance in grotesquely erroneous conspiracy theories or their religious views. Bryan Fischer, a director at the American Family Association, once said, "God buried fossil fuels because he loves to see us find them." However, many religious leaders, such as Pope Francis, have clearly stated that climate change is an injustice that must be stopped. Many of our elected representatives stubbornly halt any actual effort to prevent global warming, while pointlessly expending millions of taxpayers dollars to supply their rapacious salaries. The earth has been permanently scarred by the actions of politicians, and yet it is our generation that must face the consequences. The only real way to put an end to this unacceptable and corrupt system is to vote. Vote for people who represent the noble values that the United States once stood for. Rather than voting for another selfish candidate, we must elect someone who understands the severity of climate change and truly wants to make a difference.

Global warming is not solely caused by politicians, but those who fund them as well. Politicians have become puppets of oil companies such as ExxonMobil and Shell, who give generous donations to influence government officials. Through their monetary leverage, these companies have pushed hundreds of laws that allow more oil drilling and alleviated regulations that prevented environmental damage. According to an article published by The Guardian, "The Stanford research Institute presented a report to the American Petroleum Institute in 1968 that warned the release of carbon dioxide from burning fossil fuels could carry an array of harmful consequences for the planet." The appearance of these documents has unearthed the staggering revelation that the oil companies knew about the damages being caused by fossil fuels, but made the conscious decision to keep it a secret. In their constant quest for financial domination, these companies have obstinately denied climate change, despite the fact that they had been provided with significant evidence to prove its existence. Today, oil companies act with little concern for others or the environment. Many of their decisions, such as dumping excess oil into lakes, have caused severe economic, environmental, and health-related deterioration in third-world countries. However, they never seem to be punished for their crimes. Oil companies should no longer be allowed to profit from the destruction of the environment.

In President Barack Obama's words, "There is one issue that will define the contours of this century more dramatically than any other, and that is the urgent threat of a changing climate." Global warming is not an

issue that will simply go away. In fact, global warming has been increasing exponentially for the past 200 years. Since the industrial revolution, the release of Chlorofluorocarbons and other harmful chemicals have been destroying the ozone layer of the atmosphere. These chemicals also contribute to a biological phenomenon called the greenhouse effect, which traps the heat emitted by the sun in our atmosphere, escalating global temperatures. The evidence of global warming is all around us. According to NASA, “Global sea level rose about 17 centimeters in the last century. The rate in the last decade, however, is nearly double that of the last century”. Increasing sea levels have begun to erode away shorelines, threatening many homes near the ocean and increasing the danger of large ocean waves. In addition to higher sea levels, NASA also reported that the ice sheets around the world have been melting at an alarming rate. Satellite data shows that Greenland and Antarctica have lost 150 to 250 cubic kilometers of ice per year since 2002. The melted ice only further contributes to increasing ocean levels. With the growing temperature comes extreme weather events. Hurricanes and storms have greatly increased in intensity since 1950. The U.S specifically has witnessed a large growth in the yearly number of storms and intense rainfalls. On average, the considerable damage caused by only one of these harsh storms costs approximately 1.8 billion dollars.

The possibilities that the future may hold are only more disturbing. Waiting to act against global warming could cost thousands of human lives. The World Health Organization recently reported that “Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress.” By the year 2100, summers in Massachusetts will be equivalent to the current 90 degree average summer temperatures of Miami Beach and summer temperatures in Arizona will average out to an astounding 114 degrees. If sea level rise continues at its projected rate, several parts of large cities such as New York will be completely engulfed in water. Scientists have also predicted that many different types of ecosystems, such as coral reefs, will vanish entirely, leading to mass extinction of endangered species on a global scale. We are coming to a point where it will simply be too late to stop global climate change. The world will slowly perish, and we will have to stand by and watch.

As citizens in the democracy of America, it is our responsibility to put an end to the corruption and injustice that has led to this crisis. It is not too late to avert climate change and save the planet which has given us so much. As the young adults who will inherit this country, it is our duty to make a change by voting against laws that help big oil companies and voicing our anger at the politicians who do not do anything to stop this catastrophe. While a single vote may not seem like much, together, we can make a difference. By voting, we can show the world that we want justice for our planet and it’s people. We have been given the gift of freedom, and it is time that we used it to protect not only ourselves but also future generations. Will we be remembered as the people who did nothing as the world crumbled or the people who united to save the human race?

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Acknowledgements:

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