

# Let's Talk Solutions: Global Climate Action Summit (Extended Version)

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**Announcer:** Welcome to Climate One - changing the conversation about energy, economy and environment. I'm Devon Strolovitch. Climate One conversations - with oil companies and environmentalists, Republicans and Democrats - are recorded before a live audience, and hosted by Greg Dalton.

Today's special episode was recorded earlier this week as a kickoff to the Global Climate Action Summit in San Francisco. Greg welcomed a powerhouse panel to ask how cities, states, and companies can bypass federal inaction to advance climate solutions.

**Gina McCarthy:** We need to get together and figure out how you address and drive solutions to climate that actually end up in not just a cleaner and healthier and more sustainable world, but one that's more just.

Gina McCarthy is Director of The Center for Climate, Health, and the Global Environment at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and former administrator of the US EPA under President Obama. For McCarthy, a cleaner, healthier world enables individuals to work for change.

**Bill McKibben:** The most important thing an individual can do at this point is be a little less of an individual.

Bill McKibben is Founder of 350 dot org and is one of the nation's leading climate activists and authors. He argues that larger movements are key to changing the climate status quo

**Marisa de Belloy:** The next Bill McKibben or Gina McCarthy might be sitting in front of Cool Effect right now donating \$10 and, you know, we'll see where that goes.

Marisa de Belloy is Executive Director of the Overlook International Foundation and CEO of Cool

Effect, which helps people band together to reduce the carbon pollution that causes climate change.

**Tom Steyer:** I don't think there's any way that this gets solved without the American people putting bounds on how capitalism works

Tom Steyer is Founder and President of NextGen America, which fights climate change by, among other things, getting more than 250,000 young people to vote.

**Gloria Walton:** We need to have bold vision, innovative solutions, that's coming from the bottom up, that's coming from all of us in this room and so many people who are not here.

Gloria Walton is President and CEO of Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education, which builds grassroots power to create social and economic justice for low-income, female, immigrant, black, and brown communities in Los Angeles.

Let's listen as Greg Dalton and his guests talk solutions at this week's Global Climate Action Summit

**Greg Dalton:** Gloria Walton, let's begin with you. How did you get into climate as your area that you are concerned about?

**Gloria Walton:** Okay, get right to it. So I guess it was kind of in 2004 for people who don't know about SCOPE, we're a social justice organization known for our community organizing, leadership development, civic and voter engagement work, but we're also known for our job creation initiatives. And so when we thought about the climate sector we were actually seeing it as an economic opportunity. And in particular trying to think about how do we create jobs for low income African-American and Latino families that are poor in working-class like the ones who live in south-central Los Angeles. And at that time it was billions of dollars that were being invested coming down the pipe and so we were doing our research we figured out that the top polluters at that time are our buildings. And if you're familiar with L.A. infrastructure we have a pretty old infrastructure and so we saw this as a great opportunity to create good paying unionized jobs, and that was in 2004. Then 2005 came around and Katrina hit. And the headlines were saying the eye of the storm was in Gulf Coast, Mississippi. And what didn't make the headlines was my mother and my family and all of the families in my mother's neighborhood in Jackson, Mississippi and my mom was devastated, all of the families. Trees fell on homes, schools, there is flooding and both of those things happen to my mother's home. FEMA came for some and not for others. I was successfully able to raise a few thousand dollars to support my mom to get her roof fixed to get all the water removed and for her to be able to get a little bit of furniture. And that appeased her for a minute and as kind of months passed and we all pretty much moved on, my family didn't. And if you're familiar with Jackson Mississippi it's pretty humid there. So all of that water that we thought we removed actually saturated the walls and turned to toxic mold. And so my mom's first home that she was able to buy through an FHA loan with her hard earned savings, mind you, she's a single mom, I grew up in poverty, mother of three, went into foreclosure and she lost that home. And technically, she's still in recovery because she's never been able to purchase another home. And if I fast forward to today, I think about one of our members Miss Olivia Barber in south-central Los Angeles and for people who are not familiar with south-central it's an area, we define the community by the freeways that surround it. So the 10 freeway to the north, the 105 to the south the 110 to the east and the 405 to the west. And then we have stuff like the Imperial Highway running through community, which means that diesel trucks also love to come to our community heading to the ports, the ports of Los Angeles. And Ms. Olivia Barber has COPD she's been living with it. Chronic, and if I get this wrong someone please correct me. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and essentially it's a respiratory disease. And so on these extreme heat days that we've all been experiencing 117°, 111°, 115° South L.A. being a highly concretized community that has minimal shade trees. So on these days her COPD

is exacerbated which means that her costs for medication goes up because she has to buy more. She's not able to go to work some days, and the air conditioner that she bought, one that, you know, that you just put in the window she ran it one day and it actually made her electric bill, her power bill go upwards of \$20 which actually matters to her. It may not matter to some of us in this room, but it was actually pretty major for her. So when I think about climate and climate solutions I believe that we have to have an intersectional approach that's both about economic resilience that's also about environmental resilience at the community level. And I believe that I want to believe anyways, that all of us in this room and definitely all of us on this panel I know don't want to have a new clean green economy that still has the same structural inequities and racism and income inequality that exist today. And so when I think about climate solutions I believe that I wanted to have my mother at the table, workers, Ms. Barber, folks who can actually tell their story and share their solutions so that we actually have solutions that don't just benefit the few but benefit many.

**Greg Dalton:** Gina McCarthy, you believe that poverty is at the root of a lot of what climate is about, but it's not often talked about in the climate conversations. So tell us about how you see that connection between poverty and climate.

**Gina McCarthy:** Well I view climate as a pollution problem. It is in my words carbon pollution is just like every other pollutant. It actually impacts the poor in minority communities more heavily than anyone else. It impacts our kids and our elderly and a carbon pollution exacerbates those problems it creates continued inequalities. It keeps poor communities poor it doesn't allow them economic opportunities and it's not, carbon pollution is not just the biggest threat that we have to public health and our economy, but it could represent I think, as Gloria indicated our sort of wake-up call that it isn't just an environmental problem. It's a health problem it's about families it's about communities and it gives us a wonderful opportunity to think about how you address and drive solutions to climate that actually end up and not just a cleaner and healthier and more sustainable world but one that's more just. If we miss that opportunity then we are going to continue to slide back. That's not what democracy is about that's not what working in public service is about. It's about recognizing all those challenges and finding solutions that meet all of them and I believe we can.

**Greg Dalton:** Tom Steyer, is that possible without changing capitalism?

[Laughter]

**Gina McCarthy:** Glad he got that question.

**Tom Steyer:** Will you want to keep this to 30 seconds? Look, I don't think there's any way that this gets solved without the voice of the American people putting bounds and putting restrictions on the way that capitalism works. Because --

[Applause]

-- there is a sense that is completely false in the United States. It's been around for a few decades that somehow there is a market that is just an efficient and sent down by God, and that if we monkey with it that somehow we're going to be upsetting the natural just order and that is a fallacy and a myth. Every single market in the world is run according to rule set by human beings. So if you take a simple example about the employment market 100 years ago, you could've hired someone who is 12 years old to work for you for 14 hours and paid him \$.25. You can't do that today because the American people won't stand for it because we think it's wrong. So when we think about what Gina is talking about when we think about what Gloria is talking about which is how we choose to pollute how we as a society choose to allow a corporation to pollute, that's up to us. And that is a question

for people who are thinking about the greater good of the human beings in society and the justice that's necessary if we're gonna have the kind of society that we want. So it's absolutely incumbent on the government of the United States and we can see it happening, you know, this week in California in terms of what's been passed but the people who've been elected to represent the will of the people have to represent those people and put the balance on what's permissible in the market have to put rules so that people don't in effect, that low income communities or community of color don't become the cesspools and the dumping grounds for polluters and is that changing the nature of capitalism that's recognizing the wave that the world actually works and that there is an absolute important critical role for government in living up to the values that we share and standing up for the people in society who otherwise would be unfairly picked on.

**Greg Dalton:** There's a video on Netflix called Explained that uses a lemonade stand to explain kind of the takeover or the rise of shareholder fundamentalism that didn't used to be as strongly held in this country as it was a couple of decades ago. So Explained on Netflix will explain that in a very accessible way. Bill McKibben, a lot of environmentalists come from comfortable positions and stations in life in the United States and they kind of want to swap out the brown energy for the green energy and leave the rest things in order and they're kind of may be threatened by some of the things that we've heard here today is that fair that they want clean-air but, you know.

**Bill McKibben:** Sure, you can always find characters to fit a stereotype but, you know, my sense is that climate change or global warming has had a kind of salutary effect on the way that lots of people are understanding the world. I remember when we started 350.org we held the first big day of action that we held we had 5,200 demonstrations around the world in 181 countries. The pictures were flowing in 20, 30 a minute from around the planet and it took about five minutes of watching them to realize that almost everyone we were working with was poor, black, brown, Asian, young because that's what almost everybody on planet Earth is. And it's really useful I think for us to I mean when people sometimes people say, oh climate change is an opportunity, you know, it seems a little much really but it is an opportunity in the sense of recognizing that we actually do live on a particular planet where things move around really easily and where people get shaft in the most remarkable ways. I mean Gloria's mother lost her home and it was a really powerful story. And she would identify I imagine with the people that we work with all over the world toward literally losing their homelands, you know, their countries are disappearing beneath the ocean. And those people are active leading, the leading parts of this movement around the world. That's who's making change. So I mean truthfully, the idea that environmentalism is, you know, something that rich white people do, this doesn't seem, I mean at this point rich white people are mostly the problem, you know, I mean --

[Laughter]

**Gloria Walton:** He said it.

[Laughter]

**Gina McCarthy:** Don't look at me.

**Greg Dalton:** Marisa de Belloy, tell us about Dee and Richard Lawrence and they got into climate by accident going down to Honduras.

**Marisa de Belloy:** Yeah, so this is a story that fits in really well for what we've been discussing. So Dee and Richard went on to Honduras about 15 years ago on a medical mission actually as translators. And they discovered actually Skye Lawrence, their daughter, who I think is in the audience tonight got invited to some local homes. And she came back saying, "Mommy, Daddy,

guess what, you know, I've discovered what's going on here." Because, you know, everything they were treating was respiratory illness. Children sucking on nebulizers and, you know, mothers just coughing and coughing. And Skye realized why, you know, she was invited to this little home which is little more than a hut and the woman inside was cooking on a what's called a three-stone fire which is an open fire in a tiny little hut breathing in the smoke all day long. And they thought well, you know, what can we do about this and it's bad for the climate it's bad for this family, isn't there a better way to do something about this. So they decided to create a stove and they created one that was, you know, adapted to the local community. I make it sound easy, it was not easy, you know, there's a long tradition of Western nonprofits going to other countries and saying this is how you need to do it here you go, you know, take this and nobody ever uses it. So they spend years actually working with the local community to come up with a stove that fit the cooking task that was exactly what people wanted and then they put in a system of coming back time and time again to make sure that people were using the stove they understood how to use the stove and they were, you know, continuing to get the benefits. And it's a fantastic project, I was down there in June and, you know, you can even imagine the transformation that you'll see in the lives of these people. I visited one home where there's a woman who had a disabled child who had to be at home and with her all day long and she had to choose between taking care of her child and cooking for her family because the child had gotten so sick from sitting next to this three-stone it's open fire that, you know, she had to be somewhere else. And she was constantly running back and forth until she got one of the stoves, one of these Mirador stoves and it's transformed her life. She's healthier, her child is healthier she's got more time with her child. She's got more money available to her because she doesn't need the same amount of fuel. It's transformational. And, you know, this is a great example of a carbon pollution reduction project. One of the things that Cool Effect does is we go out and we find these great carbon pollution reduction projects there are about 10,000 of them out there in the world and they are not created equal. There's really, you know, there's a million examples of terrible ones not so great ones. But on the other hand, there are some really fantastic projects many of which are now we've put on the Cool Effect platform that people, you know, like you who are already doing absolutely everything they can to fight climate change and I'm sure everybody in this room is already, you know, voting and advocating and educating and recycling. But, you know, it's a way to do more to verifiably reduce carbon pollution.

**Greg Dalton:** We're talking about climate at Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton. My guests are Marisa de Belloy from Overlook International Foundation, Gina McCarthy, former head of the EPA under President Obama. The climate author and activist Bill McKibben, the investor and advocate Tom Steyer and Gloria Walton, an environmental justice leader in Los Angeles. Gina McCarthy, the term green jobs is often used to sort of sell -- tell us what you think about that term green jobs and how it might reflect difficulty connecting with certain parts of the country what's embedded in that term?

**Gina McCarthy:** I don't know what a green job is. Every job ought to be green I think, you know. But that just me maybe, you know, I think the challenge with that is that what people don't understand is that when the world shifts to be cleaner and healthy you can grow a much stronger economy and it creates jobs. That's the jobs that you want to have. Now if that's what you want to call green that's fine. But when you say green job it sounds elitists it sounds like it's not open to everybody. It sounds like it's a funky little thing where you take people for hikes or something. So I'm not a big fan of articulating green versus everything else. I think I want to make sure that we mainstream these ideas. I'm extraordinarily concerned that climate has become so partisan that it's not talked about among families, you know, and I think we have to get over these ideas that there is a green world and then everything else. I just think we need to get together figure out how the jobs of the future are the ones that create a sustainable, healthy and just world. Those are the jobs that are green to me. I don't care what you want to say.

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Tom Steyer, you have an organization active on college campuses around the country, red states. How do you message and try to connect with people, you're a San Francisco liberal, how do you connect with people in other parts of the country who don't want to talk or, you know, think San Francisco liberalism, keep away.

**Tom Steyer:** Well, our organization is on 421 college campuses this year. And we talk to young people under 35 about the issues that they're most concerned about which pretty much across the country involve the cost of higher education, which is a killer issue that people don't really recognize. Healthcare is a killer issue, racial justice across the country people under 35 are very, very concerned with and climate and the environment. And that's pretty much any place you go. And what I think about American politics today and this doesn't answer your question Greg, is that young people vote, people under 35 which to me is young, voted half the rate of other American citizens. And it's not that they're not informed and passionate or lazy. They have an issue and the issue is they don't think that the system response to their needs and they don't think either party tells the truth.

[Applause]

So when someone says to me, how do we talk to students in Iowa in a conservative Christian college, the answer that I have is first of all we tell the truth and we talk to them about the issues frankly and honestly and listen to them to hear what they think about them because that's what's missing in American politics is the attempt to manipulate to shade the truth to figure out how to say things in a way so that no one will be offended. When we're talking about energy and climate we're talking about something that they absolutely know in their bones has a huge justice element to it. They know that it's an issue that if people are talking about pushing it out and not caring they know it will affect them. And it's an issue where that entire generation doesn't want to see this swept under the rug. They know that it's one of the issues where the older people in America want to basically pass a gigantic debt on to them incur a huge debt and pass it on to their generation and let them deal with it. So actually I don't think there is any kind of regional issue in terms of youth in the United States of America. I think that when we go to red states when we talk to young people there they are absolutely on the same wavelength which they are sick and tired of people lying to them and they're sick and tired of people hiding the truth. And I think when you get into an honest dialogue Americans are much more similar across party lines across geographic lines than people generally know and that they tend to be very compassionate, very brave and very ready to act.

**Greg Dalton:** Gloria Walton, tell us about Taylor Mayfield. I don't know how old Taylor Mayfield is but there's a story there about him trying to get into a union where there are some obstacles for him.

**Gloria Walton:** Yeah, so this is great. This is about our green jobs program that we actually launched back in 2006. And it's a story about intersectionality and we did this through the L.A. Apollo alliance model and essentially admit that we needed to have labor at the table community at the table as well as environmental justice organizations at the table and some of our mainstream enviros as well. And I was kind of alluding to the story earlier but the entrée point was really municipal retrofits for us. And so that meant that we're gonna retrofit city-owned buildings. We saw this as an entrée point for people like Mr. Mayfield who lives in south-central Los Angeles. He's a black man, older maybe he can be kind of like my father. He kind of is like a father to me really. And he's a longtime member who I've known since I was an intern at SCOPE. I started as an intern 15 years ago and I've been running the organization now for 8 of the 15 years. And so Taylor and I have really grown together and with this jobs program we knew that we had to talk to building

trades. And the best way to do that and I'm really happy to kind of bring up labor because I feel like that's always the point of contention in the debate which I can understand and empathize with which I'll share little bit more about after telling the story about Mr. Mayfield. So we invited the building trades, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers in particular, to a community meeting. We packed the house standing room only, and Mr. Mayfield, you know, we're having like a pretty good conversation and some dialogue about what's possible and the jobs that can be created. And Mr. Mayfield stands up and he looks this representative in the eye and he just like, I know you mean well, but black folks are locked out of the building trade. So why should we work with you. It was silent, just kind of how this room is right now.

[Laughter]

And I was even shocked because, you know, you always try to have a few leaders prepped in the room, right to kind of ask those provocative questions, but this was something that just came from his heart and that was real that we actually needed to address in order for us to build trust and build a program that gave opportunities to black men and other black women as well pathways into the building trades. So we ended up dealing with that question head-on and it was our members who helped us create a program that had paid apprenticeship opportunity it had a cohort model. Labor unions actually provided bus tokens for people to get to work because, you know, a lot of people have been under in unemployed for years and don't have transportation. We were really creative with ways for people to actually get all of their hours so if you couldn't pass some of the tests, then you would actually get trained for several more hours. And so the point was to guarantee your success in the program and to make sure that you actually replace in a good paying unionized job that provides benefits so that you can actually support your family and we did that successfully. And so some of our members got access to those jobs Mr. Mayfield and many others. And then we actually expanded on that municipal retrofit program to do residential retrofits with this campaign that we called RePower L.A. And we created a new entry-level workforce called utility pre-craft training and that's still going on today. And so the success of that model reverberates and for us it's really about making sure that we have replicable models that we've done at SCOPE models that are happening in Jackson, Mississippi, with Cooperation Jackson that's happening at my dear sister organization in PUSH, Buffalo, New York with a lot of the organizations that are part of the California Environmental Justice Alliance also known as CEJA. And our very own APEN that is right here, my sister Mia's organization in the Bay Area.

**Greg Dalton:** Asia Pacific Environmental Network.

**Gloria Walton:** Yup.

**Greg Dalton:** Bill McKibben, one of the basic goes on in environmentalism is trying to bridge individual change and systemic change and there's quite a debate about people wanna say I want do an action that matters. So what kind of individual action matters and how can that be connected, you know, rise up to collective systemic change?

**Bill McKibben:** You know I think the early days of the climate discussion were a lot about individual action. What am I going to do what kind of light bulbs do I have, what am I driving, so on and so forth, fine. And if the physics and chemistry of climate were such that we had 50 or 100 years to deal with the problem probably a perfectly sound way to go about things, you know, humans and their societies really do change best when they change somewhat slowly and people have a little time to adapt and so on and so forth. But physics is, you know, calling the tune here and it's very clear that we not only don't have 50 years we had to start 50 years ago and we didn't. And that means at this point that you can't make the math work. One household at a time, one light bulb at a time. That's why so much of the emphasis I think in the movement has shifted into standing up to

those forces that are keeping us from making progress. We haven't talked about the fact that the climate fight has another side, there is the richest industry on earth, the fossil fuel industry, that's determined to keep things more or less as they are and it's requiring us to stand up to them. So I guess to go back to your question, the most important thing an individual can do at this point is be a little bit less of an individual joined together with other people in those things that we call movements the kind of things that Gloria or Tom organize that help us, help compensate for the balance of power that, you know. I mean look, left to its own devices, Exxon has all the money in the world. I'm only a Methodist and a schoolteacher, but it's my firm belief they have more money than God. And so left to their own devices they'll happily go on wrecking the planet while the rest of us happily go on changing our light bulbs. Part of this is standing up to them and that's why movement that's where the kind of organizing that Gloria is talking about that Tom's doing on campus that's why that's so crucial. That's what when it's done right, when it's done right it opens up the space in where people like Gina can get their job done. If there isn't space if we haven't opened up space for them, then it's too much to ask our political leaders. I mean without sounding cynical perhaps political leader is not quite the right phrase to use anymore our political workers to, you know, throw themselves on the barricades we have to take down some of the barricades first so that then they can go do their work.

**Greg Dalton:** Tom Steyer.

**Tom Steyer:** Well, I think what Bill is saying is obviously true that what we have is a political problem. And that the solution to our problem we have a corporate takeover of our democracy. And the only thing we can do to take back our democracy is be organized and use our votes. And unless we are organized, unless people understand what's at stake and unless people show up at the polls and assert our 200-year-old democracy and insist that it's by off and for the people -

**Bill McKibben:** Our votes and everything else.

**Tom Steyer:** Yes. I agree with Bill. Not just voting day but --

**Bill McKibben:** That's why we have to be divesting our money it's why we have to be sitting down in front of pipelines it's why we have to be doing. But on an even on the autumn of an even-numbered year you're absolutely right votes are key.

**Tom Steyer:** But what I'd say is this. What Bill is saying is don't expect that the logic of your argument that the justice of your argument that the irrefutability of your argument is gonna win the day. Because I believe that the people on this stage have a laid down argument on any one of those factors in terms of justice in terms of prosperity and job growth in terms of health of Americans in terms of America's moral leadership in the world it's an absolute laid down. The question is, that's not getting it done. There are interests on the other side who don't even argue back because they can't. But what they're doing is they're preserving their bottom line at the expense of everyone else in society and what we need to do is assert our collective will the will of the American people to protect ourselves and stand up for our values through our democracy, or we'll pay a gigantic price for their selfishness.

**Greg Dalton:** We have a question from Twitter from Ann Hancock. We'll put this to Gina McCarthy. What do you recommend climate movement leaders do to help the movement become more effective and powerful? You've been inside government at the highest levels, answer that question

**Gina McCarthy:** Well I think right now to not focus so much on what's happening at the federal government because it's nothing into, you know, I suggest that people turn off their televisions and



look at the real world. And, you know, I have to say that what Tom is doing to actually go out to young people and get them engaged again is probably the most important thing that we can do right now. You know, I'm at Harvard, practice that Harvard.

[Laughter]

Because the students care more about social justice than you can ever imagine one of the most popular courses at the B-school which is the Harvard business school is called reimagining capitalism because it's not working, you know, it's not working for everybody. And honestly, it distresses me when Tom talks about the fact that, you know, students on voting because government is not working for them, who do they think government is? We happened to be an of by and for the people government and if they don't vote, then stop talking to me about what you don't like. That's it.

[Applause]

So, you know, right now I think a lot of what government does doesn't work because it's been specifically targeted to make it not work by people who don't want government to work because they have all the power, you know, we have to recognize that.

**Gloria Walton:** I kind of get into this.

**Gina McCarthy:** We honestly, so we have to kind of grow up here and recognize that we have all the best arguments, but frankly the people we're fighting against don't even have to argue at all. They own it so we have to get to the students and remind them that this country has been through some very difficult times. I think that this is an extraordinary moment when we either save our democracy or we don't. And so they have to step up. We all have to step up and we have to stop arguing with one another and we just have to vote we have to act we have to forget about the things we can't change and we don't like. And we have to make it the world we want. And that's it, it's hard work, pull up your pants let's go that's it.

[Laughter]

**Tom Steyer:** Greg, can I give some numbers?

**Greg Dalton:** Gloria wants to get on that.

**Tom Steyer:** Go ahead.

**Gloria Walton:** Yes because Gina just had a mic drop moment so thank you for just and all of you really putting it out on the table which is getting me excited. And so I just really want to underscore some of the stuff that was said. One is that it's not enough to have an insight strategy alone which I think is the dominant theory of change which is what we tend to resort to. And the problem with just resorting to that is that one person on the inside of an institution that is being bombarded with corporate interests, lobbyists, financial interests with the best intentions on the inside being pulled in that direction you're only going to be able to -- gosh, you're gonna be able to work for what's possible within the confines of that institution, but not what's needed for local communities. And so that's why us on the outside, all of us in this room all of the organizations that I've mentioned, it's about us working structurally in connection with our decision-makers on the inside. And more importantly informing solutions because the solutions really do come from us. And then with the thing around corporate interests, you know, you talk about capitalism and the thing with capitalism it makes me think about patriarchy. It makes me think about racism. It makes me think about sexism it makes me think about xenophobia. All of these things that every issue that we work on

including climate is rooted in all of that icky stuff. And that's why we really have to have an intersectional approach. It's not enough to just deal with one of those pillars when they're all rooted in that same messed up system. And that's why it all really does need to be changed and we need to have bold vision innovative solutions that's coming from the bottom up that's coming from all of us in this room and so many people who are not here. All of the people who are marching this past weekend.

[Applause]

**Tom Steyer:** Greg, can I give some numbers on this?

**Greg Dalton:** Tom Steyer.

**Tom Steyer:** So I'd like to talk about what's going on this year in terms of what the people up here are talking about. So let's talk for one second about Florida. So the Democratic nominee for Florida is it turns out is going to be the African-American 39-year-old mayor of Tallahassee. And if you said three weeks ago today where did he stand he would have been fourth in a four-person field. He was estimated to have 15% of the vote and really was fourth and was considered someone who couldn't win. And he is someone who we said he is doing every single thing that Gloria is talking about. He is someone who is stepping up on climate who's stepping up on gun violence in the state of Florida. He is stepping up on virtually every tough issue and talking straightforwardly. So what happened? Two weeks after he was at 15% in fourth place with no money the turnout was up 70% in Democrats in the state of Florida on the primary day. And the turnout for people in the youth heavy precincts where we work was up 200% to 1000%

[Applause]

So what Gloria is talking about and what Gina is talking about is involvement of people when they see possible transformation that will impact their lives directly in the way that they can relate to. And it's very meaningful and I think that hopefully that's what Gina is talking about we're in the process of reestablishing that connection.

**Greg Dalton:** Marisa de Belloy, I wanna get you in here in terms of, you know, you have a program for carbon offsets that's one way to get people involved. Your thoughts on this conversation, and whether that is a way to kind of get people who may not be that active to sort of as a starter gateway action.

**Marisa de Belloy:** Yeah absolutely. So Cool Effect was founded on the idea that individuals can take an immediate, tangible, simple action for about seven bucks, you know, to reduce a ton of carbon pollution right then and right there. And we have a team of scientists that make sure that the projects on the platform are absolutely top-notch. We go visit them we make sure that every dollar anybody gives us has an impact, and we follow up with people over and over again extremely transparent about how we put these talk to you about these projects where your money went, etc. But what we're really trying to do is create a community of people who want to do more around climate. We have about 400,000 people already on the platform and, you know, they're offsetting, but they're also getting, you know, all the news that we can give to them they're getting angry they are getting tips from us on how to live a better lifestyle, you know, what they need to do voting wise, etc. And, you know, the research shows that when you do one action, you begin to think of yourself as an environmentalist. And so you're much more likely to do the next one and the next one. You know I mean, who knows the next Bill McKibben or Gina McCarthy might be sitting in front of Cool Effect right now donating 10 bucks and, you know, and we'll see where that goes. So that's the community aspect that we're building but even the credit aspect has a lot to be said for it. So the

voluntary carbon market over the last 10 years has reduced 400 million tons of carbon pollution. Cool Effect projects themselves have reduced 17 million tons of carbon pollution and in the last, you know, 2 1/2 years since Cool Effect was created we reduced directly through the platform 600,000 tons of carbon pollution. What is that mean? Well it means completely eliminating the footprint of 26,000 Americans for an entire year or it means completely eliminating the impact of 326,000 flights from New York to San Francisco, or if you prefer means completely eliminating 1000 Mar-a-Lago presidential golf trips.

[Laughter]

Which I would sure like to eliminate.

**Gina McCarthy:** Well that would take care of his first couple of months.

[Laughter]

Sorry I couldn't help myself.

[Laughter]

**Marisa de Belloy:** But it's about coming together as a community and taking action and, you know, and having an impact together. We all need to be in, we're all in this together. We only need to be doing absolutely everything we can be doing. And the thing about Cool Effect in the offsets is it's a way to, you know, know that you're having an impact in a highly transparent you know, not very expensive, very simple way.

**Greg Dalton:** I'm Greg Dalton. If you're just joining us we're talking about climate change at Climate One with Marisa de Belloy, Executive Director of the Overlook International Foundation. Gina McCarthy former chief of the U.S. EPA under President Obama. Bill McKibben, author and climate activist. Tom Steyer, Founder and President of NextGen America and Gloria Walton, an environmental justice leader in Los Angeles. I have some true or false questions for our guests beginning with Tom Steyer. True or false. You made a lot of money of Canadian tar sands and Indonesian forests?

**Tom Steyer:** I will say this, I know we made money off fossil fuels and I don't specifically remember some of that but we've invested in every part of the economy. And starting in 2008, I came to the conclusion it was wrong and so I've been divested for years and I decided in fact, we can't afford to have those kinds of activities and so I don't.

**Greg Dalton:** A little longer than true or false but there you have it.

[Applause]

Fair enough.

**Gina McCarthy:** I don't like this game.

[Laughter]

Is it truth or dare? I mean do we have to do something really bad?

**Greg Dalton:** Gina McCarthy, true or false.

**Gina McCarthy:** Oh shoot, it's me. Yes.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** You are having difficulty figuring out how academia works?

**Gina McCarthy:** Yes true.

[Laughter]

True. Oh thank God that was easy.

**Greg Dalton:** Maybe this also for Gina McCarthy. True or false. You are personally sick and tired of hearing about polar bears?

**Gina McCarthy:** Yes true. I love them, they're cute but they're not my grandson.

**Greg Dalton:** True or false. Gloria Walton, you sometimes don't talk about climate concerns because you think people don't want to hear the doom and gloom?

**Gloria Walton:** False. I mean you all feel me it's like I talk about what's real and what needs to be said in any given moment.

**Greg Dalton:** Bill McKibben. True or false. Villainization could be the downfall of the climate movement

**Bill McKibben:** I think of just the opposite. The moment that people started to understand that there was someone that needed fighting was the moment that it turned serious and got real. That's why, you know, people I mean look at the people who are out in the street last week in San Francisco. The first four blocks of that march were all indigenous people, mostly from North America but from around the world. You don't think they get that there is like a villain, I mean you know, exactly how much American history do you need to kind of figure that out, you know.

**Tom Steyer:** I think Bill is equivocating there.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** Let me ask Marisa de Belloy. True or false. Carbon offsets inhabit a shady and murky world?

**Marisa de Belloy:** That is true. And that's exactly why Cool Effect was created.

**Greg Dalton:** Gina McCarthy. True or false. President Obama could have got a carbon price through Congress in 2009 if David Axelrod and Rahm Emanuel had encouraged him to try harder?

**Gina McCarthy:** That's a very good question. I don't think so.

**Greg Dalton:** Also for Gina --

**Bill McKibben:** That's right. I agree.

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** -- because we like it so much. True or false. Coal state Democrats blocked the Clinton-Gore administration from putting a price on carbon in 1994 in the form of a BTU tax.

**Gina McCarthy:** I believe that's true.

**Greg Dalton:** West Virginian. Tom Steyer. True or false. Corporations wield way too much influence over our democracy?

**Tom Steyer:** No question about it.

**Gina McCarthy:** That's a tough one.

[Laughter]

**Tom Steyer:** That's a basic fact of American democracy and politics.

**Gina McCarthy:** Well they are people you know, right.

[Laughter]

**Tom Steyer:** They pay much lower tax rate than people I'd like right now.

**Greg Dalton:** Your favorite change the carried interest rule, right?

**Tom Steyer:** Absolutely.

**Greg Dalton:** Marisa de Belloy, polar bears are amazing iconic creatures that evoke strong positive emotions among many Americans

**Marisa de Belloy:** I wanna go with false because I think people are sick of seeing polar bears and I think they're sick of the doom and gloom around climate. I think what they want is to understand that their actions that they can take that there's a message of hope out there that in any case, and you know, sometimes the facts support that hope and sometimes they don't. But we still need to do and we're all in this together and we still need to go forward and solve it.

**Greg Dalton:** Last one. True or false. Bill McKibben, Tom Steyer is running for office he just can't decide which one?

[Laughter]

**Bill McKibben:** Why are you asking me?

[Laughter]

**Greg Dalton:** I thought he might have told you. Because I know if we ask him we're not sure we'll get -- let's give them a round for getting through the lightning round.

[Applause]

Question from Facebook. Dawn Hall. Can you please speak to your vision of the world we want in addition to what we don't. What would a truly post-carbon just sustainable and resilient society look like? Gloria Walton what's it look like, paint us a picture.

**Gloria Walton:** Wow. It looks like a place where all of us actually have a good paying job, breathe clean air, don't live next to our children go to school right by oil drilling sites as we need a 2500 step back we got to put that in there. It looks like a new clean sustainable economy where we have 100% renewables for 100% of the people, thank you Solutions Project. And it looks like a place where we

actually do have inside outside strategy and an authentic democracy where all voices are heard and we lead with race and equity front and center so that we actually can have an equitable sustainable economy that works for all people. (0:54:05

[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Bill McKibben, let's have you paint that picture. And I wanna preface this by saying I remember one of your book I think it was Deep Economy that said one of the primary accomplishments of the American economy recently was building bigger houses further apart from each other. So tell us what the future picture look like?

**Bill McKibben:** Yeah, I think Gloria said it just right. And I think there's sort of other ways of saying that that one of the things that we've gotten very hung up on is the idea that what humans mostly want is more stuff when probably past a certain point what we want is communities that work and connection with each other. And I will say a word, though I know it's unpopular on this stage in a sense politically incorrect. Let me say a word too for polar bears and other wildlife, you know, it'd be nice to imagine a world where the flora and the fauna that we were born on to this planet with had some room too. You know, the human being evolved in contact with each other and in contact with the world around us and one of the things that's saddest about the world is how hard it is for so many people to get to have some contact with the world around them. In California when we let people put oil wells next to people's schools and houses, what's the chance that you're going to be, you know, playing outside with your kid, you know. I mean that takes that off the map. It's possible to imagine a world that works for a lot of people and a lot of other things too. And that's probably, you know, keeping that in mind, instead of doing what we've done for the last hundred years, which is answer every single question the only thing we've asked is will this make the economy larger or not, okay. And in the process we built an extraordinarily large economy. Almost all of which is owned by 1% of the people and in the process we've wrecked the planet around us and the communities on it. So let's ask new, more interesting questions I guess I'd say.

**Greg Dalton:** Fair enough. Tom Steyer, one of the key points of the climate summit that Jerry Brown put together in San Francisco was having corporations make specific targets. People are looking to corporations in the absence of federal action. Your take on that. Is that greenwashing are corporations really doing move in the economy all these announcements, science-based targets is that real action moving toward a cleaner economy?

**Tom Steyer:** I do think it's real, but I don't think it's nearly sufficient. And let me draw a comparison to American history. In the beginning of World War II, the President, Franklin Roosevelt, called in the auto companies and said, you know, we're just not prepared for this war. And I've got to ask you that you're gonna have to dedicate a lot of your manufacturing to making tanks and ships and airplanes so that we can fight these fascists. And they came back after a week and then said, you know, we're more than willing to go we think with 20% of our production can be dedicated to the war effort and that's something we'd like to do. And he said, well, let me explain to you what I'd like you to do. It will be a 100% of your production or you will be out of business. So when we talk about what this society has to do to represent the values that we need, that Bill is talking about that Marisa is talking about that Gina is talking about that Gloria is talking about, we have to have the courage to stand up for the values that are the basis of this society. And that means we're gonna have to go to the people themselves and their elected representatives to determine what those values are. Not to the controllers of the large corporations to ask them to give us some crumbs, those are meaningful and those are not people who I would vilify. I would say, look, I am not counting on them to put us ahead of their shareholders and their bottom line. I'm looking to the American people and the will and values of the American people with a broad democracy to make sure that the people of south-central L.A. are taken into account fairly. And so do I welcome

corporations doing something good the way those auto companies were willing to do something good in World War II? Sure I do and I wanna give them credit for it. But do I think that that's gonna be sufficient for us to have a just society or to represent the values of America or to do it in a just way so that we treat people equitably across race, gender, sexual orientation years in the country. I absolutely do not. I think that's a question for the American people and the values that we all represent fairly.

**Greg Dalton:** Gina McCarthy, you were on the other side of the table from a lot of auto companies. They made some of the biggest pledges after the great recession, the bankruptcy, you know, America bailed out the auto companies. They were the first ones in line as soon as Donald Trump were elected saying, ease off. So your take on the corporations and what works to pressure them to bring them along?

**Gina McCarthy:** The auto companies I think negotiated in good faith somehow they forgot that. They did. I think California has done a remarkable job. They have made a lot of money as they've moved to cars that the country actually would like to buy which they weren't doing when we first negotiated these. I do think honestly that part of the challenge with this administration is that they are interested in simply undermining everything the Obama administration did and then frankly not even listening to the automakers because many of them do not want these revisited. There are many that want tweaks whether those tweaks are good, bad or indifferent, I don't know. But I think the challenge that we have today is that this administration is simply playing to its base. They are not playing to their industries unless they are part of that base. They are not listening to the automakers, they're not even listening to the utilities, the vast amount of which are actually fine with many of the rules that have gone before that we passed. And they are simply doing their own thing it. It couldn't be more disconnect. This administration couldn't be more disconnected from the American people than they are. It's just remarkable.

**Greg Dalton:** Question from Twitter. Joy Ceal [ph] asks when can we start talking about the unpopular sacrifices required to reverse the damage already done, for example, meat intake globally? Who'd like to tackle that? Marisa de Belloy.

**Marisa de Belloy:** Well, I say we -- I mean this is something that we put on the cool effects side that we routinely send out to our users. I mean, we need to start talking about it today, you know, we needed to start talking about it 50 years ago. I think anybody who thinks that we're gonna continue to live exactly the same lifestyle that we've been enjoying for the last I don't know how many years is crazy. You know, these are real changes and there are things we're gonna have to do. And in the grand scheme of things, they're really not that hard.

**Greg Dalton:** Tom Steyer, you own a cattle ranch. Your view on whether beef is, you know, ought to be done with or beef can be part of the solution.

**Tom Steyer:** So we do own a cattle ranch and the point of that cattle ranch is a gigantic science experiment. Because the question we have is, is there a way to raise cattle to actually sequester carbon in the soil. And that's something that we've had asked scientists to actually study for us so that we can find out if doing it in the old-fashioned way when there were herds of ungulates walking across the North American plains, the plains of Africa, that in fact can we put a bunch more carbon into the soil for about 45 years which in fact would reverse some of the climate change while the rest of the world is catching up and making changes. And I'm not sure where that's coming, obviously we are doing scientific studies and we have some preliminary reads. But there's no question whether Marisa is right, which is people eat way too much animal content and animal protein. It isn't necessary for people's diets and so there's -- I don't think there's any question but we're gonna have to have a different food system and a different understanding of what nutrition is

as a society and we're gonna have to run the whole food system I think with a different set of values. And that's something which I think we're gonna end up having very, very tasty food. People are reluctant to change things. I mean, we all are, but I think that we should understand that when we change things it doesn't have to mean we're just taking away things, we're gonna come up with some new stuff and it's gonna be fun. And, you know, American food has always gotten better. The fact that we have to change it isn't gonna make it worse, it's gonna be better.

**Greg Dalton:** Food is a very positive story. Question for Gina McCarthy from Facebook, Thomas van Dyke [ph], why has Harvard not divested from fossil fuels?

**Gina McCarthy:** Thomas, I wish you would ask them that. I've asked the same question and the students ask it every single day and we were just talking about that. You know, I think this challenge is certainly in the academic world, but it's not solely the academic world. You know, the question needs to be asked of Harvard is what's Harvard's value? What are they standing up for? And I think we all have to ask ourselves that. We have to ask ourselves individual, as communities, as corporations and as institutions. And really I don't know the answer to the question. I don't think that anyone has given an answer to that question. And I think the question needs to be asked until the answer is a better one.

**Greg Dalton:** Bill McKibben, tell us about, you've been involved in DivestInvest and it's gone from a small amount of money to a huge amount of money pretty quickly. Tell us the scope and regionally where divestment is happening.

**Bill McKibben:** The divestment thing has been a remarkable ride one that we didn't quite expect when we started it five or six years ago. It's sort of spurred on by memories of the fight against apartheid and in fact it was Desmond Tutu as one of the early people who sang do this, take this tool again. It's now much larger than that. I think yesterday there was press conference, the total was \$6.24 trillion in endowments and portfolios that have now divested in part or in whole.

[Applause]

And what began with small colleges and, you know, the corners of this country, it's now New York City, it's now London. The mayors in New York and London yesterday challenged all the other mayors in the world to divest their pension funds. The country of Ireland, the whole country of Ireland divested its holdings in fossil fuels last month, okay.

**Gina McCarthy:** Ireland is getting so cool -

**Bill McKibben:** Gina, way to go.

[Laughter]

**Gina McCarthy:** It's totally me. I know that.

**Bill McKibben:** So it's become an extraordinary tool to try and take on the power that we were talking about before. Money is the oxygen on which the fire that is global warming burns. And if we are able to stamp out that supply of money then that fire will begin to dwindle. And divestment is a huge part of that and it's extremely exciting to see. And just to get back, I mean, Harvard may be the last place on earth to divest, I don't know, I'm really glad that Gina is gonna be giving the college try. I want to call out for Tom's wife, Kat Taylor, who was on the Harvard, I believe on the Harvard board of whatever it's called, Overseers, which is I told you something right there --

[Laughter]



**Gina McCarthy:** Hey, I just started there, give me a break.

**Bill McKibben:** Kat Taylor resigned in protest from the Harvard Board of Overseers because they wouldn't divest. Let's hope that, I mean -- look if there's a rationale, if there's any reason at all to have establishments, you know, and Harvard is a great example of an establishment, it's that in moments of crisis they might actually provide some leadership that Harvard hasn't, but it could and so could a lot of other places and that would be great.

**Greg Dalton:** But Tom Steyer, when people sell fossil fuels, does it not just make it cheaper for someone else to buy that stock?

**Tom Steyer:** Well, I think about divestment and I am in favor of it and let me start by saying that I voted for it on a board where it was 32 to 1 and I was the 1. But I think there's a statement that when in Harvard divest, or when in New York City divest, or when the Church of England divest. And they're making a statement which is, we have credibility in some way, shape or form. Harvard's motto is Veritas, truth. We're saying we will do the right thing even if it's not easy and we're making a point about what's important to us and what we think should be important to other people. So do I think that this really changes the cost of capital for the Exxon Corporation? No. I mean, when I divested I was making a point that I don't want to make money from that. And I think that if you look at some of the schools and you see what they did a couple hundred years ago and what they were willing to make money from specifically the slave trade, the buying and selling of human beings, and you ask was that an appropriate thing for anybody to do but particularly somebody who professes to have high ideals? The answer is obviously no. And I think this is a case where you're asking an institution that professes to have high ideals, do you really think that you should be profiting from the destruction of the planet. And I think that's why it's important for people to do it because you're making a statement about, just as they did with apartheid, this system is wrong and we want to make sure that it changes in the way that it has to change so that we get the kind of justice in the world that we should want and I think that the vast majority of Americans do want.

**Marisa de Belloy:** I just want to add something to that too putting on my foundation hat for a minute. The thing about divestment is there is no loss of financial return when you divest. It is exactly equivalent. So, you know, it's not a crazy environmental leftist things to do, I mean, you know, Tom Steyer will tell you that. It is a sound rational financial decision to make because these fossil fuel companies have stranded assets, they're going nowhere, their stock prices are going down.

**Announcer:** Greg Dalton has been talking with Marisa de Belloy, Executive Director of the Overlook International Foundation; Gina McCarthy, former US EPA chief, now teaching at the School Harvard Public Health; Bill McKibben, author and founder of 350.org; Tom Steyer, Founder and President of NextGen America; and Gloria Walton, President and CEO of Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education.

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[Applause]

**Greg Dalton:** Climate One is a special project of The Commonwealth Club of California. Kelli Pennington directs our audience engagement. Tyler Reed is the producer. The audio engineers are Mark Kirschner and Justin Norton. Anny Celsi and Devon Strolovitch edit the show. The

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