

Don't Look to the US Government to Solve the Climate Crisis

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Global Research, September 06, 2014

Region: [USA](#)
Theme: [Environment](#)
In-depth Report: [Climate Change](#)

This year, fourteen federal agencies in the United States released a collaborative report called the National Climate Assessment which outlines the impacts that the climate crisis is having and what we can expect in the future. Woefully lacking from the report were real solutions to the climate crisis. When we questioned the media team promoting the report, they said that the report was informational and it was up to civil society groups to demand solutions.

How is it that numerous federal agencies can publish an excellent report on the scope of the problems and yet fail to act? It is likely due to the fact that the United States is an oligarchy (ruled by a few) rather than a democracy (which translates as “people-power”). [Academic studies](#) released this year show that policy decisions reflect the desires and needs of the wealthy rather than the majority of the public. (LINK:<http://www.popularresistance.org/fighting-for-a-legitimate-democracy-by-and-for-the-people/>)

In our previous article, we described how the United States has undermined the United Nations' Conference of Party (COP) meetings to force a pro-industry agenda, even going as far as spying on countries and negotiating in secret. The same activities are occurring at home to stop attempts to end the current extraction-based energy economy.

The climate crisis is here and we must take serious action to mitigate it and build systems that allow us to adapt to its effects on our life systems. Solutions exist to accomplish this, but they won't be coming from above. Rather, they will come from a mobilized grass roots demanding transformation to a carbon-free, nuclear-free energy economy.

This month, when the United Nations holds climate meetings in New York, people in the US have an opportunity to gather, raise awareness of the roots of the crisis and build a broader movement of movements that cooperates through a unified strategy. We must be clear in our demands and goals and lay a foundation to build a sustainable energy economy that provides universal access to basic necessities from the bottom up.

Federal Agencies Release Climate Assessment for the United States

In the United States, the [2014 National Climate Assessment](#) (LINK:<http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings/water-supply>) which reports on the current and expected impacts of climate change finds that some areas, particularly in the West, are using water at unsustainable levels. They predict increased competition for water and a reduction in water quality. By 2050, 32% of counties will experience high or

extreme risk of water shortages. While some areas of the US will experience droughts and shortages; other areas, particularly in the East, will have increased rainfall, risk of flooding and damage to necessary infrastructure.

The report shows that ecosystems are already being disrupted causing changes in migration patterns and the extinction of species. Changes in temperature and seasons are affecting plant life by altering their growing seasons, geographical distribution, the prevalence of wild fires and exposure to pests and diseases. The National Climate Assessment reports that “many iconic species, may disappear from regions where they have been prevalent or become extinct, altering some regions so much that their mix of plant and animal life will become almost unrecognizable.”

Overall, the 2014 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the US reports list a number of impacts that need to be considered. These include disrupted livelihoods, health effects, injuries and death where there is inland flooding, a rise in sea level or extreme heat; a breakdown in necessary infrastructure for electricity, water or emergency services due to extreme weather events; risks of lack of access to water and a breakdown in the food system; and risks of economic impacts from loss of ecosystems such as freshwater and marine life. You can review the IPCC report by [clicking here](http://www.ipcc.ch/) (LINK: <http://www.ipcc.ch/>) and the National Climate Assessment by [clicking here](http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings). (LINK: <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/highlights/report-findings>)

The US is Headed Down the Wrong Path

Despite evidence that the United States can move rapidly to a [carbon-free, nuclear free](http://clearingthefogradio.org/carbon-free-nuclear-free-energy-economy-is-inevitable/) (LINK: <http://clearingthefogradio.org/carbon-free-nuclear-free-energy-economy-is-inevitable/>) energy economy, the opposite is happening. While Obama has been adept at using the language that most people want to hear when it comes to the climate crisis, his actions have done the opposite. His administration has a close relationship with the fossil fuel and nuclear industries and so an “all of the above” energy strategy that includes fracking for oil and gas, offshore drilling for oil, building pipelines and allowing oil trains to move oil and gas, mountaintop removal for coal and nuclear energy is being promoted. Corporations are even moving to mine tar sands in the United States.

The United States has become a great source of fossil fuel for China and the European Union. Bloomberg News [reports](http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-04/u-s-seen-as-biggest-oil-producer-after-overtaking-saudi.html) (LINK: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-07-04/u-s-seen-as-biggest-oil-producer-after-overtaking-saudi.html>) that the US is “the world’s biggest oil producer this year after overtaking Saudi Arabia and Russia...” primarily due to fracking in North Dakota and Texas. Although the oil and gas boom in the US was initially portrayed as a mechanism for energy independence, infrastructure is being put in place to export oil and gas. As is characteristic of markets, as the price of methane gas fell in the US, corporations looked to export it to places where they could find a higher price.

Although sustainable sources of energy are being developed in the United States, according to [Sean Sweeney](http://energydemocracyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/resistreclaimrestructure_2013_english.pdf) (LINK: http://energydemocracyinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/resistreclaimrestructure_2013_english.pdf) of Trade Unions for Energy Democracy, renewables are not rising fast enough and are merely supplementing the use of fossil fuels which continues to rise. The

Nuclear Information and Resource Service [reports](#) (LINK:

<http://www.nirs.org/climate/epataalkingpointsflyer714.pdf>) that Obama's new EPA rules are incorporating nuclear energy as a core element even though nuclear is expensive, unnecessary and is problematic throughout its lifespan from the excavation of uranium to the production of radioactive long-term waste.

Big Energy Industry's influence over the political system at every level in the US is obvious. There are [two oil and gas industry lobbyists](#) (<http://www.taxpayer.net/library/article/political-footprint-of-the-oil-and-gas-industry-lobby>) for each member of Congress. Many industry lobbyists have an inside advantage as they are former members of Congress or staffers. Across the country, Big Energy pressures state and local governments for permits and policies that allow more extraction of fossil fuels and uranium and less regulation of their activities.

Big Energy and other corporate entities that profit from fossil and nuclear fuels also influence NGOs including those that are considered to be environmental groups. The [Non-profit Industrial Complex](#) (LINK: http://cswr.columbia.edu/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/2010_vol1_pg17_samimi.pdf) is used to maintain the status quo in the US by promoting a political party or industry agenda under the guise of environmentalism. We wrote about this previously in more depth in [Gang Green versus Fresh Greens](#). (LINK: <http://clearingthefogradio.org/gang-green-or-fresh-greens/>)

This was evident when Obama announced the new inadequate EPA rules on coal this summer. Ken Ward [reports](#) (LINK: <http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/24392-green-groups-endorse-empty-epa-carbon-emissions-regulation>) that within a day, the 15 top environmental groups in the US endorsed it rather than calling it what it is, "too little, too late." Some of the worst players are involved in the [US Climate Action Plan](#), (LINK: <http://us-cap.org/USCAPCallForAction.pdf>) a group of corporations that includes Dow Chemical, Duke Energy, Exelon, Shell and more which have joined with the Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resource Defense Council and Nature Conservancy to promote climate injustice energy policy. The role of the environmental groups is to give the policies legitimacy while the polluters continue to pollute and profiteer.

Corporations that are working to profit from the climate crisis will do all kinds of things to advance their agenda, including the use of language that sounds like climate justice. For example, this month, the People's Climate March being organized prior to UN meetings on climate change in New York City is being promoted by a broad set of organizations including the [Climate Group](#) (LINK:

<http://www.theclimategroup.org/who-we-are/our-members/>) which is holding parallel meetings in New York. The Climate Group includes Duke Energy, Goldman Sachs and a long list of multinational corporations that pursue market based approaches to profit from the climate crisis.

The collusion between Big Energy and the US government runs deep, including spying on US citizens and infiltrating activist groups. Private corporations have gone so far as to team up with the Department of Homeland Security and label citizens who were trying to halt [fracking wells](#) (LINK: http://www.earthisland.org/journal/index.php/eij/article/we_are_being_watched/) and [oil and](#)

[gas pipelines](#) (LINK: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tom-weis/has-transcanada-labeled-you_b_4112595.html) from being built on their lands or protesting strip mining for [coal](#) (LINK: <http://www.truth-out.org/buzzflash/commentary/peabody-coal-mining-is-the-real-eco-terrorism-not-young-people-who-are-trying-to-save-the-earth>) as 'eco-terrorists.'

Seeking climate justice

To counter corporate influence, the climate justice movement must be clear in what it stands for. Petermann [describes](#) (LINK: <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2014/08/13/1321335/-The-Need-for-Clear-Demands-at-the-Peoples-Climate-March>) the People's Climate March as "A big tent, as in, the circus is coming to town... But this tent is so big that it even includes organizations that support fracking and the tar sands gigaproject.... According to some of the organizers, as long as everyone agrees that climate action is needed, then it's all good. But are all climate actions created equal? No."

There are organizations that are organizing around climate justice and real solutions. The [Climate Convergence](#) (LINK: <http://globalclimateconvergence.org/>) is planning a two day conference to discuss the roots of the crisis, obstacles to change and how to build a larger, more connected and effective movement of movements. The [Climate Justice Alliance](#) (LINK: <http://www.ourpowercampaign.org/peoplesclimatemarch/>) is participating in the Convergence and is organizing additional activities and [direct action](#). (LINK: <http://www.beyondthemarch.org/>)

Similar to Climate Justice Action which developed as an international movement of movements to resist the COP process, climate justice organizations in the United States also need to recognize that all of our issues are related to the climate crisis and build a similar movement of movements. It should be self-evident that the climate crisis which impacts the planet in so many ways, affects us all. The September events in

New York provide a platform on which to build.

This article is part of a series in the lead up to the UN Climate Summit and the activities occurring around that event. It is being produced by [Popular Resistance](#) in alliance with [Occupy.com](#). The first article was: the "[Climate Crisis Connects Us](#)"

Margaret Flowers and Kevin Zeese are organizers with [Popular Resistance](#), which provides daily movement news and resources. [Sign up for their daily newsletter](#); and follow them on twitter, [@PopResistance](#).

[To march with us at the People's Climate March or join us at the Global Climate Convergence, click here.](#)

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