

Kathryn Blume on Climate Change

<http://kathrynblume.com/blog/stumping-with-bernie.html>

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Thanks to Joel Gluck for the photo.

I was invited by Senator Sanders to come to a Get Out The Vote Rally yesterday in Montpelier and speak about the challenges of climate change to the assembled group. The audience included some of the biggest wigs in Vermont, including Governor Shumlin, Representative Welch, Attorney General Bill Sorrell, Secretary of State Jim Condos, and a host of other officials and aspirants – including candidate for Lt. Governor Cassandra Gekas, who is amazing.

Here's the [video of my talk on Climate Change](#) (about 7 minutes).

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6kvNgYvQAI>

Here is the text.

Get Out The Vote – November 4, 2012

After I got the call yesterday to come speak here, I did what any honored and excited person would do these days; I posted the news on Facebook. Of course, there was a great deal of “liking” going on, as well as a couple direct messages for some of the people here.

In particular, my friend Karen from Middlebury very much wants Bernie to consider himself – and I quote – smooched.

So, I voted early the other day. Of course I voted for all of you.

I was struck by one of the remarkable things about living in Vermont, the experience of knowing or having met most of the people on the ballot.

That's a big part of what's beautiful about living here; for the most part we do all know – or at least have access to – each other. And it's vital – because of the reason I'm standing up here right now.

I happen to be tonight's poster child for climate change. I am the Lorax du Jour, if you will.

It's tragic and terrifying, what's happening out there. We've all been watching, feeling, knowing it's getting worse. And if you've got a breath in your body, a thought in your head, a pulse in your veins, you have to admit all the news makes your heart bleed.

We bleed for the broken Arctic, the Alaskan villages crumbled into the sea, the epic fires and droughts in the American West, the poisoning of the Gulf, and the flooding in Pakistan. We bleed for the Pacific island nations sinking into the sea while Asian rivers shrink and African lakes dry up, and glaciers around the world silently vanish away.

We bleed for mass extinctions and for the mountain tops removed and the forests felled and oceans acidified and miles of earth scraped to the stony bone. We bled for New Orleans and Manila and for ourselves during Irene and this week for New Jersey and New York, New York which, to so many people, feels like the unofficial capitol of the world.

We're bleeding from our hearts, and still, we must fight an unending battle against an enemy which has been formed, Golem-like, from the dark clay of our own destructive behavior. It's wielding a double headed axe – one side is climate change, the other is peak oil, and the handle holding it up is the specter of economic collapse. And we have to keep fighting day in and day out because Golems never sleep.

I know it's all a big bummer to talk about, especially at a celebratory event like this. But we have to talk about it, because it's real and true and dangerous and accelerating fast.

We have to talk about it because up until a week ago, when the skyline of New York went dark, we had a near-complete mainstream media blackout around discussing climate change. And they could so easily turn around and ignore it again.

We have to talk about it because there are galactically huge multi-national corporations making more money than God from tearing up the earth and poisoning our atmosphere and their business plans and political strategies demand that nobody say a word.

We have to talk about it because there are people dying and species going extinct and ecosystems collapsing and billions upon billions of dollars in damage, and we've already heated up the planet so much that we've forestalled the next ice age, and last time I checked nobody's selling backup Earths on eBay.

We have to talk about it because we're not going to completely solve or totally reverse climate change any time soon. We're too far down that road – here in the new geologic era of the anthropocene. Climate change has and will have a profound impact on us and generations of our descendants, and we must respond with determined fierceness and a bullish belief that we can make a difference.

As far as I can see, the world can't do it without the United States. The United States can't do it without Vermont. Vermont can't do it without all of you. And you all can't do it without each other – both those of you who'll be rejoicing on Tuesday, and those of you who'll be getting drunk.

Now, you've all been doing a great job – and special kudos to our Congressional delegation, who don't have the luxury of working in Vermont, but instead have to slug it out in the Thunderdome of Washington, D.C.

But we are still in a global crisis, the proportions of which cannot be exaggerated. So you can't get comfy. You can't think to put the work off for another day, another term, or another legislative session. There is no other day. The time is nothing but now.

You've got to keep holding each other accountable. You've got to remind each other that this isn't a game. It isn't a movie. It's stone cold realer than real. And you have got to take huge risks and push yourselves out of your comfort zones because if you don't, you can pretty much guarantee Mama Nature's going to do it for you.

Fortunately, we human beings have a side to us other than the crazy, greedy, thoughtless, destructo-monster part. We are also a remarkably creative, innovative, ingenious bunch of critters, who are often our best when things are at their worst.

And we, we Vermonters – we open-hearted, forward-thinking, passionately innovative, community-minded, social-justice-championing Vermonters – we have the capacity to take on the challenges we're facing with love for the world and respect for each other and unflinching, stare-the-abyss-in-the-face bravery, courage, and chutzpah.

We've got leaders who are our friends, friends who are our inspiration, and opponents who are our teachers. We can look each other in the eye, clasp one another by the hand, and commit, from the depths of our soul, to preserving the well-being of this planet and each other.

Even here in Vermont, though, the fights are going to keep coming. We've got to fend off the SuperPACS trying to mess with our local electoral process. We've got to stop the planned flow reversal on the Trailbreaker Pipeline. We've got to champion fossil fuel divestment campaigns and help prevent the media from falling back into climate silence. We've got to figure out how to protect our forests and open spaces and waterways, and how the heck we're going to come to some kind of accord over building ourselves a truly green, renewable, carbon-free, socially equitable energy infrastructure. We need to build safe complete streets, and a fast, functional public transportation system.

We have to strategize about how to feed ourselves locally and build a healthy, non-growth-based economy, and learn to live with less in an overpopulated, resource-constrained world.

Tough work, but we are doing it, and we'll keep doing it. And for what we think we don't know how to do, the answers are already out there, close by, just waiting for us to grab 'em. We owe it to ourselves, our children, and the people of Vermont to hold those answers in an unshakeable, unbreakable grip, and run like the wind towards a future of hope and joy and justice for all.

Thanks so much for having me, and good luck on Tuesday!