Decades of Distraction: How the United States Ignores Climate Change

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Decades of Distraction

Climate Change Timeline

Kaitlyn Sheehan

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Sponsor: Judith Swift, Communication Studies, Coastal Institute
Purpose

This project was completed as Senior Honors Thesis Project for the University of Rhode Island. As a requirement of the program, each graduating senior must complete a project of their own that meets the University's requirements. The purpose of my project was to highlight the lack of attention that climate change receives in the media; and hopefully incentivize journalists to increase the communication regarding climate change and users to pay greater attention to the topic. Throughout history there have been hundreds of discoveries, reports, and announcements that have been released regarding climate change, yet they hardly gain any traction in mainstream media. Oftentimes, any climate change announcement or discovery is overshadowed by pop culture, political, or economical events, wars, or catastrophes such as storms- even those that are linked in intensity to climate change.

To illustrate this, I conducted research to create a universal timeline of all major climate change milestones. I arranged them in chronological order (all climate change milestones are depicted in red). Then, I gathered all non-related events that demanded consumer attention instead of climate change reports, announcements, events, etc. There are a large amount of climate change milestones, yet only a hand-few are on the radar of the average citizen.

Typically, those who are not avid science readers can be confused and discouraged when reading scientific articles and reports. This timeline removes that barrier, as it provides general information that is understandable for all reading levels. Pictures were incorporated periodically throughout the timeline to transport the reader back to the moment they heard the news story- climate change related or otherwise.

The goal is to have the reader recognize the cycle that has continued for hundreds of years. It is evident that climate change is not going away, despite the lack of press it receives. Thus, we must begin to focus on climate change, give it the attention it deserves, and stop focusing on less important or trivial “news” events. This timeline serves as an educational resource by providing basic information about environmental policies, climate reports and milestones.
EFFECTIVE WAYS OF STUDYING BEFORE EXAMS

CLIMATE CHANGE TIMELINE 1690-1890

Decades of Distraction

1699: French settlers move into Mississippi and Louisiana

1701: War of the Spanish Succession begins

1752: Benjamin Franklin invents the lightning rod

1772: Invention of the Motorwagen

1773: Boston Tea Party

1776: Declaration of Independence is signed

1778: George Washington is elected President of the United States

1803: U.S. negotiates Louisiana Purchase from France

1812: War of 1812 begins

1824: Earth’s Natural Greenhouse Effect

1829: Water Vapor Create the Greenhouse Effect

1838: Trail of Tears—Cherokee nation forced to give up its lands

1849: California Gold Rush

1861: Beginning of the Civil War

1862: Union Pacific Railroad complete

1879: Thomas Edison invented the lightbulb

1886: Statue of Liberty is given to the United States from France

1886: Invention of the Motorwagen

• Karl Benz invents and unveils the Motorwagen. This is often regarded as the first, true automobile.

1712: Invention of the Steam Engine

• Thomas Newcomen invents the first widely used steam engine. This paves the way for the Industrial Revolution and the abundant use of coal.

1770: Boston Massacre

1775: American Revolution still going on

1799: Rosetta Stone is discovered in Egypt

1793: Eli Whitney invents the cotton gin

1804: Lewis and Clark expedition begins

1825: completion of the first transcontinental railroad

1862: Union Pacific Railroad complete

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1803: U.S. negotiates Louisiana Purchase from France

1824: Earth’s Natural Greenhouse Effect

• French physicist Joseph Fourier describes the Earth’s natural “greenhouse effect”

1829: Water Vapor Create the Greenhouse Effect

• Irish physicist John Tyndall shows that water vapor and certain other gases create the greenhouse effect.

1838: Trail of Tears—Cherokee nation forced to give up its lands

1849: California Gold Rush

1861: Beginning of the Civil War

1862: Union Pacific Railroad complete

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Effectiveness of Studying Before Exams

Climate Change Timeline 1891-1940

Decades of Distraction

1891: Basketball is invented
1896: Plessy vs Ferguson decision by the Supreme Court

1900
Knut Angstrom Discovers that CO2 Absorbs the Infrared Spectrum
- Knut Angstrom discovers that, at even the tiny concentrations found in the atmosphere, carbon dioxide strongly absorbs parts of the infrared spectrum.
- This shows that a trace gas can produce greenhouse warming.

1901: The first major oil discovery in Texas occurs
1902: Cuba gains independence from the United States
1905: Theodore Roosevelt is inaugurated for his second term
1915: Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas A. Watson conduct first telephone conversation
1916: Sinking of the Lusitania
1917: Zimmerman Telegram is intercepted
1918: Spanish Flu epidemic
1919: Prohibition
1920-1925
Cheap Energy Era Begins
- The Texas and Persian Gulf Oil Fields open, and begin the era of cheap energy.

1922: Teapot Dome Scandal
1929: The Great Depression begins
1930: Dustbowl
1938
Guy Callendar Proves Temperatures Have Risen
- British Engineer Guy Stewart Callendar uses records from 147 weather stations around the world to show that temperatures have risen over the previous century.
- CO2 concentrations had also risen, he suggests that the increase in CO2 caused the warming.

1939: Manhattan Project Begins
1940
**EFFECTIVE WAYS OF STUDYING BEFORE EXAMS**

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

**TIMELINE 1941-1960**

**Decades of Distraction**

- **1945:** New Studies Prove CO2 Could Build Up in Atmosphere
  - Thanks to an increase in government funding, new studies were conducted that demonstrated that CO2 could build up in the atmosphere and bring warming.
  - The Office of Naval Research funded basic research on climate change because of the Cold War. They wanted scientists present in case of a national emergency.
  - This research included the disposal of nuclear debris and deep ocean circulation.

- **1956:** Roger Revelle and Hans Seuss Discovery
  - U.S. Oceanographer Roger Revelle and chemist Hans Seuss show that seawater will not be able to absorb the additional CO2 that has entered the atmosphere, like many have predicted.
  - Revelle writes: “Human beings are now carrying out a large scale geophysical experiment...”

- **1956:** Gilbert Plass Analyzes Infrared Absorption
  - U.S. Researcher Gilbert Plass utilizes new technology, including early computers, to analyze the infrared absorption of various gases.
  - He concludes that doubling CO2 concentrations would increase temperatures by 3-4 degrees Celsius.

- **1956:** Climate Change Makes the New York Times
  - An article is published in the New York Times stating that a warmer climate on Earth may be due to more CO2 in the air.
  - There will be long-lasting environmental changes. The article also predicted the world’s future dependence on coal and oil.

- **1957:** Charles Keeling Begins Measuring Atmospheric CO2
  - Charles David Keeling starts taking systematic measurements of atmospheric carbon dioxide at Mauna Loa in Hawaii and in Antarctica.
  - He is taking these measurements using tools that he developed himself.
  - Within four years the project provides the first unequivocal proof that CO2 concentrations are rising. This project still continues today.

- **1957:** Sputnik 1 & 2 launched

- **1958:** Montgomery Bus boycott

- **1958:** NASA Project Mercury

- **1958:** IBM introduces the first commercial computer

- **1959:** Beginning of the Cold War

- **1959:** Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka

- **1959:** John F Kennedy elected President

- **1960:** Warsaw Pact formed

- **1960:** Little Rock integration

- **1960:** New Studies Prove CO2 Could Build Up in Atmosphere

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CLIMATE CHANGE TIMELINE 1961-1980

Decades of Distraction

1961: Freedom rides
1962: Cuban Missile Crisis
1963: March on Washington
1964: Civil Rights Act
1969: Apollo 11
1970: Kent State shootings
1972: The Watergate Scandal
1973: Roe v. Wade
1975: Vietnam Prisoners of War released
1980: Three Mile Island nuclear accident
1981: U.S. hostages taken in Iran

First UN Environmental Conference
- It later became known as the Stockholm Conference. It was held June 5-16, 1972.
- It set out principles for the preservation and enhancement of the human environment.
- A plan of action was also created that included international recommendations.
- This conference raised the issue of climate change for the first time.

Al Gore Enters the Spotlight
- Al Gore starts to receive attention regarding his lectures and viewpoints on CO2
- He is re-elected to Congress and holds the first congressional hearings on climate change
- He co-sponsors hearings on toxic waste and global warming

Wallace Broecker Popularizes the Term "Global Warming"
- U.S. scientist Wallace Broecker introduces and popularizes the term "global warming" in his published paper titled "Climactic Change: Are We on the Brink of a Pronounced Global Warming?"
- He becomes one of the first scientists that sounded the alarm about climate change.
- Broecker predicted that while global climate had experienced a natural cycle of cooling, planetary temperatures would soon rise because of the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere.

1963: Al Gore starts to receive attention regarding his lectures and viewpoints on CO2
1965: The first U.S. troops arrive in Vietnam
1968: Woodstock
1976: Barbara Walters becomes the first female nightly network news anchor
1980: Kent State shootings
1981: Three Mile Island nuclear accident

U.S. President's Advisory Committee Panel Warning
- The panel warned that the greenhouse effect is concerning and that the United States should start paying attention to it.
- The first U.S. troops arrive in Vietnam
- Roe v. Wade
- Vietnam Prisoners of War released

Climate Change Announcement
Long Term News Story
Mainstream News
Gun Violence
National Threat/Safety

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**CLIMATE CHANGE TIMELINE 1981-1990**

**Decades of Distraction**

1981: 
- Start of the AIDS epidemic

1983: 
- Sally Ride is the first U.S. woman astronaut

1984: 
- Famine in Ethiopia

1985: 
- Press Stops Covering Climate Change

1986: 
- Chernobyl

1987: 
- Montreal Protocol Created

1989: 
- Exxon Valdez Oil Spill

1990: 
- IPCC Produces First Assessment Report

**Hole in the Ozone Layer**
- Joe Farman, Brian Gardiner and Jonathan record the annual depletion of the ozone above the Antarctic.
- This discovery appeared in Nature in May of 1985.
- Concern was directed towards skin cancer, crop yield, autoimmune issues and blindness instead of global warming.

1987: 
- Ronald Reagan is President - vows to eliminate restrictions on coal, opening lands for mining, and shrinking the EPA

1988: Warmest Year on Record
- The official warmest year on record, as a result the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is formed to assess evidence on climate change
- Scientist James Hansen makes headlines again in a Senate testimony when he says that the greenhouse effect has been detected and is changing climate

1989: 
- The Falling of the Berlin Wall

1989: Scientists Asked to Change Their Results
- The White House asks scientists to change their findings on studies relating to global warming.
- NOAA admits that their results were altered also.
- James Hansen was asked by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to demote his own scientific findings to “estimates” from models that were “evolving” and unreliable.

1990: IPCC Produces First Assessment Report
- The first report concludes that temperatures have risen by 0.3-0.6 degrees celsius over the last century, humanity’s emissions are adding to the atmosphere and are expected to result in warming.

**TIMELINE 1981-1990**

1983-1987: Iran Contra Affair

**Press Stops Covering Climate Change**
- The first report concludes that temperatures have risen by 0.3-0.6 degrees celsius over the last century, humanity’s emissions are adding to the atmosphere and are expected to result in warming.

**Montreal Protocol Created**
- The Montreal Protocol is a global agreement to protect the stratospheric ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of ozone depleting substances such as CFCs.
EFFECTIVE WAYS OF STUDYING BEFORE EXAMS

CLIMATE CHANGE TIMELINE 1991-2000

Decades of Distraction

1991

Skeptics Weigh in on Warming
- Skeptics claim that 20th century temperature changes are linked back to solar influences.

1992

Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro
- Governments agree on United Framework Convention on climate change.
- The key objective is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentration at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference within the climate system.
- Developed countries agree to return their emissions levels to 1990 levels.

1992: South Africa repeals Apartheid Laws

1993: First World Trade Center bombing

1994: TIME releases "Bengal Tiger Extinction"

1995

IPCC Second Assessment Report
- The balance of evidence suggests a discernible human influence on earth’s climate-first definitive statement that humans are responsible for climate change

1995: Kyoto Protocol
- Developed nations pledge to reduce emissions by an average of 5% between 2008-2012.
- The United States Senate states it will not ratify the treaty.

1997

June 1995: Oklahoma City bombing

1999: John F. Kennedy Jr., his wife, and her sister are lost at sea when a plane he was piloting disappears

1999: Human population reaches 6 billion

1999: First World Trade Center bombing

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1997

Kyoto Protocol
- Developed nations pledge to reduce emissions by an average of 5% between 2008-2012.
- The United States Senate states it will not ratify the treaty.

1997: Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro

1998

Warmest Year on Record
- 1998 is the warmest year on record (to date). Later surpassed multiple times.

1998: Hockey Stick Graph Published by Michael Mann
- The first “Hockey Stick Graph” is published.
- This indicated that modern day temperature rise within the northern hemisphere is unusual compared within the last 1000 years.
- Many scientists were skeptical and rejected the graph.

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1999: Climate Change Announcement

Gun Violence

Long Term News Story

Mainstream News

Climate Change Announcement

Gun Violence

Long Term News Story

Mainstream News
EFFECTIVE WAYS OF STUDYING BEFORE EXAMS

CLIMATE CHANGE

TIMELINE 2001-2006

Decades of Distraction

Jan 2001: Earthquake hits India and kills over 20,000 people

MARCH 2001

U.S. Will Not Implement Kyoto Protocol

- President George W. Bush announced that the U.S. would not implement the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

2001

IPCC Third Assessment

- Third Assessment Report finds new and stronger evidence that humanity’s emissions of greenhouse gases are the main cause of warming seen in the second half of the 20th century.

September 2001: 9/11 Attacks on the World Trade Center

The U.S. declares a war on terrorism. Sets out on Project Enduring Freedom.

2002

2002: Priest pedophilia exposed

2004: Creation of Facebook

UK Prime Minister Sets Priority

- UK Prime Minister Tony Blair places climate change as a priority for his terms as chair of the G8 and president of the EU.

2005

Hurricane Katrina hits the US- initial damage was significant, but aftermath damaged levees that flooded, over 35,000 needed to be rescued

TIME releases “Hurricanes and Global Warming”

OCTOBER 2002

8th Climate of Parties meets in New Delhi

- Set out to form the “Delhi Declaration” that called for developed nations to transfer technology and minimize the impact of climate change on developing countries.

2004: TIME releases “Saving the Big Cats”

Kyoto Protocol Goes into Effect

- The Kyoto Protocol becomes international law for all countries that are still signed.
- The U.S. is heavily criticized for still not participating.

2005: Senate voted to confirm Condoleezza Rice as Secretary of State. She is the first African American and second woman to hold this position.

2006:

President Bush signs a law renewing the Patriot Act

TIME releases “Special Report: Global Warming”

NOVEMBER 2006

Nairobi Climate Conference

- Conference was centered around creating measures and a plan to help developing countries adapt to the negative effects of global warming.
- Set in place criteria for decision making regarding mitigation and adaptation process.

TIME releases “Hurricanes and Global Warming”

2006: Death of Steve Irwin

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CLIMATE CHANGE
TIMELINE 2007-2012

2007
IPCC Fourth Assessment
• IPCC’s fourth assessment report concludes it is more than 90% likely that humanity’s emissions of greenhouse gases are responsible for modern-day climate change.

2008
Keeling Project Results
• 50 years later, the Keeling Project shows that CO2 concentrations have risen from 315 ppm to 380 ppm in 2008.

2009
China becomes the world's biggest greenhouse gas emitter.

DECEMBER 2009
UN Climate Summit in Copenhagen
• 192 governments convene for the UN Climate summit. They leave with a controversial declaration and voluntary framework.
• Set a deadline for countries to put forward pledges of what they were planning to do to cut emissions of CO2 and other heat trapping gasses.

2011
Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the Rise
• Data shows that concentrations of greenhouse gases are rising faster than in previous years.

2012
Arctic Sea ice
• Arctic Sea Ice reaches extent of 3.41 square km.
• This is the record for the lowest summer cover since satellite measurements began in 1979.

April: Shooting at Virginia Tech, 32 killed
2008
Keeling Project Results
• 50 years later, the Keeling Project shows that CO2 concentrations have risen from 315 ppm to 380 ppm in 2008.

January 2009:
Captain Chelsey Sullenberger lands a plane on the Hudson River.

April 2009:
Captain Philipps was taken hostage by Somali Pirates.

April 2009:
IPCC Fourth Assessment

2008- Presidential Election, Obama Elected: He promises to engage with the rest of the world on climate change

TIME releases “War on Global Warming”

2009
NOVEMBER 2009
“Climategate” Happens
• Experts warn that global warming is arriving at a faster and more dangerous pace than anticipated.
• Excerpts from stolen emails of climate scientists fuel public skepticism.
• Emails are downloaded from a server at the University of East Anglia’s Climactic Research Unit.

2009-2010
Fast Start Finance
• Developed countries begin contributing to a three year deal called “Fast Start Finance”.
• The goal is to help them become more “green” and adapt to climate change impacts.
• A way to help finance mitigation.

May 2011:
Osama Bin Laden is killed

December 2012:
Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting (27 killed)

April 2010: BP Oil Spill (recognized as the worst oil spill in the world)

January 2010: Earthquake hits Haiti

2011
Greenhouse Gas Emissions on the Rise
• Data shows that concentrations of greenhouse gases are rising faster than in previous years.

Decades of Distraction

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MAY 2013
The Mauna Loa Observatory Report
- The Mauna Loa Observatory on Hawaii reports that the daily mean concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has surpassed 400ppm for the first time.

SEPTEMBER 2013
IPCC Releases a Report Calling Climate Change "Unequivocal"
- Even if the world begins to moderate greenhouse gas emissions, warming is likely to cross the critical 2°C threshold by the end of the century.
- State that there is no longer room for doubt that climate change was occurring.

2014
IPCC Fifth Assessment Report
- Scientists are now 95% certain that humans are the dominant cause of global warming since the 1950s.
- Anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases are the highest they have ever been throughout history.

2014
Third National Climate Assessment Released
- The report identifies evidence of climate change in every region.
- This report proves that global warming is caused by the burning of fossil fuels.
- Report also touches on stronger weather events have been recorded and are related to human activities.

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2014
The 1.5 Health Report from IPCC
- States that even .5 degrees of warming could negatively impact human health.
- Warming of 1.5°C is not considered safe for most communities, ecosystems, nations.
- Health risks include water insecurity, heat related death, increase in vector-related illnesses.

Decades of Distraction

January 15: President Obama is inaugurated for a second term
April 15: Boston Marathon Bombing
June: Floods in Alberta, Canada

Twitter

November : Whitey Bulger sentenced to life in prison

December: Obama announces US plans to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba

National Threat/Safety
Climate Change Announcement
Gun Violence
Mainstream News
Long Term News Story
CLIMATE CHANGE TIMELINE 2015-2016

Decades of Distraction

JUNE 2015
The West Antarctic Ice Sheet Collapses - Damage is Irreversible
- Report titled "The Great Acceleration". This collapse is projected to cause sea levels to rise up to 4 meters over the next hundred-thousands of years.
- This will also change the coastline across the world.
- June: Charleston Church Shooting

DECEMBER 2015
The Paris Agreement is Signed
- Nations pledge to set targets for their own greenhouse gas cuts and report their progress
- Agree to keep global temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels
- Increase ability for countries to deal with effects of climate change.
- June: China's Stock Market Crashes
- September: Syrian refugee crisis becomes national debate
- October: EPA Accuses Volkswagen of cheating on diesel emissions tests

2015
Mean Global Temperature is Warmest in Thousands of Years
- This was the hottest year on record.
- CO2 levels were also the highest in millions of years at 400 ppm.
- January: Flint Michigan water crisis
- June: Pulse Nightclub shooting
- July: Police shootings caught on video. Alton Sterling and Philando Castile are killed one day after each other

JULY 2016
The Warmest Month Ever Recorded
- This was the warmest month since modern recording started 139 years ago.
- July was 0.84°C hotter than the average from 1951-1981 and 0.11°C hotter than the record that was set in July 2015.

AUGUST 2016
August Ties July As The Warmest Month on Record
- This is the 11th month to break the previous monthly heat record.

DECEMBER 2016
2016 is the Warmest Year on Record
- Earth's surface temperatures were the warmest since record keeping began in 1880.
- Temperatures were 0.99°C warmer than mid-20th century mean.
- Third year in a row to set a new record
- November: Chicago Cubs win the World Series after 108 year curse
- November: Donald Trump wins the presidential election

January 15: Terror attack at French magazine Charlie Hebdo
April: Freddie Gray is killed by police, sparking the Black Lives Matter movement
June: Supreme Court decision to allow same-sex marriage nationwide

CLIMATE CHANGE
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Effectives ways of studying before exams.

Climate Change Timeline 2017-2018

January 20- Donald Trump Inaugurated

 Mueller Investigation begins

 USA Gymnastics Trainer Larry Nassar Sexual Assault Case

 Gains National Attention

 March - Women’s March on Washington

JUNE 2017

US Withdraws from Paris Climate Agreement

- President Trump withdraws the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement.
- President Trump stated that the accord would have cost America trillions of dollars, jobs, and hinder the oil, gas, coal and manufacturing industries.

February- Parkland Shooting

May

June- Families separated at US/Mexico border

July- Brett Kavanaugh nominated, sexual misconduct scandal

OCTOBER 2018

IPCC Special Report- Global Warming of 1.5 Celsius

- 1.5 Celsius is the threshold that the planet cannot cross without facing the worst effects yet of climate change.
- Must stop emitting carbon by 2050.
- Planet has already risen 1 degree Celsius since the Industrial Revolution.

November: Shooting at bar in Thousand Oaks California

December - 372 cases of Measles are confirmed for 2018


2017-2018 Global Climate Report

- 2017 was 0.38-0.48 degrees Celsius above the 1981-2010 average.
- Global sea level was also the highest satellite record.
- CO2 hit a new high record of 405 ppm.

President Trump withdraws the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement.

President Trump stated that the accord would have cost America trillions of dollars, jobs, and hinder the oil, gas, coal and manufacturing industries.

State of the Climate Report (Based of 2017)

- Report led by NOAA that stated that greenhouse gases rose to new record high values in 2017.
- 2017 was the warmest non El-Nino year on record.
- Global average sea level rose to a new record high in 2017.

Second Version of the Fourth National Climate Assessment

- Research conducted by 13 federal agencies & concluded that the world’s temperature is rising and humans are playing a role in it.
- Growing challenges to human health, quality of life, the economy and the environment.
- Knock up to 10% off the size of the American economy by the end of the century.

November:

Gun Violence

National Threat/Safety

Mainstream News

Long Term News Story

Climate Change Announcement

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- Knock up to 10% off the size of the American economy by the end of the century.
Imagine a giant asteroid on a direct collision with Earth. That is the equivalent of what we face now with climate change, yet we dither. –James Hansen

Climate change is not a new concept; scientists have been studying it since the early 19th century. In 1824, French physicist Joseph Fourier described the earth's natural greenhouse effect; however, neither the public nor the scientific community could predict the importance of this early discovery. Nearly 40 years later John Tyndall proved that water vapor and certain other gases created the greenhouse effect. These discoveries were made on the heels of the Industrial Revolution. Just 35 years later, Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius formulated and published the theory that burning fossil fuels would add carbon dioxide to the atmosphere and thus humanity would raise the planet's average temperature.

In addition to industrialization and mobilization, this era produced a definition of what climate change was, beyond just the greenhouse effect. In 1934, measurements showed that the U.S. and North Atlantic Region had warmed significantly during the previous half of the century. This announcement was disregarded for immediate concerns such as the Great Depression and the flu epidemic that killed 50 million people. It was ignored by the scientific community, the media, and the general public; no one understood the looming threat on the horizon. Thus began the pattern of pushing aside climate change for the sake of economic development. Over time America has embraced new technology. As history has progressed the cycle has repeated, and climate change announcements have been dominated by the economy, catastrophes, wars, and epidemics in an ever-expanding mainstream news cycle. The advent of social media added an even greater barrage of distracting news ranging from non-existent weapons of mass destruction to celebrity media mania.

Throughout the course of my research I looked historically at how the development of technology has gone hand-in-hand with the quality of life for Americans, but inversely impacted the climate. The theme throughout history has been consistent. There is a lack of focus on the climate and environment, and an unmatched focus on large scale global events, pop culture, and rewed-up 24/7 news reporting. There have been progressive policies, committees and conferences that have brought about positive change such as the Montreal Protocol, the Kyoto Protocol, the Paris Agreement, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), and the UN Climate Summit to name a few. Climate scientists around the globe have been collaborating to educate the public on the detrimental effect our species is having on the environment.

We are heading towards a global temperature increase of 1.5°Celsius, but we’re on the path to surpass 2° and potentially 3°Celsius. The agriculture industry will suffer as the growing season for crops continues to lengthen, sea-level will continue to rise, and coastal ecosystems and entire communities will be destroyed while natural disasters will increase in intensity and frequency around the world.

Climate change is part of our history, it is impacting our present, and our denial of it stands to destroy our future. As current political, economic and cultural events continue to dominate the news cycle, it seems as though there is little room left for climate change, the tragedy on the horizon. It is critical for America to commit to a moonshot, a Manhattan Project, as another of the great epochs of human intervention and innovation to address climate change. It is time to put aside the ultimately petty distractions and invest in a positive realignment of our resourceful ingenuity and intellectual capacity for the wellbeing of future generations.
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