

All Rise

Once upon a time, our planet was just a lonely rock going about its solitary business in deep space. Thanks to a number of fortuitous conditions, this lonely rock proved to be ideally situated for the evolution of life, and now, several billion years hence, the Earth has company—a wondrous cargo of plants and animals. If our planet were conscious, she would likely have mixed feelings about some of her current passengers. Like me, she might be dismayed by the inordinate numbers of biting insects, parasites, and pathogens, but my guess is that the species she would be most disappointed in would be *Homo sapiens*.

Our species has grown influential enough to alter the very conditions that make this planet a sweet spot for life. The climate crisis is not some distant threat, it is here, and it will get worse. Because of the lag time built into the climate system, even if we stop burning fossil fuels today, the climate will continue to warm as stored carbon is released. Greenhouse gasses we have emitted will remain in the atmosphere for a century.

Do we have the collective will to change course and save what makes this planet remarkable? Nearly everyone I know has made changes to reduce their carbon footprint. These changes are good but are nowhere near enough. We need fundamental changes to infrastructure and institutions. These changes are possible, but are being blocked by the small group of powerful elites that profit from our current economic paradigm. Reclaiming this power is the existential challenge of our times.

The 2017 People's Climate March in DC marked the first 100 days of the Trump administration. I went to the sister rally in Montpelier. At first I felt energized by the crowd, and happy to hear the many speakers who understood the need for systemic changes rooted in social justice and democratic principles. As the day went on, though, I became discouraged. Very few speakers and very few of the signs addressed the impact of climate change on non-human life. Is our species really so self-centered? Where was the outrage on behalf of the rest of life on this amazing planet? Where was the grief for the doomed polar bears and coral reefs? I, for one, am a lot less motivated to save a planet for just one species.

You care too, don't you? On September 8, people around the world will rise to support "Climate, Jobs, and Justice." These rallies precede the Global Climate Action

Summit taking place in San Francisco September 12-14. Organizers hope this summit, midway between the Paris Summits of 2015 and 2020, will accelerate the transition to a renewable energy-based civilization. Brattleboro's 350.org has spearheaded our local rally, which will have an emphasis on climate justice and building a people's transportation plan. At 3 pm there will be a bicycle ride from the Farmers' Market parking lot to the Common, a simultaneous march from the Co-op to the Common, and then a rally on the Common. I will be there, and I hope to see you too. I will be there for climate justice and to build a people's transportation plan. I will also be there for the Earth and to be a voice for the voiceless. To this end, a group of us will be gathering at the Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center to make masks and posters. We will do this on Labor Day, September 3 at 3 pm, and you're invited (see below). Even if you can't come on Monday, bring your own sign or mask and look for us on Saturday, September 8—the wildlife contingent at the Rise for Climate March. We will march for the moose and the manatees, the monarchs and the milkweed. We will march because we love the Earth and her whole wild and wondrous cargo. We protect what we love.

— Patti Smith

