



Speak Out Now

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Summer Heat: The Climate Crisis is Unfolding Before Our Eyes

This summer has seen record heatwaves across the U.S. and the rest of the world. For three consecutive days between July 4th and July 6th, the average global temperature was the hottest ever recorded in human history. Here in the U.S., many regions of the country are suffering the consequences of this record heat.

In June, smoke from raging wildfires in Canada blanketed major cities on the East Coast. For several days, New York City had the worst air quality in the world. Wildfire smoke researchers from Stanford said that June 7th was likely the worst air pollution day in U.S. history.

Earlier in July, Phoenix, Arizona, set a city record by having a temperature of 110 degrees (F) or greater for 19 consecutive days. The local health department there has confirmed that 18 people have died due to the heat and 69 more deaths are under investigation as being heat-related.

This heat is not the only extreme weather we have witnessed. While Phoenix was scorching under record temperatures, cities in both Vermont and Kentucky received the most ever rainfall within a 24-hour period in their histories. These heavy rains caused flash flooding, which washed out roads and destroyed people's homes and cars. In Montpelier, the capital of Vermont, city officials are warning people that flooding may have contaminated the drinking water supply.

Meanwhile in India, an intensified monsoon season has led to catastrophic flooding, dangerous landslides, and at least 100 dead thus far. Elsewhere, China set a new temperature record, Africa experienced its hottest night ever, and Antarctica continues to face record melting of sea ice. No continent remains untouched from the impacts of a warming world.

Scientists have been warning us for decades that events like these extreme heatwaves and flooding are being driven by humanity's continued use of fossil fuels to power our global economy. So one part of the solution is very simple – we need to stop using fossil fuels! Instead, we need to restructure our economy based on alternative energy sources, with sustainability driving all infrastructure plans.

If we don't do this, and continue to live in a world fueled by oil, gas, and coal, we are seeing glimpses of what's in store for our future. More and more of the world's population will fall victim to the intensifying climate chaos we are seeing this summer.

Unfortunately, this process is already underway. According to the United Nations (UN), in 2022 more people were displaced globally by climate-related disasters than by armed conflict – the same year as the Russian invasion of Ukraine. And the time we have to stop further climate catastrophe is running out. According to the UN's International Panel on Climate Change, "there is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all." If we want a planet to live on, we have to make big changes. And we have to act *now*.

Each day, it seems the destruction caused by these extreme weather events is all over the news, but what response do we hear from the politicians? Nothing – they offer no real solutions! The reality is that world leaders cannot get us out of this crisis because their role is to uphold the very system responsible for it.

Politicians like Biden may pay lip service to the climate crisis now that it's impossible to ignore, but they've spent their careers defending and supporting the interests of big corporations and banks – the exact companies responsible for the crisis in the first place.

These same politicians may also tout new subsidies designed to incentivize production of household solar panels or electric cars. But policies like these are a drop in the bucket compared to what is necessary and do not challenge the economic interests of the companies who produce and rely on fossil fuels for their profits.

The climate crisis is another reminder of what happens in a capitalist society based on the pursuit of profit. As long as our work and our lives continue to be organized by the corporations and the politicians they bankroll, we are headed towards climate apocalypse.

But our strength is that we are the ones who do the work to keep this system running. So we have the ability to lead the transition to a cleaner future – a future in which we control the resources, and we decide that we want to live!