

# HUMANISTS AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS 4 FUTURE

## STATEMENT BY HUMANISTS AND SOCIAL SCIENTISTS IN SUPPORT OF GLOBAL YOUTH UPRISING FOR CLIMATE ACTION

“You say you love your children above all else, and yet you’re stealing their future in front of their very eyes.... We cannot solve the crisis without treating it like a crisis.” - Greta Thunberg, COP 24, UN Climate Summit, 2018, Katowice, Poland

As educators and researchers, we are committed to exploring the most challenging questions and responsibilities in communities of learners and researchers. Our work gives us the privilege to interact on a daily basis with young people. We take deep inspiration from the international mobilization they are leading, and we join them in their refusal to accept the lack of action to prevent climate catastrophe.

Acknowledging Aldo Leopold’s insight that “one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds” (1949), and persuaded by ample experience that a community can help us overcome this solitude and address the grief, anxiety, and anger caused by this “world of wounds,” we declare our support for the Fridays for Future movement,<sup>1</sup> as well as Scientists for Future,<sup>2</sup> Psychologists for Future,<sup>3</sup> and a growing number of groups engaged in this insurgent, international youth-led movement for climate justice.

As scholars of the humanities and social sciences, we study and teach critical analysis of political, economic, psychological, cultural, ecological, legal, and global power relations; of the obscene disparity of resources between rich and poor countries, communities and individuals; of the historical, political, and psychological causes of discrimination, racism, and genocide; and of the power of social movements to instigate positive change non-violently by withholding consent and cooperation, as did the US Civil Rights movement.

These analyses are driven by fundamental moral and ethical questions that should now profoundly inform how we address the climate crisis and the need for climate justice. Counting ourselves among the growing number of scholars studying and teaching how the climate crisis (catastrophe would not be too strong a word) is anticipated, examined, and reflected on in the social world and in cultural productions such as literature, film, art, and critical theory, we witness how this crisis is shaping the collective unconscious in the dystopian narratives that drive an important segment of popular culture. Our disciplines also have great potential for nurturing the languages of imagination that give voices to living creatures’ – including humans’ – pain, despair, and sorrow. Those languages are needed now more than

ever for envisioning and creating a world in which climate justice is a foundation of our communities – locally, nationally, and internationally.

The scientific case for urgent climate action is undeniable. To cite just the most recent grim findings: the latest IPCC report shows how warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius will create climate chaos;<sup>4</sup> the IPBES Extinction Report warns that biodiversity is declining globally at unprecedented rates, with one million species facing extinction;<sup>5</sup> and UNEP’s 2018 Emissions Gap Report reveals that the Paris process is falling woefully short of what is needed to stay below maximum warming of +1.5°C or even +2°C,<sup>6</sup> a fact that corresponds to this year’s record high measurement of 415 parts per million of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere (the highest level in 800,000 years).<sup>7</sup>

These facts are reaching our students and young people around the world. The climate crisis pushes many of them toward anxiety, and some of them to reactionary extremism, melancholia, and even despair.<sup>8</sup> It also drives their demands for ambitious climate policy at every scale, for curricula relevant to their changing world, and for climate justice in all of its forms, especially intergenerational climate justice.

As educators, we acknowledge their anguish, for they will inherit the dire consequences of failed climate action and rightly perceive that the possibility of such a failure presents a massive threat to their lives, their world, and their futures. Failure to act also constitutes a violation of their human right to environmental well-being.

We are ready to join all those committed to remaking the world in the image of climate justice — a dream that we know is possible because we already see it emerging concretely in conversations and initiatives like Fridays for Future, the Sunrise Movement,<sup>9</sup> the Climate Mobilization,<sup>10</sup> the Youth Climate Strike,<sup>11</sup> the Green New Deal,<sup>12</sup> Johan Rockström et al.’s Roadmap for rapid decarbonization,<sup>13</sup> Extinction Rebellion,<sup>14</sup> and many more.

By our signatures, we commit ourselves to solidarity with these movements and initiatives and to directing the rich resources of critical analysis and creative imagination to vigorously support their demands in our teaching, scholarship, and practice.

SEPTEMBER 2019

---

#### SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/about>

<sup>2</sup> <https://scientistsforfuture.org/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://psychologistsforfuture.org/en/>

<sup>4</sup> Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, <https://www.ipcc.ch/sr15/>

<sup>5</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): <https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Environment Programme Emissions Gap Report: <https://www.unenvironment.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2018>

---

<sup>7</sup> For the Scripps Institute Keeling Curve see:

<https://scripps.ucsd.edu/programs/keelingcurve/2019/06/04/animation-of-keeling-curve-history-updated-to-include-2019-milestone/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/how-climate-change-affects-mental-health-835807/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.theclimatemobilization.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.youthclimatestrikeus.org/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.sunrisemovement.org/gnd>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.iicat.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Johan-Rockstro%CC%88m-A-Roadmap-for-Rapid-Decarbonization.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <https://rebellion.earth/the-truth/about-us/>

---

**Until October 1, 2019 signed by:**

Elisabeth Weber, Professor of German Studies and Comparative Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara

John Foran, Professor of Sociology and Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Richard Widick, Sociologist, Orfalea Center for Global & International Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Devin A. Rice, Documentary Filmmaker and Composer

Sarah Jaquette Ray, Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, Humboldt State University

Mark Stemen, Professor, Department of Geography and Planning, CSU, Chico

Nicole Seymour, Associate Professor of English, California State University, Fullerton

David Pellow, Professor and Chair of Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Melody Jue, Assistant Professor of English, University of California, Santa Barbara

Daniel Fernandez, Professor, School of Natural Sciences, California State University, Monterey Bay

Amanda Baugh, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, California State University, Northridge

Ken Hiltner, Professor, Environmental Humanities, University of California, Santa Barbara

Ryan Alaniz, Associate Professor of Sociology, California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo

Stephanie LeMenager, Moore Professor of English and Environmental Studies, University of Oregon

Richard Falk, Milbank Professor of International Law Emeritus, Princeton University & Visiting Professor, Istinye University, Istanbul.

Julie A. Carlson, Professor of English, University of California, Santa Barbara

Thomas Macho, Professor, Director, Internationales Forschungszentrum Kulturwissenschaften, Kunstuniversität Linz in Wien, Vienna

Elizabeth Rottenberg, Professor of Philosophy, DePaul University, Chicago

Sara Pankenier Weld, Associate Professor of Russian and Comparative Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara

Christina Vagt, Assistant Professor of Germanic and Slavic Studies, Comparative Literature, and European Media Studies, University of California Santa Barbara

Catherine Nesci, Professor of French & Comparative Literature, University of California Santa Barbara

Gabriele Schwab, Distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and Anthropology, University of California, Irvine

---

Jane O. Newman, Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, University of California, Irvine

Hent de Vries, Paulette Goddard Professor of the Humanities, Professor of Religious Studies, German, Comparative Literature, and Affiliated Professor of Philosophy, New York University & Director, School of Criticism and Theory, Cornell University

Bishnupriya Ghosh, Professor, English and Global Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Mayfair Yang, Professor of Religious Studies and East Asian Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

John H. Smith, Professor of German, Department of European Languages and Studies, University of California, Irvine

Amy Proppen, Associate Professor, Writing Program, UC Santa Barbara

Kai Evers, Associate Professor of German, University of California, Irvine

Rochelle Tobias, Professor of German, Johns Hopkins University

Sherene Seikaly, Department of History, University of California, Santa Barbara

Gil Anidjar, Department of Religion, Columbia University

Lisa Hajjar, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jennifer Holt, Associate Professor of Film and Media Studies University of California, Santa Barbara

Jennifer Ballengee, Martha A. Mitten Professor of Liberal Arts, Towson University

Claudio Fogu, Associate Professor of Italian Studies, UC Santa Barbara

Dawne McCance, Distinguished Professor, University of Manitoba

Harold Marcuse, Professor of History, University of California, Santa Barbara

Stephanie L. Batiste, Associate Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara

Rachel Bowlby Professor of Comparative Literature, University College London

Susan Derwin, Professor, Comparative Literature and German, Director, Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, University of California, Santa Barbara

Roger O. Friedland, Emeritus Professor of Religion and Sociology

Michael G. Levine, Professor of German and Comparative Literature, Rutgers University

Sean D. Kirkland, Associate Professor of Ancient Greek Philosophy, DePaul University

Daniel Martini, Teaching Assistant, PhD candidate, Comparative Literature, University of California, Santa Barbara

Peter Sturman, Professor, Department of History of Art and Architecture, Department of East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies

William Powell, Emeritus Professor of East Asian Studies and Religious Studies and Research Professor, University of California, Santa Barbara

Geoffrey Winthrop-Young, Professor of German, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Bhaskar Sakar, Chair and Associate Professor, Film and Media Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Sebastian Ureta, Associate Professor, Sociology Department, Universidad Alberto Hurtado, Santiago, Chile

David Shaw, Right Livelihood College Coordinator, University of California, Santa Cruz

---

Leah Temper, McGill University

Joel D Wainwright, Professor, Geography, Ohio State

Molly Talcott, Professor of Sociology, California State University, Los Angeles

Linda Williams, Professor emerita, Film and Media/Rhetoric, University of California, Berkeley

Ann Bermingham, Research Professor, History of Art and Architecture, University of California Santa Barbara

Ari Lehtinen, Professor, Department of Geographical and Historical Studies, University of Eastern Finland

Hilal Elver, Law Professor, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, and Global Distinguished Fellow at Food Law and Policy Center, University of California, Los Angeles Law School

Michael Briguglio, Senior Lecturer, Sociology Department, University of Malta

Rod Bantjes, Professor of Sociology, St. Francis Xavier University

Mathias Nilges, Professor of English, St. Francis Xavier University, Canada

E. Ann Kaplan, Distinguished Professor Emerita, Stony Brook University

Jack A. Goldstone, Hazel Professor of Public Policy, George Mason University

Joel Neville Anderson, Visiting Assistant Professor of Cinema Studies and Film, Purchase College, State University of New York

Dr. Chris Frazer, Associate Professor of History, St. Francis Xavier University

Myrna Margulies Breitbart, Emerita Professor of Geography & Urban Studies, Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

Joshua Mullenite, Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Culture and Economy, Wagner College, Staten Island, New York

Neil Nunn, PhD Candidate, Geography and Planning, University of Toronto

Elizabeth Currans, Associate Professor and Department Head (Interim), Women's and Gender Studies, Eastern Michigan University

Eva-Maria Swidler, Environmental Historian, Goddard College

David Wills, Professor of French and Comparative Literature, Brown University

Rai Clegg, Graduate Student Researcher, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Dawn Kotowicz, Marine Research Associate/Marine Affairs Instructor, University of Rhode Island

Gregory Hillis, Continuing Lecturer, Department of Religious Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Derek Gregory, Peter Wall Distinguished Professor, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

Elliot Wolfson, Professor, Marsha and Jay Glazer Endowed Chair in Jewish Studies, University of California, Santa Barbara

Peter A. Thompson, Senior Lecturer in Media Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

Cathy Caruth, Frank H. T. Rhodes Professor of Humane Letters, Cornell University

Jean Beaman, Department of Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jeni Caruana, Artist

Shepherd Urenje, Visby, Sweden

---

Ashli Mullen, Doctoral Researcher, Sociology, University of Glasgow

Jennifer L. Culbert, Associate Professor, Political Science, Johns Hopkins University

Alesia Maltz, Professor of Environmental Studies, Antioch University New England

Marisa Elena Duarte, Assistant Professor, School of Social Transformation, Arizona State University

Nancy Holmstrom, Professor Emerita of Philosophy, Rutgers University

Terry Wotherspoon, Professor of Sociology, University of Saskatchewan

Dr Laurence Cox, Associate Professor in Sociology, National University of Ireland Maynooth

Scott Prudham, Professor, Department of Geography and Planning, School of the Environment, University of Toronto

Matt LaVine, Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, State University of New York at Potsdam, New York

Alyssa Murray, State University of New York at Potsdam, New York

Marianne Hebert, Librarian, State University of New York at Potsdam, New York

Holly Chambers, Senior Assistant Librarian, State University of New York at Potsdam, New York

Christian Kerschner, Economist, Assistant Professor, MODUL University Vienna, Department of Sustainability, Governance and Methods

Joseph Vogl, Professor at Humboldt-University, Berlin, and Permanent Visiting Professor at Princeton University, USA

Ivo Ponocny, Professor, Department for Sustainability, Governance, and Methods at MODUL University Vienna

Heather Sullivan-Catlin, Ph.D., Chair, Dept. of Environmental Studies, Professor, Dept. of Sociology & Criminal Justice, Co-chair, President's Sustainability Team, State University of New York at Potsdam, New York

Rich Appelbaum, MacArthur Chair in Global and International Studies and Sociology, co-PI at the NSF-funded Center for Nanotechnology in Society, University of California, Santa Barbara

Dr. David Bugg, Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice, research focus on the contributions environmental issues make to international organized crime activities, State University of New York, Potsdam, New York

Flora Leventis, Assistant Professor of Economics and Finance, The American College of Greece

Paul Portelli, Actor, Triq Birkirkara, Malta

Thomas D. Beamish, Professor of Sociology, University of California, Davis

Jini Watson, Associate Professor, English and Comparative Literature, New York University

Rebecca J. Sheehan, in the Sociology of Gender, Sociology Department, Macquarie University, Sydney