

What is Hope? Or Do You Need a Little Darkness to Get You Going?

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Seamus Heaney wrote that “hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.” This paper explores the theme of hopefulness in the context of climate change and its interconnectedness with other climate justice issues. It examines the challenges we face through various lenses, including history, science, psychology, religion, and politics, but mostly it focuses on the potential for positive change, how we talk about these things, and the power of human resilience.

I critique pessimistic narratives from catastrophists suggesting that while their warnings are dire, they also inspire action and mobilization. While acknowledging the daunting challenges ahead, the paper argues that humanity can address climate change through innovation, collaboration, and a shift in consciousness. This paper relies on hundreds of hours of qualitative interviews/conversations with activists, artists, academics, scientists, and changemakers and emphasizes the importance of hope as a driving force for change. It cites examples of past and current social movements as evidence of humanity's ability to overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges.

Drawing on the words of Alica Garza and Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, who believe that love and compassion are essential in confronting climate change, I argue that by fostering a deeper connection with each other and the planet, we can create a more sustainable and resilient future. This calls for a shift in perspective, from one of fear, despair and darkness, to one of hope and optimism. It suggests that by embracing hope and working together, humanity can overcome the challenges of climate change as well as other climate justice issues and create a more sustainable and equitable world for future generations - one conversation at a time.

Some of the interviewees/participants that influenced this work include: Al Gore, Alejandro Frid, Andrew Hoffman, Balgis Osman Elisha, Barbara Findlay, Bob Turner, Brian Stafford, Chad Frischmann, Chief Robert Joseph, David Patterson, Colette Wabnitz, Connie Zweig, Corey Nathan, David Suzuki, David Whyte, Eric Peterson, Gabrielle Hecht, Geoff Dembicki, James Hogan, Jan Fook, Jason W. Moore, Jessie Sutherland, Jiaying Zhao, John Englander, Kari Norgaard, Katharine Hayhoe, Kelly Oliver, Ken Berlin, Kresse Wesling, Lynne Quarmby, Margaret Wheatley, Michael Challenger, Michael Mann, Naom Klein, Naomi Oreskes, Nick Enfield, Roy Scranton, Sara Harris, Senator Rosa Galvez, Tero Mustonen, Teun van Dijk, Torrance Coste, Tzaporah Berman, Vanessa Faloye, Vanessa Timmer, and Wendy Smith

“The Conversation Lab” airs on campus and community radio stations in Canada; Podcasts are available at <https://www.spreaker.com/podcast/the-conversation-lab--3522143> As well as “Climate Change and the many faces of Denial” podcast: <https://www.spreaker.com/podcast/climate-change-the-many-faces-of-denial--5670886>

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