

FALSE SOLUTIONS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

Geoengineering

Geoengineering techniques do not yet exist, but there are three proposed methods. The first, Solar Radiation Management, is intended to reflect the sunlight back to space to reduce climate change. Carbon Dioxide Removal aims to suck carbon out of the atmosphere and Earth Radiation Management is meant to offset the effects of climate change by allowing heat to escape into space. EJ communities are left out of the talk around geoengineering, and it is favored largely by former climate change deniers and billionaires, specifically in the global North. Geoengineering would have a disproportionate impact on the global south and EJ communities.

Biofuels

Biofuels are made from recently living plant matter and are used to replace other transportation fuels like petroleum. Large quantities of biofuel are made from corn, but other foods that are used to produce biofuel include sugar cane and soybeans. Biofuels are a false solution because they speed up deforestation and cause disputes whether land should be used for food or fuel crops. Biofuels also create competition for resources such as water and food. The increasing use of biofuels causes food costs to increase, especially in developing countries. Like many of these false solutions, biofuels maintain our reliance on dirty energy.

Incineration

Waste-to-Energy is a method of incineration that burns waste at high temperatures, generating electric energy and heat. The main method of incineration uses combustion (a chemical reaction). One type of incineration is called Plasma Arc Recycling. This type of incineration does not use combustion. Instead, the waste is heated at even higher temperatures so the waste melts and vaporizes. In theory, two products come from this process. One is a synga, which is a mixture of carbon monoxide and hydrogen and is used for energy. The other is an aggregate, which is a glass-like material, used for construction. Toxic gases can be found in the synga and the aggregate may have contaminated materials. Incineration has been ineffective at eliminating plastic pollution in numerous countries and is dangerous for human health and marine life. Incinerators can still emit toxins into the air, and have other issues such as toxic flue ash and other hazardous waste. It also violates the principles of Environmental Justice.

Forest Management / REDD and REDD+

Forest Management and REDD and REDD+ is a similar exploitative model to cap and trade, but globalized. Indigenous peoples in primarily the Global South are asked to help plant or replant forests (usually using invasive species) at a massive level so the Global North can keep its pace polluting the air. If the Global North has its way, its plan is to increase the amount of pollution and shift the burden of "saving the planet" on the Global South with this ridiculous scam. Forest Management has heavy corporate interest. REDD and REDD+ has also been the mechanism for massive land grabs and in some cases even evicting indigenous people from their traditional and ancestral lands.

Carbon Markets/Cap and Trade/Cap and Invest

Cap and Trade schemes have been models of exploitation in communities of color and Low Income communities also known as Environmental Justice (EJ) communities in the United States by mainstream green groups (NRDC's Reclaim Program in South Central Los Angeles was one of the first of these programs) with the intent of mass reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. The consequences of this program and others has been an increase in the air contamination in EJ communities because the majority of emission sources are in these areas, a phenomenon EJ communities call hot zones. Carbon Markets continues our reliance on dirty energy. We cannot monetize the air and expect to survive as a species on this planet.

Industrial Carbon Capture and Sequestration (CCS)

This technique captures, transfers and stores carbon dioxide. While it stops some of the CO₂ from polluting, it ignores the root cause of climate change. It delays the transition to renewables and is more expensive than renewables. It promotes increased extraction and pollution of fossil fuels. CCS benefits the fossil fuel industry and keeps us reliant on dirty energy.

Nuclear Energy

The entire lifespan of nuclear energy is one of massive contamination. Uranium mining woefully contaminates with toxins that last hundreds of thousands of years. There are currently over 15,000 abandoned uranium mine sites on Navajo and Hopi lands. There are many more abandoned mines throughout native lands. Nuclear energy is sometimes called the "Clean Energy" by governments, but rest assured that this energy source is not clean and very much the opposite. Nuclear energy plants have been known to leak or come close to meltdowns, there are now radioactive traces in all fish species in the Pacific Ocean from the Fukushima explosion. Indigenous Peoples and their lands are targeted for mining and nuclear waste sites. Currently there are no nuclear waste sites available so most of the waste is being stored on site at the nuclear power plant themselves.

Climate Smart Agriculture

Climate smart agriculture took off from the Global Alliance for Climate Smart Agriculture (GACSA) which is made up of 21 national governments, agribusinesses, and some civil society groups. It is a false solution because instead of reducing pollution at the source, the idea is to take a band-aid approach and plant so called "carbon absorbing plants" and with turning the soil regularly this is supposed to curb harmful air emissions and help cool down the planet. This approach has a heavy corporate influence while ignoring non-corporate farmer and community voices.

Final Thoughts

These False Solutions violate the principles of Environmental Justice (EJ). They maintain our reliance on dirty energy, disproportionately affecting the Global South and Indigenous, EJ/low income communities, and does not address the root cause of climate change. Elected officials need to confront the problem of overconsumption of resources by industrialized nations and the reliance on fossil fuels. The best solution is to switch to renewables immediately. The burden should not be on Indigenous, EJ/low income communities, but Indigenous, EJ/low income communities, and workers should be at the forefront of planning the solutions.

