

Our Planet Is Angry

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Theme: [Environment](#)
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“[Storm of a lifetime](#)” is how the National Weather Service in Wilmington, N.C., described Hurricane Florence as it came lumbering across the Atlantic to hurl its ferocious winds and rain onto that coastal state. Pointing to the storm’s unusual path, one [meteorologist](#) said, “There’s virtually no precedent for a hurricane moving southwest for some time along the Carolina coast.” Florence is expected to slow down as it hits the coast, dumping a catastrophic amount of water over a small area instead of spreading rain far and wide. What that means for [North Carolina’s](#) numerous hog farms, coal ash pits and nuclear reactors is anyone’s guess, but there is a high likelihood of an environmental disaster unfolding.

We aren’t necessarily seeing more large storms. We’re seeing the usual storm activity jumping into overdrive, as [The Washington Post’s Chris Mooney](#) described how “[i]n little more than a day, Hurricane Florence exploded in strength, jumping from a Category 1 to a Category 4 behemoth with 140 mph winds.”

On the other side of the planet an even stronger storm, with wind speeds greater than Florence, [Super Typhoon Mangkhut](#), is heading right toward the Philippines and China. Geographically, between Florence and Mangkhut lie the islands of Hawaii that got battered by [Hurricane Olivia](#) just weeks after being hit by Hurricane Lane. And only weeks ago, large swaths of the planet were struck by debilitating and record-breaking [heat waves](#), fueling out-of-control wildfires up and down California’s coast. We have barely recovered from Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico and Hurricane Harvey in Houston last year, and before we know it, worse climate-related disasters will be upon us.

The earth is trying to tell us something: We are a species in deep, deep trouble. No matter how much our politicians dismiss the reality of global warming, minimize its impact or offer false solutions, the rapidly intensifying storms and their unpredictable paths are screaming out that our [climate is changing](#). Heat waves are cooking the ground we walk on. No longer is a melting glacier in a far-off location the worst sign of our changing climate—the signs are happening here and now.

A warmer planet cares little for an invasive species called “Homo sapiens” that has colonized its surface and poisoned it. We may as well think of global warming as a planetary fever intended to cast us off as one would a pesky and persistent virus. It’s just physics, after all—something that ought to be grasped by anyone who understands why the inside of their enclosed car gets scorching hot after even a few minutes of sitting in the sun.

At a time when we should be heeding the earth’s angry response to our greenhouse gas emissions, Donald Trump’s administration is steadily unraveling our modest protections from climate change. On Monday, news emerged that the Environmental Protection Agency

would make it easier for energy companies to dump methane into the atmosphere. Methane is a far more potent greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. According to [The New York Times](#), the proposal would be the “third major step this year to roll back federal efforts to fight climate change.” Just when we should be rapidly and dramatically scaling back *all* fossil fuel extraction and consumption, we are literally going backward.

Even in California, which has led the charge against Trump’s ill-fated decision to ignore climate change, and where Gov. Jerry Brown just signed an ambitious [clean energy bill](#) into law, we are not doing nearly enough. Gov. Brown and the California state Legislature have led the way on climate actions, but the federal bar is so low that California is able to preserve and even expand its [oil and gas extraction industries](#) and *still* claim to be leading the way on climate change.

The earth is doing its best to purge us, yet those in power are not listening. But the rest of us are. We’re listening and acting, as 30,000 people did in San Francisco last Saturday, joining hundreds of thousands of others all over the world as part of the [Rise for Climate Jobs and Justice](#) marches, and as activists are doing right now in confronting Gov. Brown at his [Global Climate Summit](#). We are marching and rallying, screaming our throats hoarse, blocking traffic, getting arrested, chaining ourselves to equipment, and being attacked by dogs, pepper spray, tear gas and more.

Not only are we acting, we the people are the primary victims of a changing climate and the extreme weather events that are its hallmark. Trump, who boasted of the federal government’s response to Maria’s devastation of Puerto Rico by calling it an “[unsung success](#),” has effectively told us that he considers 3,000 deaths a measure of success. On Thursday he went even further, [denying](#) that there were that many deaths in Puerto Rico and claiming it was all a [Democrat-led conspiracy](#) to smear him. He has decided that [20,000 pallets](#) of bottled water that were found rotting in the sun for a year instead of being distributed to needy survivors is what constitutes an adequate response by the government. What, then, are we to expect from the response to Hurricane Florence, and to all the hurricanes, wildfires and heat waves that will follow, thick and fast?

Eventually governments will run out of money, resources and first responders to tackle the extreme weather events on our roasting planet. Ordinary people will be left on their own as elites go laughing all the way to the bank, enriched by the wealth of our fossil fuel economy.

The [French Revolution](#) of the 1780s and ’90s is one of many revolutions in history that demonstrated how people who are pushed too far can and will use violence to reorganize society. Obviously, in our current age we cannot consider killing off those politicians and corporate executives who are dooming us to climate-related suffering and death as they satiate their greed. But we can foment an alternative to bloody revolutions by stripping elites of their power by any nonviolent means necessary, such as elections, political actions and all other forms of people power. The fate of our species hangs in the balance. We are many and they are few. That is all that we can do now in the face of our climate apocalypse.

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