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PEOPLE WILL DIE!

Air Conditioning a Human Right... Because Climate Change?

🕒 2 weeks ago 👤 [David Middleton](#)

Guest "Goods and services aren't rights" by David Middleton



BY TANNER GARRITY

It's hot out there.

Pick a country, pick a headline, pick a statistic, it's all telling the same story – the planet is warming at an alarming rate. In the last few days alone, South East Asia [recorded](#) temperatures of 122°F, as regions of Pakistan and India labored through a punishing early-season heat wave; the bodies of assumed old mob hits [washed up](#) in Nevada's historically-dry Lake Mead; and sweltering highs rarely seen this side of June have arrived in France and Spain.

[...]

Considering that rampant energy consumption on the part of humans is responsible for this crisis, it might seem counterintuitive that leading researchers are now calling for expanded access to air conditioning. In a recent article for Scientific American, four authors argue that AC ought to be considered a fundamental "human right," and will be prerequisite for climate justice in the years ahead. They [write](#):

"As the world heats up, billions of people need air-conditioning. This 120-year-old technology used to be considered a luxury, but in the age of climate change, it is a necessity for human survival."

How can the planet possibly accommodate billions of more AC units, though? (Just 12% of people living in the world's hottest regions currently have air conditioning, while 90% of Americans use the technology.)

[...]

[Inside Hook](#)

Having lived in Texas since 1981, I fully appreciate the value of air conditioning.

Abstract

Heat is the primary weather-related cause of death in the United States. Increasing heat and humidity, at least partially related to anthropogenic climate change, suggest that a long-term increase in heat-related mortality could occur. We calculated the annual excess mortality on days when apparent temperatures—an index that combines air temperature and humidity—exceeded a threshold value for 28 major metropolitan areas in the United States from 1964 through 1998. Heat-related mortality rates declined significantly over time in 19 of the 28 cities. For the 28-city average, there were 41.0 +/- 4.8 (mean +/- SE) excess heat-related deaths per year (per standard million) in the 1960s and 1970s, 17.3 +/- 2.7 in the 1980s, and 10.5 +/- 2.0 in the 1990s. In the 1960s and 1970s, almost all study cities exhibited mortality significantly above normal on days with high apparent temperatures. During the 1980s, many cities, particularly those in the typically hot and humid southern United States, experienced no excess mortality. In the 1990s, this effect spread northward across interior cities. **This systematic desensitization of the metropolitan populace to high heat and humidity over time can be attributed to a suite of technological, infrastructural, and biophysical adaptations, including increased availability of air conditioning.**

[Davis, Knappenberger, Michaels, and Novicoff, 2003](#)

There's no doubt that air conditioning has saved millions of human lives.

A study [published in 2016](#) found that Americans' risk of death on a very hot day has fallen by [80 percent since the 1939-1959 period](#), with most of the gain coming after 1960 –an improvement researchers attributed almost entirely to the spread of home air conditioning. That's a number that would translate into 20,000 more deaths each year in the US if we maintained midcentury rates of heat-related deaths today. Researchers also found that this protective effect was particularly strong among vulnerable populations, including Black Americans and those ages 65 and up. This pattern holds true globally. A major 2021 research report [in the Lancet](#) estimated that, globally, access to air conditioning averted 195,000 heat-related deaths among people ages 65 and older in 2019.

In simplest terms, then, millions of people are alive today who would be dead if not for air conditioning.

[Foreign Policy](#)

However, calling it a "human right," makes me think of a scene in the 1985 classic, *Police Academy 2*...

You have the right to remain silent. You have the right to a court appointed attorney. You have the right to sing the blues. You have the right to cable TV... that's very important. You have the right to sublet. You have the right to paint the walls... no loud colors.

[Steve Guttenberg as Carey Mahoney in Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment](#)

Goods and services aren't rights

While I believe that [energy poverty](#) is a serious problem and that increasing access to affordable, reliable energy should be a societal priority, air

conditioning can no more be a right than cable TV can. No person has a right to the goods and services provided by other individuals. If air



ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE, RELIABLE ENERGY ISN'T A RIGHT EITHER, BUT IT IS THE ANSWER

“ Aug 23, 2019
Carbon Pricing Is Not a Fix for Climate Change

By: Scott Tinker

There is much talk today about carbon pricing to reduce CO2 emissions and address climate change. Unlike many environmental pollutants that have a local or regional impact, carbon dioxide (CO2) is global – there is only one atmosphere. If actions taken to reduce atmospheric emissions in one region result in increased emissions elsewhere, then the one atmosphere suffers.

Some form of carbon pricing – carbon tax, carbon trading, carbon credits – is favored by many politicians, NGOs, academics and even some in industry. But the reality is that a price on carbon will not be imposed by developing and emerging economies because it makes their energy more expensive, and they are too busy trying to build their economies and lift themselves from poverty.

In the developed world, carbon pricing increases the cost of manufacturing and products, which in turn drives manufacturing to developing nations where it is more affordable because of lower labor costs and less stringent environmental regulations and emissions standards. Global emissions rise in the one atmosphere.

Said differently, the good intentions of carbon pricing have an unintended negative impact on climate change. This is not hypothetical. It is happening.

If carbon pricing won't work, what will? Energy science tells us how to actually lower CO2 emissions into the one atmosphere in the time frame needed. Unfortunately, those who are the most passionate about addressing climate change seem to not like the answers from the energy experts.

[...]

So what options does energy science suggest will have a major impact on climate change?

Natural gas and nuclear replacing coal for power generation in major developing nations such as India, China and Vietnam would have a major impact. Carbon capture, utilization and storage; direct carbon capture from the atmosphere; and perhaps nature-based solutions such as increasing the size of forests would help, especially in fossil fuel producing regions such as the U.S., Russia, China and the Middle East.

[...]

These scientifically sound and economically underpinned energy solutions present a problem. Many are not favored by people who are the most concerned about climate change. Thus, politicians seeking climate votes continue to passionately promote programs and policies that won't actually address climate change.

But we have a remarkable opportunity. The right can acknowledge the need to tackle climate change. The left can acknowledge the energy science needed to accomplish real global emissions reductions into the one atmosphere. And developing and emerging nations can continue to climb out of energy poverty.

Unfortunately, this appears to be far from happening. Climate politics seems to trump energy solutions in Europe and the U.S., and the developing world continues to burn coal.

Scott Tinker is the Allday Endowed Chair of Subsurface Geology and director of the Bureau of Economic Geology at The University of Texas at Austin.

[UT News](#)

It is undeniable that “those who are the most passionate about addressing climate change seem to not like the answers” and “politicians seeking climate votes continue to passionately promote programs and policies that won't actually address climate change.” While the need to address climate change is highly debatable, the need to fight energy poverty is not.

It truly is a [Bizarro World](#)... Those who consider climate change to be an existential threat are least likely to support natural gas, nuclear power and CCS/CCUS. Instead they support Green New Deals that would destroy our economy, have no affect at all on the weather while worsening energy poverty.

Reference

Davis, R. E. , Knappenberger, P. C. , Michaels, P. J. , & Novicoff, W. M. (2003). Changing heat-related mortality in the United States. *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 111(14), 1712–1718. 10.1289/ehp.6336 [\[PMC free article\]](#) [\[PubMed\]](#) [\[CrossRef\]](#) [\[Google Scholar\]](#)



Article Rating



Tags: [Air conditioning](#), [energy poverty](#)

90 COMMENTS

Oldest ▾

Tom Halla

🕒 May 17, 2022 6:11 pm

Given that hard corp greens do not approve of anything more advanced than a punkah fan worked by a servant, air conditioning should be doubleplus ungood.

+ 12 -

Mr.

👤 Reply to Tom Halla

🕒 May 17, 2022 7:55 pm

Are there good paying union jobs for punkah wallahs?

+ 9 -

Craig from Oz

🕒 May 17, 2022 6:40 pm

Sorry to break this to people, but there is no such thing as 'human rights'.

Go out into nature. Stand up proud. Demand to nature your rights.

Know what will happen? Nature will look at you in bemusement and idly wonder if it should kill and eat you, or just wait for you to die. And eat you.

What people call 'rights' are actually privileges earned by generations of society going out and carving them out of nothing.

They are not just given. They must be created and then they must be defended. If society wants electricity to their home they must constantly defend their need to have this within their society and culture. You can demand and expect it, but you still need to constantly proof you deserve it and it is never a Right.

Rights are an excuse not to do any work.

+ 47 -

David Middleton (@debunkhouse) Author

👤 Reply to Craig from Oz

🕒 May 17, 2022 6:54 pm

They are not just given. They must be created and then they must be defended.



+ 15 -

TonyL

👤 Reply to Craig from Oz

🕒 May 17, 2022 8:43 pm



Right to life. You were bestowed it by nature, it is yours to keep.



If any of this sounds in any way familiar to you, you get one point.
To get two more points, name the famous document which declares these rights.
(Check back later for the answer, if needed)

+ 8 -

Hoyt Clagwell

Reply to TonyL

May 17, 2022 9:25 pm

All of those are society's rights Tony. Go try them out in the jungle. The problem is that the only thing needed to violate those rights is for one person to just ignore them. Rights have no substance. They're like the lines on the highway. All fine and good until somebody just doesn't care about the rules, which is happening with increasing frequency. (unlike tornadoes)

+ 16 -

TonyL

Reply to Hoyt Clagwell

May 17, 2022 10:01 pm

Right to life, means you can defend yourself. You can do so with "extreme prejudice. Especially in the jungle, no society necessary.

+ 9 -

Hoyt Clagwell

Reply to TonyL

May 18, 2022 8:04 am

Tell that to Timothy McVeigh. Oh wait, you can't. He was executed by the same society that guarantees those rights after he took that right away from 168 people in the Oklahoma Federal building that he bombed. Nobody's life was saved by having the right to life. Nobody was given the chance to defend themselves. Rights are nice, but they only work as long as everybody agrees to follow the rules.

+ 2 -

Tim Gorman

Reply to Hoyt Clagwell

May 18, 2022 8:13 am

Remember that freedom is not the same as perfect safety. With freedom comes risk.

+ 2 -

jeffery p

Reply to Hoyt Clagwell

May 18, 2022 8:16 am

Because people, and the government, can and do violate our rights, you're saying our rights don't exist? I'm trying to follow that thread but I'm not quite getting it.

Our society depends upon people agreeing to behave civilly. I hesitate to use the word "gentlemen" in these PC times, but that's what our society depends upon.

+ 1 -

Rocketscientist

Reply to jeffery p

May 18, 2022 8:56 am

All societies depend upon agreed to codes of conduct, that's their definition.

+ 0 -





auto

You may not be Christian, but the Ten Commandments seem, to me, to be a fair starting point.

Me – an agnostic, looking for – well – other than a Nature God, perhaps.

Auto

+ 0 –

Hoyt Clagwell

Reply to [jeffery p](#)

May 18, 2022 12:50 pm

I'm trying to say that rights are a non substantive human abstract construction that can only serve as a general guide for preferred behavior. Laws are needed to protect those rights and enforcement is required to give either of those constructions any value. I live in a state where enforcement is vanishing rapidly, which exposes the impotence of rights alone.

+ 0 –

Richard Page

Reply to [jeffery p](#)

May 18, 2022 2:56 pm

Our society depends on a balanced system of rights and associated responsibilities: you have the right to life but the associated responsibility to ensure others enjoy the same right and not deprive others of it, you have the right to freedom of speech but the associated responsibility not to harm others by it nor to deprive another of it. You have the right to liberty and the pursuit of happiness but the responsibility not to deprive others of those rights. I see a lot of talk about rights but bugger all about the responsibilities of a member of society.

+ 1 –

Jon R. Salmi

Reply to [Richard Page](#)

May 20, 2022 12:41 pm

Thanks Richard for a very cogent comment. In today's society it seem everybody knows their rights, however, mention the associated responsibilities and all you usually get is a blank stare.

+ 0 –

Jtom

Reply to [jeffery p](#)

May 18, 2022 7:53 pm

Who gave you those rights if you don't believe in a higher power? Certainly not nature. Agreement among men – society – is a nice thought, but then they also have the power to end that right, which means it is not truly a inalienable right but a privilege offered by others.

Absent a creator, who would enforce those rights in an afterlife and punish offenders violated them, there are no intrinsic rights.

There are many places, even within industrialized countries, that still live under the code of the jungle – if you want something and can take it, it's yours.

+ 0 –

jeffery p

Reply to [Jtom](#)

May 19, 2022 5:31 am

Absent a creator, do right and wrong still exist? Yes. Same with natural rights.





+ 0 -

Absent a creator right and wrong no longer exist. Might makes right becomes the law of the land.

+ 0 -

Tim Gorman

Reply to [mkelly](#)

May 19, 2022 7:18 am

The law of the jungle.

For the curious read John Locke.

+ 0 -

Jtom

Reply to [TonyL](#)

May 18, 2022 7:43 pm

Your 'right' to life only extends to your ability to protect your life. A shark isn't going to be concerned with your rights. If it infringes upon your 'right' who or what enforces that right to live?

+ 0 -

Andy Espersen

Reply to [Hoyt Clagwell](#)

May 17, 2022 10:05 pm

Rights most certainly do have "substance" – if backed by legislation.

+ 0 -

BobM

Reply to [Andy Espersen](#)

May 17, 2022 11:54 pm

Not really. Many citizens of the United States believe their "rights" are guaranteed by the U.S. Consitution. Not so. Our "rights" are guaranteed by the Armed Forces of the United States, without which, some other folks with perhaps superior arms could specify what "rights" they wished to allow us to have. Same goes for anywhere else in the world.

+ 8 -

Rocketscientist

Reply to [BobM](#)

May 18, 2022 9:00 am

Well, to be pedantic the laws are enforced by the *Executive* branch of our government, which controls armed forces, civil defense and law enforcement.

+ 0 -

ozspeaksup

Reply to [Andy Espersen](#)

May 18, 2022 2:54 am

wasnt covid enough of a lesson as to what your rights are worth? on paper and reality seem to vary somewhat?

+ 12 -

Hoyt Clagwell

Reply to [Andy Espersen](#)

May 18, 2022 8:07 am

