

Climate Touches Every Issue

Our Guide On When To Bring Up
Climate Change In A Political
Debate (Hint: ALWAYS)

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WHY CLIMATE IS ALWAYS RELEVANT

In 2016, presidential debate moderators failed to ask any direct questions about climate change, but the climate crisis touches – exacerbates – nearly every major issue that might come up in a political debate. There doesn't need to be a question about climate change to highlight how the crisis is impacting our economy, national security, democracy, health, immigration, or the fight for racial justice.

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CLIMATE CHANGE & THE ECONOMY

By denying climate change, Donald Trump is harming our economy right now, and putting future generations at risk.

- The government agency that oversees commodities traders published an analysis which concluded that climate change poses a [major risk](#) to the stability of the U.S. financial system.
- Since Trump took office, there have been 46 extreme weather or climate-related disasters that have caused [\\$478 billion in damages](#).
- Agriculture is impacted by both droughts and floods linked to climate change.
 - One drought event in 2011 cost over [\\$10 billion in direct losses](#) to the agriculture sector alone in Texas and Oklahoma.
 - In 2019, Midwest flooding left roughly [14 million acres unplanted](#).
 - The Montana Farmers Union issued a [report projecting](#) a 20 percent drop in range cattle production and a 25 percent decline in grain production by 2055.
- Our economy will be hurt by energy costs that will go up under climate change, by as much as [\\$30 billion per year](#) by mid-century as temperatures rise
- Tourism-based economies are already being hurt by climate change
 - In the Florida keys, a [50 percent decline](#) in coral cover has [recreational diving and fishing businesses worried](#)
 - Elsewhere in Florida, blue-green algae and red tide [fueled by climate change](#) had a [devastating effect on beach tourism in 2018](#). One county even had to spend [\\$7 million](#) just to clean up dead fish from the beaches.
 - In the Rockies, snowfall has [declined 41 percent](#) since the 1980s, shortening the snow season by 34 days and threatening the \$20 billion snow sports tourism industry.
 - Mountain streams fed by snowfall are also at risk of drying up, [shrinking trout](#) habitats popular with recreational anglers.

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- Two [separate reports](#) have warned of a potential loss of as much as 10% of GDP annually from the United States economy by the end of the century due to climate change.
 - That's more than twice the impact of the [Great Recession of 2007-2009](#) and three times the long-term projections for the impact of the current COVID-19 crisis, which the [CBO expects](#) will result in a 3.0% decline in real GDP over the next 11 years.
 - Climate change will end up [costing our economy more](#) (3.7% of GDP per year) than the COVID-19 pandemic by as early as 2050.
 - Those were both limited, one-time events. If we fail to address climate change we will be facing sustained, severe damage to our economy.
- [Another analysis](#) pegged the future economic cost of doing nothing in actual dollar amounts at almost \$700 billion per year.
- Extreme heat also impacts worker productivity. A [study in 2014](#) found a 1.7% decline in worker productivity for each 1°C above 15°C. This also meant a 28% loss in per-capita income on a day above 86 degrees.

POLLUTION IS A PRE-EXISTING CONDITION

Climate change and fossil fuel pollution give people pre-existing conditions and make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.

- New research on air pollution has found that [burning fossil fuel](#) causes 230,000 premature deaths in the US every year.
- Scientists and health experts from 35 academic institutions and United Nations agencies said that [children will suffer from a rise in infectious diseases, malnutrition and air pollution](#) if global warming continues on the current trajectory.
- The [American Lung Association](#) warns that pollution from vehicle exhaust and power plants can cause lung cancer, heart disease, and asthma attacks.
- Soot air pollution (PM2.5) causes severe health problems and it [increased by 5.5 percent](#) on average across the country between 2016 and 2018, after decreasing nearly 25 percent over the previous seven years.
 - Soot air pollution (PM2.5) [from power plants and vehicle exhaust](#) has been [linked to higher death rates](#) from COVID-19.
 - The [CDC says](#) “people with moderate to severe asthma may be at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.”

By denying climate change, Donald Trump is harming our health right now, and putting future generations at risk.

- Air pollution has been on the rise under Trump. [The Associated Press](#) found there were 15% more days with unhealthy air in America in both 2018 and 2017 than there were on average from 2013 to 2016.
- Researchers believe that global warming is already responsible for some [150,000 deaths each year](#) around the world.
 - Excessive heat is becoming [more frequent and more extreme](#).
 - More than [350 US workers have died](#) from heat-related illness in the past decade. In 2018 alone, there were [3,120 workers](#) that missed days of work due to heat exposure on the job.

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- Climate change is affecting our access to clean drinking water.
 - Flooding from extreme rainfall last year took [six drinking water treatment plants](#) offline and overwhelmed wastewater facilities.
 - In Colorado, rising temperatures led to bark beetle infestations, which have led to elevated levels of [cancer-causing trihalomethane](#) in local water supplies.
 - Rising water temperatures have fueled [outbreaks of toxic algae](#), contaminating drinking water sources.

CLIMATE JUSTICE = RACIAL JUSTICE

Black, Latino, and Native American communities have been subject to environmental racism for decades, poisoned by higher levels of toxic pollution and dirty air, which has made them more likely to contract and die from the coronavirus. Yet, Trump and his Republican allies have rolled back environmental protections and allowed big oil and coal CEOs to spew more pollution in communities of color. Every corrupt decision Trump has made reinforces structural racism at its core.

Here are just 10 ways Donald Trump's environmental racism is targeting communities of color already suffering from polluted air, dirty water, and toxic chemicals.

Share our listicle on the web here: [Top 10 Examples Of Trump's Environmental Racism](#)

Trump is silencing communities of color.

- On the same day [tear gas was used](#) to clear protesters outside the White House, Trump [advanced a rule change](#) that would stop communities of color from having a say on major polluting projects in their neighborhoods.
- A report from the NAACP, Clean Air Task Force, and National Medical Association found Black Americans are [75% more likely](#) to live in fenceline communities that border polluting facilities like oil and gas refineries.
- Trump used the pandemic as an excuse to roll back 69 environmental protections. Trump waived environmental safeguards, giving refineries and industrial facilities an "[open license to pollute.](#)"
- In Houston's most heavily industrialized areas, air pollutants [surged as much as 62%](#) after Trump's rollback, according to a Texas A&M analysis of air monitoring stations.

Trump ignored calls to limit dirty soot pollution linked to COVID-19 deaths.

- Scientists have warned that soot pollution [disproportionately affects](#) communities of color and can cause [cancer, heart disease, and](#)

[asthma](#), which [kills Black children](#) at 10 times the rate as white children.

- Soot in the air was [linked to higher death rates](#) from COVID-19 around the same time we learned that Black Americans were [dying at three times the rate](#) as whites from the disease.
- Still, Trump [overruled calls from scientists](#) to set tighter air quality standards on soot pollution after [disbanding](#) the panel of scientists created to determine what levels of these pollutants are safe to breathe. .

Trump rolled back clean cars standards critical for protecting air quality.

- Car exhaust is another [major source](#) of the soot pollution that is killing people of color.
- One study found that communities of color in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic breathe [66% more air pollution](#) just from car exhaust than white residents — exposure that was made worse when Trump [insisted](#) on rolling back clean cars standards.

Trump made it easier for coal power plants to keep spewing dangerous toxic pollution into the air.

- Coal power plants are the other [major source](#) of the soot pollution that is killing people of color.

In addition to fine soot particles, coal power plants spew mercury, lead, cadmium, and arsenic into the air.

- An [NAACP report](#) found that six million Americans live within three miles of a coal power plant and that population is disproportionately people of color. Trump [rolled back rules](#) on pollution from coal power plants in order to help keep older, dirty coal plants in operation longer.

Trump pushed dangerous pipeline projects through tribal lands.

- Native Americans have been on the front lines of protecting their access to clean drinking water sources from irresponsible fossil fuel development.
- After fighting off permits for the Keystone XL pipeline, Trump's response was to [repeatedly change the rules](#) to give the oil

companies what they want and to silence the people fighting for clean water.

Trump tried to gut environmental justice enforcement.

- In his first budget request to Congress, Trump [tried to completely eliminate](#) the environmental justice office at the EPA.

This is the office charged with addressing the disparities in pollution experienced by communities of color.

- In fact, [in every single year](#) of his presidency, Trump has sought to either eliminate or drastically slash funding for environmental justice at the EPA.

Trump's EPA ignored pleas from a Black community affected by a coal ash dump.

- Residents in [Uniontown, Alabama](#), a town that is 90% Black, filed a civil rights complaint with the U.S. EPA over a toxic coal ash waste landfill containing arsenic, mercury, and lead.
- [Despite reports](#) of odors, nose, throat, and eye irritation, dizziness, and nausea, Trump's EPA declined to test or monitor the site, instead relying on data from an air monitoring station miles away.
- Trump even took things a step further and [relaxed rules](#) for how this toxic coal ash is stored.

Trump rolled back chemical disaster rules, putting communities of color who live near chemical plants at risk.

- "[Refinery row](#)" in Texas and "Cancer Alley" in Louisiana are places where oil refineries and chemical plants are located next to predominantly Black and Latinx communities.
- In Cancer Alley, [researchers found](#) that the neighborhoods with higher percentage, the higher the risk of cancer goes.
- [During Hurricane Harvey](#), plants in Texas were allowed to release [more than 1 million pounds](#) of dangerous pollutants.
- Trump actually rolled back the rule known as the "[chemical disaster rule](#)" which sets requirements for chemical plants to plan for emergency situations.

Trump called climate change a "[hoax](#)."

- The denial of climate change is a racist act on its own. Everything about climate change has a disproportionate impact on people of color, and casting doubt of the reality of climate change devalues the Black and Latinx lives lost from [lung disease](#), [heat stress](#), and [extreme weather](#) that strike communities of color the hardest.

CLIMATE CHANGE IS A MAJOR DRIVER OF IMMIGRATION

Unchecked climate change will only increase pressure on our borders.

- As John Podesta wrote for [Brookings](#), “unprecedented” storms will lead to large scale migration due to resource scarcity, increased frequency of extreme weather, intensifying competition for food and water, increased frequency of disease outbreaks and stress on the US borders due to the severe effects of climate change in parts of Central America.
- Poverty and violence in Central America are major factors [driving migration](#) to the United States.
 - Most of the Central American migrants crossing the U.S.-Mexico border seeking asylum come from rural areas of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador which are [highly susceptible to the effects of climate change](#).
 - As climate change deepens poverty and food insecurity in this area, experts say it is likely that the United States will continue to see a rise in the number of families and unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.
- Drought and disasters driven by climate change will [continue to exacerbate](#) poor economic conditions that leave people in desperate situations with no options.
- [A recent scientific paper](#) predicts that the parts of the globe that best support human life and crops will shift more in the next 50 years than they have in the last 6,000 years, sparking [mass migrations](#) as people move to escape heat, hunger, and political chaos.
- As many as 1.2 billion people around the world could be displaced by 2050, according to projections in the [Ecological Threat Register](#).

CLIMATE CHANGE WEAKENS OUR NATIONAL SECURITY

Climate change is a national security threat, both abroad and right here at home.

- The [Department of Defense](#) has warned that climate change puts our national security at risk by destabilizing conflict zones.
- Our ability to respond to conflicts is also being impacted. A [2019 report](#) from the Department of Defense found that climate change is already [threatening mission-critical bases](#).
- Former U.S. National Security Adviser and Ambassador Susan Rice described climate change as a "[threat multiplier](#)" when it comes to America's national security interests.
- Our ability to respond to conflicts is also being impacted. [Over two-thirds of the military's mission-critical installations](#) are threatened by climate change, according to a [2019 report](#) from the Department of Defense.
- A comprehensive report from the [Center for Climate and Security](#) found:
 - A near-term scenario of climate change, in which the world warms 1-2°C/1.8-3.6°F over pre-industrial levels by mid-century, would pose 'High' to 'Very High' security threats. A medium-to-long term scenario in which the world warms as high as 2-4+°C/3.6-7.2°F would pose a 'Very High' to 'Catastrophic' threat to global and national security. The world has already warmed to slightly below 1°C compared to pre-industrial temperatures.
 - At all levels of warming (1-4+°C/1.8-7.2+°F), climate change will pose significant and evolving threats to global security environments, infrastructure, and institutions.
 - While at lower warming thresholds, the most fragile parts of the world are the most at risk, all regions of the world will face serious implications. High warming scenarios could bring about catastrophic security impacts across the globe.
 - These threats could come about rapidly, destabilizing the regions and relationships on which U.S. and international security depend.

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- Climate change will present significant threats to U.S. military missions across all of its geographic areas of responsibility (AORs), as well as to regional security institutions and infrastructure that are critical for maintaining global security.

CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS FOREIGN POLICY & TRADE

The U.S. risks falling behind on emerging clean energy industries while the rest of the world is making investments in their future.

- The U.S. is already falling behind to China and Europe. In 2017, [nearly half](#) of the world's new renewable energy investment came from China, and the nation is the [world's largest producer](#) of solar panels, wind turbines, batteries and electric vehicles. In 2019, the U.S. added 13 GW of [solar installations](#), while Europe added 16.7 and the previous year, China added 44 GW.
- Electric vehicles represent the future of the auto industry (the backbone of the U.S. economy), which we can't afford to cede to China ([the world's largest auto buyer](#)), and Europe ([the world leader in EV investment](#)).
 - Led by government climate policy, Europe [attracted](#) \$71 billion in electric vehicles investment in 2019, outpacing China and the U.S.
 - The Chinese government, which had [already invested](#) \$60 billion into electric vehicles before the pandemic, is placing electric vehicles at [the center](#) of their coronavirus recovery package with extensions to tax breaks for electric vehicles and an investment in growing the number of charging stations by tenfold, all with an eye to [increase](#) electric vehicles from 5% of the market to 25% in the next 5 years.
 - Researchers at CSIS [warn](#) that if China takes too much of a lead, it will threaten the U.S. ability to compete in the growing market.