

#1573 Confronting Climate Chaos with Action and Adaptation

Intro 7-21-23

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JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Welcome to this episode of the award winning Best of the Left podcast, in which we shall take a look at the action needed to curb and adapt to the extreme weather that climate change is already delivering. Sources today include The Bradcast, Democracy Now!, Counterspin, The Majority Report, Who, What, Why?,

Today Explained, and Vox, with additional members only clips from Counterspin and a speech from Representative Alexandria Ocasio Cortez.

Climate and energy journalist Andrew Freedman on spate of record-shattering extreme weather - The BradCast - Air Date 7-10-23

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: So in one sense, I know that you, like us, have been warning about exactly this for a long time. Is it still difficult to wrap your head around today, nonetheless?

ANDREW FREEDMAN: It is. I think that, while my expectations might have been for some of these records, everything everywhere all at once is how it feels right now. It feels that way as a reporter. It feels that way as just a person on earth. The global records were not something that I had expected to jump out this early in July. The peak is usually later in July, towards [00:01:00] early August. It's pretty much a done deal that July will be the hottest July on record and most likely the hottest month that we've seen since records began.

But the extremes aren't in themselves surprising. What is becoming very clear though, is the shortened window between them. So you know, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York State got hit really hard with flooding from the remains

of Hurricane Irene in 2011. These are the areas that just got hit and are still getting hit right now at this hour.

The heat waves that we're seeing in the Southwest, we know already were made at least five times more likely and more severe due to climate change. And that's just as they're ramping up. And you might say Arizona's a pretty hot place, I don't know what you're talking about. But it's not typical for Phoenix to make a run at 120 degrees during the day and stay in the low to mid nineties at night. That is a public health threat for [00:02:00] them. It is a public health threat in terms of the temperatures they're expecting in Las Vegas and in Mexico, which we might be not be thinking about, but the heat dome is really cresting over Mexico once again, likely posing a severe danger to people trying to illegally cross the border. Florida, looking at some of these observations, the ocean temperatures around Miami, around the Florida Keys are in the nineties right now. That's just bizarre. And a meteorologist who I follow posted a map, just looked at ocean temperatures around the United States right now compared to where they normally are in September. So in September is when the concerns about hurricanes really start peaking, ocean temperatures cuz they have a bit of a lag time taking in heat over a longer period during the summertime. That's when they usually peak. But right now they're hotter than they normally would be in September. So everybody's just kinda thanking the fact that we don't have a tropical storm or hurricane coming into this area right now. Because if we did, one of those factors [00:03:00] would heavily favor rapid intensification, and a serious problem. Now, it doesn't guarantee one in a month or two. It just means one ingredient is there in spades.

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: The ingredient of the warmer water, a storm comes over with that kind of warmer water, that means we're going to, essentially we are much more likely to have a huger, wetter storm, is that the proper way to describe it?

ANDREW FREEDMAN: Yeah. We've noticed this. The peer-reviewed literature shows that hurricanes are becoming -- there are more frequent high-end storms than there used to be. There's more frequent instances and bigger jumps in rapid intensity. Increases over a short period of time. We've seen that with a number of storms in the past couple years. And not just storms that have affected the US but in other ocean basins as well. And we've seen storms becoming wetter. The poster child for that is Hurricane Harvey and in Houston, which dumped around 60 inches of rain on that city.

But many storms are leading to inland flooding [00:04:00] disasters now that are worse than they were before. The rainfall in the past two days over New

York State and Vermont. One way to think about it is this particular storm -- which is like this mix between something you might see in the wintertime and a feed of tropical moisture coming off of this warmer than average Atlantic -- it's delivering about a season's worth of rain in the course of two days.

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: I know, it's just mind boggling. And I was going to ask you how unusual are these records that we're breaking all over the place? I think you've already answered, they're quite unusual. But why? Has something changed here, Andrew Friedman, or are we just at a particularly bad moment with summer heat and a new El Niño now difficult to not notice, or in fact, have we reached, as many scientists seem to be suggesting, some sort of a tipping point as far as you can tell? What do we make out of what seems to be a pretty radical change even from last summer, which was also terrible, by the way?

ANDREW FREEDMAN: [00:05:00] Yeah. I mean last summer I think it was the Union of Concerned Scientists, which is a advocacy group and scientific research group, labeled it the Danger Season. And that kind of got taken up by some in the press and by some on Capitol Hill, just noticing all these trends seem to come together during the summer. To some extent, that's what's happening. We're seeing these extreme heat events. We're seeing more extreme precipitation events. We're seeing all these things that we've loaded the dice for that we would expect.

However, the Pacific Ocean is so warm to begin with for this El Niño that the El Niño is actually having a little bit of trouble fully getting started. Because the atmosphere is not quite responding in the way that it usually does. Normally you would have cooler water in the Western Pacific and the heating in the Eastern and Central Pacific, and the winds respond accordingly. However, right now, pretty much the entire Pacific is incredibly warm. So scientists are looking at this and [00:06:00] saying, oh do we need a better index to capture the new reality of El Niño, which is the El Niño in a changing climate? And that may be the case. I think that scientists that I've talked to asking that precise question, is something new? Did we break something fundamental here? Most of them are saying no, some more emphatically than others. But every one of them, it's a little bit more hesitant of a no. And I think that there really is a perception among people that the climate has, to some degree, gone off the rails.

But if you look at the global trends since we've been tracking it, going back hundreds of thousands of years, with tree ring data and other types of data, we're pretty much on the course that we thought we would be. It's not as if there's been some giant spike. One scientist that I talked to, Deke Arndt, who's at the

National Centers for Environmental Information and at NOAA in Asheville, he likens climate change to this escalator [00:07:00] that basically El Niño years you step up, and La Niña years, you stay put or step down, in terms of the rate of warming.

And what we're seeing right now is a faster rate of warming, but an even faster rate of warming than you'd expect so quickly from El Niño. El Niño usually has a delay of a couple of months from when it's declared. And the climate system seems to be on a fast forward mode.

Bill McKibben Climate Crisis Needs Urgent Action as Earth Records Hottest Temps Ever - Democracy Now! - Air Date 7-7-23

AMY GOODMAN: Can you talk about the degrowth movement, Bill?

BILL MCKIBBEN: Well, as you know, there's — ever since the limits to growth in 1972, I guess, there's been this critique that the world can't keep growing as it has been, that it will eventually lead to ecological collapse. The eventually seems to be coming true. But it is a very strange moment, because, on the other hand, we understand that we need to increase very, very quickly the amount of green energy and clean energy that we're producing. And that requires [00:08:00] growing at least one thing: solar panels, wind turbines, batteries, so on.

So, my piece for The New Yorker was an attempt to square that circle, to say, “Are there ways that we could use this moment of extraordinary need for technological change to also produce some social change along the way, to build a different kind of world?” We need to make the technological change, and I think we also need to make some really serious social change as we do it towards a different kind of planet.

The good news is that we're beginning to see — beginning to see — the payoff from some of that technological change. You know, Texas was the center of the heat wave in the U.S. so far this year. This heat dome settled over Texas, and the numbers were astounding. There were cities setting new high temperature records 10 days in a row. But the grid did not collapse in Texas, and it [00:09:00] did not collapse, one analyst after another is telling us, because there's a lot of solar power on that grid, four times more than there was in just four or five years ago. And that power — not surprisingly, solar panels do well

in heat waves. That power has been enough to keep Texas going. Of course, and as Oliver will make the case in a minute, the irony is that the Texas Legislature is busy trying to help the fossil fuel industry and close down its renewable industry. But so far, it's renewables that are doing the job there. And, believe me, utilities around the country are starting to watch, because they understand that not only is this power cheap, it's truly critical in the world that we're headed into now.

AMY GOODMAN: I mean, we've been getting reports of hikers and tourists who have died of the heat. A woman died in Arizona's Grand Canyon National Park after falling unconscious during an eight-mile hike in over 100 degree Fahrenheit weather. A man [00:10:00] found dead in a car with two flat tires, Death Valley National Park. I think the recorded temperature the day before was like 126 degrees. You had a teen and his dad in Texas. But what about workers around the world, as well?

BILL MCKIBBEN: Well, I mean, the scale of what we're doing is astonishing, and you're very right to point that out. One of the things that the International Labour Organization has told us is that our ability to do work outdoors is already something like 10% degraded and that it will be 30%, 40% by midcentury. That is the number of hours that people can be out working. There are lots of reports. China has just come through — or, is coming through an extraordinary heat wave. And Mexico has been through a heat wave that makes the one in Texas look small by comparison. People waking up at — you know, agricultural laborers waking up at 4 a.m. to get done what they can before it gets too hot to be outside.[00:11:00]

We're changing the world in deeply fundamental ways. We're not going to be able to stop — we can't stop global warming at this point. All we can do is try to stop it short of the place where it cuts civilizations off at the knees. And that will require nimbleness and speed that we've really never seen before. As you know, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has told us we need to cut emissions in half by 2030 to have any chance of meeting those targets that you reported on in Paris just eight years ago. By my watch, 2030 is six years and five months away. So, the need to move fast has never been clearer, I think.

AMY GOODMAN: Bill McKibben, does expanding renewable energy necessarily lead to a reduction in fossil fuels? Recent data show fossil fuels accounted for 82% of worldwide energy supply last year, even as record wind and solar came online.

BILL MCKIBBEN: We're going to find out in the next couple years. And it has to. [00:12:00] Renewable energy is right now at this takeoff point. It's suddenly becoming substantial. And it has to reduce fossil fuel use if it's to matter.

That's why people were so upset when President Biden, who's done so much to sponsor renewable energy, also started approving things like the Willow oil project in Alaska or the MVP pipeline in Appalachia or this new string of LNG ports along the Gulf Coast. The politicians are getting better at saying yes to renewable energy, but they're no better at saying no to fossil fuel than they were before. And that's because of the extraordinary political power of that industry. They're clearly willing to break the planet.

It's why we need more activists and more people out pushing. At Third Act, for instance, we're training up thousands of people to take on the public utility commissions in state after state after state. These are incredibly important institutions, the public utility commissions. They [00:13:00] set rates and help determine what facilities the utilities are allowed to build. But they've traditionally been protected by their incredible boringness, and they've been captured in almost every case by the utilities that they're supposed to regulate. So we need lots of people out pushing in places like that, as well as out in the streets or at Wimbledon or wherever it is. If you're an older person like me, come join us at Third Act and see what we can do.

Climate and energy journalist Andrew Freedman on spate of record-shattering extreme weather Part 2 - The BradCast - Air Date 7-10-23

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: That this is not just bad weather. There is a reason for this bad weather, and it is because of a climate that we have polluted and we have made immeasurably worse year after year. Can you speak quickly to the differences and the ties between weather and climate? And about when we might start reporting on all of this more as a crime story than a weather or a climate story, to be frank.

ANDREW FREEDMAN: I've reported on these events in the context of climate change for many years. There are other outlets [00:14:00] that do a really good job of it right now. I think one area that is really still problematic, though, are actually the national broadcast networks, including ABC, NBC,

CBS, routinely still airing wildfire stories, airing flooding stories without much of a mention of the climate tie. You're seeing local TV meteorologists making that tie and doing so frequently. And doing so on social media as well. And you're seeing a lot of progress in national media.

But I think for example, you're not gonna see the Times, the Post, Axios or others write a story -- at least hopefully Axios not too often -- write a story on this unprecedented heat wave or a, massive flood event, without a couple sentences on how climate change is making this worse, or how climate change is driving this. Because this is all part of the context.

But yeah, In terms of changing the [00:15:00] story personally, I think every year it becomes more and more of a business story, of how much money's being -- how the economy is shifting towards a low carbon economy, who's to gain, who's to lose, what, the fossil fuel industry is doing, what the clean energy economy looks like.

I think when you think about it as a crime story, it's innovative. And some are doing that at this point, I think, and some are doing that at this point. But I think not many. I think some are, but not many. It hasn't completely sold me on moving to that, but I think the outlet that's closest to that is probably the Guardian, which is looking at it from that framework and doing so routinely. And it's interesting because it's a UK outlet and if you look at the three countries on the planet that have tended to have the most active pushback against climate science and science denial movements, it's [00:16:00] Australia, the United States, and the UK. So it's been interesting that it's a UK publication, but it's very out front on this. And in some ways it's actually led the way.

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: It has, and I'm always frustrated by that, because they've done a great job, but I'm always frustrated and I think why is a UK paper reporting on our media outlet, reporting on what's going on in the US with these US companies, are politics behind -- our obscene politics, frankly -- behind this? And I do, and I agree with you by the way, Andrew, that a lot of the mainstream outlets are far better than they were, but we'll still read a story in ABC News, and they'll talk about the flooding in the northeast or whatever the weather crisis of the day is. And they won't even mention climate. Which just seems obscene to me along with the obscene politics of it all.

Andrew, I gotta get out here shortly. But at this point, given these obscene politics, when it comes to lawmakers, and the difficulty with the many -- not everybody, but many -- in the corporate media. Are we just screwed at

[00:17:00] this point? Or do you think that efforts by the UN and the by the US, Joe Biden, the \$400 billion investment in climate, that we can actually begin to bend the curve? We have a friend of ours, Dr. Michael Mann, who I know you know of University of Pennsylvania, one of the most optimistic climate scientists you'll ever meet, he still argues that there is time to avoid the worst consequences of climate change, but we're gonna have to act very quickly to do it. Is that even possible at this point? Even if we set aside the obscene politics, if they said, yes, let's do something about this and we could all be in agreement, would we be in time to do so, or are we just hosed at this point?

ANDREW FREEDMAN: You can look at certain goals. You can look at the 1.5 degree goal in the Paris Agreement. You can look at the 2 C goal and have your arguments over whether by how much we're going to exceed those targets and then come back down to them. Most climate scientists, most policy people would say keeping it below 1.5 is a pretty tall order. [00:18:00] But is there a reason to be hopeful? Is there a reason to think that you have some agency over this? That it's not just your vote, but it's other activities that you can do in your life that can make a difference? All of that is a very declarative yes. The science shows it. Katherine Hayhoe you mentioned, her appeal to people is to say the most powerful thing that you can do about climate change is to have a conversation with somebody about it. We need to be talking about it more. We need to be learning what your neighbor is doing, whether they're buying an EV or whether they just put up solar panels or whether they're eating less red meat. All these things actually have an impact. It's not just, oh I guess we're screwed and I can't do anything about it. And then, It's hard to not think that way. And I'm a climate reporter, and, I did this story on climate anxiety being a psychological phenomenon. And every psychologist that I went to interview first asked [00:19:00] me how I was doing, and I was like, oh I did not expect that question and I'm not doing well.

But it's hard for me. It's hard for other climate reporters who live this day in and day out. But there are a ton of solutions. There are things that we're already doing. The question really is, are we going fast enough? Are we implementing this to the degree that it should be? Are there other steps we should be taking? And what happens if we do X, Y, Z?

Emily Sanders on How Not to Interview an Oil CEO, Kaufman & Bozuwa on Fighting Climate Disrupters - CounterSpin - Air date 7-7-23

EMILY SANDERS: Yeah, I mean, mainstream media has had a very hard time connecting climate change to oil companies and their decades of pollution and deception about the harms caused by fossil fuels. And when you see coverage of.

Deadly heat waves and wildfire smoke, for instance. There's often no mention of things like how the major oil companies are still spending millions every year lobbying to delay the transition to renewable energy, or how Chevron, the world's most polluting investor oil company is currently pouring even more money into increased fossil fuel [00:20:00] extraction and production after making record profits last year.

So, It's also not a coincidence that mainstream media is so far behind on this. The fossil fuel industry has a long history of investing in the media in order to manipulate the conversation about our reliance on oil and gas, what needs to be done about it, and what the obstacles really are to addressing climate change.

And that goes back to at least the eighties and nineties when oil companies began placing ads and advertorials or ads disguised as news editorials in major outlets like the New York Times and the Washington Post. That downplayed the reality of climate change. And even today, as we learned from. Last year's congressional investigations and hearings into the industry's disinformation companies like Exxon, Chevron, bp, and Shell are still running advertisements that look like articles in the country's biggest news outlets promoting things like algae and so-called natural gas as climate solutions.

So [00:21:00] they've really used the veil of journalistic credibility to help disguise their misleading and deceptive advertising for quite a while. And. We're seeing that not just with advertising, but with some reporters themselves still failing to name the source of climate inaction and still unable or unwilling to recognize and call out disinformation, sometimes even parroting fossil fuel industry framing about how we can't move off oil too quickly, or how big oil is working on ways to solve climate change.

Despite that they're causing it without actually challenging those misconceptions. It's not. Everyone. And some have gotten better, but it's certainly still a major problem. And I think we saw that last week with this CNBC interview. And what was particularly disorienting about that interview, I think was just how divorce from reality it felt at this current increasingly dire moment of climate emergency.

You know, we have all the evidence now of Chevron's duplicity and. [00:22:00] While this interview was happening, millions of the rest of us in the United States were trapped inside because of extreme heat or toxic wildfire smoke that somehow was just not mentioned at all in the interview. There was no mention of the dozens of communities that are suing Chevron and other oil companies to hold them accountable, including one lawsuit filed just a week before the interview took place by Multnomah County in Oregon for a heat dome that killed.

69 people a couple of years ago and last year's house oversight investigation into big oil's, ongoing disinformation campaigns, and their efforts to delay climate action weren't mentioned. So there was so much missing context and so many questions that didn't get asked. So much misinformation that went just completely uncorrected.

And unfortunately that's nothing new but. It's really frustrating and infuriating when you have an actual CEO of one of the world's most polluting and powerful companies sitting in the room getting treated [00:23:00] as if you were a legitimate thought partner who's just trying to balance his business priorities with concerns about the climate.

It felt like a real wasted opportunity to hold him and other. Well executives to account,

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: and as you've outlined, we can understand reasons why that doesn't happen. You point to advertising and that long history of advertorials, and then you go even further back in their interlocking directorates of fossil fuel and corporate media industries, you know, they're on.

One another's board. So even though we might call for hard-hitting, tough interrogative reporting, we do understand the pressures that make that, um, unlikely to happen and the pressures that make it so much more comfortable to have the kind of, um, jokey, you know, aren't we all in this together conversation that we saw between Sorkin and Wirth?

I, I wanna follow up on one point, which is that. The least, well, the least and most our standards have have dropped so far. But you would hope that when the person you're talking to straight up [00:24:00] lies, you know, we're not talking about industry pr deception, but worth himself saying things that were false in this conversation and that Sorkin didn't even follow up on.

EMILY SANDERS: Yeah, I mean, we heard worth tell some flat out whoppers, like he said, The clean energy system is only about 1% built, but actually last year renewable energy made up 21.5% of total electricity generation in the US and that number could be a lot higher if the oil companies got out of the way, but Soir can just let that one slide.

There were so many other pieces of disinformation and really actually great examples of the many different ways that oil companies. Lie and mislead in this interview. And I mean all of those have been exposed in lawsuits, in congressional investigations, journalistic investigations, and academic research.

So you would, you would hope that Serkin would've been prepared to.
[00:25:00] To challenge them. And that's, you know, what we really need to see for more journalists going forward.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: So you touched on this, but it seems like part of the obfuscation in media is suggesting that various weather events have such multiple complex causes that it's just impossible to link them directly to fossil fuels.

And you talked about wildfires, which of course there's much on the mind right now, and I know that. Fossil fuel lobbyists are working furiously to make sure that people do not associate those orange skies with fossil fuel emissions. And I can already see the memes like wildfires cause more pollution than fossil fuels, but you aren't fighting trees.

You know, like you can already see the desire to have people disaggregate wildfires and particulates from fossil fuel emissions. So what should we be keeping in mind there? Well,

EMILY SANDERS: there's actually a growing field of what's called attribution science or science that's able to link specific companies emissions to worsening patterns of extreme weather, and even in [00:26:00] individual weather events, and actually a recent.

Study published by researchers at the Union of Concerned Scientists found that more than a third of recent wildfires in the Western US and Canada can be attributed to 88 specific fossil fuel and cement manufacturing companies. So, Even seeing more and more of the climate lawsuits against big oil citing this type of research as evidence of the damage to these companies knowingly caused, like this last lawsuit in Multnomah County cited scientific studies that said the heat dome would've been virtually impossible without climate change.

So these companies can say it's complicated just like cigarettes. Companies said you couldn't prove smoking caused cancer, and that there were so many other potential factors involved, but I think the science overwhelmingly tells us a different story.

Climate Precipice & Israel's Palestinian Expulsion w Bill McKibben, Basel Adra - The Majority Report - Air Date 7-12-23

EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: I'm curious about your best guess -- and I'm channeling the shock doctrine here -- for what some industries are going to do to capitalize on the [00:27:00] coming chaos, the migration, the insecurity for water and food as it comes. What are some of the things that you could anticipate in terms of exploitation of the fallout from the crises to come?

BILL MCKIBBEN: I'm sure there'll be plenty of that and you know Naomi will, and the rest of us will keep track as best we can, but I think in the short run, the real example of that is the fact that the fossil fuel industry is doing everything it can to kind of co-opt the effort to cut emissions. So they got a lot of money stuck in the IRA by Joe Manchin for these carbon sequestration schemes and things like that, stuff that is expensive and not particularly helpful and really meets their goal of slowing down what has to happen, and what has to happen because it's what we have, because it's what's affordable, is solar panels, wind turbines, and batteries. Those are the trinity of things that if applied at large enough scale [00:28:00] might begin to shift the underlying dynamics of the planet's climate system.

I have no doubt, Emma, that as the things flood and whatever else, they'll be all kinds of people figuring out how to take rotten advantage of it all. But the basic job remains: transform our energy system, and do it in ways that hopefully in the process will at least somewhat strengthen communities.

One of the good things about sun and wind is that they're available, unlike coal and oil and gas, everywhere. And that's a help.

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: It does feel like there is an understanding in that fossil fuel industry that they're ultimately going to lose this battle, and they're just basically squeezing every single dollar they can.

EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: Carbon capture and stuff like that, right? So they can keep doing what they need in the short term.

BILL MCKIBBEN: They keep burning. They've got, by the latest -- I haven't checked the price of oil in the last couple weeks -- but in their reserves of fossil fuel, this industry has someplace between 50 and a hundred [00:29:00] trillion dollars worth of hydrocarbons that they've cataloged, that they have in deposits below the ground that they want to dig up and sell. And if we take climate change seriously, that \$50 trillion stays underground. That's the stakes, that's why they fight so hard. That's why it's well worth purchasing political parties and so on.

SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT: How much do you, in terms of where we are at this point and as a political matter -- and I guess getting back to that question of sort of democracy and how the failures of democracy inhibit our ability to stop those interests -- how much of this ends up becoming -- and I feel like there's always been I think a significant amount of of writing to this effect, and I just read a piece in Jacobin about the research that has shown that there is a real class war element to this. And it's obvious in the sense that as the wealthiest country on the planet, we have created far more climate change as it were, ultimately, than those less wealthy countries that are [00:30:00] gonna pay the price even more. But even within the context of these societies, how much of a class war and an understanding of this being driven by the rich and wealthy interests -- how much, how helpful do you perceive that as an understanding or as a strategy?

BILL MCKIBBEN: First place, the grotesque inequalities of our society are probably the biggest reason why our democracy is so weak and unable to respond to the challenges like this that you would hope it would. And it's certainly true that rich people use more carbon than poor people on average.

It's also true that almost all Americans have figured out ways to use large amounts of carbon compared to the rest of the world. So you're right to stick it in a global context too, and understand that there are all kinds of inequities here.

The good news, if there is good news, is that there are a lot of things, a lot of technological answers at this point that are going to be helpful for [00:31:00] everyone if we can get them deployed.

So say a heat pump, which is the necessary technology for getting much more efficient heating and cooling, it's also much better for the people who have them

in their homes. They're cheaper to operate. You don't have the boom-bust pricing cycle that you do for oil, on and on.

Electric vehicles are a great idea because of their help with the climate, and e-bikes, best of all. But they're also useful because 9 million people a year on this planet die from breathing the combustion byproducts of fossil fuel. That's one death in five. In this country, it manifests in hundreds of thousands of cases of childhood asthma a year. And they're obviously concentrated in poor and vulnerable communities 'cause that's who gets to live next to refineries and next to highways and so on and so forth.

So this is the biggest single challenge that our civilizations have yet faced. Can we quickly change our [00:32:00] ways of powering our lives in time to avert pretty much existential catastrophe? And we don't know the answer to that. We know that left to its own devices, the system won't go fast enough. That inertia and invested interest will keep it from responding nimbly.

What we're gonna have to try and find out is if we can goose that system, continue to goose that system in ever larger ways with evermore mass movement, that's what it takes.

The first Earth Day in 1970 saw 20 million Americans in the street. That was about 10% of the then population of the US. I'd wager that if we could get 10% of the population of the US out in the street, that would probably change the political dynamic here enough to allow us to make considerably faster progress than we're making at the moment. And the same around the world.

Do I know how to get that many people out in the street? I don't. We helped organize what have been the biggest demonstrations yet about climate [00:33:00] change, 400,000 people in New York in 2014. We helped provide a lot of the logistics work when there were millions of young people out around the world in September of 2019 on school strike and things.

But if you ask me, that's what it's going to continue to take. Because our system is not yet exerting anything like maximum effort to deal with this crisis.

**To Be Forewarned: The Historical Record
on Climate Change Part 2 -
WhoWhatWhy's Podcast - Air date 7-14-23**

JEFF SCHECHTMAN - HOST, WHOWHATWHY'S PODCAST: Does history point to any civilizations, any societies that have been so much better than others in understanding this in sustainability and really in dealing with the reality of this kind of change?

PETER FRANKOPAN: That's a great question, Jeff, and I wish I had a sort of pre-packed answer. I suppose the way I try and answer that is to say my starting point would be what lasts longest? What is able to stick around for a really long period of time? And funnily enough, my own areas of research geographically and academically are things that we don't spend any time thinking about. So I work on the Byzantine Empire and the Byzantines have their [00:34:00] bit part of history; when we think about it, no one really knows where they were, what they did. But they went from around 330 AD until 1453. So they were an empire that survived for a thousand years. And that was in a multi-climatic zone, multi-faith, multilingual, multi-regional, very complex society. And it's true, the boundaries in the front is changed often actually because of pressures of war or economy and so on. But over that thousand year period, there were also lots of chapters of more or less benign or difficult weather conditions and climate patterns. And that system worked for a thousand years. And I guess if you were to ask why, it's, number one, the reason why all states work -- and they're actually the reason why all marriages work when they work -- is that they have to be fair. That's the first thing: justice has to work. You need to have a system which you can't buy it because you're better endowed or you are rich, so you get the judge, you can noble the judge, and the Byzantines took that really seriously.

You need to have an ability of a bureaucracy and institutions that can cope with pressure, and that when there is crisis, they know that it's coming, they're ready for it, and they know how to solve it. And again, it doesn't work every time quite the same [00:35:00] way in the Byzantine world. But there is a real sense of fluidity, and partly because it's driven by a fact that they know that the world is always changing, you've got to be scouting the horizon, looking for problems. Funnily enough, some of the other empires that do that really well, or states that do that well are the Ottomans, their successors the Byzantines, the Mongols, they get terrible -- but they get a bad rap because of Genghis Kahn and rape and pillage, but hugely sophisticated states that sits across basically the whole of Asia, builds an empire in the course of a couple of decades. And that resilience is the key. It's how do things last for a long time. And even you guys in the United States, we're still sorry that you left us in 1776 from my side of the pond, and maybe you wanna come back and join us sometime. But it's because despite the foibles and the troubles and the difficulties in US history, United States has been pretty good at navigating change and navigating how to adapt, despite all the kind of things that people get hot under the collar.

The US is very fluid in being able to read the tea leaves. And the question is, will it be able to stay doing that in the future?

JEFF SCHECHTMAN - HOST, WHOWHATWHY'S PODCAST: And finally, Peter as a historian, when you look at this history, [00:36:00] some of the things that we've just touched on today, and you see the way the world is playing out today with respect to climate, with respect to some of these same issues, talk about the degree of frustration that you as a historian must feel at our constant refusal to use history as the guide that it could be.

PETER FRANKOPAN: Do you know what? I'll start with the good news. And I'd say first of all, we as human beings have long predicted the apocalypse, Armageddon, the end of time, massive overpopulation. And yet here we are in 2023 talking -- and there are obviously lots of problems going on in the world, not least new technologies, AI, war in Ukraine, terrible suffering in many parts of the world -- but actually life expectancy in most parts of the world is going up, literacy going up, clean water going up. So there's lots of good news that we're here, we have been able to cope.

There's good news insofar as there's lots of quite low hanging fruits if you want to address. It's not just global warming, but the degradation of the natural world where we are drinking too much water, there's not enough to be able to go round. We expect in the United [00:37:00] Kingdom, for example, water consumption is gonna go up by 40% in the next seven years. And at the moment we already have the head of one of our water companies saying, if it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down. Saying, be cautious of your water use so that you don't flush every time you use the bathroom. And in a country like mine where it rains a lot, the idea that we might be short of water should make you think, how does that look in North Africa and the Middle East where 13 of the 19 most water-stressed countries and heat-stressed countries are, what's that gonna mean for some of the problems coming towards us or towards them in fact?

So I think that there's lots of low hanging fruit where we can adapt, where we can change, where we can improve efficiency. Here in the United Kingdom, 3 million tons of food are wasted every year on farms, of edible food, and that works out at 18 million meals per day on average. So improvement of that and making it more efficient could make all of our world a better place, not least for people who are in poverty.

On the flip side, how do things look? I'm a doctor and I'm looking at the earth as my patient, I'd say, how does it look? I'd say, look, we had a big report in the UK that came out at the end of last year that said, we're between us on

this [00:38:00] earth, we're spending 1.6 times the world's resources. I would go back to what I said the very first answer, Jeff, to your first question, a bit like the bank, if you borrow too much, if you spend too much and you think that you're gonna get away with it, you just don't check your bank statements, at some point there's a knock on the door and things come to a change. So water is an issue. Food production, a warming world where whatever the causes of it are, is currently happening at quite a fast rate. And it's just making sure that we think through what we need to do. And I do lots of work with governments around the world and with people who are much, much smarter than I am. I don't know a single person who's not trying to take it seriously.

The biggest challenge right now is it looks like a big problem. So the key, as I know as a historian and I can know as a father, is to break big problems into small problems. When I'm talking to my kids, how do we do this into 10 different parts and let's solve them one by one. And I think that's the bit that's missing and I'm pessimistic at the moment because US has its relationship with China that's very complicated. Russia hasn't done the world any favors in terms of its engagement with attacking innocent Ukraine. We've got lots of dislocations in Latin America, as well as in sub-Saharan [00:39:00] Africa. But it's how do you get the whole family of nations around the table to talk? I think we could do a much better job of that than we're doing at the moment.

Disaster unpreparedness - Today, Explained - Air Date 7-13-23

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: How would you broadly describe how disaster response is changing?

JULIETTE KAYYEM: In the past, we divided the world into "left-of-boom and right-of-boom," and we're agnostic about the boom, right? So it could be the flood, the fire, the terrorist attack, the pandemic, but your boom is your disruption. Left-of-boom is prevention and preparation, we're getting ready, we know it's coming or it could come. And then right-of-boom is response, recovery and resiliency. That's the stuff you see: things are getting deployed, communities are trying to rebound. That used to be viewed as linear, one and done, right? Random and rare. That's the way we thought about it. That's the way our entire structure was built. It's a circle. It's a circle now. And so you have to think about the investments you're making in preparation as really being about, can this community recover fast enough? Because it's coming again. We may not know where or when. But that's the kind of stress that's facing the profession itself as it [00:40:00] transforms from a profession that used to be,

say, your average emergency management officer was a former cop or firefighter, and that's not the communication skills, that's not the outreach skills, that's not the equity skills that we really need for disaster management.

But you're also starting to see it in the policies. Let's just be honest here. We've incentivized bad behavior through our disaster management framework, and that's what needs to change. Everything else is just gonna be band-aids.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: My, mom, Juliette, lives in central New York in the Hudson Valley, and she lives in a house where the basement floods. And in fact, the basement did flood this time. She got about six inches of water, which is not terrible. We've seen worse. But once upon a time, I would've thought somebody will come and help my mom if she needs help. And nowadays what's really interesting is in 2023, I think somebody might look at my mom and say, why are you in that house? Why are you still there if this has been going on for 30 years? Do you think we are looking at the role that the individual plays in the boom more and more?

JULIETTE KAYYEM: Much, much more. Does your mom have flood insurance, by the way?

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: She [00:41:00] does. Yep.

JULIETTE KAYYEM: Oh, good. Okay. So as I just was making sure.

This idea of putting more pressure on communities to behave better is starting to take hold. And I don't mean that as a sort of hostile thing. I mean, it's both good and bad. So on the tactical level, let's say a boom happens, we're not gonna leave your mom in her house. But if there's evacuation orders, those evacuation orders are not abided by some percentage of the community. Sometimes it's just ideology. Sometimes it's pets. In the last 10 years, we've seen some tough love from mayors and others, simply saying to people:

ARCHIVE RECORDING: All the advice we can give is, get out. Get out. Now. You still have time to leave. Those that are gonna stay, it's unfortunate but they should make some type of preparation to mark their arm with a Sharpie pen, put their Social Security Number on it and their name. We've got first responders available, but once it gets bad, we're not gonna put their lives in jeopardy and they will not get help.

JULIETTE KAYYEM: To the bigger issue about do people stay or go?
[00:42:00] We have set up a disaster management system that incentivizes bad

behavior. It pays people to rebuild where they are. It gives them individual assistance as if they alone were impacted. We have major events and then powerful senators can just get lots of money and simply get people cash.

ARCHIVE RECORDING: Senator, you wrote a letter Friday to the Senate Appropriations Committee asking for disaster relief dollars for desperately needed resources to rebuild Florida communities. After Hurricane Sandy hit northeastern states in 2012, you voted no.

JULIETTE KAYYEM: How is that strategic thinking? It's just not. But we've put in a system in which the boom happens, we respond, we save lives. That's a priority. You try to minimize property harms. And then everyone goes after disaster relief as if it's one and done. And the thinking now -- and the insurance companies are forcing us to think about it -- is how do we use that money after a disaster to make this community [00:43:00] better? I wanna say there are some changes, they're really piecemeal, but they are good. There's been changes in everything from the Inflation Act that allows for more money to be spent to mitigation, to even the Farm Bill has provisions. Because we don't need to call it climate change. Some communities and ideologies don't want it to be called climate change. Who cares? Get money out to farmers who are seen flooding and help them mitigate their harms.

There's been changes to disaster relief that if a community uses their money for mitigation, at the next disaster the feds will actually give more rather than less. In other words, you're sort of incentivizing mitigation. And the gamble is these communities will suffer less if they put more into resiliency and fortifying structures and getting people out of certain communities.

But these are being done piecemeal or they're being driven by insurance or the market. That's no way to think about it, given the numbers and the magnitude of what our communities are facing.

NOEL KING - HOST, TODAY, EXPLAINED: And so to that end, if you were put in charge, you could make [00:44:00] whatever change you wanted, where do you think you'd begin? What would be your first move?

JULIETTE KAYYEM: You know, in my dreams, I would repeal a piece of legislation called the Stafford Act.

ARCHIVE RECORDING: Pursuant to the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, or the Stafford Act, FEMA provides public

assistance grants to state, tribal, and local governments to assist in their recovery efforts after a disaster strikes.

JULIETTE KAYYEM: Basically its general theory is: a disaster happens to a community. That poor community, we feel bad for them. Could have been us. Right? So let's just pay them money, distribute individual assistance, distribute public assistance, distribute money to the localities and states and write a check and let's get them back to normal. Okay, so that worked. But now it doesn't work, right? And so what I would do is rethink how we're paying for the last disaster to prepare us for this disaster. Condition that money. Dear community, dear individual homeowner, [00:45:00] we're not doing this anymore. We don't care about your politics, we don't care anything. Basically, you can have a check if you do X, Y, and Z. And whatever those conditions are, and we know what they are -- if you live in a fire area, we know what kind of roof you have to build. If you live by the water, we know what kind of fortification you need. And these are the kinds of efforts at each home level, at each community level that will change the incentive structure.

We have to incentivize essentially resiliency. We don't do that now because we still are in a mind frame of these disasters are random and flukeish, and we're just gonna brace ourselves until the next one.

How will the next generation of cities address the challenges of climate change - VOX - Air Date 6-15-23

VOX NARRATOR: These are images of some of the oldest cities from around the world, and they all have something in common. They were built with human connection in mind. Narrow streets, buildings close together, homes mixed with workplaces and shops, central public spaces. Now look at many of today's American cities and [00:46:00] you'll notice features that are quite different.

Wide roads, houses built far away from workplaces and shops. Parking lots, exhaust. These are cities built for cars. Cities face monumental challenges in the 21st century. Climate change, maintaining human health and social equality. So as we look to build the next generation of cities, what can we learn from the past?

We don't actually need to go that far back to see how cars have altered the American cityscape.

JEFF SPECK: If you look at at at film of the early 20th century, you see this amazing ballet of street cars and horses and buggies and tons of people

VOX NARRATOR: walking. This is Jeff Speck. He's a trained architect and certified city planner.

That really

JEFF SPECK: changed in the middle of the 20th century when someone decided that streets were for moving vehicles only for moving cars only, and trucks. Um, and they were no longer social spaces that belonged to everyone.

ADRIEN SALAZAR: A large amount of subsidies at the federal, [00:47:00] state, and local level go to building car related infrastructure versus um, uh, other forms of transportation.

VOX NARRATOR: This is Adrian Salazar and he's the policy director at the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, a member of the Green New Deal

ADRIEN SALAZAR: Network. That's because, Uh, as soon as cars became widely accessible to people who lived in America, the automobile industry started to leverage its power to try to influence city planning.

And it has been designed in policies, in zoning laws, uh, that actually make these things, uh, farther apart from each other. Where residential zones are separate from commercial zones and that has produced, uh, drastic inequity in the way that people move about.

VOX NARRATOR: One piece of legislation was the Federal Highway Act of 1956, which created the interstate highways that we still use today.

Highways

JEFF SPECK: impacted American cities negatively in two principle ways. First, they made it very easy for folks to abandon the city, and then secondly, the. Is that they were typically run through poor and working class communities. Typically communities [00:48:00] of color, they destroyed neighborhoods, they destroyed lives,

VOX NARRATOR: and as cars multiplied, so did the air pollution, they expelled and the emissions, they contributed to climate change.

In

ADRIEN SALAZAR: the United States, the transportation sector is actually one of the largest. Sectors contributing to greenhouse gas emissions in the country. And for us to be able to address those emissions means rethinking how we design our cities and how we live in them.

JEFF SPECK: When I'm working on a new place or trying to make an existing place more walkable, I look at four things.

Is the walk useful? Is the walk safe? Is the walk comfortable and is the walk interesting? And if you can do all four of those things together, you've created the most sustainable kind of place.

VOX NARRATOR: Fixing the damage that was done to America. Cities may require government investment in current solutions like public transit and modern road designs.

So what can we do?

ADRIEN SALAZAR: It's gonna take a just transition of our entire economy that leaves nobody behind and investing a. Into a regenerative economy, an economy of care [00:49:00] that uplifts people. And the Green New Deal, to me is really a vision of a suite of policies that set the direction towards that future to address the climate crisis, to address our crises of inequality, of racial injustice, of economic, uh, uh, underinvestment in communities.

That's why collective power and working together and organizing is so important because it amplifies our power and it. It shows that the vision of the world that we're fighting for has movements behind it.

VOX NARRATOR: Increasing access to public transit and active transportation like walking and biking may be a key part of addressing climate change and building the next generation of cities.

And by giving cities back to the people, they will emphasize what past cities used to human connection.

Emily Sanders on How Not to Interview an Oil CEO, Kaufman & Bozuwa on Fighting

Climate Disrupters Part 2 - CounterSpin - Air date 7-7-23

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: Of course at the root fights over responding to the climate emergency are fights over power and accountability, and power [00:50:00] resistance includes new visions, new models of how we run energy systems. In the fall of 2019, the word unlivable was being used to describe California. In the midst of wildfires and power outages, our guests and others saw at the core, not just climate crisis, but a private utility system that's not incentivized to address it, Johanna Boa, co-Manager of the Climate and Energy program at the Democracy Collaborative filled us in on some relevant history of Pacific Gas and Electric.

JOHANNA BOZUWA: There's a lot of history that's here in terms of pg and e, not investing in its grid for so many years, and really putting shareholder profits, uh, ahead of the infrastructure that we now have, which has created this concept of the new normal. But it also doesn't have to be, I mean, having these power shutoffs come on.

Again and again, governor Newsom has even said, these are incredibly not surgical. They are doing blanket shutoffs because they're [00:51:00] afraid of liability, but they're also not providing the infrastructures that communities need to actually make it through these, so their phone lines are off. You can't get onto their website, and there's only a generator station for every county.

And so that's just showing that it. This is not just them taking precautions, this is them severely mismanaging a situation in which people are losing their power and losing access to maybe life sustaining medical apparatuses as well.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: Well, and you point to history. They aren't just any utility that is being forced to deal with climate disruption, there's more that we should know about the role they've played vis-a-vis climate change, isn't there?

JOHANNA BOZUWA: Oh yes, definitely. And the Energy and Policy Institute had a really important expose. Uh, we hear a lot about Exxon New and Shell New on the news. Uh, but utilities new too. They were part and parcel to the climate disinformation campaigns that have happened in the past and have so disinformation and pg e [00:52:00] was a part of that as well.

So pg e is not a good actor in this situation. They are the ones that were able to make money off of fossil fuels for so many years and stopping action on climate change for years as well. And now they are paying the price with their own infrastructure that they. Fail to invest in so that it was ready for the new climate that they had in part given us.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: Well, alternatives are not just possible. They are as you write waiting. So let's talk about that. Let's talk about the idea of public utilities.

JOHANNA BOZUWA: Yeah, absolutely. So, um, I advocate that pg and e should be transitioned into public ownership because it can eliminate some of those warped incentives that are associated with monopoly investor owned utilities that operate our energy system.

And we can move towards a situation in which a public good is provided by a public service. So by moving to a public institution, we are going to have hopefully a more accountable [00:53:00] utility who shareholders and. Stockholders are us. It is the people who are living in California, uh, and not the shareholders who are hundreds of miles away.

You talk a lot about the media. It's been really interesting for me to look at some of the coverage that's been happening around the investors that are circling pg and e right now. They're saying, oh, we'll take it over these venture capitalists like Paul Singer who. Has been in bed with the Koch brothers for years investing in anti-climate sentiments, and we see the same thing with Berkshire Hathaway, which is another major utility company that has been trying to stop distributed solar across.

The United States, just the type of resiliency we need for California, but there are other options that are on the table right now and they're in action. San Francisco just put in a bid to municipalize their area so that they could take, break the grid so that they could be in charge of their own desk.

And similarly, San Jose, one of the biggest cities that pg [00:54:00] and d provides service to is saying, actually, you know what we should do? We should create a cooperative utility so that it is beholden to the people of California, and we're taking over pg and e at the statewide level.

JANINE JACKSON - HOST, COUNTERSPIN: Well, as we discussed when we talked about public banks on this show with Trinity Tran a few weeks ago, the word public isn't like, you know, pixie dust.

It doesn't automatically make things work in a better way, but public utilities would have. Certain, you know, criteria about being democratized, about being decentralized, about being equitable. It's, it's not just a goal, in other words, but a way to get there and, and who is involved in the process.

Absolutely. It's

JOHANNA BOZUWA: not a silver bullet, but it does provide us this opportunity to have more recourse. But there is a history of public ownership in the energy sector, but we have the ability to design into that. Institution. Things like decentralization, things like equity, things like a democratized system, and build upon what we've seen work in the [00:55:00] past, and also where we've seen public utilities historically fail.

This is a huge opportunity for California to create an energy system that's rooted in climate justice, that's rooted in the realities of the changing climate and how they're going to ensure that they actually are creating a resilient California.

Rep. AOC Reintroduces the Green New Deal on its 4th Anniversary - RepAOC - Air Date 4-20-23

REP ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ: Thank you so much, Senator Markey. And, um, it's just, it's just such a special day when we're able to come together and. Uh, reintroduce our legislation and every time we reintroduce the the Green New Deal, we're always met with additional legislation to expand this vision and execute for environmental and social justice in all forms of policy.

Because the climate crisis touches all forms of policy and all forms of our life, I want to thank Senator Markey, the Climate Justice Alliance, the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Green New Deal Network, S C I U, the a f. Bay, c w a, um, and New York Renews, as well as all those who are working at the local level to bring the [00:56:00] Green New Deal to their communities.

Just a few years ago when we introduced the Green New Deal, we were told again and again, this is not realistic, this is, this is unreasonable, that this is just a pie in the sky notion, right? But we said, watch us work. That's okay. Watch us work. And as they say, as the adage goes first, they laugh at you, then they fight you, and then we win.

And that in a nutshell, is a big part of what we've experienced over the last couple of years. First we were called unrealistic, then. When it was, when it came time to the bipartisan infrastructure law and the Inflation reduction Act, we started to fight. We said, we are not going to take crumbs and we're not going to settle for that.

That we need bold, big climate action, and we need it now. And that fight resulted in the largest climate piece of climate legislation in [00:57:00] American history, right? In American history. That is because of the coalitions built. That's that are not just supporting the Green New Deal, but supporting all climate action across a broad, progressive spectrum.

That this coalition of grassroots people and everyday people deciding to make this a political priority is why we are getting the results that we're getting today. We said, watch us work. And we didn't stop. With the Inflation Reduction Act, we decided to exploit and use every single avenue possible to make this vision a reality.

What we saw was over over 60 community project funds over, I believe, a hundred million dollars. Where we decided to organize and members of Congress deployed community project funds to create over 60 green new deal projects launching nationwide. Starting just one or two years ago, this vision is becoming a reality.

Watch us win. We have started to win. Together. We've introduced the Green New Deal [00:58:00] for Cities, the Green New Deal for Public Schools, and the Green New Deal for public housing. Just to name a few, we have highlighted. We have highlighted important issues ranging from education to renewable agriculture to show that a better way is possible.

Together these bills not only stop climate change, they tackle the intersecting crises of climate, economic inequality, and racial justice. These bills ensure that everyone has the opportunity to work a job where they earn enough to live while reducing our weight and tax on this planet. The those jobs will strengthen our infrastructure, including our school buildings and our public housing, so that children are no longer harmed by asbestos or lead paint.

Under a green new Deal, energy prices will be affordable and reliable, and no one will have to worry about having enough money. To get to work or pay for heat for frontline communities. Instead of getting bulldozed by big fossil fuel corporations through land grabs and other aggressive tactics, we finally have a [00:59:00] meaningful say in what happens in their communities.

And this future should not be too much to hope for. In fact, we're already starting to make progress. And with the Inflation Reduction Act, with the investments that that, uh, Senator Sanders and myself as well as the full coalition are releasing today, we are showing how we can use the dollar secured in the Inflation Reduction Act to make this a reality.

The core tenants of the Green New Deal, which four years ago were considered unrealistic, are now, have now made their way to being implemented in national legislation. So we're hoping that this guide will provide cities, states, tribes, nonprofits, businesses, and individuals with the tools to take full advantage of what is in here.

Final comments giving a hopeful perspective on climate action

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today, starting with *The BradCast* in two parts, giving some updates on the climate news. *Democracy Now!* spoke with Bill McKibben about the urgent action that's needed to address the climate. *CounterSpin* looked at the role of media in helping spread fossil fuel industry propaganda. *The Majority Report* also spoke with Bill McKibben about the fight against the financial incentive to [01:00:00] continue burning fossil fuels. *WhoWhatWhy* took an historical perspective on adaptability being the key to sustainability. *Today, Explained* reassessed disaster preparedness for the future. And *Vox* looked at a vision for more sustainable cities built around the needs of people, not cars.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from *CounterSpin* explaining the benefits of power utilities being publicly owned for the public good. And then they heard a part of the speech AOC gave while reintroducing the Green New Deal legislation earlier this year.

To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at BestOfTheLeft.com/support.

Now to wrap up, I just want to share a hopeful perspective from a climate scientist who wrote the article "Climate Crisis: Four Reasons for Hope in 2023." The four pillars of his argument are: 1. The reality of [01:01:00] climate change is sinking in; 2. Climate action across the US is now very real; 3. The multiple economic benefits of clean energy are becoming too obvious to ignore; and 4. Climate action is increasingly designed to be equitable and just.

Obviously, record temperatures, wildfires and storms were going to have a big impact on polling responses about the climate. This can be frustrating for those of us who have been advocating for action for decades specifically to avoid these disasters. But nonetheless, there were always going to be those who needed to be hit in the face by reality before they were going to take it seriously. So better late than never. Welcome to the party. Polling now shows that people are overwhelmingly in favor of taking action on climate change, regulating CO₂ as a pollutant, and so on.

Secondly, he writes about how coalitions of "states, cities, corporations, and universities are leading the way in showing how the [01:02:00] transition to a clean energy future can happen." Now, if you're not part of those organizations, it can be a lot harder to notice these kinds of changes happening, especially when compared to noticing the change in the climate. But change really is in the air in more ways than one.

On the economic benefits argument, back when I worked at a climate change nonprofit in the late aughts, we were looking forward to a time that the price of renewable energy would drop below the cost of fossil fuels. I mean, it was inevitable as fossil fuels get harder and more expensive to reach, and renewables only have the setup and maintenance costs to then harvest energy in an ongoing way for next to nothing, right? Once those setup costs hit scale enough to come down in price, there was going to be no going back. Now, we are past that point that I once looked forward to, and none of the underlying assumptions have changed. Renewable energy will continue to be the obvious choice for [01:03:00] economic, not just climate, reasons going forward.

And finally, something that many of us have been advocating for for decades is becoming more mainstream. I probably learned about environmental racism in about 2007 when we were campaigning to "green the ghetto." It was a movement to focus on putting green jobs like solar installation and efficiency retrofits of existing buildings in traditionally overlooked neighborhoods, the types of places where, 60 years earlier, they likely cut a community in half by building a freeway through it.

The same dynamic plays out on the international level as well. The less affluent countries around the world often contribute very little to the problem of climate change, but are regularly on the front lines of the impacts. This is now a mainstream element of climate negotiations: having more affluent countries shoulder a greater share of the burden of the clean energy transition in the name of equity and justice.

The bottom line is that the [01:04:00] impacts of climate change are easier to see than the movement against it. Kind of like how trolls and bullies are easier to come across on the internet than the thoughtful people who don't bother to wade into comment sections. It can give you a false and depressing impression of the state of the world. So better to get involved and see the progress that's happening firsthand.

That's going to be it for today. As always, keep the comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts or questions about today's topic or anything else. You can leave us a voicemail or send us a text to 202-999-3991, or simply email me to Jay@BestOfTheLeft.com.

Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our transcriptionist trio, Ken, Brian, and LaWendy for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, webmastering, and bonus show co hosting. And thanks to those who already [01:05:00] support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at BestOfTheLeft.com/support. You can join them now during our membership drive and it would be greatly appreciated. And if you want to continue the discussion, join our Discord community; there's a link to join in the show notes.

So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from BestOfTheLeft.com.