

# Speak the Plain Truth about Climate Change to the People of America and the World

**\* No More Drilling in the Gulf of Mexico! \* Stop the North American KXL Pipeline!**

**\* No New Coal! \* No New Nuclear Power Plants!**

## The environmental crisis lurches towards catastrophe

The crisis of global warming is exceeding what climate scientist regarded as the worst-case scenarios even a year or two ago. The extreme weather we have seen in the US and elsewhere in the last few years will increase and become more dangerous. The volume of ice in the Arctic Ocean fell to a record low this summer: less ice means warmer seas that will make the atmosphere even warmer. We are moving more rapidly than ever to tipping points' which will mean that catastrophic changes have become irreversible.

Last year saw a record rise in the amount of Carbon Dioxide pumped into the atmosphere from factories, power stations, road traffic etc – it went up by 5.9%. Most of this came from China and the USA which are burning coal at record high levels, and Carbon Dioxide is the main 'greenhouse gas' heating up the atmosphere.

The disastrous impacts of global warming on human society are happening now. The worst impacts are affecting the people of poor countries in the tropics and sub-tropics, but they are being felt in the rich countries too, mainly by poor, working class and struggling middle class people. We have seen the results in the Pakistan floods and the burning forests and fields of the Russian heat-wave last year, in this year's famine in east Africa and wildfires in Texas, in the loss of farmland in Bangladesh and the impending drowning of low-lying island states by rising sea levels in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

These warnings of the destruction we face if urgent action is not taken are changing the consciousness of millions of people around the world. They don't need scientists to tell them that something is happening to the climate, or that human activity is polluting the land, sea and air. They need scientists to tell them seriously and honestly how the problem can be resolved – what real action is needed to prevent runaway climate change.

The challenge is to use our science actively, and independently of governments, corporations and university managements, to provide leadership for people who know there is a problem. That will silence the climate change deniers more effectively than a thousand rebuttals.

## A crisis of political and economic leadership

We certainly can't wait for leadership from the politicians and the captains of industry or finance. They don't need scientists to convince them that climate change is real and man made. They know what is happening and why, but nevertheless these political and business leaders still refuse to take any action to avert the threatened disasters. Their refusal to act is in sharp conflict with the increasingly urgent findings of climate science and the experience of millions of people who are suffering the effects of global warming and extreme weather events right now.

In fact the political and business establishments are making things worse. Not only are the USA and China burning record amounts of coal, but the USA and Canada are determined to exploit the tar sands of Alberta, one of the most polluting and environmentally damaging sources of oil, while Russia, Canada, Denmark, Norway and the global oil companies are seizing on the melting of the Arctic ice as an opportunity to extract even more fossil fuel. The banks bailed out in the financial crisis have increased their investments in fossil fuels, while governments are cutting back their meager support for sustainable energy. The truth is that today's capitalists are as tied to Carbon by their investments and trade relations as the plantation owners of the South were tied to slavery.

## *Building a New Youth- and Scientist- Leadership for the Environmental Movement*

AGU Town-Hall Meeting

Thursday, December 8, 1230h-1330h

Moscone West, Rm. 2004

## The real failure of Copenhagen

The politicians and business leaders of the major countries are acting as though, like the legendary Dr. Faustus, they have made a pact with the Devil – a few more decades of profit before they go to Hell. In fact they believe they can use their wealth and power, and their position in countries with a more temperate climate, to escape the jaws of Hell, while the peoples of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the small island states suffer the worst catastrophes. This is a profoundly cynical, racist and imperialist policy.

The relationship and rivalry between the USA and China dominate the politics of climate change. They are the world's two biggest economies as well as the biggest polluters. The US, the richest economy but in relative decline, wants to retain as much of its global status as it can, and a rampantly growing capitalist China is competing for markets, resources and 'spheres of influence'. The failure of the Copenhagen Conference in 2009 was the result of a deal between these two powers. In reality it was the joint decision of the US and China to kill off any possibility of effective and binding limits on their greenhouse gas emissions that killed even the woefully inadequate Kyoto agreement. This week the representatives of these governments are attending the Durban Climate Conference to complete the burial of Kyoto.

## Build an independent, mass, youth-led environmental movement

Just as it took mass movements and struggles to end the slave economies in the British Empire and the United States, and the mass militancy of the Civil Rights Movement to end Jim Crow, so it will take mass struggles to beat down the resistance of our carbon-addicted elites to necessary change. BAMN recognizes that just as it was the poor, the oppressed and the young who were the base and vanguard of those movements, so it will be with our fight to liberate humanity from the carbon economy.

To build this movement we have to free ourselves from the material and mental shackles that hold us to the false view that only the rich and powerful can control human destiny. We have to reject the commonly held view that we can persuade the rich and powerful to change their disastrous policies on climate change through rational argument, as long as we keep the environment separate from all other issues.

The elite will adopt sane and rational solutions to the energy crisis, if and only if we build a movement of the oppressed that is strong enough and politically clear enough to assert itself as an alternative center of power.

BAMN understands that we have to unite the fight against climate change with the struggles against racism, poverty, anti-immigrant prejudice, and the unequal relations between rich and poor countries, because it is precisely the oppressed, the minorities and the poor, the immigrants and refugees, and the world's poorest countries that have the most to lose. When we stand together and act collectively, we have the social power to win.

**Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)**

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## **Break the paralysis of inaction – demand that national and International policies that can prevent global catastrophe be enacted now**

This is a great time to build a movement that possesses the power and confidence to win. Our biggest obstacles to success are overcoming racism and the national divisions that hamper the ability of the environmental movement to grow into a force strong enough to change history. Our movement must unite all the oppressed in a single movement and build a new leadership that is independent, democratically accountable to the movement, prepared to stand and act on the truth and above all intends to win. In other words we need leaders completely different from the cynical, duplicitous, self-serving politicians who are incapable of defending the interests of the people they profess to represent.

If the environmental movement and the scientists that so many of its young and brave activists look to for answers, fight for the solutions actually needed to stop the global environmental crisis, then overcoming racism and national divisions will not be that difficult. By arming the young people in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and South and Central America with our scientific understanding that the droughts, floods, food shortages and increasing physical hardships they face are the product of the elite in the richest nations of the world choosing to put profit before human life we can make the battle to save the environment the cause of millions of people worldwide. If we can overcome our own fears and act on the truth ourselves we can unite with those struggling for freedom all over the world. We can transform ourselves and we can win.

### **We must be independent of the Democrats & Republicans to win**

The new young forces of this movement are growing across the world in response to the global economic crisis, and sharing a newfound sense of power. Their consciousness too is being shaped by awareness of the climate change disasters already happening, and they are making the connections between the determination of the rich and powerful to continue polluting the Earth, the profiteering that led to the financial crisis, and the worldwide austerity measures. But this makes the need for leadership independent of the establishment politicians, and including the leadership of scientists, more urgent, not less.

In the last few months we have seen the growth of 'No KXL Pipeline' protests in the US that have drawn in many college students. These have been the first glimmer of life for the environmental movement since the debacle at Copenhagen. Two weeks of mass arrests of civil disobedience protesters at the White House in late August drew in many more activists, who spread the protests to college campuses in the new term, and from there to communities in the Mid-West where the pipeline was planned. President Obama had effectively made the decision to go ahead with the Pipeline before the demonstrations ever started, but through the autumn he was facing 'No Pipeline' protesters across the country and, on 6th November, a 12,000-strong protest around the White House. By mid-November Obama postponed a decision on the pipeline until at least 2013.

In order for the young protesters to build on their victory it is essential that they know its true importance and its limitations. Without their actions and organizing the Obama administration would never have put on hold a 'done deal' that is so central to the business leaders' plans for increased exploitation of fossil fuels. That was the protesters achievement, but they must now build real mass action independent of both the Democrats and Republicans and force the administration to kill the pipeline before the election, or we can be sure that whoever is President after the election will sign onto the project.

## **Scientists standing with the oppressed**

We, scientist have so much to contribute to saving the Earth. We don't have to pretend that to be objective, we have to act aloof from and impervious to the world around us. If the community of scientists stands united in defense of academic and scientific freedom, we have the power to prevent the victimization of the scientists who stand with the oppressed, and in doing so offend and anger their funders. We do not have to settle for a life in science based on presenting ways in which climate change could be 'beneficial' to some parts of the world or be accommodated to. We do not need to devote our great talents to the depressing cycle of developing more sophisticated and popular methods of communicating with greater precision the deepening global crisis created by climate change, only to find ourselves in the middle of political debates restricted to which deadly solution, more coal or more nuclear power, is better for human kind. There are movements all over the world for us to unite with. Despair or cynicism do not have to be our only choices.

As always in periods of sharp social and political crisis, the question for scholars and intellectuals – and in this case for scientists especially – is what side do they stand on? And always there are scientists and scholars who recognize that objectivity is not neutral, and that their commitment to the objective truth and human progress means that they must take the side of the oppressed and the forces of change, against the defenders of entrenched privilege. **There has never been a time in human history where this decision is more important than now or where scientists, by speaking the plain truth about science and showing how it can provide a way out the present impasse, can play a greater role in building a mass movement.**

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**A Program of Action to Win:** BAMN proposes the following action demands as an initial basis for building a mass, independent environmental movement that speaks to and for the oppressed.

\* **Stop the North American KXL pipeline now! No new coal! No new nuclear power plants!** Don't leave November's victory to the mercy of electoral politics. Build ongoing mass action in the coming year to force the administration to permanently cancel the pipeline. Stop the exploitation of the tar-sands.

\* **No more deep water drilling in the Gulf of Mexico!**

\* **Build community action and occupations to stop "fracking"!** (The highly polluting extraction of oil and gas from layers of rock by injecting high pressure fluid to crack them open).

\* **Occupy and re-open sustainable energy projects or factories that are abandoned or closed down,** uniting the fight for the right to work and the struggle against global warming; organize active support from the labor movement, environmental movement, local communities, schools and colleges, and civil rights and immigrant rights organizations.

\* **No to a privatized "Green Climate Fund" run by the corporations and the World Bank!** Yes to an internationally funded program of technology transfer and training to develop sustainable energy in poor African, Asian, Latin American and Pacific countries, under the democratic control of the people of those countries.

\* **Build a new, independent, mass environmental movement of and for the oppressed to defend our science and to fight for the mass political action necessary to solve the environmental crisis!**

\* **No victimization of scientists who speak out on the climate crisis!** The AGU and other scientific bodies must give a firm pledge to fight any attempts to victimize scientists who speak out about the climate crisis and the policies of the Government and corporations. No firing, no loss of funding! The AGU must defend scientific freedom and independence.