

Climate First!



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Climate First!

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A VIRUS, RACIAL INJUSTICE, AND AN ELECTION TURN A MOVEMENT UPSIDE DOWN

The world dramatically changed in 2020 as a novel coronavirus began spreading globally in early March. Health authorities started strongly encouraging, if not mandating, that their constituents wear masks and stay physically distanced from others. Businesses and government offices began rearranging their spaces to respect the distancing issue, and instituted cleaning policies. Then in late May, racial issues exploded in the U.S. when a handcuffed African American man died literally at the knee of a police officer. And finally, the U.S. presidential campaign began claiming public attention, and eventually a former Vice-President and a current president “slugged it out.” All the while, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions tumbled down during much of the crazy year as economies were hammered by the ever-spreading virus.

As 2020 began, activists in the climate movement, of course, had no idea of the huge societal changes coming. We at Climate First! were intent on keeping the pressure on JP Morgan Chase, the #1 investor in climate-wrecking fossil fuels of any bank in the world. And that meant delivering demands to local bank managers while staging protests outside their offices. Our work was soon amplified dramatically when we became part of the Stop the Money Pipeline (STMP) and Chase Bank coalitions. The country-wide coalitions were recently created to fight the financial institutions that funded fossil fuel projects.

It seemed that the climate crisis was an ever-present issue on many people’s minds, including decision-makers in the corporate and government worlds. And it certainly didn’t hurt that Chase Bank was continuing its trend of opening up new bank branches in the Washington, D.C. region. Thus, we had visions of ever-growing Chase Bank rallies in our quest to push the lender towards thinking climate first in all its decision-making.

But a tiny virus had other ideas...

During 2020, Climate First!’s #DefundClimateChange campaign ran ten live bank actions in the metro D.C. area, split evenly between Chase Bank branches and other major banks supporting fossil fuel projects. Of the ten bank actions, Climate First! Activists:

- 1) Delivered a “demand” letter with other documents to five branch managers or employees; and 2) Caused the temporary shut-down of two bank branches.

Highlights from 2020

JANUARY



Fire Drill Friday; Jan. 10, 2020

In the new year, Climate First! attended Jane Fonda’s final Fire Drill Friday at the U.S. Capitol. Jane’s weekly rallies over the last three months had brought together numerous luminaries and various experts on issues related to climate change to the nation’s capital, all in an effort to jump-start congressional action on the crisis.

FEBRUARY

Action at Chase Bank in Bethesda, MD; Feb. 8, 2020



Despite the chilly weather, Climate First! organized two bank actions in the Washington, D.C. area on the same day in early February.



Action at Chase Bank in McLean, VA; Feb. 8, 2020

Climate First! was able to attend two more events with groups of activists before the coronavirus pandemic shutdowns reached the Washington, D.C. area.



Climate First! went to a Sunrise protest, Feb. 21, 2020, and a rally over pipelines at the U.S. Supreme Court, Feb. 24

MARCH

Climate First! held its seventh Annual Meeting March 1st at the Tenley Library in Washington, D.C. We ate delicious home-cooked food as a father and son team shared how their family had started a nonprofit to work on sustainability issues.

One of the nonprofit's projects—Parachutes for the Planet—encourages people in communities worldwide to decorate cloth “parachutes” with artwork and what their next sustainable acts will be. Once the work of art is finished, the artists often join marches with their parachutes, and even use them when lobbying local politicians for better climate laws.



Parachutes for the Planet presentation



As the calendar moved closer to the Ides of March, the coronavirus began to grab ahold of the U.S. In response, the pandemic's mostly universal safety guidelines became the norm for citizens. And needless to say, activists, in response, were forced to modify how they used their chief tool—protests and rallies—to encourage societal change. It seemed that nearly all activists' events, including our bank actions, went virtual. Adding the bank's hashtags to one's posts on social media meant that somebody at the bank would see the demands for change.



One of our earliest online bank actions, March 2020



A family's virtual action, March 26, 2020

The 50th anniversary of Earth Day, April 22, was a perfect time to leverage an unprecedented number of events demanding action on the climate crisis. The pandemic had other plans for Earth Day, of course.

STOP THE MONEY PIPELINE

STMP organizers and others had maybe two months to totally revise their plans, and move nearly everything online. While it was a shame that a big opportunity had been missed, after Earth Day had come and gone, the end-result was probably still unprecedented, in part, due to the fact that its dominant theme seemed to be climate action. Virtual concerts, no-fly conferences, and online activism regarding the climate had replaced the types of “live” protests that activists had made so common place in the past.

Climate First!, of course, followed everyone else into digital activism during Earth Day, releasing its first-ever video lambasting Chase Chase for its status as the #1 financier of fossil fuels of any bank in the world. Organizers collected numerous photos and videos, from around the country, for the online Chase Bank “action.” Then a professional photographer created a six-minute video. When the video action was released during Earth Day 2020, Climate First! received many kudos for its work, though probably not from the management at Chase Bank. Video link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH3b8HtT6cw>

Some photos from [Climate First!'s Earth Day video](#)



350-Rhode Island



A parachute from the Mother Earth Project



A family in McLean, VA

MAY through mid-DECEMBER

Climate First! continued its online #DefundClimateChange campaign against Chase Bank through mid-December, posting actions most every Friday. We've pictured just a few here.



April 24, 2020



June 5, 2020

Recognizing that racial justice is climate justice, Climate First! participated in live Black Lives Matter actions in the Washington, D.C. area in June 2020.



DECEMBER

Just before the year ended, Climate First! was able to return to live bank actions following pandemic-safe guidelines. The actions on Dec. 11, 2020 were part of a “Day of Action” organized by the STMP coalition against Chase and other U.S. banks involved in financing “Line 3”, a tar sands oil pipeline project in the Midwest. It certainly felt good to be doing live in-person actions again! And on that eventful day, Climate First! visited eight banks in VA, MD, and Washington, D.C., delivering letters of demand to five bank managers or employees.



Wells Fargo, McLean, VA



Chase Bank, Silver Spring, MD



Citibank, Wash., D.C.

With a harrowing year coming to a close, the climate movement still had reasons to be hopeful. First, there was a new U.S. administration, one that had campaigned with a promise to address the “existential” crisis of climate change, preparing to take the reins of power. And soon to be gone, was a president who had sabotaged efforts to address the crisis in the U.S. and around the world. In addition, numerous big U.S. banks, including JPMorgan Chase, had announced publically that they would be moving away from fossil fuel investments. Finally, polls over the last four to five years were showing that more and more Americans were getting concerned about the climate crisis, while the numbers of citizens denying its existence were dwindling.

Looking Ahead

In the coming year, Climate First! will continue its work to push U.S. banks, such as Chase, to stop funding climate-wrecking fossil fuel projects.

The big questions now are the following. Will an exhausted United States, one that is clamoring for a return to normalcy, look to address the climate crisis, racial and income inequality, and other long-standing weaknesses exposed by the pandemic while “building back better”? Or will the U.S. just move as quickly as possible back to “business as usual” while giving its deep-seated vulnerabilities token attention? Doing the latter means that the U.S. could well be just “leaping from the COVID frying pan into the climate fire.”

Underlying the economic and political realities in the country are the climate activists and their supporters who have worked tirelessly to move the U.S. society towards addressing the greatest threat that the world has ever known. As a result of their undying commitment to saving the climate, Climate First! remains guardedly confident that the world will be able to avoid the worse effects—and then some--of our climate crisis.

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Climate First! conveys its gratitude to its' 1) Board of Directors, which set the direction for the organization over the past year, while its individual members worked on various critical projects; 2) “staff” and many volunteers who gave innumerable hours to Climate First! during 2020; and 3) financial supporters, who gave generous donations, which permitted the nonprofit to continue its climate work during a challenging year.

Board of Directors – Dec. 31, 2020

1. Carrie Biggs-Adams, Treasurer (CA)
2. Ted Conwell, President & Secretary (MD)
3. Sasan Dehghan (MD)
4. Fred Krimgold (VA)
5. Molly Snyder (NY)
6. James Wilkinson (MD)

Mission Statement

Climate First! strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote clean energy in the MidAtlantic region, by organizing grassroots efforts that encourage corporations and local governments to think climate first.

Contact info

Ted Conwell

Executive Director

Climate First!, Inc.

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@Climate1stUSA

Climate First! is a nonprofit, tax exempt 501 (c)(3) corporation.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Annual Report prepared by Climate First!, Inc.; March 8, 2021.

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Climate First!

12/31/2013 12/31/2014 12/31/2015 12/31/2016 12/31/2017 12/31/2018 12/31/2019 12/31/2020

Operations Statement

Income from Donations	2,851.80	4190.00	7,596.00	8,408.00	7,313.78	10,491.86	3,520.33	4,719.44
Income from Grants			500.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,415.00
Income from Item Sales	<u>430.00</u>	<u>90.00</u>	<u>80.00</u>	<u>50.00</u>	<u>40.00</u>	<u>0.00</u>	<u>133.00</u>	<u>10.00</u>

Total Income	3,281.80	4280.00	8,176.00	8,458.00	7,353.78	10,491.86	3,653.33	6,144.44
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Expenses

Operations								
Cost of Items	491.40	0.00	70.20	35.10	28.08	0.00	0.00	7.02
Registrations (IRS, Reg Agent, MD)	1,017.00	189.00	189.00	243.04	224.23	189.00	299.00	199.00
Memberships	100.00	227.00	118.00	100.00	95.00	100.00	0.00	100.00
Outreach incl Web	385.00	135.85	306.78	474.94	1,955.87	567.44	494.81	493.84
Professional Fees	0.00	310.00	265.00	330.00	231.00	280.00	280.00	280.00
Other Operating Costs	280.85	378.16	1,824.45	2,510.90	6,134.50	4,753.54	5,496.85	4,696.66

Total Operations Costs	2,274.25	1,240.01	2,773.43	3,693.98	8,668.68	5,889.98	6,570.66	5,776.52
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Programs	575.15	1377.34	2,251.11	737.27	1,579.13	836.84	887.34	149.53
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Fund-Raising Commissions			777.50	1,101.78	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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Fines and Penalties			100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
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Total Expenses	<u>2,849.40</u>	<u>2,617.35</u>	<u>5,902.04</u>	<u>5,533.03</u>	<u>10,247.81</u>	<u>6,726.82</u>	<u>7,458.00</u>	<u>5,926.05</u>
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Net Income	<u>432.40</u>	<u>1,662.65</u>	<u>2,273.96</u>	<u>2,924.97</u>	<u>-2,894.03</u>	<u>3,765.04</u>	<u>-3,804.67</u>	<u>218.39</u>
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Beginning Fund Balance	0.00	432.40	2,095.05	4,369.01	7,293.98	4,399.95	8,164.99	4,360.32
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Net Income	<u>432.40</u>	<u>1,662.65</u>	<u>2,273.96</u>	<u>2,924.97</u>	<u>-2,894.03</u>	<u>3,765.04</u>	<u>-3,804.67</u>	<u>218.39</u>
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