



GO GREEN WEEK

END CLIMATE CO₂ONIALISM

ACTION GUIDE

10 - 14 FEB. 2020

people & planet

student action on world poverty and the environment



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"Our vision for a climate just world cannot and will not repeat the same things that got us here in the first place.

Instead, solutions will be lead by the deep knowledge that comes from the very communities who have long resisted colonialism and imperialism, and those who have the courage to embrace radical solidarity."

The Wretched of the Earth

INTRODUCTION

The story we are usually being told is that the current state of climate crisis started with industrialisation, and the pouring of tonnes of CO₂ in the atmosphere by countries in the Global North. However, this is not the only vision, and it is hardly one that takes into account intersections of race and class with the climate crisis. This guide, and this year's Go Green Week, is an attempt to start decolonising our climate movement. But what does that mean in practice?

Another story places the beginning of the climate crisis way back, arguing that the destruction of nature that enabled and followed industrialisation has its roots in colonialism. The system of colonisation by countries in the Global North (such as the UK, Spain, Portugal, France and Italy) has had an immense impact on the natural environments and knowledge of colonised countries.

Nature in the colonies, experienced through colonial lenses, has always been seen as less valuable and therefore exploitable for profit, or just considered "sacrifiable". Contemporary mining, or land grabs for renewable projects are a consequence of that. People living in colonised countries were not even considered human, were enslaved and exploited. This system still continues through exploitations happening in sweatshops, or through the dehumanisation that migrants face. Colonialism also brought a loss of indigenous knowledge and ways of living that respected and interacted with their environments in a sustainable way. Decolonising our environmental movement also means re-evaluating our over-reliance on science to find solutions to halt climate change, and enable those discourses to flourish again.

With this guide, we hope to spark more discussions around the relations between the climate crisis and the legacies of colonialism that influence our society. We invite you to explore how our universities are still complicit in this system, and use this guide to start challenging those narratives. We hope to offer ideas on what to do during #gogreenweek, to encourage another, alternative discourse around sustainability. And finally, we hope that you might want to join People and Planet in running campaigns to make our institutions fairer places.



MATTERS OF LAND AND

Fossil fuel companies are among the main culprits of extractivist endeavours across the world. Our society's dependence on coal, oil and gas is causing environmental destruction in the very places where these resources are extracted; pipelines transporting them leak, polluting and poisoning the environment.

The people most affected by the consequences of extraction, are also the ones that have been – and still are – colonised throughout history. The Alberta Tar Sands operate on land stolen from indigenous communities throughout centuries of Canadian colonisation, and the pollution coming from extracting oil poisons the water and food sources of communities that still living in the surroundings of the tar sands. Often, the companies engaging in extractivist endeavours have their basis on countries in the Global North, and receive the approval of those governments. Indigenous land and lives are still treated as "sacrifiable" resources, in a desperate endeavour to extract even more fossil fuels, and making even more profit.

Burning fossil fuels causes carbon emissions, which are in turn responsible for global temperature rising. Countries in the Global North, while responsible for most extraction and emissions, are the ones who are yet to feel the consequences of the climate crisis. In the Global South, people already have to deal with extreme weather changes, which makes it impossible to continue indigenous ways of lives, which are closely linked with an environment that has often now ceased to exist.

While fossil fuel companies destroy their environment, communities in the Global South are often dependent on them for their own survival. For example in Nigeria, Shell employs workers from local communities, builds schools and starts community projects to hide its endeavours. People are forced to work for the company that is destroying their communities and environments, often in precarious conditions. Any dissent is met with brutal force, when companies ally with local governments to shut down protests and kill community leaders and climate activists.

NATURAL DESTRUCTION

Mining for minerals is as destructive to local communities as mining for coal. In a future that will be powered by renewable energy, we need to take into account what effect the production of solar panels, wind turbines and batteries will have on people who live where there is an abundance of the materials needed to make renewable infrastructure. We need to approach this question with a decolonial perspective, and not by keep on treating those communities and environments as sacrifice zones.

The model of massive energy production needs to be revised too. Solar wind farms are responsible for land grabs from indigenous communities in the Global South, and are used by Global North countries and corporations to strengthen their

power and their position in the world political sphere.

Our universities play a role in the continue colonisation and exploitation of indigenous people. It is time they stop funding and researching for these companies, and take another step towards decolonisation. Fossil fuel companies rely on institution for both their social license and expansion, and we need to put an end to that. Furthermore, universities should become part of the movement for a just transition, taking into account workers, as well as material sourcing, in the transition to renewable energy sources. We need our universities' resources and knowledge if we want to win this fight.



MATTERS OF LABOUR

The legacy of colonialism is alive and well in our international supply chains, and our lifestyle in the UK is dependent on the exploitation of workers in sweatshops, fields, prisons and mines around the world. In the UK, a strong labour movement won improvements for many workers, and continues to do so, largely ending practices such as punitive fines, 12-hour days and pay discrimination based on gender – but the low-paid factory jobs and mining jobs didn't simply disappear, they were outsourced and exported to places with weaker labour rights legislation. The garments we wear, the electronics we use, the food we eat and just about everything else we come into contact with on a day-to-day basis has likely been transported to us from halfway across the world, sometimes more than once – each journey adding hugely to its carbon footprint. We all have a responsibility to ensure that these workers are receiving a living wage for their labour, that their working conditions are safe and dignified, and that they have the right to join a union

and fight collectively for better conditions – the progress that has been made in the UK can and should be extended to all through international solidarity.

However, many multinational corporations depend on the low wages and exploitative conditions in the Global South, and they deliberately seek to keep them this way by playing nations against each other – threatening to close their factories in one place and reopen them in another if wages are not kept low, if disputes are not dealt with swiftly and if tax breaks do not remain to their liking. This results in governments acting in the interests of corporations, rather than the interests of its own citizens – it has led to the creation of Free Trade Zones where companies and brands can pay less than the minimum wage, enforce overtime above the legal limit, and pollute extensively without repercussions. This is a legacy of colonialism.

Universities, as educational institutions, have a responsibility to ensure that their supply chains are ethical and don't cause environmental harm, they have

huge purchasing power because of the sheer quantity of products they consume. Nowhere this is more apparent than in the electronics industry, with universities driving the demand for cheap electronics which were likely made in sweatshops, using metals extracted from polluting mines, by people with no other option but to work there. Exploitative, international supply chains are a legacy of colonialism, they are driving climate change and environmental degradation, and they are integral to the capitalist system which is keeping people in poverty rather than lifting them out of it.



MATTERS OF RACE AND

You cannot separate the present climate crisis from the history of colonisation, racism and global migration.

For 500 years, European states have dominated, invaded and colonised lands populated by Black and Brown people, from the Spanish in the Americas to the British in Kenya.

These colonisations have reshaped the ecology of entire continents. Native American bison were slaughtered en masse in the Plains of America. Colonial agriculture, from the slave plantations of the Caribbean to the rice monocultures of Southeast Asia, involved soil degradation, deforestation, and land pollution in the Global South. Indigenous and native systems of land and ecological management were smashed, replaced by devastating industrial and profit-driven European models.

Not only this, but migration – and its flip side, confinement – have been inextricable from these processes of ecological destruction and colonisation. Cotton, sugar and coffee in the Americas were cultivated by 11

million Black Africans ripped from their homes and shackled to European-owned plantations. Native Americans were forced from their land then penned into small and barren reservations. Vietnamese were forced from their villages by US bombs in the 1960s and driven into massive internment camps controlled by the American military. Displaced, then confined.

The climate crisis is not something which happens 'to nature' and then reverberates back on us. It is one long-running, reconfiguring process of extraction and degradation. It was a set of laws, wars and tools of torture invented on the colonial plantation and reservation, to turn colonised people's labour and land into colonial wealth. It is their wreckage now.

These historical processes, which continue today, are exactly what produce the global colour line of 'race'. What it means to be Black and Brown in our world is to be descended from European colonial subjects, to have lower life expectancy, to have your land under threat from rising sea

MIGRATION



levels, to live in areas exposed to lead poisoning. This is what race is. Race is the climate crisis. The climate crisis is race.

Today, displacement and confinement remain the handmaidens of European state and corporate actions. Pacific Islanders fleeing climate chaos are captured and detained in brutal Australian detention camps. Latin Americans fleeing the US War on Drugs and climate impacts are greeted by US border guards, barbed wire and white supremacist vigilantes.

These processes have and continue to be resisted. Migration, when taken into the hands of the oppressed, can be a tool

of struggle. Mobile maroon communities were the terror of plantation owners across the colonial Caribbean. Indigenous highlanders in the Philippines used their knowledge of the land to escape Spanish and American colonisation for centuries. Migrants fleeing drought and extreme weather events today are taking their destiny into their own hands, often leading the struggles for a better society if and when they make it to the schools, hospitals and universities of the Global North. Solidarity with them (us) is the key to undoing the interconnected history and present of race, colonialism and borders.

MATTERS OF ECONOMY

What do banks have to do with climate change? Quite a lot, actually. When we talk about needing 'system change' in response to the climate crisis, we need to be clear that this requires comprehensive change across the whole of our economy and society, and that we need to fight for that change. That means taking on the banks and bankrupting climate change.

There is an oft-cited stat that over 70% of carbon emissions since 1988 come from just 100 companies – we know it's first and foremost the fossil fuel industry driving us over the climate cliff. Less-well known is the reliance of these oil and gas companies on banks such as Barclays to fund their activities. Mines, oil rigs, fracking sites – all need to be funded before any extraction takes place. It's not much of a surprise, then, that financing for fossil fuels totalled nearly \$2tn between 2016 and 2018, even in the wake of the Paris climate accord.

Major banks like Barclays are at the forefront of this, bankrolling catastrophic climate breakdown.

Over the past three years, Barclays have poured \$85bn into fossil fuels, including highly polluting coal and tar sands. Not only is this driving us well over the 1.5C warming limit to prevent climate catastrophe, from which the poor and vulnerable in the Global South and beyond suffer most, but many of these projects are imbricated in oppression and violence, whether that's working-class communities in Lancashire having fracking forcibly imposed onto them, or First Nations in North America seeing their lives and livelihoods sacrificed to the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion.

Banks like Barclays are a key pillar in the UK finance sector's role in climate colonialism. UK Export Finance, a government body, spent nearly £2bn last year alone on funding fossil fuel projects by British companies abroad. The City of London reaps in billions from its financial relationships, such as those with fossil fuel companies, as part of a wider extractive economic model, fuelling inequality at home and abroad.

We aren't powerless within this system. Three years ago, People & Planet launched our Divest Barclays campaign, harnessing student power to pressure Barclays to drop its financial support for the fossil fuel industry. We've forced boycotts from our universities, taken action at Barclays branches directly and helped build a coalition of social movements to join the fight. Since starting our campaign, four students' unions have boycotted Barclays, alongside NUS and NUS Wales.

We've garnered extensive media coverage, helped train a new campaign from Momentum, and helped force Barclays to: abandon support for fracking in the UK; drop support for coal projects; put its tar sands funding on review.

Now we need to go even further – the climate crisis demands rapid action. We're setting up a host of new Divest Barclays groups to up the ante and cut off the money taps to the fossil fuel industry, once and for all.



HOW ARE UNIS FUELLING

There are multiple ways in which universities are complicit in the system of climate colonialism.

Historically, some institutions have been the place of study and empowerment of colonialists. After having attended universities such as Oxford, colonialists have gone on to exploit communities in the Global South, while maintaining a strong relationship with their Alma Mater. They donated part of their stolen riches to universities, which built buildings, libraries, museums and laboratories in their honour. Some still have statues on campuses across the UK (such as Rhodes in Oxford), buildings are named after them, plaques welcome people in



CLIMATE COLONIALISM?

libraries. These connections with a colonial past are often why some universities still have money and prestigious status in our society.

However, that is not the only way linking universities and climate colonialism.

Across the UK, institutions still preserve rooted links with the industries that are responsible for natural and environmental destruction in the world. Via investments, research and career access, it is clear how the relationship between universities and fossil fuel companies is still strong. If universities were serious in their commitment to decolonise, they would need to sever these links immediately.

It is also important to consider where universities source their electronics. Colonialism rules the exploitative relationships between electronic companies and their workers, and by not taking a firm stance against it,

universities become complicit in that exploitation.

The climate crisis is deeply linked with issues of race and migration. Dismantling climate colonialism at our universities also means standing in solidarity with those that have been, and still are, colonised. This translates into a full revision of curricula, as well as giving access to education to those who, because of their visa status, cannot attend university. It translates into respect of workers rights, both lecturers and other staff. And it translates into taking a clear stance against the hostile environment, rather than being a proponent of it.



TAKE ACTION TO

We want to expose our universities' complicity in this system of climate colonialism. Here are a few ideas of what you could organise during the week to start the conversation, as well as some action ideas to force your university to come into terms with its colonial legacy.

HOST A FILM SCREENING

Followed by a discussion, it is a great way to start raising awareness about these issues. See next pages from some film suggestions.

START A REDING GROUP

Education and reflection on these topics is a fundamental to inform our activism. Start a reading group in your campus, that can continue beyond Go Green Week! We also have some book suggestions for you in the next pages.

Many student groups run liberation and decolonisation campaigns on campus. Reach out to them to start forming a coalition to hold your university accountable for its colonial legacy.

HOST A PANEL DISCUSSION

Invite different lecturers from your university, and local activists for a discussion on the links between your institution and climate colonialism.

DO SOME RESEARCH ON YOUR UNIVERSITY

How does your university fuel climate colonialism? Get together before and during the week to do some research on your institution. [Get in touch](#) with us if you need some support.

DECOLONISE YOUR UNI

THURSDAY 13TH FEBRUARY - DAY OF ACTION

After raising awareness on campus, it is time to demand your university to stop fuelling climate colonialism!

- Have a protest by a building named after a colonisers at your campus, or by a statue in their memory
- Have an alternative tour of the university, highlighting how they are complicit in climate colonialism
- Take action to demand your university to divest and cut all its ties to the fossil fuel industry
- Organise a rally with activists from different campaign groups across campus, such as decolonisation and BDS campaigns

[Get in touch](#) with us if you need help planning the action!

On the same day, at 2PM, NUS and SOS-UK are co-hosting a webinar titled 'Decolonising the University'. Host a screening on campus following your action! More details coming soon, keep up to date on our social media.



RESOURCES

We have put together a list of resources that we hope will be useful in organising the week.

DOCUMENTARIES

- *Awake - A Dream from Standing Rock*. The story of the inspirational fight of indigenous communities to protect their land and water from an oil pipeline in North America
- *Thank You For The Rain*. The journey of a Kenyan farmer becoming a community organiser and international activist to build communities resilient to climate change
- *Death by Design*. It exposes the links between the electronics industry, environmental destruction and colonialism.



GO GREEN WEEK ADVENT CALENDAR

This December, to advertise Go Green Week, we have been publishing an advent calendar on our social media with articles, resources and action ideas to help you prepare the week.

You can find them all [here](#).

BOOKS

- *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* by Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore. Examining with new eyes how capitalism, colonialism and the climate crisis are interconnected.
- *The Big Conservation Lie* by John Mbaria and Mordecai Ogada. Exploring how current conservation efforts in Kenya are rooted in colonial legacies.
- *What the Dumbwaiter Hides* by Stuart McMillen. Looking into how the tech industry exploits communities in the Global South to the benefit of a few individuals in the Global North
- *Futures of Black Radicalism* edited by Gaye Theresa Johnson and Alex Lubin. A collection of essays on internationalist Black radical politics and the connections between Black resistance and anti-capitalism.



TAKE TIME TO TAKE CARE

Taking on colonial legacies, both in an institution and within oneself, can be a challenging and exhausting process. For some, it involves facing past trauma.

It is fundamental that, throughout this week (and your organising work in general), you take moments to reflect on what you are experiencing, as an individual and as a group. Remember to take care of yourself, and of other people in your group.

The last day of this year's Go Green Week falls on Valentine's Day. We know it is a bit cheesy, but it might be a nice idea to do some activities oriented towards self-care. Have a craftivism session, or go to a nice café with your group. Or why not bake some cakes and have an afternoon tea session somewhere cosy at uni?



“The current acceleration of climate change is not only an unintentional consequence of industrialisation. The climate has always been a project for colonial powers, which have continually acted to engineer it.”

Eyal Weizman

THANK YOU!

Thank you for taking the time to read this Go Green Week action guide. We hope this guide is a useful tool to start tackling climate colonialism on and off campus.

Remember you can always contact People & Planet for support in planning all the different aspects of Go Green Week and your campaigns. Let us know what you are up to, so we can publicise everything you are doing to the wider movement.

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