

Good Morning and welcome to The New School.

On behalf of the University and the Tishman Environment and Design Center, it's a great pleasure to have you all with us on campus today.

The New School has a rich progressive history, which -I think- makes this the perfect place for you all to have gathered today.

In 1919 our founders set out to create a new kind of academic institution, where faculty and students would be free to honestly and directly address the problems facing societies in the 20th century.

Their plan was to bring together scholars and citizens interested in questioning, debating, and discussing the most important issues of the day.

Today, The New School strives to be a university where design and social research drive approaches to studying issues of our time, such as democracy, urbanization, technological change, race, economic empowerment, sustainability, migration, and globalization.

The Tishman Environment and Design Center is the key translator of that vision into environment-focused research, curriculum, and practice across The New School's five colleges and in collaboration with community partners, creating a nexus between academia and the environmental and social justice grassroots movements, with a specific focus on underserved communities.

We work with over fifty Affiliated faculty members from fields as varied and diverse as fashion, economics, music, policy, management, architecture and the liberal arts to teach our students how to leverage the skills they learn here to become agents of change who contribute to socially just climate change solutions.

Our interdisciplinary approach is especially evident in The New School's unique role conquering the intersections between climate change and the

performing arts with a recently-launched project called the Tar Sands Songbook: a documentary play with music, which depicts the experience and concerns of the communities living near the Alberta Tar Sands in Canada.

I want to take a moment to acknowledge the important work that everyone in this room does.

On Tuesday morning EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt made the final announcement that the Trump Administration will rescind the Clean Power Plan.

When the plan was unveiled in 2015, the Tishman Center worked with Visiting Scholars Cecilia Martinez and Nicky Sheets to conduct an analysis of the environmental justice implications of the plan, recognizing that the promise of carbon reductions is progress, but the achievement of justice and equity in the CPP's implementation would be a truer achievement of a safe and sustainable future.

Even though we all knew the plan would be revoked by the new Administration, it still makes me reflect on all the work that everyone in this room did to get us to the endangerment finding, the CPP, and other regulatory and policy actions over the past 10 years.

I personally reflect on being on the plane to Copenhagen with the EPA team to amplify that we had just made to endangerment finding to the COP.

This finding may be all we have at this moment to hold on to, but it's reminder of how important our work is and what's at stake.

This hurricane season has helped put this into perspective. Communities in Texas and Florida are recovering and rebuilding while Puerto Rico is reeling from the devastating impacts of Hurricane Maria, where its infrastructure simply couldn't handle a storm of that magnitude and the federal government is ignoring its responsibilities.

Fenceline communities in Houston are facing hazardous pollution from oil refineries and petrochemical plants in the wake of Hurricane Harvey.

These two communities, Puerto Rico and Houston, are painful reminders of how climate change and environmental pollution will hurt our most vulnerable populations first and foremost.

We all know from having gone through Superstorm Sandy, and continuing to work on our own resiliency that the Northeast is not immune to the effects of climate change.

Our most vulnerable communities are at the highest risk from decades of neglect, socioeconomic inequality, lack of funding for infrastructure, environmental pollution and political corruption that have compounded over time.

As philanthropic and academic organizations working on climate change and environmental degradation, we must work together to ensure the communities most at risk, are able to build resiliency, participate in the growing green economy and share in the benefits of climate mitigation and adaptation planning.

I want to thank you all for kindly inviting our graduate students in Environmental Policy and Sustainability Management to join you for lunch.

Not only are they incredibly passionate about climate change, but they are a great group of students who inspire me all the time with their creativity and optimism about the future.

I hope that after meeting some of them today you will share my sense that in spite of the huge challenges posed by climate change, there is hope because of these young people who are so ready and willing to work hard to create just and equitable solutions.