

"Climate Justice" Is Largely Just A Progressive Plot Against Capitalism

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And an actual injustice to the poor people of the planet. The founders of the [Breakthrough Institute](#), Michael Shellenberger and Ted Nordhaus, have sent out an email [introduction to a terrific new essay](#) by Brookings Institution political scientist Christopher Foreman, "[On Justice Movements: Why They Fail the Environment and the Poor.](#)" As international negotiations and domestic efforts to impose top-down limits on greenhouse gas emissions continue to fail, Shellenberger and Nordhaus point out in their email:

What rushed into the vacuum was "climate justice," a movement headed by more left-leaning groups like [350.org](#), the Sierra Club, and Greenpeace. These groups invoke the vulnerability of the poor to climate change but elide the reality that more energy makes them more resilient. "Huge swaths of the world have been developing over the last three decades at an unprecedented pace and scale," writes political scientist Christopher Foreman in "[On Justice Movements.](#)" a new article (below) for *The Breakthrough Journal*. "Contemporary demands for climate justice have been, at best, indifferent to these rather remarkable developments and, at worst, openly hostile."

For the climate justice movement, global warming is not to be dealt with by switching to cleaner forms of energy but rather by returning to a pastoral, renewable-powered, and low-energy society. "Real climate solutions," writes Klein, "are ones that steer these interventions to systematically disperse and devolve power and control to the community level, whether through community-controlled renewable energy, local organic agriculture or transit systems genuinely accountable to their users..."

Climate change can only be solved by "fixing everything," says McKibben, from how we eat, travel, produce, reproduce, consume, and live. "It's not an engineering problem," McKibben argued recently in *Rolling Stone*, "it's a greed problem." Fixing it will require a

"new civilizational paradigm," says Klein, "grounded not in dominance over nature but in respect for natural cycles of renewal."

Climate skeptics are right, Klein cheerily concludes: the Left is using climate change to advance policies they have long wanted. "In short," says [Naomi] Klein [in *The Nation*], "***climate change supercharges the pre-existing case for virtually every progressive demand on the books, binding them into a coherent agenda based on a clear scientific imperative.***"(emphasis added)

Reason readers will not be surprised that an environmental "crisis" serves largely as an excuse for attempting to impose socialist policies on the world. In any case, Klein and other Progressive would-be dismantlers of progress miss the point that identifying a problem does not tell us what to do about it. Not too surprisingly, pro-free market folks pushed back against the leftwing environmentalist agenda. As Shellenberger and Nordhaus note:

As such, global warming is our most wicked problem. The end of our world is heralded by ideologues with specific solutions already in mind: degrowth, rural living, low-energy consumption, and renewable energies that will supposedly harmonize us with Nature. The response from the Right was all-too predictable. If climate change "supercharges the pre-existing case for virtually every progressive demand," conservatives long ago decided, then climate change is either not happening, or is not much to worry about.

There is still some debate over the scale and severity of future man-made global warming, but free market folks can usefully counter leftwing policy prescriptions by offering insights about how property rights, markets, innovation, and wealth creation can better protect both people and the planet. Ultimately, Shellenberger and Nordhaus correctly recognize:

Now, at the very moment modern energy arrives for global poor — something a prior generation of socialists would have celebrated and, indeed, demanded — today's leading left-wing leaders advocate a return to energy penury. The loudest advocates of cheap energy for the poor are on the libertarian Right, while *The Nation* dresses up neo-Malthusianism as revolutionary socialism.

The whole Foreman essay is well worth reading.