



TISHMAN CENTER · FEBRUARY 11, 2019

# An Interview with Genevieve Guenther

How did you come up with the idea of making an organization that links stories about climate-change impacts to climate change itself? What problem(s) are you trying to solve?

I founded [EndClimateSilence.org](https://endclimatesilence.org) in the summer of 2018, after I wrote a thread on Twitter about hearing three NPR stories in a row--one about a rancher in Oregon dealing with endless drought by trucking in 18,000 gallons of water per day, one about the future of autonomous vehicles, and one about catastrophic mudslides in Japan--without the words "climate change" ever being

mentioned. The silence on the issue was surreal and disturbing. These news reports were obviously about events and practices linked to climate change, but as far as NPR was concerned, it was as if climate change didn't exist. So, outraged, I wrote a Twitter thread, and to my surprise it went viral, even inspiring a think piece in *The New Republic*. I realized that many people wanted more climate coverage in the news and also that Twitter has real power to shape the media conversation. So I decided to use that power to pressure the media--not to do more discrete stories about climate change, which seemed like a non-starter, but actually to mention climate change in the stories about its effects that they were already reporting. And so [EndClimateSilence.org](https://endclimatesilence.org) was born.

**How does your website encourage the public to become more engaged in breaking the silence?**

Most of our activism takes place on Twitter. Our website ([EndClimateSilence.org](https://endclimatesilence.org)) serves mostly as a landing page for people who are looking for us on Google. We encourage people to follow us on Twitter ([@EndClimateSilence](https://twitter.com/EndClimateSilence)) and retweet our tweets in order to make their voices heard on this issue. Every time someone retweets one of our tweets, the journalist or anchor

we've mentioned gets a notification; the more notifications they get, the more they're reminded to #EndClimateSilence, as we put it in our hashtag. I and board member Brad Johnson have also been asked by Bernie Sanders' climate and energy team to appear [a video about ending climate silence for Senator Sanders' social media](#), and I've been interviewed on [CNN's Reliable Sources](#) about the issue as well. The more we can keep the problem of media coverage in the media itself, the more we'll be able to shift the paradigm for how climate change is covered.

**What sources do you use to stay informed about what is happening in climate change and the climate change movement?**

I read everything written by the climate journalists Kate Aronoff, Emily Atkin, Chris Mooney, Eric Holthaus, David Roberts, Eric Roston, David Wallace-Wells, and the teams at Earther, New York Times Climate, Climate Central, and Inside Climate News. I'm also connected to a network of climate activists and to climate scientists directly on Twitter. I met the climate scientist Michael Mann on Twitter, and he is now on our advisory board! **What do you think the biggest barriers are to getting real climate action in local, state or federal governments?** By far

the biggest barrier to getting our governments to address the breakdown of our life-sustaining climate is the power and wealth of the fossil-fuel industry. I mean "power and wealth" in a very direct sense, as what enables oil and gas interests not only to buy politicians and threaten them with primary campaigns in order to secure their climate denial, but also to flood public discourse with the propaganda that makes voters believe that the solutions to climate change will hurt them more than climate change itself. Yet I also mean "power and wealth" in a more Foucauldian sense, as an inescapable, enabling presence diffused throughout our social and personal lives, from the very infrastructure on and through which our bodies move and find food and shelter to the reproduction of cultural practices and conceptual worlds. Just think, for example, about the role plane travel, which relies entirely on fossil fuels, plays in our imagination of the good life. Or, in a more high-culture register, think about the fact that the right-wing petroleum magnate David Koch has his name both on what used to be the New York State Theater and on the plaza in front of the Met. We celebrate the use of fossil fuels and the men who supply them. Yet in truth fossil fuels are genocidal poisons that will kill

millions of people in the next decades and possibly billions in the next century unless we stop using them. So not only does the global energy system need to transform materially, Capitalist culture needs to evolve as well. I actively cultivate the hope that this evolution will happen through widespread education, through new forms of art, through committed activism, through necessary changes in media practices, and so on, and not through an unfolding cataclysm from which it will be too late to recover.

**Moving forward, where would you like to see this organization go? What would you change or add?**

My goal is that in the next few years the media will have changed its practices in covering climate and I'll be able to disband EndClimateSilence.org. We have 12 years to draw down our greenhouse gas emissions by half and 30 to entirely transition to a safe energy system, or else make the planet largely uninhabitable for humans. As the physicist John Schellnhuger says, the difference between 2C and 4C of warming is civilization. We need to undermine the power of the fossil fuel industry every way we can. We at [EndClimateSilence.org](https://www.endclimatesilence.org) will do our part by working to get the media to tell the truth about the climate

change that has already begun to kill  
people today.



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