

Archbishop Desmond Tutu Calls For 'End Of Fossil Fuels Era'

The Huffington Post | By [Antonia Blumberg](#)

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As the [UN Climate Summit](#) approaches, Archbishop Desmond Tutu has recorded a [new video](#) calling for "the end of the fossil fuel era."

"The destruction of the earth environment is the human rights challenge of our time," Tutu said.

Uploaded to YouTube by The Desmond & Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, the video addressed rising greenhouse gas emissions and climate degradation which wreak havoc primarily on the poor and underprivileged.

"Time is running out," Tutu urged.

Tutu called the summit a "decisive moment in the struggle to maintain God's Earth." But the UN alone can only do so much, Tutu said. Independent governments and world leaders must also step up to the challenge to protect the environment for future generations.

The archbishop wrote [an article for The Guardian](#) in May saying, "We need an apartheid-style boycott to save the planet."

There is no excuse not to prioritize the earth, Tutu wrote, for climate change affects us all. He encouraged colleges, companies and faith organizations to divest from fossil fuels, as the [World Council of Churches](#) has done.

"To serve as custodians of creation is not an empty title," Tutu wrote. "It requires that we act, and with all the urgency this dire situation demands."

Desmond Tutu: We fought apartheid. Now climate change is our global enemy

On the eve of the UN Climate Summit, Desmond Tutu argues that tactics used against firms who did business with South Africa must now be applied to fossil fuels to prevent human suffering



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Children play in flood water in Punjab province, Pakistan. 'The most devastating effects of climate change are being visited on the world's poor.' Photograph: Omer Saleem/EPA

Never before in history have human beings been called on to act collectively in defence of the Earth. As a species, we have endured world wars, epidemics, famine, slavery, apartheid and many other hideous consequences of religious, class, race, gender and ideological intolerance. People are extraordinarily resilient. The Earth has proven pretty resilient, too. It's managed to absorb most of what's been thrown at it since the industrial revolution and the invention of the internal combustion engine.

Until now, that is. Because the science is clear: the sponge that cushions and sustains us, our environment, is already saturated with carbon. If we don't limit global warming to two degrees or less we are doomed to a period of unprecedented instability, insecurity and loss of species. [Fossil fuels](#) have powered human endeavour since our ancestors developed the skills to make and manage fire. Coal, gas and oil warm our homes, fuel our industries and enable our movements. We have allowed ourselves to become totally dependent, and are guilty of ignoring the warning signs of pending disaster. It is time to act.

As responsible citizens of the world – sisters and brothers of one family, the human family, God's family – we have a duty to persuade our leaders to lead us in a new direction: to help us abandon our collective addiction to fossil fuels, starting this week in New York at the [United Nations Climate Summit](#). Reducing our carbon footprint is not just a technical scientific necessity; it has also emerged as the human rights challenge of our time. While global emissions have risen unchecked, real-world impacts have taken hold in earnest. The most devastating effects of [climate change](#) – deadly storms, heat waves, droughts, [rising food prices](#) and the advent of climate refugees – are being visited on the world's poor. Those who have no involvement in creating the problem are the most affected, while those with the capacity to arrest the slide dither. Africans, who emit far less carbon than the people of any other continent, will pay the steepest price. It is a deep injustice.

The [United Nations](#) deserves kudos for its leadership on human rights issues. But on climate change, it has run up against governments and leaders of industry who have until now [put short-term economic and political goals ahead of our collective long-term survival](#). We can no longer tinker about the edges. We can no longer continue feeding our addiction to fossil fuels as if there were no tomorrow. For there will be no tomorrow. As a matter of urgency we must begin a global transition to a new safe energy economy. This requires fundamentally rethinking our economic systems, to put them on a sustainable and more equitable footing.

I am not without hope. When we, humans, walk together in pursuit of a righteous cause, we become an irresistible force. There are many ways that all of us can fight climate change: by not wasting energy, for instance. But these individual measures will not, the scientists assure us, make a big enough difference. And they may not be appropriate for the world's poor.

We can boycott events, sports teams and media programming sponsored by fossil fuel companies; demand that their advertisements carry health warnings; organise car-free days and other platforms to build broader societal awareness; and ask our religious communities to speak out on the issue from their various pulpits. We can encourage energy companies to spend more of their resources on the development of sustainable energy products, and we can reward those companies that demonstrably do so by using their products to the exclusion of others.

Just as we argued in the 1980s that those who conducted business with apartheid South [Africa](#) were aiding and abetting an immoral system, we can say that nobody should profit from the rising temperatures, seas and human suffering caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

We can encourage more of our universities and municipalities, foundations, corporations, individuals and cultural institutions [to cut their ties to the fossil fuel industry](#). To divest, and invest, instead, in renewable energy. To move their money out of the problem and into the solutions. We can urge our governments to invest in sustainable practices and stop subsidising fossil fuels; and to freeze further exploration for new fossil energy sources. The fossil reserves that have already been discovered exceed what can ever be safely used. Yet companies spend half a trillion dollars each year searching for more fuel. They should redirect this money toward developing clean

energy solutions. We can support our leaders to make the correct moral choices and to avoid undue industry influence that blocks the political will to act on climate change. Through the power of our collective action we can hold those who rake in the profits accountable for cleaning up their mess. The good news is that we don't have to start from scratch. Young people across the world have identified climate change as the biggest challenge of our time, and already begun to do something about it.

Over the last three or four years, we have seen the rise of a new civil society divestment movement to stand alongside the scientists, environmentalists and social activists who have been challenging the moral standing of the fossil fuel industry.

Once again, it is a global movement led by students and faith groups, along with hospitals, cities, foundations, corporations and individuals. It is a moral movement to persuade fossil fuel companies away from a business model that threatens our very survival. My prayer is that humankind takes its first tangible steps in New York this week – as a collective – to move beyond the fossil fuel era.

There is a word we use in [South Africa](#) that describes human relationships: *Ubuntu*. It says: I am because you are. My successes and my failures are bound up in yours. We are made for each other, for interdependence. Together, we can change the world for the better.

Who can stop climate change? We can. You and you and you, and me. And it is not just that we can stop it, we have a responsibility to do so that began in the genesis of humanity, when God commanded the earliest human inhabitants of the Garden of Eden, "to till it and keep it". To "keep" it; not to abuse it, not to make as much money as possible from it, not to destroy it.

http://www.democracynow.org/2014/9/22/heirs_of_billionaire_oil_tycoon_john

Heirs of Billionaire Oil Tycoon John D. Rockefeller Join Growing Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement

In major climate divestment news, the Rockefeller family, which made their vast fortune on oil, has announced it will begin divesting from fossil fuel companies. The heirs of Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller are joining a growing movement of institutions and wealthy individuals who are pledging to divest from oil, coal and natural gas companies. We speak to Scott Wallace, co-chair of the Wallace Global Fund, which has coordinated the Divest-Invest effort. He is the grandson of Henry Wallace, who served as Franklin D. Roosevelt's vice president and ran for president in 1948 on the Progressive Party ticket.

Transcript

This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form.

AMY GOODMAN: Neil Young, singing his new song, "Who's Gonna Stand Up and Save the Earth?" Neil shared his song with *Democracy Now!* ahead of Sunday's People's Climate March. You can listen to the full song at our website, democracynow.org.

This is *Democracy Now!*, democracynow.org, *The War and Peace Report*. I'm Amy Goodman, as we turn now to the growing fossil fuel divestment movement. The Rockefeller family, which made their vast fortune on oil, has announced it will begin divesting from fossil fuel companies. The Rockefeller Brothers Fund is joining other foundations and wealthy individuals today to announce pledges to divest from fossil fuel companies. Together, these institutions hold over \$50 billion in total assets. In a statement, Stephen Heintz, an heir of Standard Oil tycoon John D. Rockefeller, said, quote, "We are quite convinced that if he were alive today, as an astute businessman looking out to the future, he would be moving out of fossil fuels and investing in clean, renewable energy," unquote.

According to the Divest-Invest coalition, more than 650 individuals and 180 institutions have pledged to divest from fossil fuels. This morning, billionaire environmentalist Tom Steyer announced he'll divest, as well. The Rockefellers will officially make their divestment pledge at a news conference today. South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu will deliver a video message at the event.

ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU: It is time to change the profit incentive by demanding legal liability for unsustainable environmental practices. Encourage governments to stop accepting funding from the fossil fuel industry. Such funds erode governments' responsibilities as managing custodians of our world. Divest from fossil fuels and invest in a clean energy future, benefiting the world's majority. It is no longer acceptable for

any of us to seek to profit from systems and industries that threaten our values. Move your money out of the problem and into solutions.

AMY GOODMAN: That's South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

For more, we're joined by a man who lives half the year in South Africa and half here. We're joined by Scott Wallace, co-chair of the Wallace Global Fund, which has coordinated the Divest-Invest effort to recruit foundations to divest. The Wallace Global Fund supports many organizations, including *Democracy Now!* Scott Wallace is an attorney who has previously served as legal counsel on the Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Juvenile Justice and the Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs. He's also the grandson of Henry Wallace, who served as Franklin Delano Roosevelt's vice president and ran for president in 1948 on the Progressive Party ticket.

Scott Wallace, welcome to *Democracy Now!*

SCOTT WALLACE: Good morning, Amy. And thanks for all that you do.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, today you are going to be making a major announcement with the Rockefellers and other heads of foundations about divestment. Talk about what you're going to be doing.

SCOTT WALLACE: Well, we're going to be announcing this afternoon that 50 additional foundations are divesting, representing \$50 billion in total assets, and over 600 individual investors with tons of money. This is building on the movement that started on college campuses and that Bill McKibben and others so brilliantly mobilized yesterday to take the streets. It's just the foundations that have invested in climate solutions with their grant dollars are finally deciding that they also have to invest their entire endowments consistent with her programmaticals.

AMY GOODMAN: Speaking of the student movement that has launched all of this, I wanted to turn to one of the people I spoke to yesterday in the People's Climate March. I interviewed Yale student Lex Barlowe of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network.

LEX BARLOWE: The Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network is an organization that's been in the works for a couple of years, since the beginning—since the first, very first, convergence at Swarthmore in 2011. So, yeah, so the Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network is trying to coordinate all the over 400 divestment campaigns that we have against fossil fuels on our campuses across the country. We're really excited to be here at the march today. Fossil fuel divestment has created a huge movement. It's gone in three years from like 10 schools to over 400. And we're really working on getting our students in line with this climate justice messaging. We really believe that students have created a movement out of finding this way to leverage their power as students and how they can specifically be in solidarity with front-line communities at their universities, instead of just always going to these communities and going to see what they can do, how can they take action right now on their campuses.

AMY GOODMAN: That's Yale student Lex Barlowe of the Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network. Yale has announced they will not divest, unlike Stanford, that made a major decision recently. Scott Wallace?

SCOTT WALLACE: Right, Stanford is one of the growing number of universities that has decided, under pressure from the students and the Board of Trustees and people, graduates, who have demanded it, to get out of fossil fuels—that's defined as getting out of the 200 top dirtiest polluters—and to invest in good, clean energy solutions.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, let's talk about the Divest-Invest part. So, divest, many might say, "So what? While you have a lot of money, in the long term, the fossil fuel companies have much more. Does it really matter? Your divestment will immediately be bought up by others." What is your response to that?

SCOTT WALLACE: Well, two things. One, it's an environmental—I mean, an economic and a moral issue. I mean, we have to make a pariah out of these companies. We have to send a message. But it's also good financial sense. We got out five years ago, completely divested from fossil fuels and invested in clean energy solutions, and we're ahead of where we would have been. We've been keeping track of our benchmark of how we were investing. So we're doing better. And it's because the market is starting to understand that all the reserves that are on the books of Exxon and the major oil companies cannot be burned. Their capitalization reflects these huge reserves that are still in the ground, and we're now realizing—the financial analysts are realizing that they can't take them out of the ground. They can't burn them. So the capitalization, the valuation of the companies is dropping. And over the next decade or so, the value of the stocks will continue to plummet, and the value of the alternatives—solar and wind—now competitive with oil and gas, will make those stocks more valuable.

AMY GOODMAN: I mean, a lot of heads of foundations who are listening right now, or pension funds who might be listening right now or watching, might be saying, "You can't be serious. You can actually make money off of divesting from these extremely lucrative investments?"

SCOTT WALLACE: Absolutely. And I would say to the trustees and the universities and the foundations that are concerned about losing money, concerned about risk, I would say, if you like risk, if you want risk, then stay in fossil fuels. That's the risky alternative. If you want a solid financial future, stick to stuff where you're not going to get sued when the Deepwater Horizon blows up in the Gulf and you're not going to lose your market value because of the stranded assets, the oil and coal that has to be left in the ground because we can't afford to burn it.

AMY GOODMAN: Scott Wallace, you live half your time in South Africa. You know Desmond Tutu well. Talk about the other aspects, dimensions of this movement, the moral dimensions, the comparisons to the divestment movement in South Africa.

SCOTT WALLACE: Well, as Archbishop Tutu points out in his statement that was released a couple of days ago—and you can find this on the website divestinvest.org—he looks at this as the human rights challenge of our time. And from living in Africa for the last 10 years, we see that the consequences of global warming are visited on the

people who have the least to do with creating it—the poorest, the most vulnerable in the low-lying areas without the homes that are strong enough to resist the flooding, and the people who don't have the money to deal with the drought and the famine that comes with global warming. And that's Desmond Tutu's concern. This is a practice of the developed world which is visited upon the less-developed world.

AMY GOODMAN: The [headline](#) of *The New York Times* today, and it was, you know, about 12 hours the front piece of their website, "Heirs to an Oil Fortune Join the Divestment Drive." It begins: "John D. Rockefeller built a vast fortune on oil. Now his heirs are abandoning fossil fuels." Of course, the significance—ExxonMobil, direct descendent of John D. Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company—of the Rockefeller family pulling out of fossil fuels?

SCOTT WALLACE: It's huge. I mean, it gets fantastic attention. It's the definition of irony, to have Standard Oil, Exxon, the heirs now saying, "We've got to move on." And they can, if they would transition to clean energy sources. And as I say, they are becoming competitive in pricing, so I don't know why—BP used to say they were "Beyond Petroleum." And they haven't acted on that. But I think the point of this movement is to issue a challenge to the companies, and as Archbishop Tutu talks about, we should have some accountability from those companies for the harm that they're doing.

AMY GOODMAN: The significance just learning today that Tom Steyer is going to divest? I believe he was marching in the people's march yesterday.

SCOTT WALLACE: Yeah, he is our Koch brother. He is the leader of the billionaire movement to try to push back against what the Koch brothers are doing. And I think many people have talked about the flow of money, of oil money, into elections, and of corporate money. And he is right, and Bobby Kennedy is right. We've got to—

AMY GOODMAN: He runs a major hedge fund, Steyer.

SCOTT WALLACE: He runs a hedge fund. I think he has completely gotten out of the hedge fund, but he now runs this movement, this movement that invests in politicians that are going to make a pledge to do something about climate change.

AMY GOODMAN: This is NextGen.

SCOTT WALLACE: Called NextGen—I think it's Climate Solutions. And he is making a huge difference. He's trying to inject an electoral politics angle into this movement.

AMY GOODMAN: So, finally, the issue of foundations actually making money off of divestment. What are the kinds of companies that you are investing in or areas that you're investing in, as you pull out your full investment from fossil fuels? And when you say fossil fuels, you're talking coal?

SCOTT WALLACE: Coal, oil and natural gas, fracking—the whole works, anything that comes from fossils. And investing in solar, wind, biomass. You can buy shares in Tesla Corporation. I mean, it's the *Motor Trend* Car of the Year. You can make a lot of nice

money off the clean energy solutions. And I think what's so magical about this movement is that it's led by ordinary people. It's led by the students who were out there marching yesterday. Everybody who owns a 401(k), a pension fund, who is an alumnus of a university that writes a check occasionally, who has any sort of mutual fund investment, you can go to your advisers, you can go to your fund and say, "I want out of the dirty stuff. I want you to set up a clean energy fund. I want a vehicle where I can express my values consistent with my financial goals." Everybody can put that kind of pressure. And I love that the students, the kids, are getting so engaged in this.

AMY GOODMAN: Well, Scott Wallace, I want to thank you very much for being with us, co-chair of the Wallace Global Fund, which has coordinated the Divest-Invest effort to recruit foundations to divest. He is also the grandson of Henry Wallace, who served as vice president for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and ran for president himself in 1948.