

The HOPEFUL REALIST Newsletter:
Looking at the World Today as if Facts Matter

Robert MacNeil Christie, PhD

Here we explore the latest facts, actions, and perspectives on the New Great Transformation of the Earth System, as it unfolds before our eyes. We apply the Hopeful Realism we all need to work through the greatest predicament in human history.

Latest News from the Hopeful Realist

Aging Out, or Not, Is That Really the Question? Like many in the U.S., I have struggled with the political/personal question of whether Joe Biden is up to the job of campaigning with enough vigor to beat Donald Trump and to serve another four years as President. The mass media and all the pundits who gain access to the most information, are of little help. The sensationalizing of Joe's disastrous performance in the 'first debate' clouds most of the facts in fear mongering pitted against defensiveness. Can we actually discern enough facts to determine the risks and rewards of either choice? But what *is* the other choice? Not a simple dilemma. Interestingly, for once in his life, Donald Trump remains silent in his glee over the Democrats' dilemma.

I am compelled to look at all this from the perspective of the eighty-four year old that I am. Both these candidates are younger than I am. People age differently; I am not infrequently shocked by the death of people younger than me and the poor physical and mental condition of others who have seemingly given up on life beyond sitting in front of a TV screen. Whatever you think of either of these two, their capacities are not a mere number. Judge them by what they do.

When I crashed my bicycle a couple of years ago, I was annoyed by the number of people who told me that I should not be riding a bicycle because I am too old. Once the giant hematoma on my knee (no joint damage, and the bike sustained no more than a twisted handlebar), I was back riding again, with the wind in my face and the trees passing by—the experience of riding in the real world cannot be replicated on an indoor stationary bike. Living is far better than waiting to die—the latter being a really stupid choice.

So, what are we to make of these two 'octogenarians,' one a pathological liar and narcissistic sociopath by any textbook definition his entire life, the other a slightly older lifelong politician of both unending ambition and deep experience in government, as well as an empathetic personality?

And, no, government is not to be judged as a business, but instead as a servant of the people. Oh, and aside from all the fakery on "The Apprentice," which according to insiders had to be

heavily managed to assemble an episode due to his erratic behavior, the former president was very ineffective in business. Who goes bankrupt running a casino? Business success, by the way, is not to be judged by how effectively one cheats.

Changing candidates at this stage (I was reminded yesterday that Joe is already on the ballot in some 20 states, which is almost impossible to change) is a process fraught with complexity and its own dangers. The last thing the nation needs is bickering Democrats entertaining the orange wannabe king, which is what we have right now.

Don't Mess with Karine Jean-Pierre. I turned on the TV while having brunch Monday; there was Jean-Pierre with her cute curls and totally take-care-of-business demeanor, fending off the White House journalistic sharks, with straight forward boundary-setting answers to their endlessly repeated demands to invade the privacy of doctors and others. The sensationalism, not only with which they treat the whole 'bad debate performance' issue, got very tiresome. But their incessant attempts to drum up more by repeated questions that Jean-Pierre explicitly stated she could not answer, became downright annoying.

Frankly, I have not seen a more skilled, articulate, clear, and even-handed press secretary as far back as I can remember. After she repeatedly explained the limitations on names of doctors, "for security reasons," and for their right to privacy, finally fed up with the harassment, she eloquently articulated the boundaries of civility beyond which their inquisitorial attempts she would not tolerate. I won't even go into the content of the questioning; it was all about demanding intimate details of the president's health, legitimate in general and in the specific circumstances. But the rabid-dog repetitiousness, ignoring the boundaries initially set and repeatedly reaffirmed, meant that I could have watched five minutes and gotten all the information that took a half hour to journalistically litigate.

Oh, by the way, it came out in the publicly available medical exam report that Joe has peripheral neuropathy in his feet. I can relate. It is quite annoying and often painful, and sometimes makes walking a bit awkward. But I can assure you it has no bearing on my 'cognitive performance' or ability to do any job other than a 100-meter dash (which I would do fine, but only on my bicycle). The New York Times had completely bungled its own reporting by failing to check the White House visitors log, which would have revealed that on most of the visits of the neurologist to work with damaged veterans, Joe was out of town, nullifying its innuendo of possible Biden Parkinson's disease.

That new publishing company, *Omega Publishers*, which will publish *Holding It Together: Social Control in an Age of Great Transformation*, under its imprint, Bear Claw Press™, is formed. Launch Date for the book is now set, as my energy after that nasty shingles episode is almost 100%. The book cover and interior design are done and almost all pre-publication reviews are in. The publication date is now set for July 26, 2024. We continue learning a great deal about the rapidly changing publishing business. Ben Franklin would be amazed.

My eBook ***HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto*** remains available as a **free** download from [Kindle Unlimited](#). The regular Kindle eBook price is \$6.99. Please give it a rating/review on [GoodReads.com](#). Also, please [review and rate](#) *Hopeful Realism* on its Amazon page. You can do so by clicking the button on the lower left of the book's Amazon page below "Customer Reviews," and say a few words about what you think about the issues and how I frame them.

Note: Past issues of this Newsletter are available, archived on my web site:

<https://thehopefulrealist.com/hopeful-realist-newsletter/>

LOOK UP! A Bi-weekly Featured Commentary

The Hard Part: Societal Transformation... The 'environmental movement' has had a tough go from the start. The whole idea of exercising restraint is anathema to the industrial consumer culture, which was ingrained in the minds of Americans since before Thorstein Veblen labeled the burgeoning consumer culture "conspicuous consumption" at the beginning of the twentieth century. The 'movement' had a very hard time gaining a foothold early on when corporations gave environmentalists token support in exchange for leaving them alone on the really big matters. Well, it has gone much farther than that.

My good friend, colleague, former grad student, and sometimes mentor, Derrick Jones, reminded me of the blog post I did September 16, 2014 (OMG, that's almost a decade ago) that I titled "Climate Science or Social Science?" My point was that we know a great deal about climate change and the damage it can do and is already doing at exponentially growing rates of acceleration. Further, for that reason we have all the technical knowledge to eliminate all carbon emissions and other ecologically destructive activity of the consumer-industrial political economy. But we do not. Why?

Because the so called "elephant in the room" that nobody seems able to see is that the biggest problem we have is not physical-technical, and it is far bigger than a 'problem' that our present system to solve. In fact, it is not a problem at all, it is a fundamental predicament that reaches deeply into the lives of everyone. Our fundamental predicament is that 'we' cannot 'fix' the climate emergency by any technical means alone. Eliminating fossil fuels means that almost all operations of every institution, including every business or corporation, and every level of government from local village to the federal 'deep state' (if you will), must be transformed in a way that allows society to function on a much smaller input of energy.

Unfortunately, we have relied far too long on the one energy source that is more energy dense than any of the clean renewable sources available today. We can neither ramp up the construction of new, putatively safer, nuclear power plants, nor build out the many (untested) carbon capture technologies at sufficient scale to replace current levels of energy consumption, or clean enough carbon from the atmosphere, before the entire Earth System collapses before

our eyes—which of course means that our social systems will collapse right along with their global habitat.

On top of that, the fossil fuel corporations, their industrial allies, and the complex system of think tanks, lobbying operations, and other propaganda programs, have kept the so-called “climate debate” from facing the facts by various deft distortions of language and politics. That is why the featured book, *The Language of Climate Politics*, in this issue of *The Hopeful Realist Newsletter* is so important. It directly confronts the fossil-fuel domination of the US national narrative on climate, in various blunt and subtle ways, each of which prevents rational discussion and decision making on what must be done to save ourselves from societal chaos and even potential species extinction. ‘We’ are victims of the corrupt perpetrators of the climate emergency, not its authors, who cleverly blame the people for the system that they drive and the deceit that they have consciously orchestrated for decades.

Today’s Featured Image:

Propaganda can take many forms. Here, the idea that women can and need to do the physical jobs formerly limited to men was a motivator for women to join the World War II mobilization of manufacturing for the war.



Propaganda: “Rosie the Riveter”

Image credit: National Archives

On the other hand, the propaganda by the fossil fuel industry is far more subtle, penetrating the climate narrative to turn it away from the very core necessity of addressing the climate emergency: the New

Great Transformation of industrial modernity into an ecological civilization—an idea that is anathema to its profit and power.

Books and other Sources Related to the New Great Transformation

This is a brand new book that discusses in detail many things that should have been central to the national discourse decades ago. We must ask why no progress has been made to lower carbon emissions, the primary cause of climate chaos, along with diverse other forms of ecological damage all over the world. The answer is both incredibly simple and complex. Decades of fossil-fuel funded think tanks, lobbying operations, and political influence have framed the so-called 'climate debate' within language forms that keep discussion and policy from facing the hard truth that we cannot afford to tolerate fossil-fueled energy any more; it will soon destroy the conditions required for human and many other life forms.

Genevieve Guenther. 2024. *The Language of Climate Politics: Fossil-Fuel Propaganda and How to Fight It*. New York: Oxford University Press.

It is obvious, even before reading the detailed analysis in this book, with the entire national discourse around climate change being infused and corrupted by fossil-fuel propaganda, that the only way out of this global predicament is to fight the dominance of the fossil fuel industry and to replace the government elites that support it.

Quotable Quotes

I only received a copy of *The Language of Climate Politics* a couple of days ago, and have just started reading it. I have already found several quotable quotes. Here is a sample:

The “we” responsible for climate change is a fictional construct, one that is distorting and dangerous...the word “we” provides political cover for the people who are happy to destroy the livable planet to gain more profit and power.

~ Genevieve Guenther

I cannot count the number of otherwise well-meaning people who attribute the climate crisis to the 'behavior' that **“we”** engage in. Just like our 'carbon footprint,' “we” is a construction that shifts attention and blame for our predicament to everybody, conveniently diffusing blame for what very particular financial and corporate elites decide about the economy and the energy system we live within. Time to wake up to the hierarchy of power that “they” control. The vast majority of “we” have little or no influence over the decisions that the power elites make. The only way we can actually count is to organize a movement to transform our societies for survival!

See you in two weeks. Meanwhile, stay safe, say hello to a neighbor or stranger, check out my blog posts at [The Hopeful Realist.com](https://TheHopefulRealist.com) and read [HOPEFUL REALISM: A Climate Manifesto](#).