

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

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## **350.Org: Moving in a "Completely Different Direction"**

**Represent Our Resistance**

**By Dr. Lenore J. Daniels, PhD**

**BlackCommentator.com Editorial Board**

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When we project modernity, as we define it, as the inevitable destiny of all human societies, we are being disingenuous in the extreme. Indeed, the Western model of development has failed in so many places in good measure because it has been based on the false promise that people who follow its prescriptive dictates will in time achieve the material prosperity enjoyed by a handful of nations of the West.

-Wade Davis, [\*The Wayfinders: Why Ancient Wisdom Matters in the Ancient World\*](#).

The world plans to send the West (in anticipation of the United Nations Climate Change Conference) a message on Saturday, October 24, 2009. While I did not watch the game between the Yankees and the Angels to see which team the Phillies would play in the World Series, I did look for news on the climate change protest.

I imagined predominantly young white environmental activists in cities throughout the U.S. and an image of similar participants in European cities. Those most impacted by climate change would not even know such a protest or the planning of this protest nor would they know the organizers. The world inhabited by those with time to organize and execute a march and the world of the hoods, rezs, barrios, villages, rural farmer

areas, and rainforest can only collide not coordinate a protest against Western nation-states plans to turn all of Earth's life over to the corporations.

Then on Monday, I saw footage of those *actual* protestors. Multiracial groupings of people in the U.S. and around the globe held signs or wore t-shirts that read - 350! New Orleans, Philadelphia, The Gambia, Ethiopia, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Mexico, Brazil, Jakarta, Indonesia, Cordillera, Philippines, Beirut, Lebanon, the Shores of the Dead Sea in Israel, Palestine and Jordan, the Maldives - Looks like the organizers of this International Day of Action remembered the world's majority. Countries in Africa, for example, are hit the hardest, as Wondwoson M. Seide writes in *Born Black Magazine*, "by more draughts, floods and other disasters" as a result of global warming. In addition, "the historical weather patterns are becoming less useful for predicting the future conditions because global warming is changing ocean and atmospheric conditions." Just ask the residents of Maldives or those residents in the Gulf Coast cities in the U.S.

According to former *New Yorker* writer and environmental campaigner, Bill

McKibben, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere must be reduced back to 350 parts per million.

We are already past 350ppm, and that comes with its own set of realities. We have to move much more quickly and much more powerfully than we are at the moment. We have, for example, to stop burning coal by 2030, (sic) and quicker in the Western world.

In the U.S., "the largest emissions are electricity generation (33 percent) and transportation (28 percent). The primary drivers of emissions in these sectors are coal-burning for electricity generation and oil use for transportation. Almost all U.S. CO2 emissions are generated by the combustion of fossil fuels" (*Resources for the Future*).

Yet, it in the U.S., according to polls from the Pew Research Center on the People & the Press, only "57 percent of Americans [that's U.S. citizens] now believe the Earth is warming," writes Lisa Bennett at [HuffingtonPost.com](http://HuffingtonPost.com), down from "77 percent in 2006" while reports indicate that the effects of "climate change are occurring faster than predicted." Bennett thinks President Obama's appearance at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference this December in Copenhagen is a must "not simply because the whole world IS watching, but because nearly 20,000 delegates from 193 countries have been waiting since 1997 for the U.S. to align its climate change goals with the rest of the world."

Has anyone noticed that Obama has prioritized the "necessary" war in Afghanistan? The Obama administration continues to use depleted uranium in Iraq and Afghanistan. "1.7 times heavier than lead, and much more harder than steel," writes Philadelphia journalist Dave Lindorff, depleted uranium's use permits the release of uranium oxide particles, which are just as radioactive as the pure isotopes" that can be "inhaled or ingested" ([Counterpunch](http://Counterpunch) October 30, 2009). Obama attends the climate change conference and announced the end to the use of depleted uranium? Not likely! He's creating his Viet Nam, complete with a build up of troops and, of course, more

chemicals in the atmosphere and dead Afghanis and U.S. soldiers. This is not exactly a plan to save humanity and the planet! As Bill Moyers said on *Moyers Journal*, 200 million troops were sent to Viet Nam and "we still lost."

If this government does not turn its foreign policy around, if it does not focus its domestic policy on prioritizing the health care of its citizens, and if it does not halt an economic system that secures wealth for the corporations, everyone may lose against greed and violence.

According to the website at [350.org](http://350.org), the call for an International Day of Action was intended to "lifting public awareness on the need for an international climate treaty to reach 350." By "assembling a coalition of hundreds of organizations committed to this vision of a more sustainable world," the organizers intended to connect communities across the planet, and provide "on-line resources and tools" that would "make pulling together an event" access to all. Ultimately the organizers of the International Day of Action intended to create a movement that would leverage "meaningful political change."

While I recognize U.S. citizens are confronting catastrophic illnesses, many without health insurance, while I recognize thousands are facing unemployment, foreclosures, and homelessness, I also recognize that what links the issue of health care, unemployment, foreclosure, and homelessness is the refusal of this government to enact foreclosure procedures on Wall Street bankers and the corporations. The "necessary" war in Afghanistan is a *priority* that reflects the serious and historical failings of the capitalist venture. Capitalism cannot sustain Life on this planet: Anti-government corporations and spineless politicians equal a global catastrophe in the making.

*350.org?* I have to put in a call.

"The media will not tell you but this was the largest climate protest in U.S. history organized by the same people who organized the climate protest in 2007," says Matt Fitzgerald, Grassroots Communications Coordinator.

According to 350.org's [website](http://350.org), the organization's mission is "to inspire the world to rise to the challenge of the climate crisis - to create a new sense of urgency and of possibility for our planet." Indigenous populations outside the U.S. and other Western nations, with fewer ppm emissions, are nonetheless experiencing the greatest impact of climate change, now! Jamie Henn, Communications Coordinator of 350.org. said that the organization's goal was to reach the populations at the G-20 table.

"We started off to elevate the voices of people who were not listened to in Ethiopia and in the U.S. - voices who traditional didn't have their voices heard."

"We emailed friends from environmental groups. We called people. We contacted organizations and gathered names and [those individuals] gave us more names."

Along with emailing potential organizers, the initial organizers used Facebook and Twitter to amass people around the world who would, in turn, "meet with neighbors, fellow students," local politicians, and elders.

Those who agreed to participate took ownership of their own 350 event. Many incorporated their "own local issues." In the process, these organizers "learned new skills."

One community already at work rebuilding the 9th Ward in New Orleans recognized the significance of organizing a 350 parade in the streets to "mourn the city but also to celebrate the spirit of the city."

People throughout the world organized themselves, Henn says. "They know what is the best way" to organize their communities. "[350.org](http://350.org). empowered them to be leaders."

Ultimately, 350.org. facilitated some 5,200 events in 181 countries!

"350 is not only a scientific number but also a "metaphor: We are too high. We need to go in a completely different direction."

It remains to be seen if Western governments in particular bothered to take note!

Governments, Wade Davis writes, can not afford to "ignore the magnitude of the threat or the urgency of the dilemma" facing the planet as we confront climate change. There is no way around it! No short cuts! To return to 350ppm would require "a reorientation of human priorities that is both historic in its significance and profoundly hopeful in its promise."

Website : [www.350.org](http://www.350.org) (See photos from around the world and contact the organization and become involved).

[Jamie@350.org](mailto:Jamie@350.org)

[Matt@350.org](mailto:Matt@350.org)

**BlackCommentator.com** Editorial Board member, Lenore Jean Daniels, PhD, has been a writer for over thirty years of commentary, resistance criticism and cultural theory, and short stories with a Marxist sensibility to the impact of cultural narrative violence and its antithesis, resistance narratives. With entrenched dedication to justice and equality, she has served as a coordinator of student and community resistance projects that encourage the Black Feminist idea of an equalitarian community and facilitator of student-teacher communities behind the walls of academia for the last twenty years. Dr. Daniels holds a PhD in Modern American Literatures, with a specialty in Cultural Theory (race, gender, class narratives) from Loyola University, Chicago. Click [here](#) to contact Dr. Daniels.



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