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By [Marcy Franck](#)

You've been a good fighter, Dear Optimist. But if this month's [IPCC Report](#) (or the wildfires, or the megadroughts, or Hurricanes Henri or [Ida](#)...) knocked you down, we're in your corner. First, we're going to talk about the reasons we remain optimistic about the future. Then we'll squirt water into your mouth, dab your face, and give you a pep talk. And, finally, we'll rub your shoulders and share how our team of climate leaders keeps going even when the going gets tough.

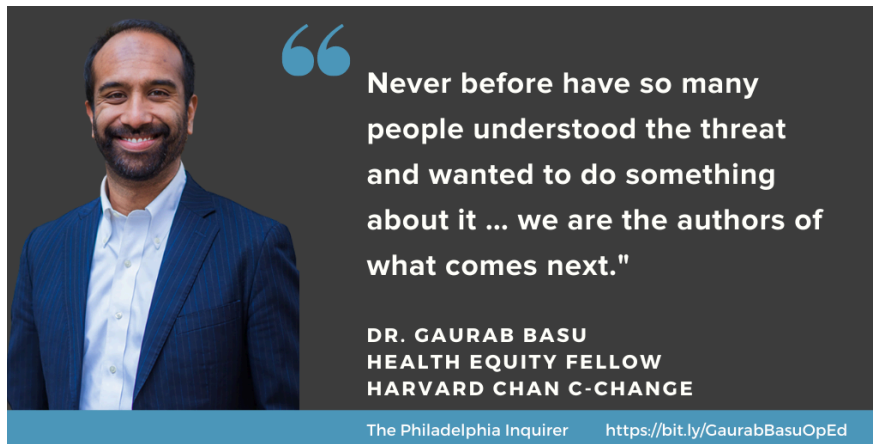
Then we'll pat your back and send you back into the ring.

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WE REMAIN OPTIMISTIC

Everything's not awesome, but that doesn't mean that it's hopeless and bleak.

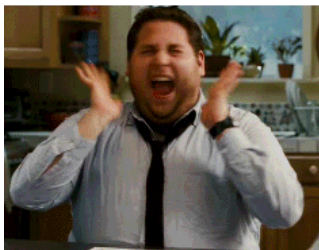


Dr. Basu's op-ed is welcome medicine after a month of difficult news. In it he calls for courage and prescribes five things we can all do to make a difference (and feel better in the process):

- We must all become climate voters
- Recognize that you are an effective climate advocate
- Choose information sources carefully
- Talk about how climate change threatens the things and people you love
- Find ways to process your grief

[Read now](#)

See also: [Why we shouldn't give into climate despair](#) | [The antidote to climate dread](#) | [We Must Act So That We Can Feel Hopeful—Not the Other Way Around](#) | ["What can I do?" Anything.](#)



You're the first to know: [Dr. Basu](#) and [Dr. Pedja Stojicic](#) are launching a free 6-month program for health professionals to develop community organizing skills. Fellows will learn the impacts of climate change on health equity & advance solutions based on the organizing strategies of [Professor Marshall Ganz](#). [Learn more.](#)

WE CAN MOVE ON CLIMATE WITHOUT CONGRESS

Bills ... schmills?

As the two biggest climate bills ever [meander their way through Congress](#), one could tie oneself in knots waiting for existential politics to play out, but:

Yesterday, the Biden administration launched the [first federal office \(\\$\)](#) to address climate and health equity, with a focus on environmental justice and providing health protections to our most vulnerable populations.

Behold the "green vortex" and [How the U.S. made progress on climate change without ever passing a bill.](#)

Cities and states march to their own drum: [CO bill demands emissions cuts](#), [a power plant in MD ditched coal for batteries](#), [CA backs solar mandate for new](#)



[buildings \(\\$\)](#), [SoCal will get 38K new chargers](#), [Maui will go 100% renewable in 2 years \(\\$\)](#), and the list goes on.

The executive branch is creating rules for fuel efficiency, cutting carbon emissions from utilities, and methane from oil and gas. They are also directing federal money for grants and loans for businesses, states, and communities.

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

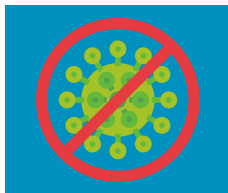
...and we're wicked smart, if not modest or good looking. Here's what we've been up to.



Measuring health benefits of clean energy: Our report with the [Clean Energy Futures project](#) found that an [80x30 Clean Energy Standard](#) would improve air quality in the lower 48, save 317K lives by 2050, and produce \$1.8 trillion in climate and health benefits by 2050.



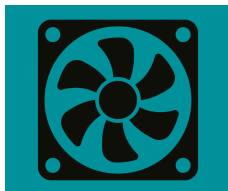
Analyzing transportation policies: Our [TRECH Project](#) is providing a roadmap for where to target investments to most cost-effectively improve air quality and health. Our research confirms that efforts to electrify the bus fleet in New York City will have large health benefits—and, the biggest bang for the buck.



Preventing the next pandemic: Our [report](#) outlined how to stop the next pandemic by preventing the spillover of pathogens from animals to people—while also [saving the planet](#).



Helping doctors talk about climate: Our [new guide](#) helps pediatricians bring climate into primary care, and our Climate MD Lead Dr. Renee N. Salas teamed up with Dr. Katharine Hayhoe to pen this editorial in The BMJ on [Climate Action for Health and Hope](#).



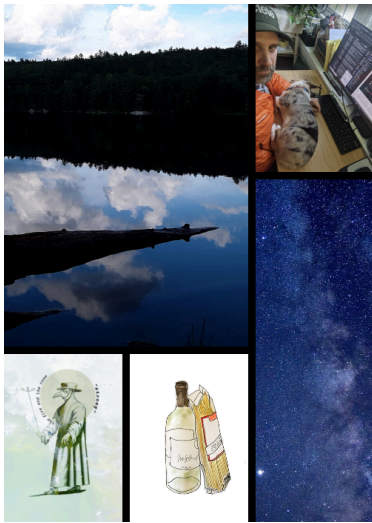
Navigating extreme heat: Our Director Dr. Aaron Bernstein testified before the House Science Committee on [how to coordinate a federal response](#) to extreme heat, and wrote about [staying safe if you have health issues](#). Dr. Renee Salas offered [4 tips to beat the heat](#) on NPR's Lifekit.

SELF CARE IN THE TIME OF 'OMG REALLY? NOW THIS TOO?'

“The one thing we need more than hope is action. Once we start to act, hope is everywhere.” —Greta Thunberg

But what if sometimes *I don't want to take action*? What if I'm tired and bitter and would rather say bad words and toss a single-serve plastic cup *straight into the trash can*? 😞

Burnout is real, Dear Optimists. Our psyches weren't designed to carry the whole world's trauma. Doing activities that spark joy is essential to keep working in this space, and fun is something we take seriously here at Team C-CHANGE:



- [Skye](#) and [Kathy](#) recharge by getting into nature. Kathy says, “Any trail that combines woods and water feels like my natural habitat and helps to clear my head.”
- [Jonathan](#) is a self-proclaimed “very slow composer” who plays [in a band](#), and isn't afraid to write dark music.
- [Jessica](#) hunts for dark skies to photograph the Milky Way.
- [Drew](#) takes [@rumford.the.corgi](#) on grand adventures.
- [Liz](#) dives into her kids' world to experience “life without time or internet or breaking news.”
- [Anna](#) blasts show tunes while cooking her favorite [one-pot dinner](#), which you can find on the blog she writes and illustrates with her fiancé.
- [And I](#) disappear into Netflix with wild abandon.

What do you do to recharge? We'd love to see. Share your photo tagged #ClimateOptimist.

Photos courtesy of (clockwise from top) Kathy Fallon Lambert, Drew Michanowicz, Jessica Schiff, Anna Miller, and Jonathan Buonocore.

HOW TO KEEP ON KEEPING ON

A day job in climate change can get heavy sometimes.



So I asked our team: How do you keep showing up, even when it's emotionally challenging? Here's what they said.

[Gaurab Basu MD, Health Equity Fellow](#)

As a physician and a parent, I often have moments of grief and fear about climate change. In these moments, I think of the millions of people worldwide who are fighting alongside me—the scientists and engineers, the activists and policymakers, the doctors and nurses, and all the people of goodwill who know that climate action will create a more fair and compassionate society.

After reading the IPCC report, I thought of Dr. King's quote — "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice" — and also of everyone pulling the arc towards justice, and towards limiting global warming to 1.5°C celsius. **The Civil Rights movement probably did not seem possible until there were breakthroughs, and I deeply believe we are close to having a societal breakthrough.**

[Kathy Fallon Lambert, Senior Advisor](#)

I muster my working-class, milltown roots to push for solutions because the world doesn't have time for me to feel sorry for myself. I also find it inspiring (perhaps even a privilege) to work on pressing problems where there is the potential to make a difference, and I take that opportunity seriously. Lastly, the camaraderie of working with people who are also committing their time, ideas, and energy helps to keep morale up when things seem hopeless. **Staying in positive, open-hearted dialogue is one way to tap into that human potential that can also help keep us focused and energized.**

[Skye Flanigan, Program Manager](#)

No one denies that it's hard to stay optimistic, but when I get overwhelmed **I take a deep breath and try to focus on the exciting innovations like EVs and renewable energy.** We have been in tough situations before but we are resilient and the fact that there is awareness of the reality of climate change will lead to a more swift response to fixing the problem. Sometimes you just need to tune out the doom and gloom and focus on the opportunities and solutions ahead.

[Marcy Franck, Senior Communications Strategist](#)

Writing this newsletter is medicinal—every day I comb the news for meaningful climate action, and every month I find more than I can fit within the word count. That’s a lot of good news! But cultivating optimism still takes grit and persistence. When it comes to my own contributions, **I pace myself. I give myself permission to pick up one project at a time, work on it, then put it down until I’m ready for the next one.** Over time it adds up, and I know I’ve done what I can to keep this planet livable for my kids’ future.

[Adele Houghton, Student Ambassador](#)

I focus on small wins. I am an architect, so I work in a field that, by definition, makes change happen. Even though I get frustrated when projects don’t go the way I would like or when bureaucracy or regulations stand in the way of innovative approaches to design, there is always a piece of the project I can work on that makes a difference. Even poorly constructed buildings can be retrofitted to improve their impact on fossil fuel emissions, the urban heat island, etc.

[Liz Purchia, Communications Director](#)

I have always been stubborn, and I am the same way when it comes to climate change. I refuse to accept defeat. I will keep on doing my part, trying to move the boulder up the hill. My commitment to act is further strengthened by my desire to give my kids the best world possible. Working to raise awareness for climate action helps me feel like I’m making a difference.

I try to remind myself that we have the ability to choose. I’ve always loved this quote from Gina McCarthy in *All We Can Save*: **“I refuse to sit around being angry and anxious all the time. I am not going to be a dead woman walking. I am staying hopeful and energized. Why? Because I can. How? I choose to be.** Let’s turn the chaos of the day into actions that will strengthen our democracy, empower the powerless, and build healthier communities today and a more sustainable tomorrow. Stand tall, stand together, speak up, and get active.”

[Dr. Renee Salas, Yerby Fellow and ClimateMD Lead](#)

The answer to this question is deeply personal. For me, it is eternal hope. As a follower of Jesus, my ultimate hope rests in Him. He called me to this work to serve others, fight for equity and justice, and care for the planet that was entrusted to us. With my faith as my foundation, I am confident that love triumphs and light overcomes the darkness. **Action on climate change can be the unifying event that heals our divisions, our health, and our planet. I am watching this unfold and grow; small actions by one person join those of others to catalyze massive, swift change.** My daily hope is continually renewed by being a witness to that. Thus, inspiration is all around me. Onward, together.

WAIT WAIT, ARE YOU HEADING TO COP26?

If so, we’d love to know your plans. Email cchange@hsph.harvard.edu to let us know.

Looks like reading newsletters is your thing. Subscribe to the [Research Roundup](#) from our friends who write fun stories about serious science at Harvard’s School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.



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