

distance

it is so easy to distance from the astronomical numbers, the statistics that are terrifying but not at all understandable.

it is less easy to ignore the face put to the facts, the disproportionate heat difference between those districts redlined because they didn't deserve trees, a population that is nearly all people of color.

it is less easy to ignore the child kneeling over the bones of what should have been his survival, as deforestation, habitat loss, natural disasters destroy the species that many rely on for food.

it is less easy to separate the numbers that represent reindeer deaths, when presented with the woman who relies so heavily on that very animal for her and her family's survival.

how deceptively simple it seems to say that you aren't the problem.
you are not a large corporation drilling for oil underneath the very ice that indigenous peoples rely on,
yet your silence radiates through the depths of this mass extinction, as the lawmakers chosen by we the people echo that message that we claim not to support.



(Luhn, 2020)



(Mitchell, 2018)



(Mitroshin, 2020)

choices

in an era where it is easier to separate,
distance, ignore the incoming devastation
because it is simpler to assume that climate change
is a “tomorrow problem”.

for them, it isn't, a group historically silenced,
redlined,
air pollution astronomically higher,
choking on the very air while they bury
their loved ones dead of COVID-19
only because the air pollution scarred the
lungs of a person already deemed
disposable, unworthy

how did we forget that we are human beings first,
party politics be damned,
polarization on this issue is a mere privilege that
is not recognized,
we cannot step away from the damage we have caused,
rather decide that tomorrow has to be different.

set aside the scary statistics, and turn them into stories,
this world is a choice,
we get to choose,
and our deafening silence vibrates
across the graves of those
who weren't gifted the choice that we stare at
right now.



(Barria, 2020)

focus

focus not on the fact that you will suffer first,
the truth being that you likely won't.
focus not on the fact that your family is fine,
that you are not likely not living on top of a landfill,
your water sources have not dried up, forcing you to
walk further and further, endangering your own safety
for the fundamental right to have water.
focus not on the fact that climate change is slow,
that the effect being felt at this very moment
are not being felt by you.

when we are unable to empathize with the woman
who was attacked walking further to retrieve water
for her family in a country that has been first
to experience the devastation,
our humanity decreases.
when we are unable to understand the urgency in those
whose islands are their livelihood, and will likely be submerged,
our humanity decreases.
when we are unable to understand that their suffering is
not the fault of their country, but rather our own,
our humanity decreases.

instead, think as a human, not as one against the world,
rather one with the world.
the idea is not to point blame, but rather to understand
that we as a species are not a political issue, because if
no one fights for these humans already battling the devastation,
there will be no one to fight for humanity against an issue
no one wants to acknowledge.



(White, 2017)

ignorance

recognize that we are all sinners,
no single person is exempt from bearing
the responsibility for climate change.

our responsibility, drowned out in the
face of the ignorance put forward like
a safety net,
remember that no one will catch humanity when it falls.

we are not so different, you and I,
our history tainted with the ignorance and
refusal to learn,
refusal to understand how our definitions of justice
have changed to token advocate,
inspiration porn,
no visible action.

your safety net is ignorance, theirs is the
concrete slabs and landfills that their houses
and neighborhoods are built upon, boiling in the
nonstop heat because trees went to the suburbs, not them.

your safety net is looking in the mirror and
telling yourself you have no personal responsibility, that
you didn't do this,
theirs is facing down police in riot gear, fighting for their
right to maintain the tribal land protected by a treaty
thousands of years old, ensuring that their access
to clean water and resources from their land
is no longer infringed upon.

it is us that you will remember on the eve that our world
ends,
the people who held the knowledge, who suffered in the
face
of destruction, who fought you every step of the way,
who never had the safety net, no one to catch us as we
fell,
and in the end, without action
we will fall together.



(Parracho, 2013)



(Srikanth, 2020)

learned helplessness

in the ever incumbent presence of learned helplessness
humans are more likely to think
they have no say,
rather they have to sit, watch, and absorb
destruction, extinction,
the racial divide expanding.

the power of human choice in the fight against climate change
is overlooked, trodden upon,
the knowledge stemming from indigenous groups
disregarded

people do not realize the power they hold,
the significance behind phone calls,
protest
it is so easy to sit, watch, and comfort yourself
with the idea that one voice doesn't matter, that one vote
won't change an outcome,
instead of recognizing that the power of choice
and one voice
can be the beginning of bridging that divide.

powerless

how difficult it must be to worry about the Earth,
rather than watch the Earth shatter, and the broken
pieces line the chasm between human life and
human decency.
how powerful you must feel fighting against a pipeline
going through your city,
but how easy it must be to say “there are fewer of them”,
how easy it seems to decide who lives and who dies.
how easy it is to say “i am fighting for climate change”,
how difficult it is to fight for everything that comes with it.
each bulldozer taking down each tree digs a greater
divide between ignorance and human reality.
how deceptively simple it is for you to turn off your television,
to comfort yourself and say “i support indigenous peoples”
make it so you can look in the mirror,
sleep at night.
ignore the water cannons used in below freezing temperatures
as humans fought alongside other humans for the
vital right to water,
and how powerless you will feel when it’s your water
that is contaminated with the treachery of a country
that never really cared at all.



(Lefort, 2016)

who lives, who dies, which one?

How is it that while you are fighting for the animals,
they are fighting for their community.
Human life, so vital, so valuable,
yet disregarded based on what you believe in or what you look like.

How is it that we care more about animal habitat
than the vitalness of a neighborhood with children
being exposed to toxic waste
laced with the systemic racism that
constantly says they are worth nothing more
than the spraying of oil, pesticides, and poison.

the message, entrenched in the privilege of being
able to walk out and breathe in the air not tainted
by a company's chemicals, while another community marches
for their right to escape a chemical that could kill them, facing
off with police dragging their bodies off of a road they laid on
to protect their children from toxins
likened as killers.

Understand the demonization, the psychological
devastation of lawmakers continuously saying that an
animal habitat is of more value than your family's life.
we would rather save a white polar bear than a person of color,
and somehow, this is not infuriating enough to provoke action.



(Friar, 1992)

recycling a cycle of injustice

We are taught in school, reduce reuse recycle,
save the planet, we are taught, but little is said
about where it goes.

Certainly, it isn't shipped as garbage, unsorted,
without a care, to the countries who have so little waste
that they take ours,
surely, we are not placing our garbage, our trash
as a weighted burden of expectations
on countries that can barely afford
to feel their population, countries that are the first
to experience the devastation laced with
betrayal, betrayal of the expectation
that we, the *fortunate* ones would finance saving
their islands from sinking to the bottom of the ocean.

Yet we, a country of *money* and *power*
have turned our backs and cast the blame on the
countries that have shipped back tons upon tons
of our unsorted recycling
that we expected them to *handle*,
when we cannot even figure out how to
sort, and ensure that we are not complicit
in the rising temperatures, rising sea levels,
mass extinction.

We do not want to be burdened with responsibility,
we chase the message we want to hear,
“Recycling is PERFECT” we hear, and we cling to that.
We refuse to read between the lines, push our lawmakers
to finance the climate crisis,

and as we turn away from personal responsibility
in the face of a global crisis
we fail to realize that with no avenue of recourse,
an issue so easy to distance from will soon be the issue
that spells termination of humanity.

solutions

When you think of the voices that are historically silenced, theirs is not one of them. When thinking about climate change, the voices heard are those of the animals, the knowledge base from those of the scientists, never, not once, turned to the people who have the personal experience, a wealth of knowledge that is simply ignored.

We disregard them. Consider them too small of a group to deserve a voice in the fight for change, even though they are the first to suffer, the first to have solutions. We make a political fight for the very soul of our species.

Our situation begs the question, how can we sit and watch lawmakers fight a political battle over the livelihood of the human species, and do nothing? To sleep at night, we say we support. We post on Instagram, tainted by our obligation to look in the mirror and convince ourselves that we are not the problem, yet our deafening silence rings of our privilege because we have that power to look away.

As if it doesn't even exist.

As if the voices at the Dakota pipeline don't exist. As if their fundamental right to water, to land, bound by broken promises from a nation that will never admit their complicity in watching corporations trod on the land of those most

knowledgeable on the climate crisis.

In history, we learn from the past in order to change the future, and when we cannot learn to make phone calls, press lawmakers, vote for those who lead with the climate in mind, let me remind you of this very fact;

History will remember us for this.

unity

In the face of climate change, it bears value to wonder who will suffer first, to step back and evaluate your role, not your responsibility in causing the issue rather the way that you can mitigate the suffering of your fellow humans.

What are your intentions? To sit by and watch those devastated by a human-caused issue because they had no humans willing to make changes on their behalf, or will you be the solution?

Will you be the one voice that stands by those who are historically silenced, vote for the lawmakers who choose with climate change in mind, those who protect those most vulnerable populations, or will you sit in silence?

We tell ourselves that we have no power, no avenue of recourse, that we cannot make change. I propose that we can. We are humans first, and political views and economic goals should never cast doubt on who we are, and in a world of divisive polarization, this is one issue that begs for unity.

United we stand, and united we fall, and while one group may fall before the others, that one group will take with it all hope for the future of our species, and if we wish to survive, we must care for those who are most vulnerable.