


# Not Too Late

CHANGING THE CLIMATE STORY  
FROM DESPAIR TO POSSIBILITY

Edited by  
Rebecca Solnit &  
Thelma Young Lutunatabua  
with illustrations by David Solnit



This is a study guide to support teachers using *Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility* in the classroom (and anyone who wants to form an independent study group). It contains:

- **A STUDY GUIDE** outlining topics with which to build discussions and analysis, research projects, writing assignments, and class presentations.
- **ROUTE MAPS** through the book
- an **ANNOTATED TABLE OF CONTENTS** for the book

# Introduction

Climate is an issue that touches everything. As a subject of study, it involves almost everything, too: history, culture, economics, law and justice issues, race and gender politics, and so many branches of science—plus, the state of the climate movement, the shift to renewables, and the policy issues being decided and/or implemented at every level from local to global. No one knows everything about climate. There are great specialists and great generalists, and there are newcomers trying to find a point of entry. Where should someone start with climate?

We at Not Too Late try to strike a balance between defeatism (it's too late, we don't have the solutions) and overconfidence (the amazing movements and technologies will make it all fall into place somehow). We think people should know a bit about **the science**—

notably, that the single greatest cause of global warming is the burning of fossil fuel, and how that emits carbon that goes up into the upper atmosphere, thickening the insulating layer that holds heat, unleashing climate chaos. . .

**and technology**—

with wind and solar, we have the capacity to leave the age of fossil fuels behind. . .

**and complexity and intersectionality**—

fossil fuel isn't the only problem, and renewables aren't the only solution. We need to think about how climate is connected with racial justice, gender justice, decolonial movements, and more. How we produce and consume food and durable goods, design our communities and transportation, protect wild places and wildlife are among the many other things that matter.

**so does culture**—

because, for the great majority of us to do what the climate needs, we have to understand the situation and care about the big picture—collective well-being, long-term thriving, our inseparability from nature—

so, rethinking what constitutes wealth, health, and security also matters, which is a cultural question, and, of course, culture also gives rise to—

**politics, which also matters immensely**—

because, right now, the main obstacles to doing what the climate needs for a stable future are political: a small percentage of humanity is slowing and stopping what the great majority of humanity wants: a healthy, thriving planet for us all, now and for the long-term future.

That small (but wealthy!) percentage includes fossil fuel investors, owners, shareholders, and other beneficiaries including oil companies and oil-rich nations, along with politicians and other decisionmakers who are either directly benefiting or can't imagine the scale of the crisis and the possibilities. And the crisis has impacted the

**emotional life of many**—

which is why *Not Too Late* brought in wise voices to talk about that impact and the tools to address it.

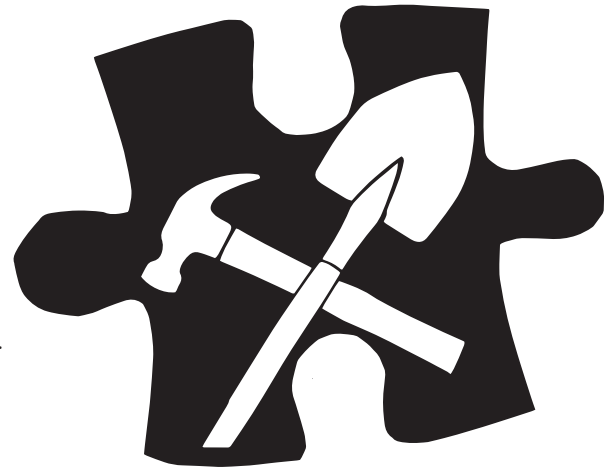
That's a lot. But it also means that whether you teach literature or science or social studies/sociology or political science, climate makes a great body of ideas, voices, and issues around which to build a curriculum, and *Not Too Late: Changing the Climate Story from Despair to Possibility* has material for you.



# How Do We, How Can We, Think About Climate?

## Not Too Late's Prompts:

- What is your vision of the climate future? Is it one version or more than one? Describe your best-case and worst-case scenarios.
- What are your sources of information about climate? What models for thinking about the future do you have? Whom do you listen to, and how do you choose? (This is about the larger question we face with so many subjects: How do we select trustworthy sources of information?)
- What's the best conversation you ever had about climate? The worst? What has changed how you feel about it for the better? For the worse? What's been the most surprising thing you've ever heard or read about climate? Can you think of something that would change your view of it now?
- How would you explain the climate situation today to someone who had just arrived from, say, 1973? What would you tell them about renewable energy? About politics? About good and bad changes over the past half century? What would you want to hear from another time traveler, this one coming back from 2073? What would the visitor from the future want to say to us? (Maybe role-play these characters or even write a script: "Where are the personal jetpacks and moon colonies and why does everyone stare at these hand-held devices at all the time?" said the person from 1973.)
- Have you gone online to try to understand more about climate? Did you find good information? Did you find bad information, too? Identify a source for climate information that you find useful to share. Perhaps also identify one you see as flawed—maybe a corporate site, a mainstream media site, a conspiracy theory or doomer's site or social media—and look at why you disagree with its frameworks or fact-check its claims.
- Who should decide what affects a place, a country, a planet? Who does decide? Discuss who should decide, and what kind of a world would emerge from their decisions. (Maybe discuss climate as a democracy issue, in the clashes between who's most impacted and who decides and who should.)
- What are the frameworks in which you think about climate and related issues—how change works, who has power, what matters? Can you find a widespread framework and explore what happens when you change it, either by analyzing what you see as its flaws or proposing an existing alternative framework or thinking one up?
  - **FOR EXAMPLE**, what happens when we say, "Doing what the climate crisis requires of us is expensive," versus the cost of not doing what it requires? Whose economy is the subject of "Doing all this is bad for the economy"?
- Has anyone around you ever talked about what we owe the future? Can you think of choices and efforts from the past that made the present we live in better? Can you see things we are doing now that contribute to the future, as well as things that undermine it? (Past examples could be building public libraries or protecting forests or laws ensuring human rights. . .)
- What stories do you know about ordinary people making change? Were you taught stories about the women's movement, the civil rights movement, the environmental movement, or other historical actions that changed something for the better? Did those stories unpack how the change actually happened? Are there successful models of change you know that apply to the climate crisis?<sup>1</sup> Can you name a victory of the climate movement?
  - **PROJECT**: Have each member of the group research and present one achievement of the climate movement.



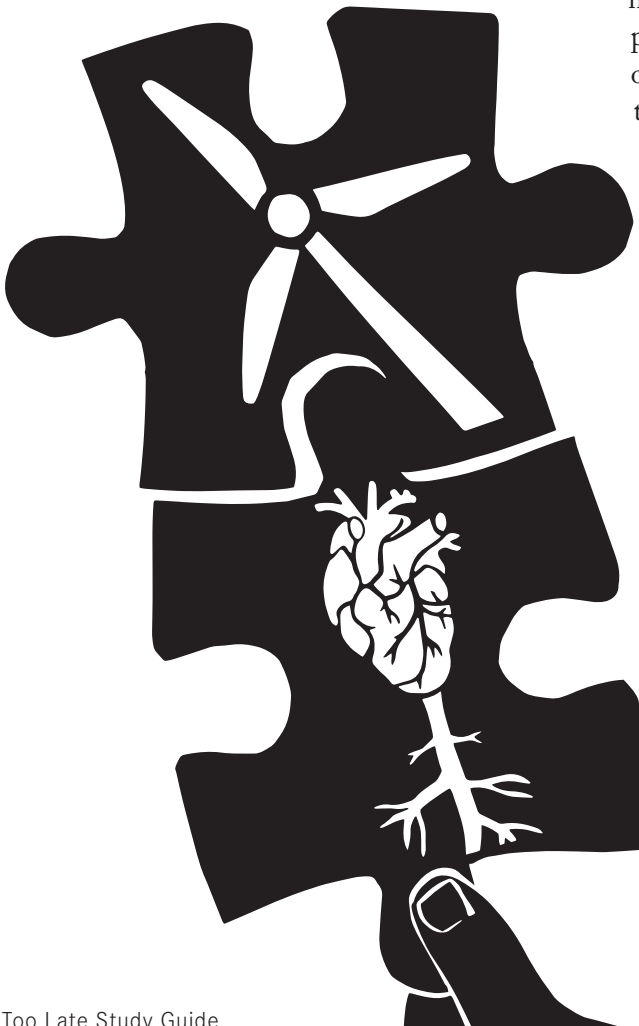
1. The film *To the End* by Rachel Lears gives a very good picture of how young people started the Sunrise Movement, the Sunrise Movement begat the Green New Deal, and the Green New Deal inspired the 2020 Democratic presidential candidates to engage with the issues and Biden to build a robust climate platform. The Green New Deal also shaped the Build Back Better legislation, which didn't pass, and the cut-down Inflation Reduction Act that did. Both inspiring and analytical, *To the End* would also be an excellent teaching tool.

- What’s the theory of change that is most mainstream? Most radical? Where does power reside? What powers do ordinary people have? Where can we see them at work? Who tells us that we have power? Who tells us we’re powerless? Who is served by the story that we have no power?
- Take one item in the Climate Victory section of *Not Too Late* and research how that change happened, from beginning to end. (Renato Constantino’s chapter on setting 1.5°C as the threshold in Paris in 2015 and Rebecca Solnit’s essay on indirect consequences, which traces the trajectory from the Sunrise Movement and the Green New Deal to the 2022 passage of the Inflation Reduction Act, both explore how specific changes came about.)
- Can you think of changes that happened in the past fifty years that help you think about changes for the next fifty years? Do you have examples of things that have changed suddenly or unexpectedly? (Examples could include the liberation of Eastern Europe in 1989; the collapse of the Soviet Union; the swift journey of Nelson Mandela from prisoner for life to president of South Africa; the gain of abortion rights in Ireland, Spain, Argentina, and Mexico and their loss in the US; the spread of marriage equality internationally—and the invasion of Ukraine, with its impact on global alliances and Europe’s energy transition.)
- Mostly, we’re asked what we’re willing to give up to meet the climate challenge. But what might we gain if we left the age of fossil fuels behind and got our power from sun and wind? Can you tell the story both ways? Name three things you’d like to give up. And three you’d like to gain.
- Have you seen positive visions of the future in films, TV shows, games, or music videos—or read about them in books or newspapers? If you haven’t, why do you think that is? What have you learned from the negative visions? Why do we have so many negative/dystopian/scary versions and so few hopeful ones? Imagine that the very moment you’re living in is a science-fiction film for someone watching in 1953. What’s utopian in this very moment and what’s dystopian?

- In discussions of what is “better” and “more secure,” whose needs and desires are central? On the news? In congresses and parliaments? In discussions of “the economy”? Who gets left out? How do these things change if you change the focus? Tell the story of the safe and stable world from the perspective of very rich people in the Global North and very poor people in the Global South.

- Mary Annaise Heglilar writes (p. 20), “I could tell that it felt good to talk like this: open and honest about the experience of watching the world fall apart in front of our eyes. To say our fears out loud and have them, and ourselves, accepted and understood. I could see the weight lifting from our shoulders, but it only rose so far. It hung in the air, just above our heads like a heavy ominous cloud, until someone popped the question that brought it right back down on us: *But what can we, as individuals, do?*” What’s her answer? What’s your answer?

- **PROJECT:** Pick a fossil fuel project and try to imagine the points of view of an Indigenous climate organizer and a fossil-fuel executive. Prepare a dialogue between the two.





# Quotes to Start Conversations

(THERE ARE LOTS MORE IN THE BOOK, BUT WE'VE PULLED OUT A FEW SAMPLES):

Nothing is inevitable, and that's crucial to remember in this fight. It's no surprise that so many of the tactics the climate movement is using to tackle fossil-fuel Goliaths are taken straight from playbooks used to bring down dictators.

—Thelma Young Lutunatabua

In our efforts to protect what is being lost, how do we make sure we're appreciating what is fighting to remain?

After a frustrating new law is passed, do we take a moment to bring bread to our neighbors? Do we watch the sunset after a brutal storm? Have we acted as if there were possibilities other than destruction? Have we taken steps to show that our liberation is tied to that of others?

—Thelma Young Lutunatabua

We live within large structures, from our transportation networks to our massive, highly integrated global food system. Dependent as we are on these structures for our well-being, individuals have a limited ability to transform how they live on their own—a single consumer's purchasing decisions will not shift the cultivation techniques of a global agribusiness. While we all have a role to play in addressing climate change, that role must include, and perhaps even emphasize, transforming these structures.

—Edward Carr

What gives me hope is that human history is full of examples of people across the ages who have risen to face the great challenges of their time and succeeded against all odds. Victory is not the arrival in some promised land; it is a series of imperfect victories along the way that edge us closer to building the critical mass that eventually shifts the status quo. Right now, we are living through the biggest social movement of our time. A time of true global citizenry, driven by our duty to protect the planetary conditions that sustain us all. The question is, *How are you going to show up in this moment?*

—Joelle Gergis

With love for each other and deep connections to the planet, we can create a future in which every person has a place to call home, and where all people can thrive.

—Gloria Walton

We need stories to remind us why hope is complicated but necessary, because the opposite mode is to live neat lives powered by a self-affirming wireless fidelity to all-terrain gloom, where all signs point to defeat and despair waits at every turn. To hope is to embrace uncertainty, knowing the bad guys have not won yet.

—Renato Redentor Constantino

I believe that the peoples of the Pacific have important intellectual contributions to make to the global climate-justice movement. We have insights born not only of living in close harmony with the Earth but also of having survived so much already—the ravages of extractive industry, the experiments of nuclear powers. We have information vital to the project of recovering the planet's life-support systems.

—Julian Aguon

We come from cultural traditions rich in beauty and resilience—the same traditions that have enabled us to thrive in our ancestral spaces for thousands of years—but that is simply not enough to ensure our continued survival. The part simply cannot save the whole. The answer to the question of climate change must come from everyone, or it will come from no one.

—Julian Aguon

But while there are some things about this moment that feel unique, I remind myself that *the experience of the world ending is not new*. Whether due to a prophecy or a very real looming threat, many of our ancestors also likely felt that the world was ending. And in many cases their worlds *did* end. The devastation on Easter Island, the fall of Carthage, the arrival of Columbus, the centuries of chattel slavery, the destruction of Hiroshima, the Cold War, even the Cuban missile crisis—these all must have felt like the end of the world. Facing loss, despair, uncertainty, and death is as much a part of the human experience as anything else.

—Yotam Marom

In the moments of wisdom encouraged by these heroes, I remember that despair is my vanity talking. It is an indulgence in the illusion that what is here and now is inevitable, that the future is written, that we can see how it will unfold. Despair is not about reality, or the world, or even ultimately the people we care about. *It is about us*. It is the act of allowing our very real sadness and fear to limit our sense of what is possible, about finding safety and comfort in that darkness, about avoiding heartbreak. Despair is the easy way out.

—Yotam Marom

In the midst of all this, I believe that it is essential that we grieve. We have to come to terms with the multiple losses that we are experiencing at this time and to move out of the parched landscape of denial to experience grief and learn what grief can give us. I also believe that it is important at this time for us to work with our fears, those sharp and foreboding edges that keep us knotted in the fist of threat.

—Roshi Joan Halifax

We have heeded the call to abandon futility and meet our moral anguish, our grief, and our fear with openness and curiosity. We have also allowed ourselves to be worked by the power of adversity in order to meet the unfolding and uncertain present with inquiry, hope, awe, and loving action.

—Roshi Joan Halifax

In five billion years—nearly as long as the Earth has existed—our sun will explode, regardless of whether we are very good or very bad at tending to the planets it illuminates. This fact does not lessen our responsibility to fill that time with as much regard for life as we can, in the liminal space between Earth's creation and destruction. We have always known this, deep down; why else would we plant trees that we know will never shade us?

—Jacquelyn Gill



If we were able to unshackle our imaginations in this moment, I think our compatibility with the Earth would become possible. I believe that humans have a concept of ourselves as taking from the Earth and not necessarily giving anything back to it, using the Earth as kind of a temporary machine from which we're going to launch some other situation or find some other planet. And it's a very limited worldview. I think if we were to unshackle our imaginations, we would be able to see this is an abundant place that has everything we need. It could actually be very satisfying for us. Maybe we could satisfy it, too.

Some of the things that have most astounded me that have come to pass in our recent history have been the ways we have galvanized and changed the culture and conversation around sexual harassment, harm, assault, and violence through the #MeToo movement—and understanding that that change was made possible because of a lot of people at a relatively small scale being willing to tell their stories, tell their truths, and begin to make interventions for themselves by stepping out into the light. Concurrently, we've seen a major shift in the culture and the conversation around abolition and prison systems and the preciousness of Black life through the work of Black Lives Matter and the Movement for Black Lives. And with both movements there have been massive learning edges. Yet, if I think about ten years ago, that didn't feel possible, it didn't feel like that could happen that quickly.

—adrienne maree brown

# Contributors and Essays by Category

The first list includes all contributors with their locations. The next three lists identify contributors who are BIPOC, women, and scientists. Additional groupings include essays recommended in particular for writing classes, essays addressing emotions in relation to climate, essays unpacking how activism works, and essays dissecting the political process.

## All Contributors, with Locations

|                              |                                |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Julian Aguon                 | Guam                           |
| Jade Begay                   | New Mexico                     |
| adrienne maree brown         | Durham, North Carolina         |
| Edward Carr                  | Worcester, Massachusetts       |
| Renato Redantor Constantino  | Philippines                    |
| Joelle Gergis                | Canberra, Australia            |
| Jacquelyn Gill               | Bangor, Maine                  |
| Roshi Joan Halifax           | Santa Fe, New Mexico           |
| Mary Annaïse Heglar          | New Orleans, Louisiana         |
| Mary Anne Hitt               | West Virginia                  |
| Nikayla Jefferson            | Santa Barbara, California      |
| Antonia Juhasz               | Washington, DC                 |
| Kathy Jetnil Kijiner         | Marshall Islands               |
| Fenton Lutunatabua           | Fiji                           |
| Yotam Marom                  | New York, New York             |
| Denali Nalamalapu            | Washington, DC                 |
| Joseph Sikulu                | Australia                      |
| David Solnit (illustrations) | Berkeley, California           |
| Rebecca Solnit               | San Francisco, California      |
| Leah Stokes                  | Santa Barbara, California      |
| Farhana Sultana              | Bangladesh; Syracuse, New York |
| Gloria Walton                | Washington, DC                 |

## BIPOC Contributors

Julian Aguon  
Jade Begay  
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Renato Redantor Constantino  
Joelle Gergis  
Mary Annaïse Heglar  
Nikayla Jefferson  
Kathy Jetnil Kijiner  
Fenton Lutunatabua & Joseph Sikulu  
Denali Nalamalapu  
Farhana Sultana  
Gloria Walton

## Women

Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Lutunatabua  
Jade Begay  
adrienne maree brown  
Joelle Gergis  
Jacquelyn Gill  
Mary Annaïse Heglar  
Mary Anne Hitt  
Roshi Joan Halifax  
Nikayla Jefferson  
Antonia Juhasz  
Kathy Jetnil Kijiner  
Denali Nalamalapu  
Leah Stokes  
Farhana Sultana



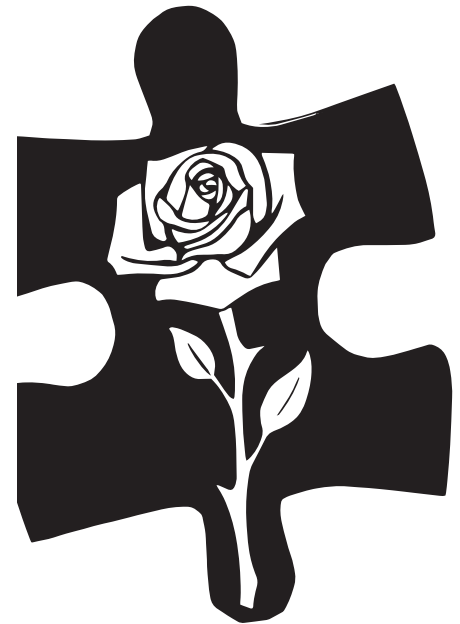
## Scientists

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Edward Carr     | Geography, IPCC contributor                 |
| Joelle Gergis   | Climate, IPCC contributor                   |
| Jacquelyn Gill  | Paleoecology, climate scientist             |
| Farhana Sultana | Geography, climate                          |
| Leah Stokes     | Environmental policy, renewables technology |

## Climate Essays for Writing Classes

*We recommend all the essays for use in writing classes, but these in particular, many of which are in the first person, might be especially good for inspiring thoughts about how to bring materials together and tell a story.*

|   |
|---|
| Julian Aguon, “To Hell with Drowning”   |
| Jacquelyn Gill, “The Asteroid and the Fern”   |
| Nikayla Jefferson, “From the Hunger Strike with Love”                                   |
| Yotam Marom, “What to Do When the World Is Ending”                                      |
| Rebecca Solnit, “In Praise of Indirect Consequences”                                    |
| Thelma Young Lutunatabua, “Not Only a Danger But a Promise” and “Nothing Is Inevitable” |



## Emotions Evoked in Relation to Climate

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Julian Aguon                       | Overwhelm, loss, resolve   |
| adrienne maree brown               | Hope, astonishment, “dosing yourself with pleasure,” “what does enough feel like?”   |
| Renato Redantor Constantino        | Hope acted upon become victory   |
| Joelle Gergis                      | Hope in the face of the facts  |
| Jacquelyn Gill                     | “I mourned, but I also marveled,” fear, wonder   |
| Mary Annaïse Heglar                | “To say our fears out loud and have them, and ourselves, accepted and understood”  |
| Mary Anne Hitt                     | Determination  |
| Roshi Joan Halifax                 | “How we meet fear, how we meet loss, and how we meet grief . . . [and] we open to hope, and how we open to wonder”   |
| Nikayla Jefferson                  | Despair, grief, and love: “The truth of my climate despair is that it is a tender ache around the space of my heart, but I feel this great pain only because I feel greater love”  |
| Kathy Jetñil Kijiner               | Sadness/grief, hope, rest, creativity  |
| Fenton Lutunatabua & Joseph Sikulu | Joy, celebration, “our work is grounded in love and care. . . . Love is one of the most underrated organizing tools”   |
| Yotam Marom                        | Despair, sadness, fear, resoluteness, commitment, resolve, solidarity, hope  |
| Denali Nalamalapu                  | Imagination, courage   |
| Rebecca Solnit                     | Introductory essay: “To hope is to accept despair as an emotion but not as an analysis”; from the conclusion: “One underlying story worth unpacking tells us we’re too fragile to face hard things, that if we are sad we will break, and we should never be sad because it’s a kind of failure. . . . Despair is the opposite of complacency, but both can lead to inaction.” |
| Farhana Sultana                    | “A sense of despair, grief, rage, suffocation, stagnation, abandonment, and regression coexists with that of revolutionary potentiality, alternative possibilities, collectivizing, determination, worldmaking, and critical hope”   |



Thelma Young Lutunatabua

Introductory essay: fear, anger, commitment, hope; closing essay: “It’s not that we avoided or disregarded the grief, but we also did not stop at grief. . . . To care about the climate crisis is to be in a steady state of managing grief and pain,” hope, celebration)

**How Activism Works**

Julian Aguon

On finding strength from community, tradition, and elders

Jade Begay

“Climate justice is about building ties between people, their land, and their traditional, ancestral ways.”

adrienne maree brown

“Imagination is a muscle” and “When I imagine the world in a right relationship, it’s a love story between our species and this Earth and amongst us.”

Renato Redantor Constantino

On how the officially less powerful can organize to move the more powerful

Joelle Gergis

“What we do over this coming decade is literally a matter of life and death. We must decide that destabilizing our planetary home is simply not an option.”

Mary Annaise Heglar

On how to find out what your contributions/place in the climate movement can be

Mary Anne Hitt

“When we won policy solutions that moved us forward but fell short of that vision, we regrouped and tried again . . . new beginnings are often born during our most difficult days.”

Nikayla Jefferson

A detailed description of managing a hunger strike for climate

Antonia Juhasz

“The first thing to say is that the fossil-fuel industry does not always win. . . . Increasingly, people came to look to those who had the longest experience confronting the fossil-fuel industry. Those were primarily marginalized communities, communities of color, nations of color. . . . What if all of those strategies that were already being utilized and practiced were supported, elevated, echoed?”

Fenton Lutunatabua & Joseph Sikulu

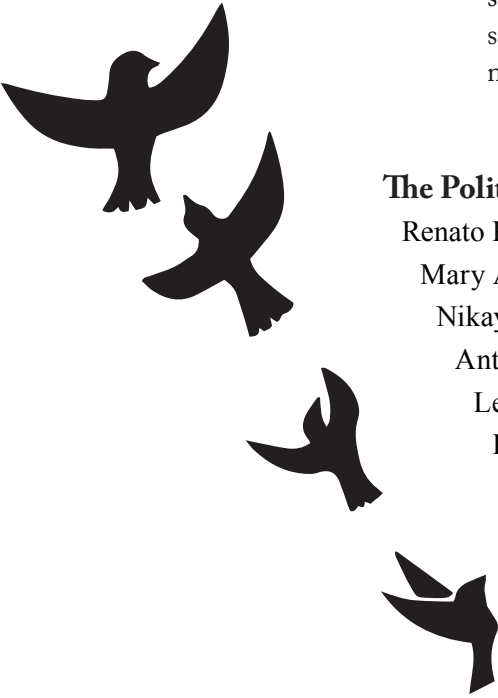
On building hope, defiance, confidence, joy and solidarity into your organizing

Denali Nalamalapu

“How because of the near-century scientists, mothers, organizers, Indigenous peoples had fought for action on climate change, we were able to see some real global momentum.”

Rebecca Solnit

On indirect consequences, tracing the circuitous path to the Inflation Reduction Act and the many impacts of the Standing Rock pipeline protests; on the unforeseeable and the long arc of change in the 1973 essay; essay in final section: “The stories, ideas, values, aspirations, and facts we carry strengthen or weaken us, connect or disconnect us, motivate or demoralize us.”



**The Political Process**

Renato Redantor Constantino The struggle to set 1.5° as the goal in Paris

Mary Anne Hitt How we get to a renewables future

Nikayla Jefferson How she ran a hunger strike)

Antonia Juhasz The political vulnerabilities of the fossil fuel industry

Leah Stokes The policies behind electrification

Farhana Sultana The colonial politics of climate chaos

Gloria Walton Communities of color implementing renewables

# Annotated Table of Contents and Essay Summaries

JOIN US (introductory overview by the editors)

## Difficult Is Not the Same as Impossible

*Rebecca Solnit*

A reminder that we are deciding the future now, a meditation on hope as distinct from optimism, on grassroots power and the power of movements, on what it means to live in a rapidly changing world, and on the growth of the climate movement and positive signs for climate goals.

3

## Nothing Is Inevitable

*Thelma Young Lutunatabua*

Reflections on how the world has come to face climate and on the obstacles that remain despite clear information on the crisis—which is a crisis of power still being decided—and on coping with the emotional impact of engagement with the climate crisis.

11

WE HAVE THE SOLUTIONS (fact-based essays on aspects of the climate situation)

## Here's Where You Come In

*Mary Annaïse Heglar*

Longtime climate journalist offers guidance to everyone who wants to find a place in the climate movement and reflects on the immense rise in interest in climate.

19

## We Are Not Doomed to Climate Chaos

*Edward R. Carr*

An IPCC (United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) scientist reinterprets the latest report to recognize that transformation is inevitable and to offer hope and urgency: “We already have the technology we need to mitigate and adapt to climate change in a manner that brings about sustainable development. We have failed to act on it” and urges a rethinking of who is centered in discussions of impact and action: “A climate-resilient future is still possible. It starts with changing who is in the conversation. . .”

28

## Defeating the Fossil-Fuel Industry

*A conversation with oil policy analyst and investigative journalist Antonia Juhasz, Rebecca Solnit, and Thelma Young Lutunatabua*

An expert in the field discusses ways in which the fossil fuel industry is weakening and shedding jobs, credibility, and influence. She also looks at its vulnerabilities and the shift to renewables, considers how frontline communities offer powerful examples of successful organizing, and how the current climate movement is confronting the industry at every stage and in every aspect of its activity, from extraction to transportation to finance, with a nod to uneven levels of consumption and impact—in other words, the wealthy have an outsize climate impact.

32

## A Climate Scientist's Take on Hope

*Joelle Gergis*

“Averting planetary disaster is up to the people alive right now,” begins IPCC scientist Joelle Gergis. “We have urgent decisions to make about how much will be lost to future generations. We must choose what we are willing to save.” She acknowledges some changes—melting ice, sea level rise—are inevitable, but “the good news is that there is no evidence to support the notion that we are currently facing runaway climate change or the inevitability of an unlivable future.” Current commitments to reduce emissions are far from enough: “The scientific community is saying that we can still avert the worst aspects of climate change, but we need to move quickly.”

38



## **From Destruction to Abundance**

*Leah Cardamore Stokes*

An expert on policy and renewable energy reviews the opposition to the energy transition and the ways it is going forward: “If we gather all that pollution, we could divide it into chunks, like a pie. Each slice of that pie is a piece of the economy that we can move away from dirty fossil fuels and toward clean technologies.” She describes current and potential transitions for each slice, then reviews the other benefits including clean air, good new jobs, and plummeting costs for power.

45

## **Shared Solutions Are Our Greatest Hope and Strength**

*Gloria Walton*

Walton, director of The Solutions Project, notes, “The old way of thinking that environmentalism is separate from achieving equity and justice is long gone.” She describes the clean, just, connected world we could have and where pieces of it have already been realized: “With love for each other and deep connections to the planet, we can create a future in which every person has a place to call home, and where all people can thrive.” From Brooklyn to the Navajo nation, she provides examples of where these dreams are being realized.

52

## **Decolonizing Climate Coloniality**

*Farhana Sultana*

Geographer Farhana Sultana describes climate colonialism as the phenomenon whereby those least responsible for contributing to climate breakdown are impacted more acutely over longer periods than are those most responsible. She describes contemporary climate colonialism as it manifests in global inequality around resources and power and decision-making, noting its presence at the annual global climate conferences that she also sees as “spaces of opportunities to challenge the system.” She goes on to describe what decolonizing climate could look like and celebrates “healing colonial and imperial wounds through transformative care, empathy, mutuality, and love” as well as “through decolonizing knowledge” and through solidarity and building community.

58

## **An Indigenous Systems Approach to the Climate Crisis**

*Jade Begay*

NDN organizer Begay writes about Indigenous knowledge lost and recovered, about how this knowledge embraces holistic, systemic views and relationships to land and the natural world. She reviews examples of the employment of Indigenous knowledge to protect the environment and the climate against disaster but also as regenerative practices and transitions to renewable energy: “At their root, the Green New Deal and other regenerative solutions and progressive policies around climate justice are actually Indigenous models.”

66

## **How the Ants Moved the Elephants in Paris**

*Renato Redentor Constantino*

The Philippines-based Constantino, who has played a major role in global climate politics, describes how, at the 2015 Paris climate conference, he participated in the ultimately successful campaign to shift the threshold temperature from 2°C to 1.5°C. It’s a story of organizing and seizing power by the climate-vulnerable nations and representatives of the Global South, and it is a reminder that those often deemed powerless can be powerful and that change often comes from outside and below.

73

## **To Hell with Drowning**

*Julian Aguon*

Aguon declares, early in his first-person narrative essay, “First, the climate-justice movement must listen more carefully to those most vulnerable to the ravages of climate change, such as Oceania’s frontline communities. Second, we who are waist-deep in that movement need more than facts to win.” He describes both Pacific Islanders’ powerful practical approaches to relocation in the face of sea level rise and the deep cultural and spiritual loss experienced by people rooted in place and facing displacement, ending with a beautiful example of memory and resistance.

82

## **An Extremely Incomplete List of Climate Victories**

92

**What to Do When the World Is Ending**

105

*Yotam Marom*

Beginning with the recognition that “the experience of the world ending is not new,” climate organizer Yotam Marom looks at how Jews in the Holocaust and Native Americans faced the end of their worlds and finds examples of courage and commitment: “They understood, it seems, that purpose, strategy, and action could overcome despair.” He finds “more than strategy” in these actions that also claim agency in the face of overwhelming circumstances.

**Meeting the More and the Marrow: What Moral Anguish, Grief, and Fear Give Us**

112

*Rosbi Joan Halifax*

A Buddhist teacher addresses the emotional impact of climate chaos: “We mustn’t look away. We are in a crisis of the mind and a crisis of the heart. And the nature of this crisis goes to the very core of how we live as social beings, how we live as moral and caring beings, and how we meet fear, how we meet loss, and how we meet grief. . . . Yet, I think it’s also important to know that like grief, fear can be a kind of doorway.”

**Bigger Than the Easiest Answer**

119

*Interview with Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner*

Marshall Islands poet and climate leader reflects on hope and loss: “. . .the way hope can be weaponized, the way it can be used to not face the reality of the situation, to not be able to grieve, to not give time for grief, to not give time for those of us who are really feeling it first. . . . Hope, for me, is recognizing that it’s not on one person, that the savior complex is completely self-destructive. Hope for me is being able to work within our team. Just one step at a time working on it daily and knowing that we’re doing something.”

**The Asteroid and the Fern**

124

*Jacquelyn Gill*

“The hard rock record does not promise that we, in all of our soft-bodied ephemeralness, could not possibly do as much damage as an asteroid: in the climate crisis, humans *are* the impact event, but we are also the small furry things emerging from the safety of our burrows in the aftermath and the ferns renewing the blasted landscape with greenery, creating something new out of the ashes of the old world. Unlike the dinosaurs, we have a choice: Will we be the asteroid or the fern?”

**In Praise of Indirect Consequences**

130

*Rebecca Solnit*

“Too often, people seem to think that if there are not immediate and obvious consequences, there’s failure. In reality, what happens in response is often more subtle, delayed, unpredictable, incremental, and indirect—and yet still valuable and significant, sometimes more so—than simple formulas and short timelines account for. Often those consequences continue to ripple outward and unfold for decades afterward. . . . What we aspire to seems hard to reach, but the improbable, for better or worse, is not the impossible.”

**From the Hunger Strike with Love**

138

*Nikayla Jefferson*

A young Sunrise Movement organizer writes about her role in leading a hunger strike and the emotions that strike and the climate crisis stir: “The truth of my climate despair is that it is a tender ache around the space of my heart, but I feel this great pain only because I feel greater love. The despair is a consequence of the many wells of my heart filled with love for family and friends, for my California and the land, for all the life, human and otherwise, that colors Earth with beauty and gives me enough meaning on darkest of days to endure on. The despair is the heartache of loss, the fear of more loss, and the empathy for all the other life living this moment of loss alongside me.”



## Full Narratives of Love and Hope

143

*Interview with Fenton Lutunatabua and Joseph Zane Sikulu, Pacific Climate Warriors*

“We were recipients of a white savior narrative that really painted us as folks who really couldn’t tap into our own agency or, you know, into our innovativeness. So, as that configuration of people, we knew there needs to be a more nuanced story that is told about our people, and we really need to claim ourselves as the heroes in these stories. We started thinking about what that looked like. There are so many beautiful things about warriorship and stewardship from the islands that we want to uplift. And so, we’re just like, let’s just keep this simple and go with Pacific Climate Warriors. *We are not drowning. We are fighting.*”

## THE FUTURE WE WANT (positive visions and possibilities)

### Imagination Is a Muscle

151

*A conversation with adrienne maree brown*

“I believe that humans have a concept of ourselves as taking from the Earth and not necessarily giving anything back to it, using the Earth as kind of a temporary machine from which we’re going to launch some other situation or find some other planet. And it’s a very limited worldview. I think if we were to unshackle our imaginations, we would be able to see this is an abundant place that has everything we need. It could actually be very satisfying for us.”

### Looking Forward from the Past: 2023 from 1973

158

*Rebecca Solnit*

“In 1973, as in almost any time, few could see what was beginning. The way tiny seeds germinate underground, that ideas travel from margin to center, from outraged reaction to widespread acceptance, from rights campaign to established law, the way germinating seeds would crack the surfaces that seemed solid and stable. The way that things as fundamental as food, nature, race, gender, spirituality, justice would be profoundly rethought. . .”

### Looking Back from the Future: 2023 from 2073

164

*Denali Sai Nalamalapu*

“It was as if we all knew what was coming . . . how big the changes would be . . . how because of the near-century scientists, mothers, organizers, Indigenous peoples had fought for action on climate change, we were able to see some real global momentum.”

### A Love Letter from the Clean Energy Future

170

*Mary Anne Hitt*

A leader in shutting down coal-fired plants envisions the near future: “We’ve reached the year 2030, a date that has loomed large for humanity as a threshold that would make or break our climate. As I look back over this pivotal decade in human history, it’s clear that, against all odds, the work we did together planted the seeds for the just and sustainable energy future that is now flowering.”

### Different Ways of Measuring: On Renunciation and Abundance

177

*Rebecca Solnit and Thelma Young Lutunatabua*

“What if the climate crisis requires us to give up the things we don’t love and the things that make us poorer, not richer? What if we have to give up the foul contamination around fossil-fuel extraction, the heavy metals people inhale when coal is burned around them, the oil refineries that contaminate the communities of color around them from the Gulf of Mexico to California? . . . How do we shift societal perceptions of what a ‘good life’ is? What’s holding us back—is it corporations and governments or is it our own blinders?”





TAKE THIS WITH YOU  
(parting words encouraging engagement)

**Packing (and Unpacking) for an Emergency** 185

*Rebecca Solnit*

“The stories, ideas, values, aspirations, and facts we carry strengthen or weaken us, connect or disconnect us, motivate or demoralize us. They not only prepare us to face emergencies but also to change whether and how they happen. That is, they make us who we are, and who we are has everything to do with who and what survives. What will you take with you in an emergency? What are you packing for the emergency that is the age of climate change? Some stories are life rafts or desert springs; some are poison or prison or heavier than we can carry where we need to go.”

**Not Only a Danger but a Promise**

*Thelma Young Lutunatabua*

“There are many of us in newer generations that recognize that the systems of the past do not work for us, so we are looking for what needs to be seeded instead. Those that said it’s okay to take and take and take and never return. Those that diminished the sacredness of community and the diversity of life. Those that preached the gospel of sacrifice zones. Something else must bloom. . . . My hope is tied to an existing practice of refusing to allow apocalyptic prophecies of the future to come to pass.”

193

