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# Opinion

## EPA Rollbacks Will Hurt People of Color

President Trump visiting West Virginia to announce a major rollback in regulations limiting coal fired power plant emissions feels like being lost in a dark coal mine, reaching a fork in the tunnel with one direction pitch black and a bright light at the end of the other. The choice seems so obvious and yet the President of the United States of America intentionally heads into the darkness.

At the turn of the millennium we knew for a fact that the planet is warming and that greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide accelerate warming. We were aware of the human contribution and that limiting carbon emissions is the best way for humans to try to avoid catastrophic upheaval.

It took much time and work to get the Clean Power Plan in place that eliminating it is just short of insane. The president's announcement sent me back to our 2002 report "Air of Injustice: African Americans & Power Plant Pollution." The collaboration brought Dr. Joseph Lowery and Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Lefwich of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda and Black Leadership Forum, respectively, together with Martha Keating and Angela Ledford Anderson formerly with the Clean Air Task



Felicia M. Davis

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Force and Clear the Air to mobilize and educate the African American community about the impact of power plant pollution on air quality, climate change and public health.

We reported that coal-fired power plants are the largest industrial emitters of a list

“At the turn of the millennium we knew for a fact that the planet is warming

of pollutants with negative health impacts such as increased asthma, lung disease, premature deaths and even increases in infectious disease. Long before Hurricane Katrina we tried to sound the alarm connecting poverty, race, geography and even insurance status to climate impacts. Scientists tried to explain that while we can't point to any single weather event as evidence of climate

change, by the time the pattern is proven it will be too late. We're like slowly boiling frogs unable to grasp the upheaval that climate change is already causing.

We did a poor job of explaining what a global degree Celsius actually means, our hockey stick graphs and bathtub analogies only worked for people who understand climate science. People can't seem to connect floods, drought, fires, hurricanes and extreme weather to climate change. We should have stressed the fact that there are only ten global degrees of difference between today's climate and the ice age. We need to break things down in terms everyday people can appreciate. Perhaps we should remind Americans about the days of the Dust Bowl or the water wars between ranchers and farmers in westerns.

Looking back the 10 Principles of Just Climate Policy developed by the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative (a diverse group of 28 US environmental justice, religious, policy and advocacy groups) included in the Air of Injustice appendix should have been featured more prominently. Principle number one: Stop Cooking the Planet and states plainly that, "Global warm-

ing will accelerate unless we can slow the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. To protect vulnerable Americans, alternatives must be found for human activities that cause global warming."

If we started there and elevated these principles, there would have been a focus on workers and communities. We were adamant that "no group should have to shoulder the burden alone of transition from a fossil fuel-based economy to a renewable energy-based economy. We had in mind training and economic development for miners and other displaced workers.

While caring about the needs of local communities down to the individual, it is important to recognize that, "Global Problems Need Global Solutions" and as one of the largest contributors the US should be out front. The Paris Agreement was a major accomplishment. After decades of negotiations finally the whole world was on one accord when it came to the urgent need to collectively work to reduce emissions and adapt to changes that are inevitable. Resilience emerged as a priority given the magnitude of change underway.

Read the rest of this commentary at  
**TheSkanner.com**

## The Abuse Won't Stop Until We Change Police Culture

Another day, another week, another month, another viral video of police gone wild. This time it's Baltimore, a city already under a federal consent decree to reform its police department after a Justice Department investigation into the 2015 death of Freddie Gray at the hands of police found rampant, systemic abuse of black residents by cops.

Contrary to the usual response to such recordings, police and city officials acted quickly after Officer Arthur Williams was caught on camera Saturday, Aug. 11, savagely beating a defenseless DaShawn McGrier. McGrier, a 26-year-old warehouse worker, suffered fractured ribs, a broken jaw, various cuts and bruises and spent two nights in a local hospital.

After a witness posted the attack on Facebook and Instagram that day, Williams resigned. By Wednesday, he had been charged with first and second-degree assault.

The Baltimore incident mirrors images from so many other cities - Fort Worth, Texas; Philadelphia, Tulsa, Oklahoma; New York City, Mesa, Arizona; Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Cleveland, Chicago, Beavercreek, Ohio, Gwinnett County, Georgia; Bloomfield, New Jersey, Grandbury, Texas; North

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Headline News

Charleston, South Carolina; Falcon Heights, Minnesota.

It's "déjà vu all over again." In most cases, the officers are white, and the victims are black. Consequently, there is an inclination to define po-

“There is an inclination to define police misconduct largely as an issue of race

lice misconduct largely as an issue of race. The Baltimore cop caught on camera beating the hell out of a black man, T, however, was not white. He was African American. So was his partner, who stood by and watched without trying to halt the assault.

So are 42 percent of the officers within the Baltimore Police Department. So is the current Baltimore police commissioner, as was the previous police commissioner as was the police commissioner

when Gray died of a crushed spinal cord following a ride in the back of a police van, as were six other Baltimore police commissioners in a city where police have been under the control of African-American political leadership for nearly 40 years.

Race is a significant part of the problem. For police and much of society, black men are the boogeyman, a threat or suspicious just by their mere presence. But it's just a part of the issue.

As we discovered through nearly 100 interviews with police, city officials and citizens across dozens of American cities, these incidents continue at a steady, pernicious pace because of a mindset and a pattern within most police departments that overrides nearly every significant effort to change them.

Until we, the citizenry, address that culture as well as our own attitudes about what police should and should not do, the shootings, the beatings, the harassment and the abuse of police power will continue.

In large part, our police departments are defined by a law enforcement culture that perpetuates an us-against-

the citizens attitude in which defending fellow cops - no matter how inept, how malevolent or corrupt - is paramount. Consequently, officers act with a sense of impunity, because they know that no matter what they do, their fellow officers will back them up, or at the least, won't report them.

We saw this in Chicago four years ago when three officers lied on their police reports to justify the shooting of 17-year-old black juvenile by a fellow officer - even though they knew there was video of the incident that would contradict their statements. So, the incidents continue. Williams did what other Baltimore cops had done, including his previous harassment and arrest of McGrier. This time it was caught on camera.

Additionally, departments too often do a poor job of screening out applicants, allowing in men and women who have already been proven to be bad cops in other departments. Such was the case of the officer who shot and killed 12-year-old Tamir Rice in Cleveland and the former St. Louis cop who without justification ruined the life of Fred Watson in Ferguson under the color of law.

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