Improving online dialogues about justice and equity in climate and science

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We began working on this guide in early 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic began disrupting everyday life and threatening people in our communities. Many of the principles we discuss here are applicable to current debates about economic relief, public health and how recovery policies will or won't advance justice and equity in climate and energy policy. At the same time, many of our organizations are moving to online-only meetings and collaboration, so we think these resources may be useful for treating each other with dignity in these new circumstances. This is an extremely challenging, transformational time for society. We strongly urge scientists and scientific institutions to amplify trusted public health information and to think deeply about what our work looks like now and on the other side of the pandemic.

Introduction

Many people in climate and science discussions struggle with justice-related issues, particularly when they see critical perspectives aimed at scientific institutions, prominent scientists, and science celebrities, such as older white men who hold popular leadership positions in our communities.

At the same time, social media has made perspectives from justice-based advocates in and outside the scientific community much more accessible to people who may not have had the opportunity to learn about these perspectives earlier in their education or careers.

This can create a fraught ground for dialogue. To that end, we offer a guide below that includes brief summaries regarding justice- and equity-based approaches to climate policy, suggestions for improving dialogues and collaborating to advance justice, and resources for further reading and reflection, as well as responses to common questions.

Justice and Equity are Necessary for Climate Policy and Science

Justice and equity are a critical part of climate and science policy debates, from underlined environmental justice in climate adaptation to the allocation of clean energy and clean transit resources and the allocation of scientific resources themselves, including at public universities.

It's a mistake to view justice and equity as separate from science, technology and climate policy. Nevertheless, many climate and science advocates would consider social movement actions such as pipeline protests at Standing Rock to be outside the mainstream of climate

policy discussions. But such actions are critical to understanding climate policy, and are based on a specific legal theory of justice stretching back centuries. And indeed, the iconic Standing Rock sign post is part of a Smithsonian exhibit on the history of treaties between Indigenous groups and colonizing powers, including the U.S. government.

These perspectives are also important for policymakers: Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez joined the Standing Rock protestors in 2016. The Green New Deal, which has been embraced by a number of political leaders, includes justice-based frameworks for addressing climate policy, too.

Standing Rock signpost, National Museum of the American Indian, April 2020, Source: Wikimedia Commons

Other efforts focus on decolonizing policy in very concrete ways. For instance, the Karuk tribe entered into an agreement with the U.S. Forest Service to conduct controlled burns as means of managing wildfires through traditional cultural practices that indigenous communities used for generations before colonization. U.S. laws banning these practices date back to the 1850s and were part of a program of genocide against Native people that sought to eradicate not just people themselves, but their knowledge about the land. In global climate policy, the immense wealth gap between the Global North and Global South — and the role that colonial policy structures continue to play in perpetuating that gap — is central to understanding international climate negotiations, especially since the richest 10% of the world produces nearly half of all lifestyle-related emissions.

Combating environmental racism and gentrification are also critical for effective climate policy in the United States. As cities gentrify, they can drive out working class people of color who use public transit, pushing them to commute to work in vehicles further from city centers. Building more truly affordable housing near public transit can reduce emissions, prevent gentrification and improve quality of life. Further, we know from detailed heat-mapping studies that the environmentally racist practice of "greenlining" — denying resources for creating green spaces in cities — is creating more heat stress in communities of color as the climate warms.

Finally, our institutions are still failing us when it comes to who gets to conduct climate research and inform climate policy, who gets to feel comfortable speaking out against dominant paradigms, and who is instead subject to additional layers of harassment when they speak out against those paradigms. Scientific institutions are second only to the military when it comes to rates of sexual harassment against women. Racism, anti-immigration policies, ableism, and discrimination against LGBTQ+ peers in our fields also harms people's ability to conduct research and contribute to public discussions. Policymaking institutions, including Congress, face the same sets of discriminatory practices which are being actively debated, dismantled and hopefully replaced.

The voices and the traditions, or lack thereof, that inform how scientific and academic institutions are heard deeply affect the types of knowledge and knowledge-creators we value in public debates.

A Note on Terminology

Throughout this guide we refer to "justice-based advocacy." This is a broad, relatively neutral term that describes multiple forms of advocacy, such as advancing environmental justice, promoting gender equity, defending immigrants, and fighting anti-LGBTQ+ bigotry, ableism, and racism. However, there are specific terms one often runs into in this space, just as there is jargon in any field of inquiry, that can create confusion for people who are not part of a justice-based community. Importantly, the use of these terms is also contested, often in bad faith. Just as science deniers claim that "theory" means "untested hypothesis" rather than "model for how the world works," anti-justice advocates create their own definitions of these terms to cloud debate. For instance, the idea of "staying woke" originated with black activists who urged one another to remain vigilant in the face of oppression, especially police violence. But over time, anti-civil-rights activists on the right and liberal critics of justice-based advocacy have conflated the term with dated, ahistoric claims about so-called "political correctness."

- Glossary of justice-related terms (Racial Equity Tools)
- Glossary of sexuality and gender terms (Human Rights Campaign)

1. Be Open-Minded, Not Defensive

When we (and the institutions we're part of) are publicly criticized about an element of equity or justice, we should receive it as good-faith, constructive criticism, just as scientists receive corrections on public remarks, manuscripts and papers from peers. The point is not to attack the critical speaker or writer, but instead strive to make everything a community produces better.

Often people participating in climate and science dialogues — including older cisgender, heterosexual white men in positions of relative power and influence — are unsure of how to respond and may unintentionally cause harm by reacting defensively. This discourages people from marginalized groups, —especially women of color— from interacting with or succeeding in our community. Indeed, scientists can come into conflict with one another when they work across disciplines or sub-disciplines. Similarly, people who are unfamiliar with justice-based work can unintentionally exacerbate misunderstandings if they don't step back and consider what they're hearing from others and how their own words might, in turn, be misunderstood or cause harm.

Importantly, a defensive approach often looks like asking someone who has made criticisms to explain their views in depth each time they make a new criticism. On one level, it's like asking someone to explain basic physical concepts related to their field of expertise over and over again in different online forums. On another level, it is also a demand for emotional, intellectual labor from someone who faces the very forms of discrimination which are often under discussion. This is a stressful experience, as it forces them to relive harm they've experienced. It's also worth noting that often, people who bring up justice and equity issues do not respond to specific online demands for further discussion since doing so can be an endless task. A non-response to an inquiry doesn't necessarily mean someone is being hard-headed about their views; they may have simply explained their views many, many times already.

When someone has benefitted from historic and ongoing systems such as patriarchy or colonialism, it's often easy to feel defensive. The defensiveness comes from wanting to protect one's ego and avoid feelings of embarrassment or shame, a perfectly understandable but also unhelpful impulse in this situation. *In response to criticism, we want to prove that we are good people. But these disputes are rarely about us personally. They are about the impact of how our institutions exclude and harm people from marginalized backgrounds.* In practice, taking criticisms personally centers oneself in the conversation instead of focusing attention on institutional problems. It also raises the burden of proof that a community demands from people making justice-based criticisms.

However, critiques are sometimes personal. The actions and words of individuals matter because of the scale of public power in climate leadership. We are all accountable for our behavior and sometimes make mistakes. Those mistakes can be glaring, painful, subtle, unfortunate, and entrenched. People in positions of leadership are often apt to make these

kinds of mistakes in public, at scales that matter, in ways that undermine the health and accountability of the community as a whole. Accountability as an ongoing practice is challenging, but leaders need to hear the people who are saying — loudly — "Ouch!"

One may feel the need to share information about how progressive they personally are when responding to criticism, but that often comes across as non-responsive, self-centering, and defensive. In many cases, it's a dodge because it attempts to essentialize a discussion and let the leader in a more powerful position off the hook for fighting for more institutional change. Taking criticism too personally can lead to lashing out, engaging in public and private character attacks, backchannel communication with "good old boy" networks, direct threats, and private or institutional stonewalling. This is direct aggression against people who make these criticisms and a form of gatekeeping that prevents institutions from improving.

As an alternative to these lines of behavior, one should consider proactively discussing criticism. Get curious about how those raising criticism would like to see institutions and leaders in a given community respond. It's vital to remember that such conversations are opportunities for leading by example, actively doing better, and learning to listen.

That said, we should be mindful that putting the burden back on critics to ask for more information can come off as a request for emotional labor or unpaid research on one's behalf. Asking basic questions or making requests to define terms are often unproductive means of discussion. It's better to engage people, not ideology. It's not a contest to win, it's a conversation to have. And one shouldn't engage in direct aggression or gatekeeping. It's bad behavior and we shouldn't look away when it happens: it's the professional equivalent of locker room talk.

Further, one can simply share a criticism with one's audience as another perspective worth time and attention. Or one can consider saying nothing at all and reflecting on the criticism for a while until strong emotions ebb, just as one might consider hearing and thinking about a different perspective at a scientific meeting. At the end of the day, recognizing these feelings, being vulnerable, and being open to constructive criticism is the most powerful way to grow as a communicator and advocate. A best practice here is to compassionately engage in a practice of mutual learning rather than perpetual conflict.

Inquire, Don't Escalate
In online settings, such as email or Twitter threads, consider the spiraling role that reply-all functions can have:
- They bring more people into the conversation who may or may not want to have a conversation.
- They create social pressure to respond and be seen as responding since we assume that there is an audience for our interactions.
- They can allow the most online, most vocal people with the most free time and strident opinions to overwhelm the conversation.
- On open platforms, they can draw in onlookers and bad faith actors, not just people who are, for instance, invited into a private forum or list-serv.

If one is not sure what to say, one should simply try to be constructive and open minded. If someone feels like they need to do more to educate themselves before weighing in substantively, they don't have to say anything at all.

Most of all, we should remember that it's not just about ourselves. It's about how we, our actions, statements, and position of relative power operate within the larger institutional context. Though one may not always recognize one's own power, if someone feels comfortable in their authority to criticize others on science, public policy, or leadership styles, that privilege is an expression of one's power to shape the conversation.

The purpose is to build power with others instead of holding onto positions of power over others. Moreover, if these ideas are new to someone and they do not have a robust accountability process for public speech, they may not be able to fully identify the scale of their privilege and positionality. This is true especially in fields where scientists feel they are fighting for their voices to be heard, often against a tide of deliberate disinformation. Recognizing our roles in the broader power structures around us will lead to more understanding and a stronger community.

2. Don't be harmful.

When someone from a marginalized background criticizes people, institutions, or power structures that marginalize them and people like them, it's rarely the first time they've done so. *They are likely to have spent years privately and publicly suffering from discrimination and violence and living with the knowledge that institutions are not doing enough to reduce harm, dismantle, and replace oppressive systems.* Further, many of their experiences are likely to have resulted in people diminishing or dismissing their views, or worse, further marginalizing them behind their backs through gatekeeping. And this doesn't just happen to people who casually espouse justice-based views, it happens to tenured professors who have spent their entire lives deeply studying these very topics. The cumulative toll of discrimination is <u>suffering</u>: people's mental and physical health, their economic prospects, and their career opportunities and status.

That's why responding defensively or attempting to shut down criticism can be deeply harmful. It sends a message to the person making their criticism that their professional expertise and personal experiences are not worth listening to. It also sends a message to other people like them that they are not welcome in online discussions in addition to the physical institutions where they feel unwelcome. Additionally, it sends a message to onlookers that it's okay for community leaders to dismiss, belittle, and harass people who articulate justice-based perspectives. Subtle public discriminatory behaviors and microaggressions are often just a more benign part of a spectrum of intimidating behaviors public scholars face. And finally, defensive responses weaken our ability to replace the broken institutional power structures that are harming people and preventing progress on issues we care about.

For instance, if a young black woman who is interested in climate change sees people who critique colonialism, patriarchy, and racial justice repeatedly shut out of policy debates, will she want to engage in climate advocacy? Will she avoid a career in science or environmental conservation, or leave it after putting in years of effort? This is the kind of harm we can cause by acting defensive when critiqued.

Assume others have expertise and knowledge you might not have

Dismissing someone's criticism dismisses their expertise in justice-related issues, which often comes from both a deep scholarship and their lived experience. Assume a critic has often thought and read deeply about colonialism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, racism and other forms of oppression both implicit and explicit, all of which are also the subject of rigorous scholarship across multiple disciplines. Consider them an expert in that field, and recognize your own relative lack of specific knowledge in a given field, just as you would when speaking with someone from a different but related academic discipline. For instance, when someone speaks out and several white men chime in to dispute their views, it often demonstrates by example the very discriminatory practices a person brought up. Defy expectations. Listen, learn, and encourage others to do the same.

Recognize that your communications standards aren't universal

Justice-based advocates are used to people invoking a desire for more "civility" in response to criticism. But the standards our society uses to determine what's civil or uncivil are often derived from rules thrust upon us by the rich white men who exclusively wielded power and controlled scientific and policy-making institutions for centuries. Their rules about acceptable and non-acceptable forms of discourse weren't always focused on productive debate, but were used to maintain their power to oppress others by insulating themselves from criticism while maintaining their power and oppressing others, for instance, by perpetuating a false divide between "civilized" Western views and "uncivilized" non-Western views. These same false epistemological divides were often used to promote discredited race science and justify policies from colonial powers such as seizing land from indigenous people and perpetuating chattel slavery.

By contrast, people who work in justice-related fields are used to holding each other — and their leaders — accountable and therefore have different standards for civility, which often involve respecting one another enough to speak directly and forthrightly. Further, basic class, race, gender, and cultural differences affect how we communicate and which kind of critical statements we interpret as constructive or hostile.

Therefore a simple comment from a justice-based advocate, such as: "This essay reinforces dangerous, racist notions about climate policy" might be perceived as "I think this author is a bad, racist person." Instead of internalizing the criticism as personal, one should step back and think about the real substance of what is being communicated and think critically and systemically. We should seek to avoid reinforcing respectability politics — the process through which dominant groups attempt to force non-dominant groups to comply with their modes of communication. Respectability is the secret police of rhetorical culture: it limits the boundaries

of valid discourse, eliminates dissenting and paradigm-shifting voices, and assassinates the character of its targets. Instead, we should aim to improve our own communication and work to be intellectually and culturally inclusive and leave the weaponization of respectability out of scholarly and public discourse.

Tell your followers to stop being harmful
People with big followings might feel like they can't control their followers if they're being mean, racist or sexist in response to criticism. But speaking up in response to followers behaving badly is important: it demonstrates what kind of behavior we will and won't look kindly upon in our community. Intervention in meetings and online spaces works. Those interventions can be private, but they can also be public: "I'm not happy with how folks who follow me are responding here. Please sit back and listen and stop piling on."

And this should go without saying but to be perfectly clear: *one should not interact with people who are actively harming others with subtle misogyny or casual racism.* As well, do not interact with accounts that are fomenting or participating in coordinated attacks — and this requires you to be savvy and informed. Many mass campaigns to discredit public advocates on Twitter, for instance, are actually fomented from chatrooms and threads of 4Chan, right wing subreddits, and other online spaces, particularly ones populated by misogynists. They can be coordinated and sophisticated campaigns, not just the bad behavior of a few "bad apples." Recognize that online actions carry authority, and engaging with harmful accounts can bestow some of that credibility to them —- even if you're arguing with them.

Don't shut people out
Talking about justice-based issues can be distressing for everyone involved, but NOT talking about them is only distressing for the people who are suffering from harm. Avoiding these conversations means sacrificing the mental, physical and economic health of those being harmed for the sake of the feelings of those who either purposefully or accidentally cause harm. In many cases, people from marginalized backgrounds who make a habit of speaking up in social settings, including online communities, get further marginalized in those communities or expelled from them for violating rules around "civility." Blocking, leaving online communities, kicking people out of online communities, and warning other people about someone's vocal advocacy of justice-based perspectives can hurt that person's career prospects and reputation, further compounding discrimination.

Relatedly, this creates survivorship bias in our communities: people from marginalized backgrounds who "survive" years of discriminatory behavior are less likely to be vocal about justice-based views. Cumulatively, these actions weed out and punish the sharpest and brightest minds from engagement in public scientific leadership: it's a massive brain drain and loss of public investment.

Demonstrate a willingness to learn and do the reading.
When justice-oriented advocates introduce people to new perspectives, it's usually because others haven't had the opportunity to educate ourselves about a particular issue. So, asking

justice-based advocates to demonstrate something they know to be true takes work, and it's a specific kind of work that they've been asked to perform repeatedly. *Instead, consider reading some of their other public writing on one's own time or reading some of the resources compiled below.* Just as we wouldn't expect to spend two hours each day educating every climate contrarian on our Twitter feed, justice-based advocates should not be expected to do homework for someone, even if that person is operating in good faith. When in doubt, Google it first, then ask questions later. Ignore the strong feelings that compel you to respond right away on online platforms.

3. Be constructive

Many people who feel defensive in these conversations may ask themselves if they're just "supposed to shut up." Receiving criticism gracefully, listening deeply, and speaking less are all great ways to learn more about justice-based perspectives while empowering people in communities most affected by climate policy. Welcome their critiques and take it as guidance.

You can also do more than that: actively work to reduce harm from yourself and other people in your community. Go the extra mile to advance justice, to restore what so many of our peers and allies have lost, and fight alongside people trying to make the world more just, more peaceful, and one we can be proud to live in today and pass on to future generations.

Build up new leaders and change institutional expectations about who speaks
Don't just reduce harm to make spaces safer for discussion. Demand that institutions focus on restorative justice to heal divides in our field so we can move forward together. Those with a platform can amplify historically marginalized voices to their followers. Co-author papers and op-eds with younger scientists to help build their standing in the community. Share justice-based perspectives in the spirit of learning, even if they make you uncomfortable.

But one shouldn't perpetuate a dependent relationship between people with marginalized voices and people with powerful voices who promote them. Instead, one should strive to be a partner working in solidarity to change expectations around who speaks for science and who speaks in climate debates. For instance, a scientist with a big platform might consider passing on interview requests and speaking opportunities to other people from marginalized communities. Yes, this involves giving something up, but it also involves building a stronger scientific and climate community from which we all benefit.

It's worth noting here that many leaders do this privately through mentorship. They can also act public to encourage others to do the same. For instance, science writer Ed Yong publicly tracks how often he quotes sources based on their gender. 500 Women Scientists also maintains a rich database of women scientists based on their expertise. Scientists can make a concerted effort to support and create opportunities for other people in one's field whom we don't hear from enough and make sure they have the resources and support they need to succeed. This is actually what robust intellectual work looks like - engagement and stewardship

of who contributes to public conversation and how their views are received. Ultimately, supporting these perspectives is what radical and transformational leadership looks like.

Push for professional development in justice and equity

Institutions tend to do a poor job centering justice-based perspectives when they offer communications and policy training. For instance, the climate community has invested considerable time and resources in teaching people how to communicate to conservative audiences. There are many reasons for this, notably that conservative policy makers often exert significant control over budgets for science agencies. Institutional support for working with justice-based communities is not as robust, though many societies, agencies and foundations are updating their strategies. For instance, the Union of Concerned Scientists' Science Network offers webinars on integrating justice-based approaches into scientific projects and decolonizing science. Beware, however, of any "check the box" approach to training that allows institutions to claim to have completed work that, in reality, is an iterative, on-going process.

Advance justice and equity, not just diversity

Many institutions engage in what justice-base advocates sometimes call "representational" or "surface-level" diversity and which they also criticize as a form of multicultural neoliberalism.

For instance, justice-based advocates are against war, imperialism, and militarism, which are historic outgrowths of colonialism that actively oppress people from marginalized backgrounds. Therefore, justice-based advocates are critical of institutional relationships with defense contractors, which celebrate some forms of diversity within their institutions — e.g. LGBTQ+ employees — but whose work nevertheless enables military forces to commit acts of violence, including against civilians. In this case, an institution may succeed at welcoming a subset of people from one marginalized background while still oppressing people from another marginalized background. Justice-based organizations don't settle for representational diversity, but instead center advancing justice and equity in their work and ensuring that we replace violent power structures with restorative ones.

If a person has more leverage to push an institution towards justice, they should use it. Recognizing that power and bringing in critical voices can help break down and rebuild existing institutional power structures in healthier ways. In conversation, people should not use efforts they are already undertaking as a shield to deflect criticism. A good way to respond to criticism might be to say, "We're doing some work on this at my institution, but I'd love to hear more about how we can do better and people and groups we can work with."

Support projects that advance science and justice

There are many ways institutions can empower people from marginalized communities, both through services provided and career opportunities. For instance, the "Throwing Shade" project in Richmond, Virginia uses federal science resources and public-collected data to identify areas where heat waves are worse due to "greenlining." These data can help cities identify and close resource gaps that directly affect people's health and well-being. It can also give young people

from communities of color hands-on experience doing science. *Create, identify, and talk about these projects as part of online dialogues.*

Pay people for time and expertise

Working on justice-based issues can be time-consuming, mentally taxing and emotionally draining for people from marginalized backgrounds. Too often they are asked to contribute their labor to justice-based causes for free, including serving on diversity committees, conducting public outreach and communication work, and even providing training to other staff. *Asking people to work for free diminishes the value of their labor, meaning less of the work gets done and people don't think the work is as important.* Pay people for their time and expertise and fight for budgets that can be used to advance justice and equity work.

Final note: be more than an "ally," be a partner who works in solidarity to advance justice

Many justice-based advocates are increasingly critical of the idea of "allyship." Instead of breaking down broken power structures to create restorative ones, even well-intentioned allies may wind up pushing for incremental reforms that <u>reduce tension</u> in an institution, but fail to deliver justice. And too often, people from positions of power who act as "allies" in advancing justice wind up <u>co-opting</u> the work of people from marginalized backgrounds, especially women of color.

Remember that justice and equity are necessary for climate policy! This is a non-negotiable framework for addressing climate change, and opposition to this framework is ahistorical and lacks a robust theory of change. Solidarity with this work is what doing the right thing looks at many levels: climate leadership, public scholarship, mentorship, and collegiality.

Regarding public discourse on climate change, we should understand the way we talk about these issues determines what policy choices our community presents as valid and invalid. Indeed, we are setting public norms, setting boundaries on what is considered acceptable discourse, and conducting world building that can include or exclude people. When this discourse is policed by a powerful, narrow, historically-privileged demographic, we can be very sure that the strength of ideas and imagination in the discourse will degrade as a result. So, working in solidarity for justice is exactly what right action looks like in leadership spaces. We must strive for excellence.

The truth is that dismantling systems of oppression benefits everyone. For instance, it's obvious that dismantling patriarchy benefits women who face gendered violence, but it also benefits men who don't comport with their society's expectations around masculinity and who can also face harassment and violence from other men attempting to enforce a patriarchal system. Understanding and dismantling systems of oppression is evidence-based practice; this is a

framework for extending value, moral attention, resources, time, and restorative care to the vast complexity of the human experience.

Advancing justice isn't charity work or a side-project. It's a responsibility we all have to create a better world. The same political systems that deny sexism, racism and other forms of oppression have denied climate science for decades. If they continue to work as intended, we will fail. This work isn't optional. It is necessary.

"If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is tied up in mine, then let us work together."

Lila Watson, indigenous activist

Resources
- UCS Science Network webinars
- 500 Women Scientists
- Rowan Institute
- Request a Scientist - 500 Women Scientists
- The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century - Ramón Grosfoguel, University of California, Berkeley
- What is Racism? Ramon Grosfoguel University of California, Berkeley
- The Case Against "Allies" - Mychal Denzel Smith
- The Problem with "Privilege" - Andrea Smith
- Fighting Racism and the Limits of Allyship - Khury Petersen-Smith and brian bean
- Women of color on climate Twitter list - Mary Heglar
- Green voices of color Twitter list - Mary Heglar
- Decolonising Science Reading List - Dr. Chanda Prescod Weinstein
- Gatekeeper Fragility, aka Meta-Fragility, the fragility around others being too fragile - Vu Le, Executive Director of Rainier Valley Corps
- Hot Take podcast - Mary Heglar and Amy Westervelt
- Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny - Kate Manne, Cornell University

Responding to Common Criticisms

- *But justice-based advocates are already on our side. We'll lose moderates and conservatives if we do what they want.* This perspective is an argument about political strategy. It assumes the speaker has a particular level of insight into how politics will work out on something over time. Importantly, it comes across as 1) assuming conservatives are more important and more worthy of one's time and attention than justice-based advocates 2) assuming that we should perpetuate current oppressive systems of power, and 3) negotiating on someone else's behalf. This "meta-fragility" also assumes moderates and conservatives are unwilling or unable to engage in justice-based conversations, so this argument also prevents them from being able to make progress on justice-related issues themselves.

- *We need to focus on solving climate change first, then we can tackle racism and women's rights*. This argument presumes a political theory of change that these issues can be isolated from one another and addressed one at a time. But it is not possible to solve climate change adequately unless people from marginalized backgrounds are able to secure equal political power and replace harmful institutions with beneficial ones. If climate policy creates jobs, who gets hired? If it means new housing, who gets to live there? If it subsidizes electric vehicles, who can afford to buy them? If the questions, and answers, of climate policy don't take systemic inequities into account, they will almost certainly propagate unfairness, which prevents everyone from having access to sustainable options, which ultimately means emissions continue to rise. Further, assuming that we can maintain status quo power structures and policies is an active political choice, one that is just as active as change.

- *This is just science and climate advocates eating their own.* These perspectives are often rooted in a desire for justice-based advocates and mainstream liberals to not enter into conflict, but they do have ideological differences. This sort of reaction is also a form of political advice that comes across as asking justice-based advocates to be quiet. But it's healthier to acknowledge and discuss differences rather than push a political strategy that involves further marginalizing people who are already marginalized.

- *Woke cancel culture SJWs are doing identity politics and I'm against extremism on both sides.* These arguments come across as repeating right wing tropes. Because that's what they are. Indeed, phrases like "woke" have specific meanings in justice-based advocacy and were often created by black activists. But over time, as these words entered the mainstream, well-funded right wing groups tried to wedge them into their rhetoric around "political correctness," a concept that has as much to do with being correct as climate denial does with actual climate science. Justice advocates are fighting for true inclusion in climate action. If that comes across as an extreme view to someone, they should consider whether or not their beliefs have truly created room for real, adequate solutions to climate change.