

There is Really Only One Way to Come to Grips with the Climate Crisis: Proposal for a Research Agenda on the Global Climate Justice Movement

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The situation we face

The Earth is warming, slowly but surely, and this is already having massive negative effects on people's well-being: floods, droughts, superstorms, rising sea-levels, loss of biodiversity (species extinction), polluted cities, rivers, and oceans. This means poor health, early deaths, homes lost, famine, social disruptions, and conflicts (think wars, civil wars, overthrows of governments, and the like).

Importantly, the governments and the economic elites of the world do not have this steadily worsening crisis under control. The Paris Agreement signed by 196 nations of the world in December 2015 offers no chance of containing global warming under the thresholds that science suggests must not be passed. The Agreement is weak because it is not legally binding; the pledges, even if all met, would still raise global temperatures in this century by around 3 degrees Celsius. The stinginess of the wealthy nations of the global North in financing the renewable energy revolution that the under-resourced countries of the global South require magnifies the problem.

Meanwhile, the proven reserves of the fossil fuel corporations and countries have a business model that entails burning more than *five times* the amount of fossil fuels that the Earth can handle. If one wants to hold to the more stringent, safer limit of 1.5 degrees, with a better than 80 percent chance of staying under that, we have only nine years left till the planet is in danger of passing the tipping points that lead to runaway climate chaos.

The Research Proposal

My firm and considered conclusion is that the *only* chance that humanity has to come to grips with the most dangerous existential crisis of our century is for people to somehow form the biggest, broadest, most effective global social movement the world has ever seen. Our purpose should be to *force* governments and corporations to do what must be done. This movement already exists, though it is far from strong enough to have a chance of success at the moment. The next step must be to find ways to turn this movement power into political power, and to do so in an era when people lack confidence in all existing parties. It seems likely that we are talking about some new kind of party that comes out of the social movements that will bring it to power and then is held accountable by them as it turns the ship around.

I would like to join with other scholar-activists around the world to develop 1) analyses of the state of the climate and other social justice movements in their countries, 2) to present "best practices" from their own region for building this movement, and 3) to develop ideas about how to build a powerful global climate justice movement and attendant political parties to enable a strong global commitment to prioritizing the climate crisis and their responsibilities and capabilities to face it, in the next several years.