



We're all in this together. Not!

Given the existential nature of our climate predicament, you might think we're all in this together. And, in some ultimate way, you'd be right. But in every other way, you'd be so fucking wrong.

Take, for example, white, well-off me. Am I “all in this together” with black kids in the South Bronx getting clobbered by asthma? Or Honduran climate refugees fleeing three seasons of crop failures? Or Indigenous Amazonians being hounded out of their villages by ranchers and mining companies?

Climate catastrophe isn't neutral. With disproportionate force it hurts exactly those people—poor folks, communities of color, and residents of the Global South—who have historically done the least to cause the crisis.

Wait, if they did the least to cause the crisis, who did the most?, asks my inner-fragile-white-person.

You did! You forced the Indigenous to dig the gold and silver out of the New World that made the Old World rich that brought black bodies across the Atlantic to extract the surplus value that built the capital that dug the coal that drilled the oil that made empires in the North that colonized and neocolonized the South and poisoned the skies with carbon before the rest of the world had a chance. You did it! I saw you there!

I wasn't even born yet.

OK, maybe you weren't *there* there, but your ancestors were there and they did it!

My ancestors were poor tailors in the shtetl.

OK, maybe not your ancestors per se, but folks who looked like you, and you benefited! And you're still benefiting! Odds are your family has ten times² the wealth of some black family across town, and that gap is growing—and climate change is no different. You've run up a huge carbon debt over the last couple centuries, and it's payback time.

Look, I just want to help.

Me too, but this struggle isn't just about recycling and putting solar on your roof, it's not even just about blocking pipelines and curbing emissions, it's about Climate *Justice*, it's about not always putting toxic dumps in the poorest Black and Brown neighborhoods, it's about making sure the people most impacted have a say over how the problems get fixed, it's about righting big historic wrongs.

Wrongs that, er, I—or my ancestors, or people who looked like my ancestors—did, huh?

Alas, yes. And if you're still thinking the world is a beautiful, fragile blue-green orb floating out there self-evidently worth saving and why can't we all just get along and stay focused, don't be surprised when someone comes back at you with: "It's a pretty picture those white astronauts took from space, but why should I trust you to come into my neighborhood with your solutions to save a world that's just gonna keep fucking me and my people over?!"

I don't want that to happen.

Right, me either.

So...?

So, let's agree: Yes, we're all in this together, and...

And...and...No, we're not in this together?

Right! Yes *and* no.

Wait, how can both of these opposite things be true at the same time?

Ah, grasshopper, now we're getting somewhere.