

ShoeStrike for Climate Justice!



AP - Maria Meza and her children from Honduras fleeing tear gas at US border

Flagstaff, Arizona -for immediate release - Tens of millions around the world are fleeing climate disasters every year. Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala are drying up. Farmers in these countries can no longer support their families. They flee to the cities, where there is not enough work, and ultimately, they flee northward. In Phoenix, thousands of people end up in emergency rooms from extreme heat exposure and hundreds die every year.

Such changing conditions from drought to floods to wildfires to massive hurricanes are leading to millions of climate refugees all over the world. Twenty-four million people were displaced by climate disasters in 2019, and the World Bank projects that climate change will displace 143 million people per year by 2050, unless we do something about it right now.

While the USA is among the biggest polluters causing greenhouse gas emissions, we seem to be unable to take responsibility for the consequences of our actions. "Our borders are shut to these climate refugees even though we are largely responsible for their plight", says Marco Alatorre with Flagstaff's Fridays for Future, "as long as our government refuses to help these people, we need to protest their failing policies, and we'll keep protesting until they act to reign in our CO₂ emissions and support climate refugees."

Across the world and in the US, it is people of color who are being most negatively affected by climate change. For example, in Phoenix, AZ it is people who cannot afford to cool their homes have been hit hardest by extreme high temperatures. The city is now installing cooling refuges and hydration stations for folks who can't afford to cool their homes. The more privileged folks cool their homes and some buy second homes in cooler places like Flagstaff.

ShoeStrike for Climate Justice. Since we cannot gather safely in large numbers due to the pandemic, we are holding a ShoeStrike for Climate Justice, modeled on the SkoStrejk movement that started in Sweden and is now spreading to other parts of the World. People will bring their shoes and protest signs to City Hall on Saturday, July 25th. The protest will take place from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm. The ShoeStrike is sponsored by the Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance, Fridays for Future, Elders Climate Action, NAU Divestment Club, Flagstaff Climate Action Council, Citizens' Climate Lobby, and Flagstaffians Combating the Climate Crisis.

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More Background information:

On July 25th *ShoeStrikes for Climate Justice* are going global with ShoeStrikes happening all over Sweden, Germany, Great Britain, the US, Canada, and parts of Africa. ShoeStrikes are also planned in Flagstaff, Sedona, Cottonwood, Prescott, Phoenix, and Tucson on July 25th.

Government failure to act. With an ongoing tragic corona pandemic and economies in free fall, our Federal decision makers are busy today. But strong leadership is also about being able to look beyond the chaotic present and act now to address a far greater challenge: the climate crisis. While many US cities, like Flagstaff, are implementing strong climate action and adaptation plans, our federal government has backed out of our country's commitments to the international Paris Climate Accord.

In the Paris Agreement, 194 countries agreed that the average temperature increase should be limited to well below 2 degrees with the aim of limiting it to 1.5 degrees. Despite this, greenhouse gas emissions continue to increase. Since the industrial revolution, we have already raised the average temperature by 1.2 degrees.

The warming means not just elevated sea levels, but also dehydrated grazing land and greater evaporation of our precious water. Rangeland productivity has already dropped by over 80% in much of Coconino County. As of June 16th, there were 941 wildfires in Arizona this year, having burned over 170,000 acres. On June 22nd there were 73 active fires burning in our state.

Clearly these outcomes are unsustainable. Water availability and food production are projected to drop even further in Central America, and corn production is shifting northward into Canada. There are plenty of things that individuals do to reduce their carbon footprints. Our state and federal representatives need to take the bigger steps towards a sustainable and secure society. In January, our Coconino County Board of Supervisors approved construction of the 477-Megawatt Chevelon Butte Wind Power Plant. This is a step in the right direction, and we need many more big steps like this one.

At the end of 2019 the European Investment Bank (EIB) announced that they will stop making loans for projects involving fossil fuels. The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and other major global financial institutions are now considering whether to follow the EIB's example. Perhaps our cities should build a more sustainable future by divesting from fossil fuels, before their value plummets. Perhaps our government leadership should build a more sustainable future for us all, by investing in the coming technologies of wind and solar power.

Meanwhile, what are our responsibilities for helping climate refugees? Do we just continue putting them in refugee camps in Europe and just turn them away from the US? Do we ignore them until their desperate plight boils over at home and on our borders?

To learn more please visit <http://www.NAZCCA.org>.

