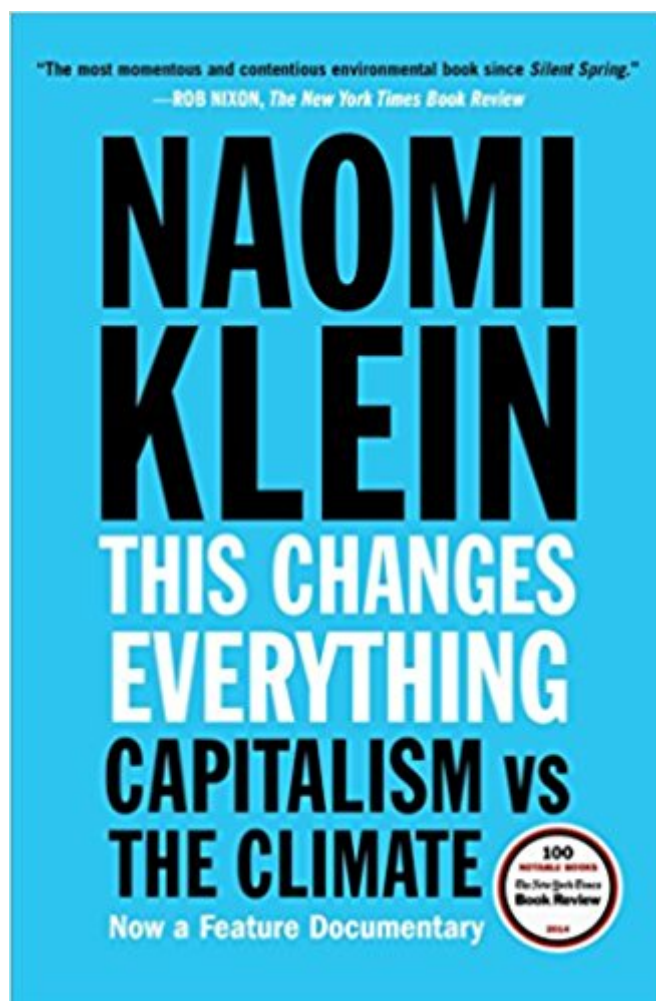


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This Changes Everything: Capitalism Vs. The Climate



Synopsis

The most important book yet from the author of the international bestseller *When Did We Start So Small?* is a brilliant explanation of why the climate crisis challenges us to abandon the core “free market” ideology of our time, restructure the global economy, and remake our political systems. In short, either we embrace radical change ourselves or radical changes will be visited upon our physical world. The status quo is no longer an option. In *Naomi Klein* argues that climate change isn't just another issue to be neatly filed between taxes and health care. It's an alarm that calls us to fix an economic system that is already failing us in many ways. Klein meticulously builds the case for how massively reducing our greenhouse emissions is our best chance to simultaneously reduce gaping inequalities, re-imagine our broken democracies, and rebuild our gutted local economies. She exposes the ideological desperation of the climate-change deniers, the messianic delusions of the would-be geoengineers, and the tragic defeatism of too many mainstream green initiatives. And she demonstrates precisely why the market has not—and cannot—fix the climate crisis but will instead make things worse, with ever more extreme and ecologically damaging extraction methods, accompanied by rampant disaster capitalism. Klein argues that the changes to our relationship with nature and one another that are required to respond to the climate crisis humanely should not be viewed as grim penance, but rather as a kind of gift—a catalyst to transform broken economic and cultural priorities and to heal long-festered historical wounds. And she documents the inspiring movements that have already begun this process: communities that are not just refusing to be sites of further fossil fuel extraction but are building the next, regeneration-based economies right now. Can we pull off these changes in time? Nothing is certain. Nothing except that climate change changes everything. And for a very brief time, the nature of that change is still up to us.

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Customer Reviews

"This may be the first truly honest book ever written about climate change." (Bryan Walsh *Time*) "The most momentous and contentious environmental book since *Silent Spring*." (Rob Nixon *The New York Times Book Review*) "This is the best book about climate change in a very long time—in large part because it's about much more. It sets the most important crisis in human history in the context of our other ongoing traumas, reminding us just how much the powers-that-be depend on the power of coal, gas and oil. And that in turn should give us hope, because it means the fight for a just world is the same as the fight for a livable one." (Bill McKibben, author of *The End of Nature* and co-founder of 350.org) "This Changes Everything is the work book for . . . [a] new, more assertive, more powerful environmental movement." (Mark Bittman) "Naomi Klein applies her fine, fierce, and meticulous mind to the greatest, most urgent questions of our times. . . . I count her among the most inspirational political thinkers in the world today." (Arundhati Roy, author of *The God of Small Things* and *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*) "Naomi Klein is a genius. She has done for politics what Jared Diamond did for the study of human history. She skillfully blends politics, economics and history and distills out simple and powerful truths with universal applicability." (Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.) "[A] robust new polemic. . . . Drawing on an impressive volume of research, Ms. Klein savages the idea that we will be saved by new technologies or by an incremental shift away from fossil fuels: Both approaches, she argues, are forms of denial. . . . Ms. Klein is aware of the intractability of the problems she describes, but she manages optimism nonetheless." (Nathaniel Rich *The New York Times*) "Klein is a brave and passionate writer who always deserves to be heard, and this is a powerful and urgent book." (John Gray *The Observer* (UK)) "If global warming is a worldwide wake-up call, we're all pretty heavy sleepers. . . . We haven't made significant progress, Klein argues, because we've been expecting solutions from the very same institutions that created the problem in the first place. . . . Klein's sharp analysis makes a compelling case that a mass awakening is part of the answer." (Chris Bentley *The Chicago Tribune*) "Gripping and dramatic. . . . [Klein] writes of a decisive battle for the fate of the earth in which we either take back control of the planet from the capitalists who are destroying it or watch

it all burn. (Roy Scranton Rolling Stone) "Naomi Klein's latest book may be the manifesto that the climate movement and the planet needs right now. . . . For those with whom her message does resonate and they are likely to be legion her book could help catalyze the kind of mass movement she argues the world needs now. (Mason Inman San Francisco Chronicle) "Powerfully and uncompromisingly written, the impassioned polemic we have come to expect from Klein, mixing first-hand accounts of events around the world and withering political analysis. . . . Her stirring vision is nothing less than a political, economic, social, cultural and moral make-over of the human world. (Mike Hulme New Scientist) "A powerful, profound, and compelling book. (Matthew Rothschild The Progressive) "Klein is one of the left's most influential figures and a prominent climate champion. . . . [She] is a gifted writer and there is little doubt about the problem she identifies. (Pilita Clark The Financial Times)

Naomi Klein is an award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist, and author of the New York Times and #1 international bestseller *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. Her first book, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, was also an international bestseller. Klein is a contributing editor for Harper's and reporter for Rolling Stone and writes a syndicated column for The Nation and the Guardian. She lives in Toronto.

First off, I agree with many of the 5 and 4 star comments--this is an inspiring book. Klein has helped her readers better understand the germination of a broad based, multi-dimensional climate movement from the ground up and its potential to galvanize and revitalize the Left. Also, she hasn't shied away from calling out the source of the problem--capitalism--when so many liberals shrink from mentioning the "c" word. In addition, her focus on the fossil fuel industry as the strategic target of the movement clearly highlights the importance of isolating one of the most malignant sectors of industrial capitalism. But despite her insightful and inspirational treatment of the climate movement's potential to change everything, I believe Klein over-states her case and overlooks crucial features of the dangerously dysfunctional system we're up against. By putting climate change on a pedestal and reducing capitalism to neoliberalism, she limits our understanding of how to break capitalism's death grip over our lives and our future. Throughout her book, Klein confuses the centuries old economic system of capitalism with its most recent ideological justification--neoliberalism. She makes it seem like our climate crisis is just a matter of bad timing. If government leaders hadn't just guzzled the neoliberal cool-aid of unfettered free markets, they would have agreed to restrict fossil

fuel use years ago. REALLY? This malignant, profit-driven, global economy has been addicted to a life support system of hydrocarbons for nearly 200 years--and couldn't keep growing without it. In addition, Klein ignores the deep connection between climate chaos, militarism, and war. While she spends an entire chapter explaining why Virgin Airlines owner, Richard Branson, and other Green billionaires won't save us, she devotes three meager sentences to the most violent, wasteful, petroleum-burning institution on Earth--the US military. Klein shares this blind spot with the United Nations' official climate forum. The UNFCCC excludes most of the military sector's fuel consumption and emissions from national greenhouse gas inventories. This exemption was the product of intense lobbying by the United States during the Kyoto negotiations in the mid-1990s. Ever since, the military establishment's carbon "bootprint" has been officially ignored. Klein's book lost an important opportunity to expose this insidious cover-up. The Pentagon is not only the largest institutional burner of fossil fuels on the planet; it is also the top weapons developer and military spender. America's global military empire guards Big Oil's vast infrastructure of oilfields, pipelines, and supertankers. It props up the most reactionary petro-tyrannies; devours enormous quantities of oil to fuel its war machine; and spews more dangerous toxins into the environment than any corporate polluter. The military, weapons producers, and the petroleum industry have a long history of corrupt collaboration. This odious relationship stands out in bold relief in the Middle East where Washington arms the region's repressive regimes with the latest weaponry and imposes a phalanx of bases where American soldiers, mercenaries, and drones are deployed to guard the pumps, pipelines, and sea lanes for Exxon-Mobil, BP, and Chevron. The petro-military complex is the most costly, destructive, anti-democratic sector of the corporate state. It wields tremendous power over Washington and both political parties. Any movement to counteract climate chaos, transform our energy future, and strengthen grassroots democracy cannot ignore America's petro-empire. Yet oddly enough when Klein looks for ways to finance the transition to a renewable energy infrastructure in the US, the bloated military budget is not considered. The Pentagon itself openly recognizes the connection between climate change and war. In June, a US Military Advisory Board's report on National Security and the Accelerating Risks of Climate Change warned that "...the projected impacts of climate change will be more than threat multipliers; they will serve as catalysts for instability and conflict." In response, the Pentagon is gearing up to fight "climate wars" over resources threatened by (or revealed by) atmospheric disruption, like Arctic deep sea oil, fresh water, arable land, and food. Klein says she thinks climate change has a unique galvanizing potential because it presents humanity with an "existential crisis." She sets out to show how it can change everything by weaving "all of these seemingly disparate issues into a coherent narrative

about how to protect humanity from the ravages of a savagely unjust economic system and a destabilized climate system." But then her narrative ignores militarism almost entirely. Can any progressive movement protect the planet without connecting the dots between climate chaos and war or confronting this petro-military empire head on? If the US and other governments go to war over the planet's shrinking reserves of energy and other resources, should we keep our focus locked on climate change, or should resisting resource wars become our most immediate concern? Another important blind spot in Klein's book is the issue of "peak oil." This is the point when the discovery of new wells fails to keep pace with the depletion of old ones, so the rate of petroleum extraction begins its terminal decline. By now it's become widely accepted that global CONVENTIONAL oil production peaked around 2005. Many believe this produced the high oil prices that triggered the 2008 recession and instigated the latest drive to extract expensive, dirty unconventional shale oil and tar sands once the price point finally made them profitable. Although some of this extraction is a heavily subsidized, financially speculative bubble that may soon prove over-inflated, the temporary influx of unconventional hydrocarbons has given the economy a brief respite from recession. The current fall in oil prices also reflects the slowdown of the global economy (especially in China), as well as Saudi Arabia's determination keep production levels high in order to punish its political enemies (Iran & Russia) and drive its economic competitors (North American frackers) out of the market. However, the current oil glut is only temporary; conventional oil production is predicted to drop by over 50 percent in the next two decades while unconventional sources are unlikely to replace any more than 6 percent. Any temporary benefits from low oil prices may vanish in the coming years as the unrelenting demand for oil inevitably reduces supply, energy prices skyrocket, and the global economic contraction and breakdown returns with a vengeance. Thus our post peak oil future may take the form of alternating periods of economic stagnation and breakdown. The peak oil predicament raises important movement-building issues for climate activists and all progressives. Klein may have avoided this issue because some folks in the peak oil crowd downplay the need for a powerful climate movement. Not that they think climate disruption isn't a serious problem, but because they believe we are nearing a global industrial collapse brought on by a sharp reduction in the net hydrocarbons available for economic growth. In their estimation, global fossil fuel supplies will drop dramatically relative to rising demand because society will require ever-increasing amounts of energy just to find and extract the remaining dirty, unconventional hydrocarbons. Thus, even though there may still be enormous amounts of fossil energy underground, society will have to devote ever-greater portions of energy and capital just to get at it, leaving less and less for everything else. Peak oil theorists think this energy and capital drain will

devastate the rest of the economy. They believe this looming breakdown may do far more to cut carbon emissions than any political movement. Are they right? Who knows? But even if they're wrong about total collapse, peak hydrocarbons are bound to trigger escalating recessions and accompanying drops in carbon emissions. What will this mean for the climate movement and its galvanizing impact on the Left? Klein herself acknowledges that, so far, the biggest reductions in GHG emissions have come from economic recessions, not political action. But she avoids the deeper question this raises: if capitalism lacks the abundant, cheap energy needed to sustain growth, how will the climate movement respond when stagnation, recession, and depression become the new normal and carbon emissions begin falling as a result? Klein sees capitalism as a relentless growth machine wreaking havoc with the planet. But capitalism's prime directive is profit, not growth. If growth turns to contraction and collapse, capitalism won't evaporate. Capitalist elites will extract profits from hoarding, corruption, crisis, and conflict. In a growth-less economy, the profit motive can have a devastating catabolic impact on society. The word "catabolism" comes from the Greek and is used in biology to refer to the condition whereby a living thing feeds on itself. Catabolic capitalism is a self-cannibalizing economic system. Unless we free ourselves from its grip, catabolic capitalism becomes our future--not relentless growth. Capitalism's catabolic implosion raises important predicaments that climate activists and the Left must consider. Instead of relentless growth, what if the future becomes a series of energy-induced economic breakdowns--a bumpy, uneven, stair-step tumble off the peak oil plateau? How will a climate movement respond if credit freezes, financial assets vaporize, currency values fluctuate wildly, trade shuts down, and governments impose draconian measures to maintain their authority? If Americans can't find food in the supermarkets, money in the ATMs, gas in the pumps, and electricity in the power lines, will climate be their central concern? Global economic seizures and contractions would radically reduce hydrocarbon use, causing energy prices to tumble temporarily. In the midst of deep recession and dramatic reductions in carbon emissions would climate chaos remain a central public concern and a galvanizing issue for the Left? If not, how would a progressive movement centered on climate change maintain its momentum? Will the public be receptive to calls for curbing carbon emissions to save the climate if burning cheaper hydrocarbons seems like the fastest way to kick start growth, no matter how temporary? Under this likely scenario, the climate movement could collapse faster than the economy. A depression-induced reduction in GHGs would be a great thing for the climate, but it would suck for the climate movement because people will see little reason to concern themselves with cutting carbon emissions. In the midst of depression and falling carbon emissions, people and governments will be far more worried about economic recovery. Under these conditions, the

movement will only survive if it transfers its focus from climate change to building a stable, sustainable recovery free from addiction to vanishing reserves of fossil fuels. If green community organizers and social movements create renewable energy trusts or revolving loan funds to build local/regional energy resilience they will gain respect as community problem solvers. If they initiate nonprofit forms of socially responsible banking, production, and exchange that help people survive systemic breakdowns, they will earn valuable public approval. If they help organize community farms, kitchens, health clinics and neighborhood security, they will gain further cooperation and support. And if they can rally people to protect their savings and pensions and prevent foreclosures, evictions, layoffs, and workplace shutdowns, then popular resistance to catabolic capitalism will grow dramatically. To nurture the transition toward a thriving, just, ecologically stable society, all of these struggles must be interwoven and infused with an inspirational vision of how much better life could be if we freed ourselves from this dysfunctional, profit-obsessed, petroleum-addicted system once and for all. The lesson that Naomi Klein overlooks seems clear. Climate chaos is just one DEVASTATING symptom of our dysfunctional society. To survive catabolic capitalism and germinate an alternative, movement activists will have to anticipate and help people respond to multiple crises while organizing them to recognize and root out their source. If the movement lacks the foresight to anticipate these cascading calamities and change its focus when needed, we will have squandered a vital lesson from Klein's previous book, *The Shock Doctrine*. The power elite will use each new crisis to ram through their agenda of "drilling and killing" while society is reeling and traumatized, unless the Left is capable of envisioning and advancing a better alternative. If the Left cannot build a movement strong enough and flexible enough to resist the ecological, economic, and military emergencies of declining industrial civilization and begin generating hopeful alternatives it will quickly lose momentum to those who profit from disaster.

This may well be one of the most important books of the decade. It may also be one of the most depressing. It is informationally (is that a word?) very dense -- very dense. I have written computer models for the past twenty years and know a bit about their limitations, and about their value. Though this book is disturbing, I think it gives a fair assessment of the research regarding climate change and global warming.

An Explosive compilation of factual material on the climate changes that are already devastating life on earth. For 200 years the industrial revolution has been filling the atmosphere with CO₂ and the rate of filling this "sink" has increased dramatically. Glaciers and seas and forests and weather

systems and lives of people, animals and plants are already affected as well as the most vulnerable, the next generations. Despite the awful implications, the author does not depress the reader but offers prior examples of change although she honestly reports that economic change has not followed legal and cultural change. That is where we are today, capitalism unfettered is speedily leading to a planet no longer able to tolerate it.

This book does what no other I know of has done before. It actually maps out the scale of the economic and political change needed to address climate and proposes some ways of getting there. It reasserts the overwhelming moral case for doing so. It is bold, challenging, scary and yet very encouraging and ultimately hopeful. Someone had to write this book. Thank you Naomi Klein for doing it, and doing it so well. So why four stars and not five? I just wish writers of Klein's calibre also understood what people like Robert Thurman have been saying to the Occupy movement; that developing compassion and self-awareness is an indispensable part of this transition. This is as much a spiritual crisis as anything. While Klein does touch on this point, she offers little in the way of a compelling vision or set of practices to achieve the spiritual change needed.

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