

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM CLIMATE CHANGE BOOKS & THE ARTS AUGUST 8/15, 2022, ISSUE

A Burning Planet

Should the climate movement embrace sabotage?

By Thea Riofrancos

JULY 25, 2022



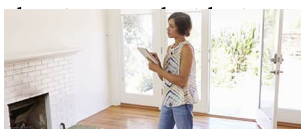
Illustration by Tim Robinson.

In 1957, as the postwar economic boom led to a “great acceleration” in hydrocarbon energy use, a group of scientists working for a Texas-based petroleum company called Humble Oil (later renamed ExxonMobil) embarked on a study prompted by growing public concern over air pollution and new research on the consequences of burning fossil fuels. What they found was that the “enormous quantity of carbon dioxide” in the atmosphere was linked to the

“combustion of fossil fuels.” Sixty-five years later, reality has proved to be even worse than their findings. With the unchecked combustion of fossil fuels releasing enormous quantities of carbon, the world is now on track to reach 5.8 degrees Fahrenheit above preindustrial levels. At the most recent UN Climate Change Conference, the assembled heads of state produced, yet again, zero binding commitments to reduce those emissions. And despite the green rhetoric, only 6 percent of the fiscal stimulus packages implemented by the G20 nations in 2020 and 2021 have contributed to emissions reductions, even as oil company profits soared to record highs. Amid government inaction, it has also become clear that the private sector will not save us. We’ve been told that benevolent investors would reroute capital away from dirty energy sectors and toward the green industries of the future. But the promise of “socially responsible finance” has proved to be mostly a scam. Despite pledges to do otherwise, Blackrock, the world’s largest asset manager, has continued to invest in fossil fuel companies, and the production of coal—the dirtiest fossil fuel—is now on the rise.

Meanwhile, with neither states nor capital doing all that much to slash carbon use, emissions have fully rebounded from their pandemic slump. In 2021, the world broke two grim records: the highest recorded carbon dioxide emissions in history and the largest absolute annual increase ever. Year after year, Global North countries delay the promised climate financing for the Global South, which contributed the least to the crisis yet experiences its worst harms. Instead of redistribution, Global South governments can expect what Daniela Gabor and Isabella Weber call “carbon shock therapy,” wherein loans from the International Monetary Fund are conditioned on adopting regressive carbon pricing and cuts to fuel subsidies. Geopolitical conditions are adding fuel to this growing fire. In the wake of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, governments in the US and Europe are rolling back renewable energy commitments.

The reign of fossil fuel capitalism does face fierce resistance, however. During the waves of student strikes in 2019, young people around the world decried the generational injustice of inheriting a burning planet. The United States has seen a spate of successful campaigns opposing new extraction, pipelines, and power plants. In Memphis, an environmental justice coalition stopped the Byhalia pipeline, which would have run through Black neighborhoods in



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mines oil export terminal, a burial site of enslaved inia to North Carolina

have forced Duke Energy and Dominion Energy to cancel the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. The Lumni Nation and its allies have helped prevent a coal export terminal in Whatcom County in Washington; on the other side of the state, environmental and river protection groups have helped prevent the government from granting key permits for a fracked-gas-to-methanol refinery in Kalama. In the Great Plains, after more than a decade of struggle against the Keystone XL Pipeline—which would have transported tar sands oil extracted from beneath the boreal forest of Alberta, Canada, to refineries on the Gulf Coast of Texas—President Biden revoked its cross-border permit, and TC Energy abandoned the project.





These campaigns have used a range of strategies. Indigenous-led movements like the water defenders at Standing Rock are distinct from what Kai Bosworth calls “pipeline populism” (movements composed primarily of white rural landowners and grassroots environmentalists), and both of these in turn contrast with the Black and Latino communities fighting environmental racism. But all of these movements have shared one key feature: nonviolence. The exceptions—a handful of protesters, acting on their own militant volition, who have destroyed fossil fuel machinery—only prove the rule. In the United States, climate activists’ commitment to pacifism is capacious enough to foreclose property damage, let alone bodily harm to fossil fuel executives. But despite these heroic efforts, corporations emit with impunity and states continue to delay any action to stop them—and all the while, the world gets hotter and hotter.

It is this consensus about peaceful activism amid elite recklessness that Andreas Malm rejects. *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* will not tell you how to blow up a pipeline, but it will try to convince you that efforts to physically dismantle the infrastructural tentacles of fossil fuel capitalism are historically grounded, strategically intelligent, and morally imperative. “There has been a time for a Gandhian climate movement; perhaps there might come a time for a Fanonian one,” avers the book’s penultimate line. “Perhaps” is performatively ambivalent, equal parts prediction and provocation. While slippages between these rhetorical modes pervade the text, one thing is crystal clear throughout: For Malm, the climate movement needs to attack the crisis at its root, defusing “carbon-emitting devices” one by one.

For several years now, Andreas Malm has been hot on the trail of the perpetrators of one of history’s greatest crimes: the discharge of hundreds of billions of tons of carbon into the



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... excess deaths a year can . The journey began with zy histories that portray the past as an arc that bends toward fossil fuels and to show instead how the fossil fuel revolution of the 1820s and ’30s was the result of dynamic class conflicts rather than an inevitable progression. Water, he notes, was after all abundant and free, and water wheels more powerful and reliable than the early steam engines at the outset of the Industrial Age. The adoption of steam engines and coal was the outcome of mill owners seeking to resolve a problem that stymied their efforts to ensure a reliable, and disciplined, supply of labor: the fact that untapped sources of fast-flowing water were spread throughout a countryside, while people were concentrated in towns and cities. By embracing coal and steam engines over rivers and water mills, they found a novel solution that allowed them to better dominate both workers and nature—and thus pave the way for an age of unprecedented economic growth amid smokestacks of planet-warming carbon.

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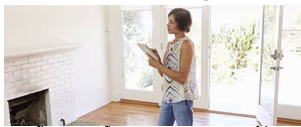
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In *The Progress of This Storm*, Malm skipped ahead nearly two centuries and shifted from the academic study of history to the theories increasingly popular among academics themselves. He trained his polemical ire on the ivory tower, where, he insists, a set of prominent philosophers, geographers, and sociologists have played the role of useful idiots for fossil capitalists by flattening the distinction between human society and nonhuman nature. Effacing ruling-class culpability for climate change was not, of course, the intent of those scholars who sought to re-embed humans in the “web of life” (to use Jason Moore’s term) or to recover the agency of nonhuman nature (Bruno Latour’s “actor network theory”) and even “matter” itself (Jane Bennet’s “new materialism”). But by mixing the social and the natural, Malm contends, these scholars refused to hold humans, and specifically capitalist humans, accountable for their wanton destruction of the earth. For Malm, the only way to counter this destruction is to retain “the uniqueness of human agency” and the social/natural dichotomy it underwrites. Agency, after all, lies at the heart of both the complicity of elites and the capacity of the masses: “Political warfare against an ever more pestiferous ruling class demands manuals brimful with binaries.”

As if to take up his own injunction, Malm then set out to publish a slew of such manuals. *White Skin, Black Fuel*, written by Malm and a collective of 20 other authors, traced how the far right has rallied to the defense of fossil capital, transforming denialism from industry-saving propaganda into a central tenet of ethnonationalist reaction. *Corona, Climate, and Chronic Emergency* ends with a vision of “ecological war communism,” in which states expropriate fossil capital without compensation and massively scale up green technologies. Malm’s latest manual, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, aims at rousing the climate movement into a state of collective rage adequate to meet the challenge of planetary catastrophe. Between a revolutionary past and a utopian future, he argues, stands the weighty impasse of the present: “The extraordinary inertia of the capitalist mode of production meeting the reactivity of the earth.” The options are fatalism or sabotage. Malm implores us to choose the latter.

How to Blow Up a Pipeline can be divided roughly into three sequential prongs: the history of climate change resistance, the strategies it has embraced and the ones it ought to embrace,



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adherence to nonviolence, this movement, Malm argues, was disruptive—offering up an “impressive repertoire” of “blockades, occupations, sit-ins, divestment, school strikes, the shutdown of city centers, the signal tactic of the climate camp,” all demonstrating John Berger’s observation that the logic of protest is not moral suasion but credible threat. The second plane of climate activism’s history is the *longue durée* of social ferment that goes back to slave revolts, abolitionism, the suffragettes, anti-colonial uprisings, the Black freedom struggle, and the anti-apartheid movement. This longer history, Malm argues, is directly relevant to climate activism’s more recent cycle: It is the reason that these activists give for embracing pacifism—and it is also the reason, Malm argues, why they shouldn’t. Groups like the Sunrise Movement and Extinction Rebellion, he contends, subscribe to a sanitized image of the many past movements that have pursued human emancipation—thereby snuffing out any whiff of violence and drawing the wrong tactical conclusions from their own confabulations. Malm doesn’t mince words here: The “psychology of strategic pacifism” is “an exercise in active repression”; its accepted narrative is a “mixture of cant and forgery” and “a fetish, outside of history, unrelated to time.”

To counter this fetish, Malm spends 16 pages systematically refuting pacifist revisionism, with lively accounts of John Brown's armed abolitionism, the suffragettes' massive arson campaign, "subaltern violence" from Ireland to Algeria, weaponized self-defense and urban riots throughout the civil rights movement, and the Spear of the Nation's property destruction during the struggle against apartheid. Not only did these victorious movements employ violence defensively and offensively, but, Malm insists, their organizers left behind a record of practical wisdom on the reasons why violence is sometimes necessary. The African National Congress offered a theory of power that combined "the hammer of armed struggle" and "the anvil of mass action," and the Women's Social and Political Union demonstrated how "Deeds not words" could upend gender domination.

Does the climate movement require deeds not words, as these emancipatory struggles of yore did? Malm asserts that the answer is yes. The climate crisis is a cause and a consequence of inequality, he argues, with those least responsible also being the most vulnerable to its ravages and those most complicit going practically unscathed—all of which points to the necessity, in his view, of violent action. But when it comes to the question of who is most harmed, Malm does not specify. Should this group be defined in geographic terms (e.g., the residents of the sinking Pacific Islands), the lowest-income countries, the entirety of the Global South, or a subset of the latter with the highest level of "multi-dimensional climate vulnerability"? Should it be understood sociologically, whether demarcated by what W.E.B. Du Bois called the "global color line" or by the contours of Indigenous peoples and their ancestral territories, or by economic class—the workers of the world united? Is it perhaps best apprehended in generational terms, with not only today's youth but all the unborn humans to come living with the deadly consequences of their reckless predecessors?

Who, in other words, is the revolutionary subject of the climate crisis? Who is the agent of historical change? Without an answer to these questions, the idea of organizing massive and disruptive protests that don't shy away from destroying the property of fossil capital appears all the more daunting. Even if one could identify fossil capitalism's structural antagonists, the empirical existence of such a group, or sets of groups, is an insufficient precondition for their



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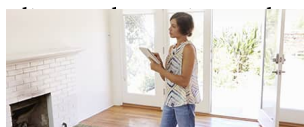
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harmed by global warming could recognize their shared grievances and their combined potential to dig fossil capital's grave (or rather, keep fossil fuels buried right where they are). In fact, if anything, Malm suggests that the most harmed groups are inadequately militant. Especially in the Global South, he notes, sabotage against fossil fuel infrastructure is particularly "conspicuous by its absence," given the preponderance of protest targets and the disproportionate impact of global warming. People in the Global South, he argues, "might agonise over it [the climate crisis]; they rarely see a means for fighting back."

But Malm's narrow definition of "fighting back" risks minimizing what is arguably the most effective anti-extractive activism in the world. He may be right that these activists mostly refrain from sabotage. But they do put their bodies on the line and erect blockades and other physical barriers—and they do so in the face of state and corporate repression. And, contra Malm, this risky activism is in fact more likely to take place in countries on the lower rungs of the global hierarchy. In one recent mega-study of anti-extractive movements around the world, scholars found that between 1997 and 2019, just under a quarter of the 371 cases of

protests against fossil fuel extraction, pipelines, or refining occurred in high-income countries, with nearly half of all episodes occurring in low- or lower-middle-income countries. It's true that the vast majority of this Global South protest is "pacifist" by Malm's definition—though that needn't imply a lack of force on both sides. Forty percent of the instances of anti-pipeline protests resulted in state criminalization or outright violence, including murder. Given Malm's respect for bravery, he ought to tip his hat to the Latin American land and water defenders, who are killed in higher numbers than environmental activists anywhere else in the world.

If this doesn't count as "fighting back," neither does the long history of blowing up pipelines in the Global South, primarily in Africa and the Middle East. Malm does devote several pages to these acts of sabotage. But none of this destruction meets his stringent criteria: "Devices emitting CO2 have been physically disrupted for two centuries by subaltern groups indignant at the powers they have animated—automation, apartheid, occupation—but not yet as destructive forces in and of themselves." This is a curious statement. In the aforementioned study, among the reasons given by front-line communities for their resistance to fossil fuels (again, disproportionately concentrated in the Global South) are "biodiversity loss," "air pollution," "contamination of soil and water," and "loss of land"; for pipelines and fracking specifically, "global warming" is also a factor. These movements clearly see the infrastructure of fossil capitalism as Malm does: destructive in and of itself. They just don't always see climate change as the only or primary harm, but instead focus on the localized environmental and social impacts—impacts that also have atmospheric implications. (After the fossil fuel industry, tropical deforestation is the second-largest contributor to global warming.)

The idea that sabotage and other forms of direct action against fossil capitalism count as such only if the placards and chants of the protesters refer to carbon parts per million or call out oil executives by name not only artificially minimizes the extent of the relevant resistance; it also flies in the face of everything we've learned about what inspires effective climate and environmental activism. Beyond the narrow confines of the already engaged, or those materially secure enough to be protected from the immediate, palpable, and therefore local ravages of fossil capitalism, a strategy that relies on an abstract commitment to mitigating



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that Malm purports to

Throughout *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, Malm is explicitly preoccupied with the need for a broad-based climate movement that engages millions of people. Far from pushing a theory of the vanguard, he is careful to thread the needle of militancy and mass mobilization, arguing that the two are dialectically intertwined rather than mutually opposed. To this point, he critiques the eco-sabotage of the 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s for its nihilism and adventurism: In Malm's view, it represented mostly a hammer without an anvil. But in a permanent state of climate emergency, Malm's tactical calculus changes. The precarious balance between vanguardism and mass mobilization gives way to the "law of a tendency of the receptivity" to violence "to rise in a warming world." (One might well ask if this "law" also applies to the adherents to fossil fascism, and what risks this might pose to activist saboteurs.) He suggests that this new receptivity to violence might attract new participants, would-be protesters who are repelled rather than reassured by the movement's abiding pacifism.

While it is undoubtedly true that some would "feel summoned" by sabotage, Malm seems to have reversed the causality here. Mass movements are not spawned on the backs of lone wolves; rather, it is in moments of mass mobilization that spontaneous (or planned) violence

might erupt. To wit, during the enormous uprising sparked by the police murder of George Floyd, the burning of a police precinct in Minneapolis was met with widespread approbation: 54 percent of Americans thought the act was justified. Moving public opinion on an event as incendiary as setting ablaze the very infrastructure of “law and order” was a herculean task. It is impossible to imagine such a dramatic, if fleeting, shift in the Overton window without millions in the streets—15 million to 26 million, to be precise, rendering the months-long uprising the largest and most geographically expansive protest movement in US history. In other words, the radical-flank theory works both ways: Radicalism can legitimate stances that are moderate by comparison, but multitudinous protest that’s deemed relatively peaceful is necessary for violence to have this effect.

In all fairness, Malm would probably agree. But by framing violence as a solution to the climate movement’s current impasse, he flirts with propaganda of the deed, the notion that violent political acts on their own awaken latent masses. Malm observes that the absence of “a single riot or wave of property destruction,” usually taken as a sign of the success of pacifism, could just as well evidence the climate movement’s “failure to attain social depth, articulate the antagonisms that run through this crisis, and, not the least, acquire a tactical asset.” Is violence a result or a cause of social depth? And exactly how are “antagonisms” articulated? The same history of intermittently violent social struggle that Malm recounts provides some guidance: Abstract concepts such as the atmospheric concentration of carbon or the global workings of fossil capitalism will not on their own compel large numbers of people to engage in potentially fatal collective action. It is the palpable everyday effects of those planetary phenomena—the loss of land and livelihoods, the ruination of habitats and waterways, the meting out of intimidation and brutality—that rouse people to link arms and even risk their lives in highly asymmetric battles with multinational firms protected by the repressive arm of the state.

The challenge before us, then, lies less in persuading frontline communities to resist on the grounds of global emissions rather than local pollution or in encouraging the already committed Global North participants in Fridays for Future, Ende Gelände, and Extinction Rebellion to wake up and choose violence. Rather, the challenge appears to be in recruiting



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of these groups, Malm expands the importance of the struggle to eat the rich, with all the hunger of those who struggle to put food on the table, will never hit home.” But his focus remains on inciting “social anger” rather than cultivating a social base.

In the final chapter, Malm reflects on the moral basis of pipeline sabotage and taps into a sort of secular faith reminiscent of Martin Haglund’s recent treatise, *This Life*. First he eviscerates climate fatalism: The “reification of despair,” he argues, is itself a “performative contradiction,” purporting to merely describe, from the comfort of an armchair, the certainty of apocalypse while actively dissuading people from taking action. It is also empirically wrong, because “every gigaton” of carbon emissions “matters.” Malm is intrigued by a different kind of fatalism, however. Taking inspiration from the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, he appeals to the “nobility” of martyrdom: “Death was certain and still they fought on. It can never, ever be too late for that gesture.”

For Malm, the moral imperative to act against all odds issues from a duty to both the past and the future. Every new generation looks backward at those preceding it, he insists, asking whether their forebears “willingly queued up for the furnaces? Or that some people fought like

Jews who knew they would be killed?” But as today’s extreme weather events are only a “foretaste” of what’s to come, each generation looks forward as well, knowing that it too will be judged by its offspring. Historical consciousness is also a historical conscience; it is here that morality and strategy meet.

All movements have martyrs, whether in the literal sense of those who expose themselves to peril for the cause or, more figuratively, those who will not live to see the fruits of their efforts. But for activists to have a fighting chance of getting us off the track of dangerous warming, we need to see a dramatic change in the energy system that powers the global economy in the course of our lifetimes—not after generations of struggle. Such a rapid transformation of this magnitude absolutely requires a leap of secular faith: the tenacious belief that things both could and must be otherwise. And it may well require a hardened commitment to sabotage and the many grave risks it entails.

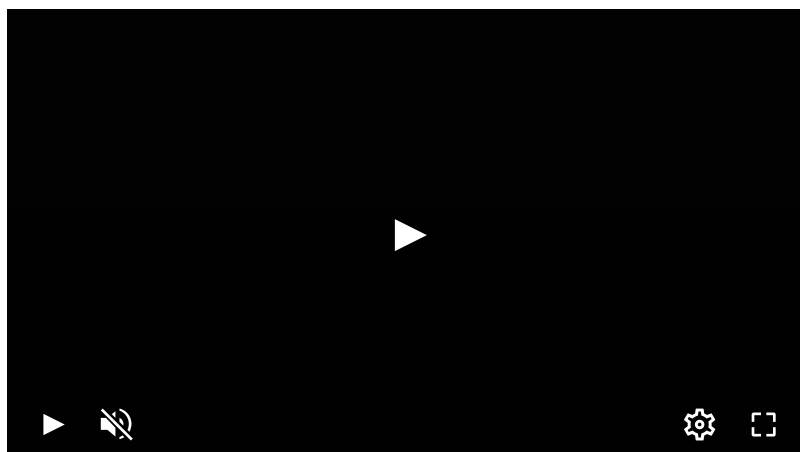
For all these reasons, when the millions-strong climate movement is reassembled and poised to continue its trajectory of growth and militancy, *How to Blow Up a Pipeline* should be required reading for the cadres. Its forceful prose, stirring paeans to courage and discipline, and fidelity to the legacy of popular violence in the pursuit of emancipation make it a convincing critique of the pieties of today’s pacifism. But despite these virtues, the book does not provide answers to the abiding challenges of creating collectivities, united as much by righteous rage and hope as by shared strategy and vision, and sustaining their actions in the stormy decades to come. Who are fossil capitalism’s gravediggers, and what are their sources of leverage? What are their everyday concerns and anxieties, and how are those related to the climate crisis? What keeps them from banding together now, and what would facilitate their mobilization in the future? And how might they be convinced that, despite all appearances and lived experiences, it is truly in their power to change the world?

Thea Riofrancos is an assistant professor of political science at Providence College. She is the author of *Resource Radicals* and a co-author of *A Planet to Win*.



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COMMENTS (3)





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Republicans Shouldn't Get a Pass on Climate

Joe Manchin only matters because all 50 GOP senators are willing to let the planet burn.

By [Mark Hertsgaard](#)

TODAY 5:00 AM



A climate activist holds up a placard reading "GET CLIMATE DONE" in protest outside the Capitol. (Eric Kayne/AP Images)



This story is part of [Covering Climate Now](#), a global journalism collaboration cofounded by Columbia Journalism Review and The Nation strengthening coverage of the climate story.

“We have a choice: collective action or collective suicide,” António Guterres, the secretary general of the United Nations, said last week as vast swaths of the planet baked in record-breaking heat that has killed thousands of people so far in Europe alone, with the numbers expected to rise, and sparked wildfires that imperil countless more. “To tackle the climate emergency,” Guterres added, we need a “decade of decisive climate action.”

But Republican officials decided *against* climate action decades ago, and have long refused to accept that humans are causing climate change, much less that it threatens all of civilization. Despite mountains of scientific findings and heartbreaking real-world evidence, GOP leaders, including (but certainly not limited to) Donald Trump, Mitch McConnell, Kevin McCarthy, and Steve Scalise, have demonized the very idea that climate action is important. Above all, congressional Republicans have opposed every major piece of legislation intended to tackle the onrushing crisis.

Which is why President Joe Biden found himself giving a speech on July 20 announcing executive actions to deal with what he called the “climate emergency”—even as he stopped short of declaring an official national emergency—including more wind power and helping low-income households pay for air-conditioning.

Biden hinted that more executive actions may follow, and those might help, but the unfortunate truth is that executive action is a poor substitute for actual legislation. Lawsuits—which affected industries would surely file—can delay and blunt the impact of executive orders, and the next president can immediately undo them. But Biden has little recourse now that his Build Back Better climate bill is dead.

Who killed Build Back Better? Judging from news coverage and outraged statements by Democrats and climate activists, it’s not Republicans who are to blame. The villain is one man and one man only: Senator Joe Manchin, Democrat of West Virginia.

Manchin’s announcement last week that he would not support more federal climate spending triggered a gusher of denunciation. Manchin “just torpedoed Democrats’ climate agenda,” read a CNN headline. He “intentionally sabotaged” Biden’s climate program, Senator Bernie Sanders thundered on ABC News. Alluding to the millions of dollars of coal company stock that Manchin owns, Penn State climate scientist Michael Mann told *The Guardian* that Manchin is “willing to see the world burn as long as it benefits his near-term investment portfolio.”



Manchin’s announcement that he would not support the Build Back Better bill was met with outrage from Democrats, climate activists, and climate activists chief. “Now it’s up to Joe Manchin,” a *Mother Jones* headline announced after the House of Representatives passed Build Back Better in November. A month later, after Manchin announced—on Fox News, no less—that he could not support the legislation, a *New Yorker* headline declared, “Joe Manchin Kills Build Back Better.”

Manchin deserves all this condemnation and more, but it is bizarre that his Republican counterparts haven’t faced this intensity of criticism, even though they are at least as culpable. Search the news stories and public statements cited above, and countless others from the same time frame, and you’ll find that Republicans’ role in blocking Build Back Better is rarely even mentioned—and certainly not identified as the principal reason climate legislation routinely dies on Capitol Hill.

Manchin is only one senator. His opposition to Build Back Better mattered only because all 50 Republican senators stood in lockstep against climate action, just as their party has done for 30 years.

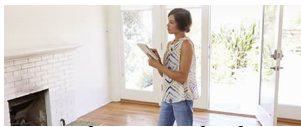
And yet, today's Republicans pay no political price for torching the planet. In a democracy, elected officials are free to vote for or against whatever they please, but that doesn't mean they shouldn't be held accountable for their choices. But most political observers, journalists, and even political adversaries simply accept the GOP's climate obstructionism as an immutable fact of life, not worth calling out or wasting energy on.

This means Republicans get a pass on their climate wrecking. They don't have to endure the kind of nasty headlines directed at Manchin. They aren't subjected to the very public pressure he has encountered in his day-to-day life, such as when young climate activists staked out his houseboat and demanded to know why he was dooming them to a hellish future. Instead, Republicans get to please their climate-denying voter base as well as their fossil-fuel-industry donors—and never have to explain themselves to the broader electorate, which, as it happens, favors climate action. Manchin gets nearly all the blame.

As a journalist, I'm puzzled and dismayed that many of my colleagues let politicians off the hook like this. After all, it's easy enough to state the relevant facts, as *Nexus Media News* did in a welcome exception to most coverage. The Build Back Better bill failed, Nexus reported, "after coal millionaire Sen. Joe Manchin III joined the entire Republican party in opposing action on climate change."

There's still time for a course correction before the fast-approaching midterm elections. This November, Americans will be voting on, to paraphrase Guterres, climate action versus climate suicide. But most Americans don't know that. According to opinion polls, they think that they are voting on inflation and the state of the economy. But transcending each of those issues, vital as they are, is the question of whether the world's biggest economy and most powerful nation will do its share to halt humanity's race toward climate apocalypse.

In the weeks ahead, Biden, Democratic candidates, and climate activists can help voters understand the stakes and learn which politicians do and don't favor climate suicide. Mike Tidwell, executive director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, has urged fellow activists to "grieve" the defeat of Build Back Better, but only briefly. Then, Tidwell continued,



...pro-climate US senators...

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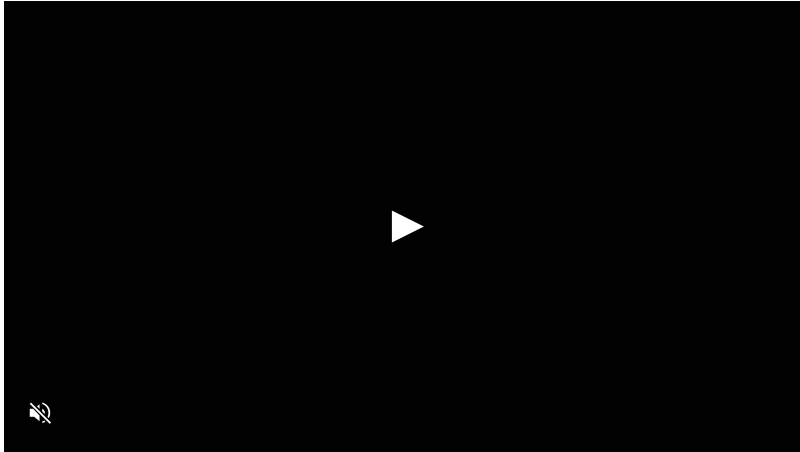
We in the press also have a role to play. It is our civic responsibility to hold all electoral candidates accountable and to inform voters about the choices facing them. It's sad but true that one of America's two main political parties has repeatedly demonstrated that it opposes strong climate action. Educating voters on that indisputable fact is neither activism nor partisanship. It is telling the truth.

Like an umpire calling balls and strikes, it is the press's job to report the news fairly and accurately, not to worry if the players don't like the results. It's not the press's fault that Republicans have chosen to embrace climate denial and delay. They are free to choose differently at any time, and if they do, the press should report their change of heart just as plainly. But the days of giving any politician a pass on climate action versus climate suicide must be over, or suicide it will surely be.

Mark Hertsgaard Mark Hertsgaard is the executive director of Covering Climate Now, a global journalism initiative committed to more and better coverage of the climate story. He is also the environment correspondent for *The Nation* and author of books including *HOT: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth*.

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