

January is a good time to look back, and realize we are not ready for the future that has arrived. This Planet series began in January 2008, so this is the start of the fourteenth year. The teenagers among you who want to catch up can review the 100 articles I have written at alanbetts.com

The past year was a disaster for the planet, with record tropical cyclones and hurricanes, record fires raging in the western US, and record temperatures continuing to melt the Arctic and the permafrost in northern Siberia. The Gulf coast states were hit by storm after storm and Nicaragua was devastated by two category 4 hurricanes just two weeks apart. On November 1st the strongest super-typhoon ever hit the Philippines with 195mph winds. In late November, northern Somalia, struck by the strongest cyclone of the satellite era, got a year's rainfall in 48 hrs.

The Earth was close to a new record temperature in 2020. Tragically, as climate extremes are accelerating, millions of species are becoming extinct, threatening all life on Earth. For the U.S., the question is a simple one: how bad will we let it get? To be very blunt, how many of the world's children and grand-children are we willing to kill, just to appease the fossil fuel industry and increase current profits for the rich?

The year was a disaster for the US. The misery of COVID was made far worse by our narcissistic leader who bears responsibility for killing hundreds of thousands by ignoring the spread of the virus and by lying about it. In contrast, Iceland, using U.S. technology that our government refused to use, achieved a ten-fold reduction in the death toll per capita. In addition, our president has taken large bribes from many industries to roll back EPA regulations for clean air and clean water, and so kill many more people.

His colossal crime of taking the US out of the Paris climate commitments, to increase oil company profits, will haunt the hundreds of millions who will die this century from accelerating climate change. It is staggering that killing our children and the elderly for profit is now acceptable to right-wing capitalism. The ghastly reality is that under present rules the US capitalist system can make more money now from destroying the Earth than by saving it for our children. It boggles my mind that some on the religious right can support climate policies that will kill so many unborn children, and still pretend they are protecting the unborn.

Ironically, this incompetent would-be dictator established a new landmark that teachers should note. The U.S. constitution is complex, but if you are too lazy to actually read it, you cannot defeat it just by lying, waving your arms and threatening people. Even the stacked Supreme Court did not think propping up his ego justified overruling a fair election. This week he directly threatened the Georgia Secretary of State, demanding that the certified state election result be reversed in his favor: an extraordinary crime for a president. Finally as I write, this deranged and now criminal loser sent his mob to storm the U.S Capitol in a futile effort to prevent the Senate from affirming that Biden won the election. I just hope that he can be moved very soon to a far-off putting green, where a trusted smiling servant can divert his ball safely into the hole.

But it is time to leave this evil in the dust and move on. Last month I discussed how the desire for power and control has corrupted our human world. This is an on-going struggle. After the misery of COVID, our society is desperate to return to profit and growth-oriented capitalism, even though this is destroying the planet on which life depends. It is so difficult for the rich and powerful to accept real change away from an economic system that exploits both people and the Earth.

As the Extinction Rebellion has correctly insisted, we have to move to an economic system that works with the living Earth and for all the people across the globe. Stand up for the Earth and for your fellow citizens, whoever they are and wherever you meet. If it seems hopeless at times, slip into the wilderness and reconnect with the truth that will set you free.