



The Role of the United States in the Global Climate Emergency

For the people of the world to have the best chance at handling the climate emergency the United States government must do the following:

- Remain a signer of the 2015 Paris Agreement and increase its commitment to it
- Carry out its financial commitments to the United Nations and to international climate financing entities, such as the Green Climate Fund
- Commit to policies and legislation that will require industries and other sectors of the economy to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, as laid out in the October 2018 IPCC report (reduce emissions by at least 45% by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050)
- Stop all support for the exploration, development, and production of fossil fuels
- Commit large financial resources to exploring and carrying out natural carbon solutions
- Support a “conflict of interest policy” to ban fossil fuel industries from the UN climate talks

For the people of the world to have the best chance at handling the climate emergency U.S. industries must do the following:

- Convert from fossil fuel to renewable energy as rapidly as possible, without waiting for economic incentives to do so.
- Begin planning for an economy that is not based on unlimited growth. (Unending and unlimited growth has brought us to the current situation.)

For the people of the world to have the best chance at handling the climate emergency the people of the United States must do the following:

- Organize to accomplish the actions above
- Overcome the conditioning that drives us to acquire and consume more than we need. (There are enough resources available for everyone to have a good life.)
- Decide to use resources rationally without waiting for governments and industries to give up their destructive policies. (Official leaders have so far failed to act—we can and must take leadership.)



- Share our resources with those who are facing the crisis with insufficient resources. (We are all in this together.)

RATIONALE

The United States (U.S.) government and the U.S. economic system (U.S. corporations and banks, in particular) play an especially negative role. They have deceived their people about the reality of climate change and have continued to engage in practices that worsen the climate emergency. The U.S. has threatened to withdraw from the

Paris Climate Accord of 2015 (which would influence other countries to follow suit)—almost certainly undermining global efforts to handle the climate emergency. As a major economic power and the second largest source of global greenhouse gas emissions (historically the largest), U.S. action is vitally important.

The October 2018 IPCC report makes it clear that climate change is a global disaster in the making and will get progressively worse until it is addressed. Because global efforts to address the climate emergency



Sustaining All Life (SAL) is an international grassroots organization working to end the climate emergency within the context of ending all divisions among people. *United to End Racism (UER)* is a group of people of all ages and backgrounds, in many different countries, who are dedicated to eliminating racism in the world and supporting the efforts of all other groups with this goal. UER and SAL are projects of and use the tools of Re-evaluation Counseling. Re-evaluation Counseling (RC) is a well-defined theory and practice that helps people of all ages and backgrounds exchange effective help with each other in order to free themselves from the emotional scars of oppression and other hurts. By taking turns listening to each other and encouraging emotional release, people can heal old hurts and become better able to think, to speak out, and to organize and lead others in building a world in which human beings and other life forms are valued and the environment is restored and preserved. Re-evaluation Counseling currently exists in 95 countries.



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have been late and inadequate, the problem is now so large that it will take significant resources and collective action to address it fast enough to avoid catastrophic consequences. According to the IPCC report, we have eleven years to make large reductions in greenhouse gas emissions (forty-five percent by 2030, reaching net zero by 2050)—meanwhile, U.S. and global emissions continue to rise.

The U.S. government is committed to supporting the U.S. fossil fuel industry and expanding the production of fossil fuels. It is the world's largest oil and gas producer and third largest coal producer. Far more coal, gas, and oil are already being produced than we can burn and still stay below 2C (the international goal is to stay below 1.5C). Continued production will be catastrophic.

The U.S. government (working with the U.S. fossil fuel industry) has led efforts in the UN to slow action on climate change. It has undermined efforts to provide developing nations with resources to address the already devastating impact of climate change on their peoples and lands. Developing nations have asked wealthy nations for faster action. They have asked for financial resources—to make their societies more climate resilient, address what they are already experiencing, and transition from fossil fuels to renewables. If they continue to rely on fossil fuels for their development, they will add to the production of greenhouse gas emissions. The U.S. also blocks international efforts to exclude the fossil fuel industry from the UN climate talks.

To avoid global catastrophe, the U.S. must do the following: stop relying on fossil fuels, devote significant resources to the transition to net-zero emissions, and aid developing nations. If we delay, the cost of taking action in the future (if it is even possible to do so) would greatly exceed the cost of assisting developing nations and reducing our own emissions now.

The U.S. economic system has conditioned USers to consume far more than they need in order to have good lives. This excess consumption adds significantly to our GHG emissions. Only a small percentage of the world's population consumes at the U.S. level.

A recent study shows that individual behavioral changes on a massive scale could reduce emissions between nineteen and twenty-five percent. These changes could include the following (not in order of priority): substituting other forms of transportation for gas-powered individual vehicles, electrifying our homes and cutting power usage, installing rooftop solar and solar water heaters or micro-wind, recycling, using energy efficient lighting and appliances, not purchasing items unless we have a real need for them, eating more plant-based foods and less animal protein, reducing food waste, and composting. Many USers have the means take such action now.





The Work of *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism*

It is possible to limit the effects of human-caused climate change and restore the environment—and some very large changes in our economy and the lives we live are needed for this to happen. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* believe the environmental crisis cannot be resolved without ending racism, genocide toward Indigenous peoples, classism, sexism, and other oppressions. The impact of environmental destruction and climate change falls most heavily on people targeted by these particular oppressions. Making the changes needed will require a massive movement, spanning the globe, of people of every background fighting the effects of both climate change and racism.

In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we believe that the barriers to building a sufficiently large and powerful movement include (1) longstanding divisions (usually caused by oppression, and especially racism and classism) between nations and between groups of people, (2) widespread feelings of discouragement and powerlessness, (3) denial of or failure to engage with the escalating damage to the earth's climate, and (4) difficulties in effectively addressing the connections between the environmental crisis and the failures of our economic system. *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* work to address these and other issues.

The role of oppression

The economic and political forms of our societies demand growth and profit with little regard for people, other life forms, or the earth. This results in exploitation and oppression. Oppressions (such as racism, classism, sexism, and the oppression of young people) target everyone, inflicting tremendous injustices, limiting access to resources, and damaging the lives of billions of people. Once targeted by oppression, we tend to act toward others in ways that repeat the hurts that we have experienced. Much of the mental and emotional damage done to humans is the result of this passing on of hurt. Though humans are vulnerable to acting in oppressive ways, oppressive behavior is not inherent, but arises only when a human has been

hurt emotionally. Oppressive societies manipulate this vulnerability to establish and maintain economic exploitation.

The importance of healing personal damage

The mental and emotional harm done to us by oppression and other hurtful experiences interferes with our ability to think clearly and sets groups of people against each other. This makes it difficult for us to think about and respond effectively to the climate emergency. People would not cooperate with a society that exploits people and damages the environment if they had not first been hurt.

Healing from the hurts that help to hold oppression in place and lead to other damaging behavior is not quick or easy work. Many of us resist this work. We may have survived by numbing ourselves to the damage done to us by oppression. Some of us assume that we will never be free of this damage.

In *Sustaining All Life* and *United to End Racism* we have learned that it is possible to free ourselves from these hurts and address barriers to effective organizing. We can heal from hurtful experiences if someone listens to us attentively and allows and encourages us to release the grief, fear, and other painful emotions. This happens by means of our natural healing processes—talking, crying, trembling, expressing anger, and laughing. By releasing distressed feelings in a supportive network, we can stay united, hopeful, thoughtful, joyful, and committed. This in turn strengthens us in building our movements to stop the effects of climate change and racism.



Sustaining All Life



For more information, see:

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