

Climate Crisis: It's Real and It's Here. You Can Do Something.

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

There's a scene in a Woody Allen movie in which a mother takes her little boy to a psychiatrist because he refuses to do his homework. The child is depressed since learning that the universe is expanding. He thinks everything will break apart, so what's the point? His mother tells him he has to do his homework anyway because Brooklyn is not expanding!

Many people perceive the Climate Crisis as similar to the universe expanding. It's mostly happening out there beyond our everyday lives. It's not happening in Rittenhouse Square. The news stories are still about politics, immigration, crime, and sports. Advertising still pushes cell phones, cars, and beer. Maybe the weather report hints at it now and then. Yet, it's hard to believe it's a real crisis.

How the media reports on this issue affects public perception of its urgency. The term climate change can sound relatively benign. That is far from accurate. The Niemann Journalism Lab reports that *The Guardian*, a British daily newspaper, has instructed its writers to use "climate crisis, climate emergency, or climate breakdown" and "global heating" instead. According to *The Guardian's* editor-in-chief, "what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity."

Jersey shore and other coastal residents have already been affected by the climate crisis, and "America's Great Climate Exodus" is starting in the Florida Keys, according to Bloomberg. States are buying out homeowners in flood-prone areas and bulldozing homes.

A Florida state demographer predicts that by the end of this century, 13 million Americans will need to move because of rising sea levels. Billy Fleming, a landscape architecture professor at the University of Pennsylvania, says that we have only 10 or 12 years to mobilize and manage retreat. After that, "it won't matter because much of America will be underwater or on fire."

The earth has seen more floods, storms, wildfires, habitat changes, and species extinction. According to the

Environmental Defense Fund, the oceans have experienced "marine heat waves and ocean acidification that could push ocean animals and ecosystems to their limits."

The Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) says human climate drivers include heat-trapping emissions from burning coal, gas and oil in power plants and vehicles; cutting down and burning forests; tiny pollution particles (aerosols); and black carbon pollution (soot). The UCS concludes that the goal of the Paris Agreement of 2015, which aims to reduce emissions worldwide enough to keep global warming under the dangerous threshold of two degrees Centigrade, "can be achieved through immediate and sustained action to reduce our heat-trapping emissions like adopting technologies that increase energy efficiency, expanding our use of renewable energy, and slowing deforestation (among other solutions)." <https://www.ucsusa.org/global-warming/science-and-impacts/science/human-contribution-to-gw-faq.html>

GreenBiz Group, a media, events, and networking company in Oakland, Calif., says teenagers are our best hope for leadership to save the planet (the climate crisis is the number-one concern of young people), along with professional and governmental entities: meteorologists, mayors, investors, health professionals, indigenous peoples, risk managers, farmers and fishers, and Silicon Valley techies.

Per Espen Stoknes, a psychologist, economist, professor, and director for the Center for Green Growth at the Norwegian Business School in Oslo, said in a TED talk that people are more likely to take action if their neighbors are taking action.

What are the actions we neighbors should take? Jason Smerdon, a climate scientist for Columbia University's Lamont Doherty Earth Observatory, recommends that people use their voting power to elect policymakers who support major governmental investments, incentives, regulations, and taxation to save the planet. People should also vote with their dollars by not investing in companies that are the biggest producers of greenhouse gas emissions or the companies that finance

them. Data on companies are available from Climate Accountability Institute <http://climateaccountability.org/> Data on fossil-free mutual funds are available on <https://greenmoney.com/fossil-fuel-companies-hidden-in-mutual-funds/>

Immediate actions Smerdon recommends for individuals are: decreasing beef consumption (cows produce huge amounts of methane gas emissions), installing solar panels, and avoiding driving or switching to a fuel-efficient vehicle. Other sources recommend: limiting air travel, installing LED lightbulbs, reducing use of appliances and devices, planting a garden, eating local food, and discarding less food. The time is now.

Or, one day you may find yourself sitting on the Broad Street beach, listening to your short-wave radio, snacking on insects, and holding a one-way ticket on the last flight to Antarctica. Then you'll know it's real.

Green Energy Solutions for Urban Problems

Dana Robinson of Earth Quaker Action Team (EQAT) and Martha Griffen of the Climate Action Team of POWER presented at the Philadelphia Ethical Society on Rittenhouse Square, October 21. Earth Quaker Action Team is pressuring PECO to increase their source of energy to 20 percent solar by 2025 by building solar installations in urban neighborhoods, creating thousands of new skilled jobs for urban residents. POWER's climate team wants local investment in green infrastructure to improve the health of people living in poor and polluted neighborhoods and to create green jobs as a pathway out of poverty.

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