



Physicians for Social Responsibility
10 Dumfries Court
Sacramento, California 95831
www.sacpsr.org • info@sacpsr.org
916-955-6333

Climate Change: A Monstrous Reckoning

By Abigail Palmquist

Student at Aspire Benjamin Holt College Preparatory Academy in Stockton, California

Like Dr. Frankenstein of literary legend, modern civilization's zeal for innovation and industry has created a monster, and though this monster may hide himself in the mountains for a time, he will eventually come back to haunt us. Climate change is our Frankenstein's monster. Day by day, it is increasingly evident that he is bellowing back into our social consciousness through a warning personified in forest fires, hurricanes, heat waves, tree disease, and flooding. We would be wise to heed the monster's warning and vanquish him; in fact, we are the last generation able to do so.

We now have front row seats to the devastating effects of climate change on the lives of our neighbors and families. Clear evidence shows that the climate is changing and that this possesses drastic consequences for all domains of life, and yet the attitude persists that climate change does not affect our everyday lives. Such a stance inhibits us from investing the necessary resources into confronting it. While this attitude may serve as a comforting shield from an impending reality, current events have rendered it demonstrably untrue. As temperatures rise, snow melts faster and sooner, precipitation decreases, and insects that thrive in warmer conditions begin to rot trees, leaving behind forests of combustible debris. These conditions brew the perfect storm for massive wildfires that decimate our communities like Paradise, Malibu, and Santa Barbara. We can no longer pretend like climate change is an abstract battle for a future generation to fight.

Rooted in the sentiment that we need not worry about climate change is also unawareness about who it affects first: those in poverty without the means to deal with climate-induced catastrophes. Apart from the structural damage and loss of life that they cause, droughts, wildfires, and floods remind us of the delicate connection between the earth and our food supply. This is apparent in poor communities where crop shortage means economic hardship for a farmer and hunger for the community. Oxfam, an international organization advocating for those in poverty, emphasizes that ". . . the people least responsible for causing climate change bear the brunt of its impacts. Poor communities, particularly women and marginalized groups, face the greatest peril." If we are a

generation committed to social change and the eradication of poverty, we must recognize that confronting climate change is essential to this mission.

As the "first generation to feel the effect of climate change" we must realize that we are "the last generation who can do something about it." While altering the fabric of society seems daunting, the key to reversing climate change lies in education. We must encourage our brightest minds in science, law, politics, and economics to enact a revolution that prioritizes sustainability and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The leaders of change for racial equality, gender equality, and technology have used their movements to restructure society. Our generation must follow their example and use our collective energy to slay the monster of climate change.

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