

Closing remarks, Stubblefield Institute's "American Conversation Series: "US Climate Change Policy: Who Pays, Us or Our Children?"

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Thank you, Dr. Stubblefield, for your inspiring question. If I could go back in time, would I do the same thing or would I change the way we communicate climate change in a way to be effective?

Here is what I think. According to many surveys, 98% of all stories on climate change are gloom and doom, which is overwhelming. It not only causes division, it also, more importantly causes paralysis and overwhelm.

We started The Climate because I wanted to do something to move the needle even the tiniest bit on climate change so that my worst fears wouldn't come to pass. That's why we focus specifically on stories of strength, hope and courage. Positive stories that are reality-based and solutions-oriented because those are the kind of stories that give hope; stories that bridge what I call the Hope Gap—the abyss between the despair people feel around climate change and an imagined future with solutions worth fighting for.

Should we contemplate turning back time? No. We are where we are. And where we are is in the midst of the beginning of the era of Climate Change. No more time for wishful thinking. It's time for us all to be here now, in this present moment. It's time to embrace this reality and It's time to join me—and the other 1,300 plus people and organizations we've reported on—in looking forward—with hope—to an imagined future worth fighting for.

I know some of you out there will counter, "But Hope is not a strategy," to which I say nay! And here's why: The great American philosopher Cornel West once spoke on the difference between hope and optimism. He said, "Optimism tends to be based on the notion that there's enough evidence out there to believe things are gonna be better. Much more rational, deeply secular. Whereas Hope looks at the evidence and says, 'It doesn't look good at all. Doesn't look good at all. Gonna go beyond the evidence to create new possibilities based upon visions that become contagious, to allow people to engage in heroic actions, always against the odds, with no guarantee whatsoever.'

Going beyond the evidence to create new possibilities...you know what that sounds like to me? Making a plan. Creating a strategy. That's why when I hear people say, "Hope is not a strategy," I say, "Hope is more than a strategy—it's going beyond the evidence to create an imagined future with solutions worth fighting for. Hope allows people to engage in heroic actions, always against the odds, with no guarantee whatsoever."

That's Hope. And that's why I'm a prisoner of Hope. Just like all the great people and organizations on whom we've reported and will continue to report. Just like the fabulous listeners of our podcast, thanks to them, I continue to be a prisoner of Hope. And like me, have become prisoners of Hope, too. And for that I thank them, and I thank you all in the audience tonight for participating in this American conversation.