

# The Obama Priority-Game Can't Be Played With Climate

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Great news: Obama apparently heeds our call not to build new roads. But this article first deals with the ultimate challenge for the new president, and we come up with an historic basis for hope with substance to effect positive change regarding protecting the climate:

As some consumers of serious news are learning, the climate is in such sad shape that there may be no hope for humanity and life as we know it in the not-so-long term.

But today we have our struggles and dreams.

For those who don't just struggle and dream for more material wealth, the prospect of a refreshing new U.S. president is in the front of our minds.

This is a crucial and vulnerable time for everyone, as the new administration takes shape and gives signals to all other sectors.

Meanwhile, for the grassroots activist and the Do-It-Yourselfer, it has always been clear that we'd be falling for a crock of BS if we believe what the corporate media and their allied politicians want us to: the Earth's climate is just one issue out of several.

Wrong. We have to have more than faith and patience when we heard Barack Obama say, when he declared victory on November 4th, the "planet is in peril."

He should back this sentiment up by attending the UN Climate Change meeting in Poland starting next week. He is welcome to do so according to the U.N. Climate Change Secretariat, but Obama's apparently trying not to show up the Bushies. Understandable, but what a super-charger if he changes his mind and goes and urges community action! Oh, to also dream Obama would put the technological fix into perspective with what he knows about oil and petrocollapse. Incidentally, he has demonstrated in a New York Times interview that he knows how food security is perilously dependent on dwindling oil.

On Nov. 18th, Obama told a California conference on climate via video link that "Few challenges facing America -- and the world -- are more urgent than combating climate change." So does this mean some other challenges, if only two or three, are more urgent? Granted, nuclear holocaust could be one. People having homes is of course top priority. That gives us two challenges so far, although if everything involved in having homes comes with baggage to thwart action on global warming, then it's a terminal mistake. At the same conference, Obama said "we will develop clean coal technologies." He must know there is no such thing as clean coal, nor "safe nuclear" (a sop to conservatives?).

If taking action on climate is to be effective, "the economy" has to be second priority. To try to compromise in such a way to somehow favor both, as in letting economic considerations somehow guide society to true climate protection, is nothing other than ecocide. Game over, goodbye life as we know it, hello accelerated extinctions. No green jobs, no green cars. Just the ruins of industrial civilization and the plasticized remains of humans and other predators.

History in the making, repeating itself?

Here's why we might take hope in a President Obama's ability to lead and inspire: First, we acknowledge he got elected as a regular grow-the-economy liberal Democrat. He's against war, but he's for hammering Afghanistan in order to compromise and get into the White House. Understandable. Let's look at what might be a parallel in history, whereby an

establishment-loyal, Cold Warrior and youthful Democrat got elected president and became an active, fearless peace seeker before he was taken out.

John F. Kennedy, following the Cuban missile crisis, "became intent on ending the Cold War by establishing a peaceful relationship with the Soviet Union... he persevered and mandated that all U.S. personnel would be withdrawn from Vietnam; he was determined to never send in combat troops even if this meant defeat. He also refused to intervene militarily in Laos. He exchanged private letters with Khrushchev, which infuriated the CIA, and secretly initiated plans to attain rapprochement with Cuba."

A review of the new book (excerpted above) JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters is about the not-so-well-known side of John F. Kennedy "who changes from a Cold Warrior to an altruistic leader willing to risk his life to ensure that the world's children will not become victims of a nuclear catastrophe." [author: James W. Douglass; review quotes are from Nick Anez on Amazon.com]

One can switch a couple of phrases from that sentence: "Cold Warrior" to "Industrial Greenhouse Compromiser," and "nuclear catastrophe" to "climate catastrophe." Could President Obama be so bold to go against the corporate global warming machine? He has a head start on Kennedy as an activist, having been a civil rights attorney. Let's hope BHO is less and less beholden in his mind to the party machine and its powerful backers. If he does not succeed in doing for the climate what Jimmy Carter tried to do on energy conservation and energy transition -- "the moral equivalent of war" -- then he will be the most visible failure of the last phase of the USA as the climate accelerates its unraveling.

Do we sit on our hands and find out? Hmm, I wonder if we will decide to survive. Well, let's just wait and see how the politicians take care of the hen house; err, the republic and "the planet in peril." We shall see how much we'll have to count on President Obama being a human being first and a political game player second.

Already we have a positive indication that as President he wants road repair, and not more roads -- perhaps Culture Change's efforts to help Obama and his people distinguish between the two approaches have been fruitful already. When we consider every president before him, this reprioritization is a revolutionary departure from wasteful growth and sprawl to more of a maintenance and restoration approach. A halt in road building means a turnaround for expansionist civilization. The hope: "Obama said he intended to put people back to work rebuilding roads and bridges, modernizing schools, building wind farms, solar panels and fuel-efficient cars," in a syndicated news story over the weekend from Agence France-Press. Go Barack! -- and the people will soon be leading you.

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Announcement: On the day Barack Obama was videoconferencing on the climate, Albert Bartlett was honored with the award for Best Magazine Article for his article titled "Why Have Scientists Succumbed to Political Correctness?" The Population Institute's 2008 Global Media Awards covered all media and issued an award for each category in Los Angeles. As spelled out in his article (on the Culture Change website), Dr. Bartlett expresses concern over scientists' identifying overpopulation as a cause of problems in their writings, but ignoring it in their recommendations for solving environmental problems.

[culturechange.org](http://culturechange.org)

Another award winner was Robert Engelman, whose book *More: Population, Nature, and What Women Want* was reviewed on Culture Change by John Wertime -- a must read:

[culturechange.org](http://culturechange.org)

Further reading:

Take the Pledge for Climate Protection / Let the beautiful Earth provide / Ten vital steps to slow global warming and climate destabilization:

[http://culturechange.org/cms/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=201&Itemid=52](http://culturechange.org/cms/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=201&Itemid=52)>  
culturechange.org

Obama orders plan to create 2.5 million new jobs by 2011" Agence France-Presse, Nov. 22, 2008:

zimbio.com/AFP

"Obama administration and eco-hope: business as usual with more road building? " by Jan Lundberg:

culturechange.org

Review of JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters, by James W. Douglass; review by Nick Anez:

amazon.com

Limousine, Midnight Blue: Fifty Frames from the Zapruder Film, by Jamey Hecht:

jameyhecht.com

Second Warmest October for Global Temperatures, from the National Climatic Data Center on Nov. 18, 2008. Analysis: the combined global land and ocean surface average temperature for October 2008 was the second warmest since records began in 1880, and Arctic ice fell to its third lowest level:

boston.com

Obama Not Planning Visit to UN Climate Talks in Poland:

reuters.com

"Obama addresses global warming summit" by Foon Rhee, Boston Globe, Nov. 18, 2008:

boston.com