

## Making Sense of Climate Change Confusion

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“You don’t believe that nonsense, do you?” I was mid-session with a physiotherapist and had just referenced global warming in response to his lamenting bizarre weather and stymied plans. I filtered *Ha*, ‘nonsense’ and answered, “Actually, I do.” He paused, his expression telegraphing *Are you nuts?* then recited, “There’s no evidence to support that,” and “People are so gullible.” Years later I learned that his comments are [telltale of a small group of Americans, the Dismissive, who deny climate change is occurring, human-caused or a threat](#). “[M]ost endorse conspiracy theories,” including [“global warming is a hoax.”](#) Today a [dwindling 10 percent of Americans espouse such beliefs](#), indicating that to most of us, the *hoax* itself is a hoax. Nearly all climate scientists agree.

[Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists worldwide attest that global warming is happening](#). “There is virtually no disagreement” among these experts that “humans are causing climate change.” Most acclaimed scientific associations endorse this vast contingent, including the United Nation’s 195-country Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The IPCC instructs, [“Human influence on the climate system is clear” and recent human-caused greenhouse gas \(GHGs\) emissions “are the highest in history.”](#) Among other evidence, Antarctic ice cores confirm that carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) now [“are far higher than at any time during the last 650,000 years.”](#) CO<sub>2</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub> and nitrous oxide have the greatest warming effect. All have “substantially increased” since approximately 1760 when the Industrial Revolution began.



Image credit: <https://mrgeowagg.wordpress.com/2015/06/24/greenhouse-effect-and-anthropogenic-warming/>

While it would comfort us to attribute global warming to changes in the Sun’s energy output, [that theory is easily disproved](#). If it were true, scientists would expect to see warmer temperatures in all five layers of the atmosphere. Instead, they have observed *cooling* in the *upper* atmosphere and warming at the surface and lower atmosphere where GHGs remain trapped. This helps us comprehend climate change, but we understandably avoid the subject.

We are crisis-fatigued from systemic racism, brazen political corruption, COVID-19, our broken economy, global warming, and resulting personal crises. This must change. Educate yourself, communicate with others, vote for candidates who will combat these crises. Additionally, know the following three tripwires in the climate change narrative. Each creates confusion.

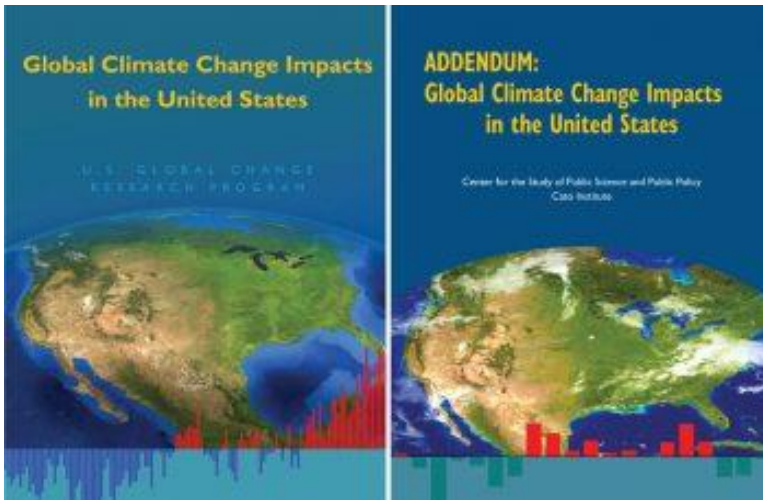


Image credit: <https://www.climatefiles.com/deniers/patrick-michaels-collection/2012-cato-global-climate-change-impacts>

First, disinformation campaigns. A powerful contingent of nonprofit organizations skew scientific evidence, then advertise, lobby and litigate their “science” to protect corporate interests. Pictured is an [official report by climate scientists for the U.S. Global Change Research Program \(USGCRP\)](#). The adjacent [“addendum” by CATO Institute](#) aesthetically copies the USGCRP report but contradicts it with manipulated data promoting unsubstantiated claims. Likewise, to subvert IPCC reports, [Heartland Institute publishes anti-science messaging](#) as the “Nongovernmental International Panel on Climate Change,” or NIPCC. The [Competitive Enterprise Institute](#) advances the [same agenda](#). Such organizations market themselves as *public policy think tanks* but their [Dismissive beliefs benefit petroleum, chemical, energy and other industry interests](#), not the public.

Second, false equivalency. Mainstream media often imply 50/50 credence between a climate scientist and an opposing speaker by allowing them equal airtime. Complex and, frankly, unengaging scientific data are presented on par with Dismissive arguments, constrained by the host’s need to garner soundbites before the next commercial break. But where 97 percent of all climate scientists concur, the matter is beyond dispute.



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Third, methane is routinely ignored. We frequently hear CO<sub>2</sub>-related terms like “carbon footprint,” “carbon neutral,” “carbon free” and “carbon sink.” [Methane is “the other important greenhouse gas”](#) yet rarely addressed. When it is acknowledged, the fact that animal agriculture [generates 35-40 percent of all human-caused methane emissions](#) is usually omitted. Methane [“is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide...\[i\]n the first two decades after its release.”](#) Global food production is [“the largest pressure caused by humans on Earth.”](#) Thus, [“addressing methane is the fastest, most effective way to slow the rate of warming.”](#)

### WHERE DO YOUR BELIEFS COME FROM?



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Note that [“science is based on evidence without belief,”](#) then consider your daily CO<sub>2</sub> and CH<sub>4</sub> footprint. Visualize residential CO<sub>2</sub> emissions as in the [Australian “black balloon” video](#), and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transportation in any [“Racing Extinction” trailer](#). Most CH<sub>4</sub> emissions relate to food. As is clear, your ability to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> is limited, but you *can* switch from CH<sub>4</sub>-heavy animal products to eating plant-based. Doing so is the [“single biggest way to reduce your environmental impact on the planet.”](#)



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How can we have good health without a healthy environment? How can we continue to support the plundering of animals, soil, water, air and forests, yet expect our youth to live unburdened by the environment? The science is clear. We must change now.



*Photo credit: Leo Jaine*

Born and raised in Hawaii, Shauny Jaine has lived in Seattle for 31 years and is a [Main Street Vegan Academy](#) VLCE, JD and BA *cum laude* in writing. She is a former full-time litigator and holds multiple certifications relevant to veganism, including a graduate of Yale University's Climate Change and Health Certificate program and the T. Colin Campbell Nutrition Foundation program in plant-based nutrition through eCornell. Shauny and her spouse, Tana, enjoy raising their longtime vegan family: McKenna (16), Tyler (16) and Leo (12); pups Nikita and Kasbah; and cat, Annie. She serves on the Board for [Heartwood Haven](#), a vegan animal sanctuary in Gig Harbor, Washington, and is an affiliate member of the [American College of Lifestyle Medicine](#) and the [Plant Based Foods Association](#). Her favorite social media platform is Instagram—find her there [@shaunyjaine](#).