



An Inconvenient Truth A review and synopsis

I recently saw the movie, *An Inconvenient Truth*, by Al Gore. He delivers a powerful message in this documentary about the current climate crisis. He explains what global warming is and the threat that it is now and will be in the next fifty years. I found his arguments strong and compelling.

I must caution you that he discusses his political views and background, including the lost election and he makes a few slams at the current administration. That might make watching the movie difficult for people with more conservative leanings. I thought this was unfortunate. His message is an important one and I wish it was not clouded by politics. My husband and I are independent voters and we found this distracting. I think that it might have been better narrated by someone more neutral like Robert Redford, who has a long history of working on environmental issues.

In case you decide to skip the movie, here are my notes. If you'd like more information, visit www.climatecrisis.net Here's the takeaway:

The sun's radiation comes to the earth through light waves that are re-radiated into the atmosphere. The atmosphere has been thickened by pollution (CO₂) and this causes infrared rays to be trapped causing the temperature to rise.

What does that mean to the planet?

- **Record heat waves.** The ten hottest years on record have occurred in the last 14 years. Several years ago, 35,000 people in Europe died in a prolonged heat wave. The same year the temperature climbed to 122 degrees in India. In the US, 200 cities in the west have broken heat records.
- **Violent weather.** Storms have gotten increasingly stronger. Wind and ocean patterns are changing because of warmer ocean temperature. The change in the oceans current causes hurricanes and typhoons. In addition, tornadoes have increased in number and severity.
- **Paradox of flooding and drought.** Because of the warmer ocean temperature the glaciers melt which causes flooding in countries like China. The precipitation increases and is relocated drawing it away from other areas like Darfur and Niger, which suffer from drought. These countries have extreme heat which sucks moisture out of the soil.
- **Conditions in the Arctic.** There are several concerns in the Arctic. Trees put their roots into the permafrost which melts and causes them to start leaning. They call them drunken trees. The melting permafrost is no longer a solid base for homes and pipelines, which causes them to sink or tip. The arctic ice cap has diminished by 40% in the last forty years. As the water melts the ocean becomes warmer and the sun mirrors off of the water which speeds up the melting process.
- **Species loss.** Animals are in danger of extinction. Migration patterns have changed which affects their food supply. Polar bears have been known to drown because they sometimes must swim as far as sixty miles to find ice to rest on.
- **Shifts in Seasons.** Frost was designed to kill invasive ecological pests. Unfortunately these pests are surviving because there are less days of frost. So insects like Western pine beetles, bark beetles, mosquitoes and ticks are increasing in number. Rodents are no longer killed off

at the usual rate. In addition thirty new diseases and a reemergence of a few diseases that were once under control, have become yet another threat. Two of these are West Nile Virus and the Avian Flu.

- **Antarctica and the disappearing ice shelf.** If ice shelves from the west side of Antarctica were to melt it would raise the sea level twenty feet. If Greenland were to melt it would raise it twenty more. The seasonal ice melt is speeding up in Greenland which makes the situation alarming. One of Mr. Gore's quotes was "maps of the world will have to be redrawn." The increased sea level would cause flooding in the following places: Florida, San Francisco, Manhattan, Netherlands, Beijing, Shanghai and Calcutta, India. All of these areas are heavily populated and the result would be catastrophic.

They have been charting the changes since the 1960's. Although he acknowledges cyclical warming periods in the past, nothing compares to what has happened in the last forty years. There is a misconception that there are disagreements among scientists. He tried to dispel this myth by showing results of a study which pulled 928 articles from scientific journals. There was no dissention among those scientists in regard to the current climate crisis. Not unlike the tobacco industry, a memo was intercepted that read, "we must reposition global warming as theory rather than fact."

The inconvenient truth is that we are putting more pressure on the earth due to the ever increasing population. There are stronger demands for food and water as well as timber from forests and oil for fuel. Americans are responsible for more carbon emissions than any other country on earth.

So what can we do?

As a country:

- Reduce our dependence on foreign oil.
- Expect more from the auto industry. Raise fuel economy standards.
- Be more efficient with our use of electricity.

As individuals:

- Attempt to bring your emissions to zero.
- Walk, bike or use public transportation.
- Buy high efficiency cars, a hybrid, if possible.
- Choose renewable energy. Ask your gas company if they have green energy.
- Change your thermostat.
- Have an energy audit.
- Recycle.
- Write to Congress.
- Plant trees.

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