

Good afternoon, and welcome to The New School!

My name is Michelle DePass, and I am the Director of the university-wide Tishman Environment and Design Center, and Dean of the Milano School of International Affairs, Management, and Urban Policy.

The Tishman Environment and Design Center is a research and practice hub here at The New School fostering bold design, policy, and social justice-based approaches to environmental issues.

We bring together some of the best students and faculty at the university to be researchers for the resistance, standing with with community-based and grassroots organizations as academic allies in the fight for environmental and climate justice.

It's an honor to have you all here with us today celebrating Climate Week 2017.

Let's be honest, it's been a rough year.

As a former Assistant Administrator in the EPA during the Obama Administration, I have felt every form of hurt, confusion, and anger watching the current administration dismantle so much of the progress that has been made toward environmental justice at the Federal level in the past few decades.

As a former program officer at the Ford Foundation who funded community-based recovery efforts post-Katrina, and the daughter of two parents living in Florida, I have watched in horror and sadness as hurricane after hurricane has come barreling through the Atlantic Ocean and decimated communities in their paths.

But I refuse to feel despair.

This afternoon's event is a testament to the resilience of our communities, and the strength of the climate justice movement.

We will not sit quietly and let our rights and legal protections be stripped away.

We will not lay down in defeat when the wind blows and the rain falls and the water rises with record breaking intensity.

We will not be intimidated by racist rhetoric and hate groups.

We will do what we have always done: we will stand together, fighting every day for breathable air and drinkable water, and healthy, safe communities for our loved ones.

That is what today is all about.

I want to thank our list of partners who helped make this event happen - and please bear with me, it's a long list.

Thank you to:

the Hip Hop Caucus

People's Climate Music

The Lonely Whale Foundation

The People's Climate Movement

350.org

Uprose

Friends of the Earth

WeAct

The Solutions Project

New Republic

#Sandy5

The Union of Concerned Scientists

And EarthJustice

It's our honor to have you all here at The New School, demonstrating just how powerful and beautiful this movement is.