

All We Can Save essay summaries

All We Can Save is an anthology of writings by women at the forefront of the climate movement who are harnessing truth, courage, and solutions to lead humanity forward. This guide offers summaries of the book's 43 essays – each one powerful on its own and together offering a rich kaleidoscope through which we can see with greater clarity.

** Note: Throughout this document, we capitalize all races, following the lead of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi and others*

Begin

By Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, PhD, and Katharine K. Wilkinson, DPhil, co-editors

- The story of Eunice Newton Foote, a long-forgotten “grandmother” of climate science, brings into focus issues of leadership, exclusion, and gender.
- Johnson and Wilkinson offer an overview of the nexus of gender and climate, a framework for feminist climate leadership, and a preview of the anthology's purpose and themes.

1. Root

Calling In

By Xiye Bastida, youth climate justice activist

- Framed by her own climate awakening, inherited ancestral knowledge, and the need to halve global emissions this decade, Bastida argues that climate justice is urgent and everyone has a role to play, offering 10 tips for activists.

- A regenerative future is possible if we band together to take action based on justice, with collaboration across generations and lived experiences.
- Key terms introduced:
 - climate justice
 - just transition
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Rachel Carson
 - Greta Thunberg

Reciprocity

By Janine Benyus, biologist and biomimicry expert

- Plant communities seek survival largely through collaboration and mutualism – in contrast to the prevailing emphasis on competition.
- Humans can learn from the reciprocity of plants and ecosystems and nurture ecological solutions for healing the Earth.
- Key terms introduced:
 - cooperative-community theory
 - mutualists
 - carbon cycle
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Suzanne Simard

Indigenous Prophecy and Mother Earth

By Sherri Mitchell–Weh’naHa’mu Kwasset, JD, Indigenous author and activist

- Indigenous prophecies offer guidance, warnings, and sacred instruction for restoring balance with the planet and for climate justice work.
- Indigenous wisdom, rooted in interconnectedness and kincentric awareness, is increasingly recognized for its potential to bring mainstream society back into balance, though science has historically dismissed Indigenous ways of knowing.
- Key terms introduced:
 - kincentric awareness
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Linda Hogan

A Handful of Dust

By Kate Marvel, PhD, climate scientist and writer

- Weaving literature, history, and science, Marvel explains the problems with the “band aid” solution of solar geoengineering, which does not address the root climate problem of emissions.
- Temporary manufactured solutions are profoundly risky, as everything on Earth is interconnected; better and more permanent solutions are possible.
- Key terms introduced:
 - geoengineering

What Is Emergent Strategy?

By adrienne maree brown, activist, facilitator, and author

- Grounded in the wisdom of plants and animals, emergence explains the strength and resilience of Earth’s interconnectedness, as parts interact with and as a wider whole.
- As future ancestors, emergence offers us a framework and strategy for transformation, running counter to many conventional notions about how to manifest change.
- Key terms introduced:
 - emergence
 - future ancestors
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Octavia Butler

On Fire

By Naomi Klein, journalist, activist, and filmmaker

- Earth’s present climate breakdown is the result of thirty years of governmental failure to take action, despite dire scientific warnings; movements around the world are growing to confront it.
- A swiftly enacted Green New Deal could give humanity a fighting chance to make vital societal changes, address the climate emergency, and avoid mass extinction.
- Key terms introduced:
 - climate breakdown
 - climate emergency
 - net-zero carbon dioxide emissions
 - Green New Deal
 - sixth mass extinction
- Women leaders introduced:

- Greta Thunberg

2. Advocate

Litigating in a Time of Crisis

By Abigail Dillen, JD, environmental lawyer and nonprofit leader

- Rooted in her own personal and professional journey and the history of environmental lawmaking in the United States, Dillen makes a case for the power of law and litigation in the climate fight.
- Litigators, many of them women, are using the law to protect people and defend land from the dangers of climate change.
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Anne Hedges
 - Dr. Cheryl Reichert
 - Jenny Harbine
 - Linda Garcia
 - Sharon Lavigne

Beyond Coal

By Mary Anne Hitt, clean energy and climate strategist

- Hitt shares ten lessons from her decade at the helm of the Beyond Coal campaign, working to retire existing coal plants in the United States and block plans to build more.
- Smart advocacy is critical to achieving a future that is coal-free, just, and powered by clean electricity.
- Key terms introduced:
 - public utility commission
 - fracking
 - Jemez principles
 - electrification

Collards Are Just as Good as Kale

By Heather McTeer Toney, JD, civil servant and climate justice advocate

- McTeer Toney shares how her personal experience, Christian faith, and community inspired her work in government and advocacy for environmental justice.

- Black communities are essential contributors to the national climate conversation and climate leadership, mobilized through community trust, connection, and faith.
- Key terms introduced:
 - creation care
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Lisa Jackson
 - Dr. Beverly Wright
 - Catherine Garcia Flowers
 - Dr. Mildred McClain

The Politics of Policy

By Maggie Thomas, climate policy expert and adviser

- Due to America's legacy of environmental racism, historically marginalized populations bear the brunt of environmental harms, including climate change.
- Informed by her experience as a climate policy adviser on two presidential campaigns, Thomas explains her work to make climate policy and political discourse more inclusive, fair, and effective.
- Key terms introduced:
 - environmental racism
 - Blue New Deal
 - sea level rise
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Theresa Landrum
 - Elizabeth Warren

A Green New Deal for All of Us

By Rhiana Gunn-Wright, researcher and architect of climate justice policy

- Gunn-Wright describes the framework for a Green New Deal – the problems it seeks to address, the principles that guide it, and its vision of power.
- A large-scale economic mobilization is necessary to transition the U.S. off of fossil fuels; it must center justice to repair and protect frontline and vulnerable communities most impacted by climate change.
- Key terms introduced:
 - frontline community
 - economic mobilization

- public investment
- green banks

3. Reframe

How to Talk About Climate Change

By Katharine Hayhoe, PhD, atmospheric scientist, professor, and author

- Talking about climate change is vital to help people connect with the issue and spark urgent action.
- Hayhoe shares her own stories of engaging in climate conversations and her insights for how to do so more empathetically and effectively.

Truth Be Told

By Emily Atkin, climate journalist

- Journalism has a responsibility to share critical information about climate change with the public, equipping citizens to respond and hold the powerful to account.
- Atkin shares her experiences as a reporter, which taught her that courage to tell the truth is imperative in the fight for our future.

Harnessing Cultural Power

By Favianna Rodriguez, artist and cultural activist

- Rodriguez makes a case to leaders of the climate movement that cultural strategy is imperative to its success, but most climate stories, art, and cultural content have fallen short in critical ways, especially by excluding BIPOC.
- She offers seven principles for harnessing the power of culture for climate justice and life on Earth.
- Key terms introduced:
 - cultural strategy
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Molly Crabapple
 - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez

Becoming a Climate Citizen

By Kate Knuth, PhD, climate-focused politician

- Drawing on her experiences in politics and civic life, Knuth argues that addressing the climate crisis requires fundamental shifts in civic engagement and democracy.
- “Climate citizenship” emphasizes collective participation across local, state, national, and global levels.
- Key terms introduced:
 - climate citizenship
 - climate vulnerability
 - climate citizenry

Wakanda Doesn't Have Suburbs

By Kendra Pierre-Louis, climate reporter and podcast producer

- Pierre-Louis highlights the power of story and a central problem: most TV and film narratives about the human-nature relationship frame it as inherently oppositional.
- *Black Panther* offers a powerful counterpoint, showing humans living in equilibrium with nature in the fictional country of Wakanda; this kind of narrative is vital to help humans restore reciprocity with the Earth.
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Robin Wall Kimmerer
 - Sharon Stirone
 - Mika McKinnon

4. Reshape

Heaven or High Water

By Sarah Miller, writer and journalist

- Miller recounts her experiences impersonating a prospective home buyer in Miami and the ways real estate agents and others minimize the city's present and looming climate catastrophes to sustain the status quo.
- Beyond cognitive dissonance, Miller raises issues of infrastructure, planned retreat, and climate resilience relevant to coastal cities and beyond.
- Key terms introduced:
 - sunny day flooding
 - climate resilience
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Dr. Kristina Hill

- Dr. Astrid Caldas
- Dr. Amy Clement

A Tale of Three Cities

By Jainey K. Bavishi, climate resilience expert

- Drawing three different professional chapters, Bavishi explores three coastal cities on the frontlines of climate impact and their varied approaches to resilience: New Orleans, Honolulu, and New York.
- Lessons apply to coastal cities broadly: centering principles of equity and inclusion, embracing the iterative nature of the work, and working towards transformation with many layers of community benefit.
- Key terms introduced:
 - subsidence
 - adaptation

Buildings Designed for Life

By Amanda Sturgeon, architect and biophilic design advocate

- Buildings are often a climate problem but present a climate opportunity; the architectural principle of “biophilic design” can help achieve it.
- Buildings that center biophilic design can reduce energy use and climate impacts, while fostering positive connections between humans and nature.
- Key terms introduced:
 - built environment
 - biophilic design

Catalytic Capital

By Régine Clément, entrepreneur and climate investment expert

- To address climate change, we must end destructive capitalism; Clément argues we can use the mechanics of capitalism to transform it.
- Clément shares the approach of her organization CREO, which taps the “catalytic capital” of ultra-high-net-worth families to build a groundswell of investment in climate solutions.
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Rose Marcario
 - Kat Taylor
 - Eileen Fisher
 - Rosa Luxemburg

Mending the Landscape

By Kate Orff, restorative landscape architect

- Orff frames the vital work ahead for the planning and design professions in an era of interconnected biodiversity, climate, and social crises.
- Drawing on examples from her own work, Orff offers four principles to guide efforts to mend the physical landscape and move towards an ethic of “collective gardening.”
- Key terms introduced:
 - pollinators
 - greenwash
 - protective ecosystems
 - managed retreat

5. Persist

We Are Sunrise

By Varshini Prakash, youth climate movement builder

- Prakash shares the story of her own journey into climate organizing and the growth of the youth-led Sunrise Movement, working towards robust climate action, rooted in racial and economic justice.
- Sunrise Movement’s three-part theory of change aims to build public support and political power and create a new shared political alignment to address inequality and climate change.
- Key terms introduced:
 - divestment
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Claire Tacherra-Morrison

At the Intersections

By Jacqui Patterson, policy analyst, organizer, and nonprofit leader

- Patterson shares a series of experiences at the intersections of environmental, racial, and economic injustice that have shaped her path and her work, specifically in support of Black, frontline leadership for climate justice.
- Across the world, communities are rising; Patterson proposes a theory of change to scale the radical transformation that’s already under way.

Dear Fossil Fuel Executives

By Cameron Russell, model and activist

- In her letter to fossil fuel executives, Russell draws parallels between her own extractive and exploitative industry – fashion – and theirs.
- Fundamental transformation is required, through a just transition of our energy system to clean sources and putting the planet, workers, and community above profit.
- Key terms introduced:
 - short-termism
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Céline Semaan

Sacred Resistance

By Tara Houska–Zhaabowekwe, JD, attorney and land defender

- Houska shares stories of working to stop fossil fuel funding and pipeline construction and to defend land and culture.
- Houska draws out Indigenous values that guide this work, and calls for deeper consideration of core values that inform corporate, government, and movement spaces, to radically reframe human connection with the sacred Earth.
- Key terms introduced:
 - land defense

Public Service for Public Health

By Gina McCarthy, government leader and environmental advocate

- McCarthy draws on her experiences in public service to explain the connection between climate change and public health.
- Climate solutions are public health solutions, and women play a vital role in pushing government to do its job: to build a safe and healthy future for all people.
- Key terms introduced:
 - particulates
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Mary Robinson

6. Feel

Under the Weather

By Ash Sanders, storyteller and journalist

- Sanders chronicles firsthand experiences with mental health impacts of the climate crisis, illuminating a growing field of research and engagement.
- Emotional responses to the climate crisis challenge conventional notions of “sickness” and call for new constructs, methods, and language to help us understand and cope.
- Key terms introduced:
 - permian extinction
 - ecoanxiety
 - ecopsychology
 - climate grief
 - solastalgia
 - pre-traumatic stress disorder
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Lisa Van Susteren
 - Alicia Escott
 - Heidi Quante

Mothering in an Age of Extinction

By Amy Westervelt, journalist and podcaster

- Westervelt shares her experiences as a mother in this time of planetary crisis, and proposes that parents are a powerful but under-utilized resource for the climate movement.
- The Black feminist concept of “community mothering” offers a model and a way to frame the work that’s needed to ensure a livable planet.
- Key terms introduced:
 - community mothering
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Dr. Renee Lertzman
 - Dolores Huerta

Loving a Vanishing World

By Emily N. Johnston, poet, essayist, and activist

- Johnston grapples with what it means to love the world amidst so much loss and how to act amidst grief and uncertainty.
- Sharing her experiences with the activist group 350 Seattle, pushing against Shell’s Arctic drilling effort, Johnston calls all of us to participate in this vital, fleeting moment.

The Adaptive Mind

By Susanne C. Moser, PhD, social scientist and adaptation expert

- There is growing need to support climate/adaptation professionals and nurture the “adaptive mind” – a set of capacities and skills that enable the ability to respond amidst crisis and change.
- Moser makes the case for building systems of psychological support and offers twelve strategies for caring for our mental wellbeing.
- Key terms introduced:
 - adaptive mind
 - climate grief

Home Is Always Worth It

By Mary Annaisé Heglar, writer and podcast host

- Heglar shares encounters with “doomer dudes,” as well as hope policing in the climate movement, and calls us to counter nihilism and embrace emotional nuance.
- The space between totally-doomed and hope-eternal, however messy, is the critical place from which to view the climate crisis and act for our shared home.
- Key terms introduced:
 - doomer dude

7. Nourish

Solutions Underfoot

By Jane Zelikova, PhD, climate scientist, advocate, and communicator

- Soil is a critical piece of the climate problem and solutions; thriving microbes in the soil work with plants and foster carbon sequestration.
- Farmers and ranchers have the tools they need now to shift agricultural practices, rebuild healthy soils, and draw carbon back down to Earth.
- Key terms introduced:
 - carbon sequestration

- photosynthesis

Solutions at Sea

By Emily Stengel, regenerative ocean farming expert

- Stengel shares the work of GreenWave to advance regenerative ocean farming – a promising alternative to land-based agriculture, with its environmental and economic challenges.
- A growing community of farmers is building a new blue-green economy, using a model that is ecologically restorative, carbon sequestering, and centers equity.
- Key terms introduced:
 - regenerative ocean farming
 - circular business model

Black Gold

By Leah Penniman, farmer and food justice activist

- Drawing on her work at Soul Fire Farm, Penniman describes the sacred, ancestral relationship between Black communities and soil; how colonialism, capitalism, and White supremacy severed it; and how that relationship is being healed.
- Farms led by Black women are using heritage practices to heal the soil, sequester carbon, and build resilient local food systems.
- Key terms introduced:
 - silvopasture
 - regenerative agriculture
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Andrea Manning
 - Keisha Cameron
 - Larisa Jacobson
 - Germaine Jenkins

Water Is a Verb

By Judith D. Schwartz, journalist and author

- Water plays an essential role in moderating the Earth's climate and can be a critical ally.
- By understanding water as a verb – specifically the processes of infiltration, transpiration, and condensation – we can work with ecosystems and the water cycle to help nature heal.

- Key terms introduced:
 - water cycle
 - Climate Victory Garden
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Precious Phiri
 - Katherine Ottmers

The Seed Underground

By Janisse Ray, author and naturalist

- Ray uses the metaphor of “edges” to frame the moment we’re in – edges for the climate, agriculture, society, and our psyches.
- The edge is fraught and scary, but a place of opportunity and engagement.

8. Rise

A Letter to Adults

By Alexandria Villaseñor, youth climate activist

- Villaseñor writes a letter to adults, sharing her own journey to climate activism and explaining why now is the time to become a climate activist.
- Faced with the generational inequality of climate change, young people are leveraging protest, litigation, education and more to spark change; all generations must join them.
- Key terms introduced:
 - generational inequality
 - climate change signal
 - *Juliana v. U.S.*
 - *Children vs. Climate Crisis*

An Offering from the Bayou

By Colette Pichon Battle, JD, attorney, activist, and nonprofit leader

- Battle recounts first hand knowledge of climate trauma, gentrification, and migration, pointing to the extractive economic system that has created these crises.
- In the era of climate emergency, we need a new approach to migration, rooted in reframing our understanding of the problem, restructuring our

social and economic systems, and recentering local knowledge and frontline leadership.

- Key terms introduced:
 - climate trauma
 - climate gentrification
 - climate migration

A Field Guide for Transformation

By Leah Cardamore Stokes, PhD, climate policy expert, professor, and writer

- Drawing on her own journey in climate and energy work, Stokes argues that we must move in widening circles of influence, shifting beyond a focus on individual choices to the community level and then to policy and institutional change.
- Stokes offers examples and suggestions for how to do this and what's needed to transform our energy system.
- Key terms introduced:
 - energy system
- Women leaders introduced:
 - Jane Fonda
 - Naomi Oreeskes

Like the Monarch

By Sarah Stillman, journalist and professor

- Through the story of Sony Sulekha and Signal International, Stillman addresses an often overlooked element of climate disasters and displacement: migrant “recovery workers.”
- Climate change heightens existing cracks and cruelty in immigration, legal, and labor systems; governments and communities can and should build toward climate migration with dignity.
- Key terms introduced:
 - climate displaced people

Community Is Our Best Chance

By Christine E. Nieves Rodriguez, educator, organizer, and writer

- Rodriguez tells the story of how her community came together to ensure collective survival through mutual aid in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico.

- Community is the critical infrastructure for adaptation and survival in the face of climate change and government's systemic failures.

Onward

By Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, PhD, and Katharine K. Wilkinson, DPhil, co-editors

- Johnson and Wilkinson return to the beginning, unpacking the layers of meaning in each word of the title *All We Can Save*.
- With truth, courage, and solutions, our work is to move forward together.