

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF CLIMATE TRUTH



Climate truth is not easy news to receive or deliver, and it takes fortitude to spread it. However, it is a message that people are increasingly ready to hear. (Photograph: Les Stone/Corbis)

The Climate Mobilization launched seven months ago, when we began spreading the Pledge to Mobilize at the People's Climate March in New York City. Our mission is to initiate a WWII-scale mobilization that protects civilization and the natural world from climate catastrophe. Climate truth is central to this mission. We believe that the climate movement's greatest and most underutilized strategic asset is the truth: That we are now in a planet-wide climate crisis that threatens civilization and requires an immediate, all-out emergency response.

The Pledge to Mobilize, a one-page document that any American can sign, is our tool for spreading climate truth and channeling the emotions it inspires into political power.

The Pledge is a public acknowledgment that the climate crisis threatens the collapse of civilization, as well as a call for the United States to initiate a World War II-scale mobilization to eliminate our national net greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 and enlist in an international effort to restore a safe global climate. (Please see [The Case for Climate Mobilization](#), for a detailed scientific and economic explanation of our demands).

The Pledge also contains a set of political and personal commitments to build the social mobilization required to achieve these demands. When you sign the Pledge, you agree to:

1. Vote for candidates who have also signed the Pledge to Mobilize over those who have not.
2. Support candidates who have signed with time, money, or both.
3. Spread the truth of climate change, and the Pledge to Mobilize, to others.

It is still early days for The Climate Mobilization, but our progress is quite promising. The Pledge to Mobilize has been signed by more than 1000 Americans, a number that is growing every day. We encourage people, once they have signed, to recruit friends and family, and to advocate for mobilization in public.

Mobilizers have begun a variety of actions such as giving presentations on the climate crisis and need for mobilization, tabling, or holding discussions in their homes. In March, 375 people marched to the San Diego Federal Building, where they posted the Pledge to Mobilize. On June 14th, we will have our first National, holding rallies and other Pledge-spreading events across the country that will call on our fellow citizens, as well as national political representatives to mobilize in defense of civilization. Former congressman Jim Bates will kick off the day at Midnight, acting as a modern-day Paul Revere, riding horseback through the San Diego streets warning that “Climate change is coming, Mobilize!” and will conclude his ride at a nighttime rally for Mobilization.

The Climate Mobilization plans to be extremely active during the 2016 campaign season, using it as an opportunity to bring climate truth into the front of the public mind, and make every candidate answer whether they understand that climate change poses the greatest challenge we have ever faced, and whether they have the competence and strength of character to sign the Pledge and mobilize.

This paper explores the transformative power — and strategic necessity— of climate truth. It explains why we believe the Pledge to Mobilize approach contains such incredible potential for change.

This paper will also address the concern that The Climate Mobilization should be less frank and frightening about the climate crisis, and push for a more appealing and “realistic,” though inadequate, solution.

The Power of Truth for Individuals

Humans have a remarkable capacity for imagination and fantasy. This is a precious gift, which allows us to create technological breakthroughs and captivating, brilliant works of fiction. Our imagination gives us the capacity to re-make the world, a uniquely powerful ability that no other animal can come close to rivaling. The downside, however, is that our minds are such powerful and flexible creative forces that they can also easily deceive us.

Socrates advocated that individuals must work to discover personal truth, encapsulated in his statement, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” Guatama Buddha, a near contemporary of Socrates, created a spiritual system that also emphasizes seeking personal truth and staying in touch with reality. This is no easy task—distinguishing reality from fantasy is a life-long developmental challenge. The child, for example, must learn that monsters and fairies are not real. As the child grows, she must continue to determine what is real about herself, her family, and the world — including recognizing the truth of her capacities, or strengths, proclivities and limitations.

She must also recognize what family stories have been distortions of reality, i.e. “In this family, everyone always gets along.”

There are two basic reasons why it is critically important that individuals separate truth from distortion and fantasy. The first is very practical. If someone does not adequately understand themselves and the world, they will have a very difficult time navigating it, or growing in response to it. For example, if a teenager believes himself to be invincible, he may break bones or worse before coming to terms with the reality of his vulnerability. Or if he has been told his entire life, and now believes, that he can accomplish any goal easily, he might be in for a rude awakening when he enrolls in advanced courses for which he is unprepared. If he can't accurately evaluate his talents honestly, he denies himself the chance to utilize his strengths and bolster his weaknesses!

The second reason was discovered by Freud, and used during the past century by psychoanalysis and the related psychotherapies to relieve individual suffering and enhance individual lives. The truth is inherently energizing and enhancing to the individual because the truth is often known, but defended against—repressed, dissociated and denied. This avoidance of the truth takes continual effort and energy. Take, for example a woman who finally admits to herself that she is a lesbian after years of fighting this knowledge. When the truth is finally embraced, a weight is lifted and a new level of personal freedom is accessed.

The woman feels as though she has a new lease on life, and indeed she does, because she has integrated an important truth, which is inherently invigorating and opens up new frontiers of possibility.

Sexual orientation is only one example. We all shield ourselves from unpleasant truths; it is a basic part of human mental functioning. That is why actively examining oneself is critical. Psychotherapy is one such process of active examination, and the results can be staggering. First the client's depression lifts, then their interpersonal relationships improve, then they make a career change that is more rewarding. Increased understanding and honesty bear many fruits.

The Power of Truth in Social Movements

All of the great social movements throughout history have successfully applied the transformative power of truth en masse. The transformative truths of social movements are widely known before the emergence of the movement, but they are repressed, denied, and ignored. The institutions of society—the government, media, academy and religious institutions often collude in denying the truth, failing the people they are meant to serve. Successful social movements take the truth into their own hands and force individuals, institutions, and especially governments to reckon with, accept, and ultimately act on the truth.

Vaclav Havel championed “Living in Truth” rather than complying with the corrupt, repressive actions of the Soviet Union. His work helped cause the non-violent Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, after which he became the first democratically elected president of Czechoslovakia in 41 years. Havel described the strategic power of truth:

(The power of truth) does not reside in the strength of definable political or social groups, but chiefly in a potential, which is hidden throughout the whole of society, including the official power structures of that society. Therefore this power does not rely on soldiers of its own, but on soldiers of the enemy as it were—that is to say, on everyone who is living within the lie and who may be struck at any moment (in theory, at least) by the force of truth (or who, out of an instinctive desire to protect their position, may at least adapt to that force). It is a bacteriological weapon, so to speak, utilized when conditions are ripe by a single civilian to disarm an entire division.... This, too, is why the regime prosecutes, almost as a reflex action, preventatively, even modest attempts to live in truth. (1978, emphasis added.)

The lies of the Soviet state in Czechoslovakia collapsed when confronted with the force of the truth. This was possible because, as Havel describes, the power of truth exists in everyone, including the army, governmental leaders, and other elites—we all “know” the truth on some level—but it is buried under layers of defenses, fear, and doubt.

However, when people advocate for the truth with clarity and moral certainty, the truth comes to the forefront of people's minds; it cuts like a spear through layers of denial and self-deception

Gandhi pioneered the movement strategy called "Satyagraha" which means "Truth force" and has connotations of love and inner strength. Rather than using violence to create change, practitioners of Satyagraha used their inner resources to march, fast, and otherwise demonstrate the truth of their message that colonialism was inherently degrading and that India needed to govern itself. Satyagraha was instrumental in helping India achieve independence.

Martin Luther King utilized Gandhi's teachings and preached about the need for "soul force" in the struggle for racial equality. Before the civil rights movement, America rationalized, ignored, and passively accepted the brutal Jim Crow system. The civil rights movement brought the ugly truth of Jim Crow to the center of American life. When non-violent protesters were met with hateful violence, and these confrontations were broadcast into living rooms across America, the truth could no longer be denied and ignored: the status quo was seen as morally bankrupt. Major, immediate changes were plainly necessary. When a powerful truth is effectively communicated, change can happen very rapidly.

The Truth Allows Us to Grow

Grappling with the truth makes us, as individuals and societies, healthier and more resilient. It allows us to approach problems with rationality and creativity and energy that would otherwise be sapped by denial and avoidance. Social movements invite us to put truth into practice — to be changed by the truth and to share the truth with others. This takes dedication and courage. In successful social movements, these traits are found in abundance. When people become agents for truth and vital change, they are elevated, enlarged, and lit up. The truth, and their role in advancing it, affects how they view themselves, what occupies their mind, and how they conduct their affairs. The power of truth allows them to transcend their limitations and what they once thought possible for themselves.

Psychologist and climate activist Mary Pipher puts it this way:

We cannot solve a problem that we will not face. With awareness, everything is possible. Once we stop denying the hard truths of our environmental collapse, we can embark on a journey of transformation that begins with the initial trauma —the 'oh shit' moment — and can end with transcendence. In fact, despair is often a crucible for growth. When our problems seem too big for us to tackle, there's really only one solution, which is: We must grow bigger.

The Most Powerful Truth of All

We are living in a state of planetary emergency and must mobilize our society on the scale of World War II in order to rapidly bring greenhouse gas emissions to net zero in order to have a chance of averting the collapse of civilization and the destruction of the natural world. The fact that we have warmed the world this much, and show little sign of stopping, is evidence of widespread institutional failure. We cannot expect anyone else to save us. We must do it ourselves.

This truth, while deeply unwelcome, has the potential to be the most powerful, transformative truth of all. Climate truth has the potential to be more powerful than any country's independence; more powerful than overthrowing authoritarian states; and more powerful than civil rights or any group's struggle for safety, recognition and equality. Climate truth contains such superordinate power because all of those causes depend on a safe climate.

If we do not solve climate change, we will never be able to build a just, free, healthy, loving society. It will be “game over”—the experiment of humanity organizing into civilizations will have failed. This will mean the deaths of billions of people and the loss of safety and security for the rest. It will be a miserable, deplorable fate. If we accept climate truth, we can channel the enormous power of our values, passions, empathy and hopes for humanity towards our fight for a safe climate.

Some people will feel that the climate crisis is not 'the most powerful truth of all,' a distinction that should be reserved for the existence of God. Some even feel that the existence of God lessens or negates the need to act on the climate crisis. I am not a theological expert or religious person, so I can't confidently speak to the matter. I can say that I have come across a good number of deeply religious climate activists who believe that separating God from creation is not possible, and to honor him, we must protect the planet and ourselves. Further, I know that every major religion considers both suicide and murder deeply wrong. Allowing climate change to unfold without mobilization is suicide, homicide, and ecocide on a massive scale. Though the intent to harm is lacking, passivity on climate is complicity with these deaths. As the growth of faith-based climate efforts grow, perhaps most notably the statements of Pope Francis, we see that there is no contradiction between religious faith and climate truth. Indeed, there is a contradiction between professed belief and passive acquiescence as humanity destroys itself and the natural world.

The fact that climate change threatens the collapse of civilization is not only known by scientists and experts. It is widely known—and defended against. Many Americans are willfully ignorant—they know that climate change, and the institutional failure it represents, is scary, so they keep it out of their focus. They never read about it, perhaps telling themselves that they aren't interested.

Another common defensive reaction is to intellectually accept the “facts” of climate change, but not to connect emotionally with its implications. This attitude can be seen by those who calmly, cynically state, “We are fucked,” and remain utterly passive.

Though climate change ranks low on most Americans’ lists of stated political priorities, our collective anxiety is apparent. Witness the popularity of learning survival skills and packing “go bags”—people harbor the fantasy that in a collapse scenario, they would be able to successfully take their safety into their own hands. Or look at the profusion of apocalyptic movies, TV shows and video games that have been popular in recent years.

If we look squarely at the climate crisis, we realize that these portrayals of destruction are not as fantastical as they seem; that they are imaginative forecasts of the climate ravaged planet that we are careening towards. This understanding can, to borrow Naomi Klein’s phrase, “change everything.” Letting climate truth in can affect not only your civic and political engagement, but also your priorities, goals, and sense of identity. You are not, as American culture has told you, an isolated actor, living in a stable country on a stable planet, whose main purpose in life is to pursue personal success and familial satisfaction. Rather, you are living in a country, and on a planet, in crisis.

Your primary moral responsibility is to fight for your family, your species and all life on earth. You didn't ask for it, you didn't cause it, and you probably don't like it. But here you are.

Here we all are, in personal and collective danger. Climate change is already killing 400,000 people a year, a number that we should expect to rise quickly and abruptly as climatic and civilizational tipping points (i.e. the breakout of water wars and food riots) are reached. Climate change is a matter of life and death for billions of people, and for civilization as a whole. If we allow ourselves to feel that reality, then our survival instincts can kick in. We must be like the mother who lifts a truck to pull out her baby, or perhaps more aptly—a man who comes perilously close to drinking himself to death, but emerges from hitting rock bottom resolved to courageously face his problems rather than fleeing them. Our love for life and for each other can urge us to great feats.

The Pledge to Mobilize: Harnessing the Power of Climate Truth

I have witnessed the transformative power of climate truth. I have seen people go from passive and disengaged to mobilized, working with dogged determination to fight climate change and spread climate truth to others. These transformations are vitally important, because only people who allow them to be transformed by climate truth can provide the fuel for a heroic, fully dedicated, and ultimately successful social movement.

The Pledge to Mobilize provides people with a point of entry into the global climate crisis—it provides a roadmap for how any one individual can build power and affect change in the arena of national politics. The knowledge that you can effect meaningful impact on the climate crisis—call it agency, empowerment, or active hope—is critical for accepting climate truth. Without agency, the scope of the crisis can cause despair, cynicism, or an obsessive focus on assigning and avoiding blame. Without the Pledge— or some other comprehensive political platform and social movement strategy that clearly and effectively tackle the climate emergency—people’s alarm and despair about climate change are largely inert. With the Pledge, this emotional energy can be channeled into dedicated, effective action.

Kat Baumgartner exemplifies this. Kat had been concerned about climate change for several years, but felt largely hopeless and was not engaged in any political or organizational work. After several months of increasing engagement and leadership, Kat described her experience of signing the Pledge and joining the Climate Mobilization in a letter to friends, asking them to sign:

After retiring from the fire department and being lost for a while, I am so grateful to have found another purpose in life. I didn't think it was possible for me to find anything that I could feel as passionate about as I did about being a firefighter.... Our Pledge calls on the Federal

Government to respond to the crisis we are facing in a way very similar to the response to World War II. Experts agree that only this type of response will save civilization from collapse and we believe that the Pledge to Mobilize strategy can fundamentally alter what is politically feasible!

Endemic Avoidance of Climate Truth

The Pledge to Mobilize is dedicated to bringing climate truth into the mainstream because, today it is difficult to find. As leading environmental analysts Jorgen Randers and Paul Gilding put it in 2009:

It's like belonging to a secret society. Conversations held in quiet places, in cafes, bars and academic halls. Conversations held with furrowed brows and worried eyes. Conversations that sometimes give you goose bumps and shivers, and a sense of the surreal – is this conversation really happening? This is what it's felt like over the past few years, to spend time with some of the world's leading thinkers and scientists on issues around climate change and sustainability. In public this group generally puts a positive, while still urgent interpretation of their views... But in private, often late at night, when we reflect on what we really think and wonder if the battle is lost, it's a different conversation. The talk goes to the potential for self-reinforcing runaway loops and for civilization's collapse.

We discuss geopolitical breakdown, mass starvation and what earth would be like with just a few hundred million people.

This is an incredible, crucial statement. Even leading scientists and thought leaders aren't being totally candid. Instead of frank discussions of the crisis, conversations are awash in confusion, denial and fixation on irrelevancies. Much of this is due to the billion dollar misinformation campaign that the fossil fuel industry has waged to cast doubt upon settled science. Another substantial contribution comes from the media, particularly the American media, which has consistently misapplied the concept of "balance" to give rogue climate deniers a place at the discussion table, and underreported the extent to the crisis.

However, these are far from the only causes — climate truth is avoided by almost everyone. A recent Yale poll shows that only 16% of Americans hear discussion of climate change from people they know once a month or more, while 25% report never hear people they know talk about climate change! Even when climate change is discussed the full extent of the crisis, is avoided. Instead of being communicated truthfully, climate change is communicated with a huge variety of distortions that make the situation appear less dire, and the solution less drastic.

We are told that there is still carbon “in the budget,” even though the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere today is enough to cause a climatic catastrophe, and eventually lead to global warming far above levels that could plausibly be considered safe.

We are told to worry for “our grandchildren,” implying that we, ourselves are not in danger. Sometimes we are given the baffling message that climate change is an acute, global crisis, but the solution is minimal! We are told that changing our individual consumer decisions is a meaningful response to the crisis, and that gradual carbon-pricing policies can solve climate change on their own while allowing business as usual to continue. David Spratt elaborates on these obfuscations in his very worthwhile paper, “Always look on the bright side of life: bright siding climate advocacy and its consequences.”

That we are in an acute crisis, and need an emergency response, similar to how we mobilized to meet the emergency of World War II — is considered too hot to handle. Americans are considered too weak, ignorant, and ideologically rigid to be able to deal with it. Instead, messages are tested on focus groups and refined in order to achieve a desired level of comfortable acceptance. A cottage industry of climate psychology warns of the danger of apocalyptic rhetoric and implores climate communicators to “focus on solutions” (without honestly confronting the problem) to avoid “turning people off.”

The fact that this communications approach has become normative in American politics does not make it less harmful. Philosopher Harry G Frankfurt, describes this way of relating to the truth, which is the premise of his book, “On Bullshit”:

Bullshitters, although they represent themselves as being engaged simply in conveying information, are not engaged in that enterprise at all. Instead, and most essentially, they are fakers and phonies who are attempting by what they say to manipulate the opinions and the attitudes of those to whom they speak. What they care about primarily, therefore, is whether what they say is effective in accomplishing this manipulation. Correspondingly, they are more or less indifferent to whether what they say is true or whether it is false.

This patronizing approach is doomed for failure. While acknowledging that people who discuss climate change in this truth-bending style mean well, we must also realize that they are making a critical error. We are in an emergency. We need an emergency response. We cannot possibly hope to achieve one without frank and brutal honesty. If there is a fire, should we coax people to leave the building through euphemistic half-truths?—“Its getting hot in here, let’s go outside where its nice and cool?”—Or should we tell them the truth, and direct them to safety?

Further, there is a fundamental difference between telling the truth and distorting it. The difference can be heard and felt by the listener.

Even if one's intentions in bending or avoiding the truth are good—subtle dishonesty is perceived by the recipient, whose “bullshit detector” goes off.

Considering that most of what Americans are told about climate change is either euphemistic understatement or outright lies, is widespread apathy really surprising? Is it any wonder that so many Americans conclude that everyone has an agenda and choose not to engage with the climate crisis?

The Pledge to Mobilize, rather than assuming that people “can't handle” the truth of climate change, attempts to help people handle and process that truth. The Pledge challenges them to grow, cope with the truth, and become active agents for effective change, spreading climate truth and the Pledge to Mobilize to others. Using the World War II metaphor, we provide an example of a time in which the United States successfully mobilized against an existential crisis; it provides hope without denying the severity of the situation; it invites Americans to look at the climate crisis squarely and rise to the challenge of their time

The most common criticism we have received about the Pledge's demands is that it is not “politically realistic” to demand a 100% reduction of US net greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. Some believe that this timeline is too rapid to possibly be achieved, even in the context of a full-scale climate mobilization.

These critics recommend that we should weaken our demands in order to be more mainstream. Of course, anyone who has studied climate change knows that these emissions cuts will give us our best possible chance of saving civilization. People don't argue that the Pledge doesn't state the truth; they argue that the truth needs to be avoided! Stating the truth plainly—both of the extent and immediacy of the crisis and the enormous scale of the needed solution—makes them too uncomfortable

Popular climate blogger David Roberts characterized humanity as “stuck between the impossible and the unthinkable.” Our job is therefore to achieve the ‘impossible’! As Joe Uehlein, Executive Director of the Labor Network for Sustainability put it recently in a Facebook discussion of the Pledge’s ambitious timeline and the need for a WWII-scale Mobilization:

It may or may not be possible, but that is what the timeline science tells us we're on requires...I totally understand your criticism (that the Pledge's emissions timeline is unrealistic). It's just that 30 years of realism, realistic approaches, reaching for what's achievable got us exactly nowhere. Even if all the countries do what they pledge to do in terms of carbon emissions, we still fail. That reality has to be emphasized so people will reach beyond realistic. I believe this is the only path to winning the war.

At least that's what my experience tells me -- 15 years on the UN Commission on Global Warming, and 40 years in the labor movement. We're losing the climate fight, and we're losing the workplace justice and income inequality fight. This is why "that's not realistic" does not resonate with me any longer.

Joe has given up on political “realism” that cannot deliver protection from climate change, and embraced climate truth. We need a massive solution to a massive problem, and to accomplish it we need to reach beyond defeatist “realism” and reclaim our institutions. We need to unleash the transformative power of truth.

Martin Luther King confronted a similar challenge when leading non-violent direct action to expose and challenge the brutal truth of segregation. His “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” was a response to the white religious leaders who called on him to go slower and tone it down. King answered,

I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to "order" than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who

constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another man's freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.

Similarly, we must realize that it is not merely "deniers" who distort climate truth and stand in the way of the climate mobilization that we need, but anyone who privileges political "realism" over scientific realism and moral responsibility, clings to false-optimism, or advocates "politically fashionable carbon gradualism. "

The Challenges of Climate Truth

Climate truth is rare because it is hard. It makes us feel immense fear, grief, and anger. It has radical implications, for our society and for us as individuals. Personal change, psychotherapists know, should ideally come gradually, so a stable sense of identity and safety can be maintained.

Climate truth challenges us to our core— we worry how we can maintain who we are after taking it in! Should we change careers? Move to the country and start a farm? Climate truth makes us doubt ourselves: We worry that we don't have it in us; that we won't measure up; that we will lose.

Fighting climate change requires deep, sustained commitment, rather than a brief burst of passion. We would like to make it our absolute top priority. Yet we also need to pay our bills and raise our families. There are only so many hours in the day - how many should be spent fighting climate change? Mobilizers report that this problem —balancing the workload of their personal mobilization with life's other demands — is the hardest part of participating. Every person, every Mobilizer, must find their own solutions to these issues; their own balance

Climate truth also offers interpersonal challenges. We are messengers of painful, challenging news. It elicits fear—even terror, grief, and a crisis of conscience. When we speak climate truth, we convey to others, “The life you thought you were living, with big plans and a bright future, a life in which your main responsibility is to pursue your own satisfaction, is over, or at least on hold until the climate crisis is solved. We are in a global crisis, and to live a moral life, you must respond.”

When we speak climate truth, we are sometimes met with blank stares, palpable recoiling, or even outright hostility.

The people we are speaking to might become anxious, which makes us feel guilty—as though the painful feelings the listener is experiencing are our fault, as though speaking climate truth is mean-spirited, rather than absolutely necessary. In order to stay in denial, some people might prefer to avoid us or ridicule what we are saying. We may find ourselves feeling alone.

The Rewards of Climate Truth: We Must be Heroes

Climate truth is not easy news to receive or deliver, and it takes fortitude to spread it. However, it is a message that people are increasingly ready to hear. Mobilizers are often surprised by how well people respond to discussions of climate truth, especially when structured through the lens of the Pledge to Mobilize. People are often grateful and relieved to talk—climate anxiety had been weighing on them—and they had found little opportunity to discuss it with others. People also express gratitude and respect for our efforts. Nothing is more gratifying, or more strengthening to a relationship, than when someone joins you in climate truth, as a champion of civilization and the natural world.

Further, taking on the mantle of climate truth gives individuals a strong, clear sense of meaning in life. It expands who we are and how we think about ourselves.

Ranae Hansen, took on the role of “Point Person” for Minnesota, wrote this introducing herself to Minnesota Mobilizers:

Because I am convinced that the US has to step up boldly, I agreed to this role a month ago. And then, I was hospitalized for sudden adult onset Type I diabetes. Rather a set back for my organizing! However, once it was clear that I would survive this shock, I realized even more deeply that working to preserve the planet for plants, animals, and humans was the way I wanted to pay back the gift of a continued personal life.

Fred Branfman spent his life dedicated to humanity, and to truth. As a young man he exposed America’s secret bombing campaign of Laos during the Vietnam War. Decades later, he helped develop the Climate Mobilization concept, and would have been one of our co-founders had he not become terminally ill and passed away a few days after the People’s Climate March. The other co-founders of The Climate Mobilization, including myself, are in our twenties. We feel viscerally afraid of how climate will wreak havoc in the coming decades — we fight not only for “future generations” or for the natural world, but also for our own safety and security. Fred, in a totally different stage of life, did not worry about his own safety in regards to climate change.

Rather, he spoke about the opportunity for great and enduring heroism:

We have clearly arrived at an evolutionary watershed: the first time that our species is heading toward species-suicide by its own hand. If we act politically to try and save it we will know a heroism that none before us have experienced. Our inner desire to live lives of meaning will be remembered for all time to come, as long as humans in whatever number still walk this earth...We have thus been offered the most sublime human opportunity of all: To participate in an heroic movement to preserve all human achievement and make possible its continuation for all human time to come...We are clearly in the early stages of the worst and most prolonged crisis humanity has ever faced. It can only be met if millions of us...decide that we cannot live with ourselves if we do not act politically to try and avert this crisis.

Our “sublime opportunity” for heroism faces its next great phase in the run-up to the 2016 elections, in which we will elect a new President and much of a new Congress. Let all of our motivating desires — to be safe, to protect our loved ones and the extended human family, now and in the future, to protect the glorious natural world, and to be remembered — push us to sustained, heroic activism for the next 19 months. The Pledge to Mobilize can channel this energy into a transformation of the campaign and national discourse on climate change.

Rather than discussing whether candidates “believe in” climate change, we must make them answer whether they understand that climate change poses the greatest challenge we have ever faced, and whether they have the competence and strength of character to mobilize against it. We will make them confront climate truth directly, and judge them by their response. This is what The Climate Mobilization is dedicated to achieving. Our goals reach beyond the “realistic” to what is necessary and true.

Source: <http://www.commondreams.org/views/2015/04/27/transformational-power-climate-truth>