

Statements to the Biden Administration and World Leaders on the Eve of Biden’s Climate Summit, From Ohio State Students Studying Religion and Environmental Values in America:



Eric Anderson:

Many people speak about environmental issues, but very little actually take action. For me, protecting the environment means changing my own personal actions. I try to practice discipline over what I consume and use. I do these things because I want to be able to protect the earth’s natural state. **Growing up spending much of my time in nature, I want others to be able to get the same happiness from our planet that I did.** I change my actions not only for myself, but for my impact and influence on others.

Hayley Bostelman:

In today’s growing environmental crisis involving increases of pollution and the warming of our planet, we are in a real need for a unified front to begin fixing the issues. This unified front isn’t going to happen overnight and will only happen once all people are educated on exactly the issues we face. All people deserve to know the consequences of pollution and of climate change. All people deserve to know how these consequences affect us all, but especially affect the poor even more. As a country, we need to acknowledge the environmental issues we face, and we need to bridge the educational gap that is evident between the

everyday person and the environmentally educated. Only then will we see a unified front, and then maybe we can start fixing the problems that we have caused.

Sam Buehler:

We are facing so much loss, and so much of it is fading away unseen and unheard. This loss is devastating and demands recognition and action. It is crucial that accountability is held to those that have caused and continue to cause climate change. We must help those that are already facing the impacts of climate change while limiting our warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. **Eighty percent of the world's biodiversity is cared for by indigenous populations. These voices must be heard, respected, and represented in how we address climate change.** We are out of time, and we must face the problems we have created equitably and quickly before it is too late.

Norman Chan:

"We are all human." This short sentence meant a lot to me as a minority growing up in white school system. Seeing the prejudice against minorities struck me deeply. It seemed so unfair that we were treated so differently because we did not look the same. After reading so many different religious organization's climate change statements I was shocked to see so many discussed the need to protect the poorer communities. This was the first time I had seen a similarity in so many different organizations that discussed the needs of smaller groups. I think it is easy to forget that everyone is human, regardless of race, gender, or income, and only think of who to help based on usefulness to those in control. I think that environmental justice must be continued to be fought for. It is also important to amplify the voices of the minorities calling for environmental justice without drowning them out with our own. **We are all human, and everyone deserves to have the same care and protection against environmental issues.**

Cade Cushman:

I'm Cade, I'm 20 years old, and I study environmental policy at Ohio State University. Having been signed by nearly every country on Earth, the Paris Agreement is the world's current best hope to driving down global emissions in future decades. **Global climate change is the greatest threat humanity has ever faced, and the future is currently in our hands to decide.** I fear that I won't be able to enjoy a long life under extreme heat and severe weather, and I feel empathy for those less fortunate than me who are already losing their homes as a result of rising sea levels. **Above all, I think about how history books centuries from now will judge us for our addiction to fossil fuels, when we were gravely warned of the implications of our actions but chose the economy over science, our future, and our planet.** We are in a crucial window of opportunity right now where we can stop polluting our planet and reverse the damages we have already inflicted. Shifting toward clean energy may be expensive now, but just imagine the economic and human costs we'll face tomorrow if we do nothing. **The time to act is now, and it will take nothing less than a collective effort from every nation on Earth to change the bleak prognosis for future generations.**

Hanna Dilik:

By 2050 there will be approximately 200 million climate refugees. This means 200 million people will be displaced or forced from their homes because of sea-level rise, shoreline

erosion, coastal flooding, drought, water scarcity, agricultural disruption, earthquakes, and hurricanes to name a few. The majority of climate refugees are not high or middle class but are instead the overlooked impoverished class. These communities are vulnerable to adverse climate impacts because corporate America thinks it's justifiable to place hazardous waste facilities, incinerators, and other toxic sites in these communities. They believe their monetary and hierarchical status makes them less likely to fight back. Therefore, I'm imploring you to fight back for them. I'm imploring you to protect these vulnerable communities from the impact of climate change that they are not causing but you are causing by letting these corporations continue to run efficiently. We can't save the planet if the poor can't benefit from the same clean energy that you do. Help the communities that are the dumping grounds for corporate America.

Jacob Dunn:

Some of us are lucky to not yet have to feel the effects of climate change. Some of us have access to food, water, and shelter and will continue to for years to come. Others aren't as lucky. **It is important that we take action on climate change now, not only to protect our future self, but to protect the lives of people today.**

Kate Eaton:

My generation will be living amid the crisis that our predecessors created. We will no longer read warnings about coastal land loss, food scarcity, extreme weather events, mass extinctions, and unbreathable air; we will be living through these disasters. When global leaders treat climate summits as theatrical performances, and only make empty promises about "net-zero" they are meddling with the future security of billions. May the well being of global humanity rest on your shoulders.

Preston Fischer:

Statement to the world leaders: Hello all, **as a huge lover of wildlife and the natural environment, there is nothing I see more important than ensuring that the forests, rivers, lakes, prairies, and all wildlife that exists within will forever have a clean home to live in. Please do whatever you can to protect these beings and their environment so that my children will one day be able to marvel at the same creatures as myself.**

Maxly Gasca:

The Golden Rule. Treat others how you want to be treated. This statement is very unassuming, but at its core it has many connections to spirituality and the environment, for it calls one to not just be sympathetic of another's well-being, but to also be empathetic and consider why enacting a certain action could potentially do more harm than good. Treat others how you want to be treated. **Who is the other, or rather what is it? If we raise this question from a spiritual standpoint, the other is all creation. Your brother, sister, mother, father, friend, stranger, pet, animal, land, water, and sky. All of it. Treat all creation how you want to be treated.** You would not wish to be abused, forced to inhale toxic chemicals, forced to drink contaminated water, have mountains of trash thrown upon you, and be forced to be patient for a change to occur. No, to endure all those toxins,

pollution, and degradation and be forced to be compliant. It does not make sense. Treat all creation how you want to be treated. So, I call upon you, our leaders of this world, that while you are discussing the fate of our planet to remember the golden rule and how it is not fit nor reasonable to be patient for change when so much damage has already occurred.

Briar Golladay:

Across the world today, even in highly developed countries like the United States, it is difficult for the average person to live sustainably, and nearly impossible for a lower-income person to. Even as a student going to one of the largest colleges in the country, I find it difficult to live a sustainable life. Every day, I am forced to throw out plastic waste from grocery shopping, since almost every item in the store is wrapped in plastic. Wrapping these items in plastic forces people who just need to buy food to feed themselves and their families to perpetuate the environmental injustice experienced by those who have to deal with our plastic waste and the byproducts of its production. **I believe one of the best things we can do to prevent waste is to make sustainability the norm for the average person, instead of a nearly impossible goal to strive for.** One way to start is to strongly encourage companies to stop packaging all of their products in plastic. This is an important first step in reducing the impact of our waste on those who have to deal with its aftermath.

Hannah Graf:

All people deserve to have the right to clean energy sources. Humans are all created equal and deserve equal rights and the rights to better resources for the environment. Currently, with the state of the United States, this is not possible with the continuous sinjustice that continues to occur. **Poor communities are being taken advantage of and not being given the proper resources to even survive.** Drinking water is necessary for survival, yet there are still people in Flint, Michigan who do not have access to this resource. In order for there to be progress with environmentally clean resources, like renewable energy, there needs to be attention and help brought to these communities who need drinkable water. And once that occurs, renewable energies like solar energy need to be more widely available to all communities of people at a lower cost or incentive. Solar energy is accessible to only those who can pay for it, yet it would be most beneficial to those who do not have the money to make this switch. With help from the Biden administration and clean energy organizations, this could be made possible and we as people can make steps towards a greener future.

Garrett Hruby:

Climate change is a very serious problem that us, humans are being faced with throughout the world. This dramatic change in weather, poor air quality, and warmer temperatures are causing major problems. **Climate change is not a brand new issue due to the fact that scientists have studied it for decades. However, numerous politicians have neglected to address this issue. I am here today to ask for you to make a stand to address this problem.** I firmly believe that there needs to be a dramatic change from gas powered vehicles to electric vehicles due to the amount of emissions that are released into our atmosphere. Personally, I believe climate change is a very serious issue which if we do not make a stand, it may kill off all of life on earth.

Rachel Isaacs:

Addressing climate change and environmental injustice is the most important battle of our lives because it isn't one we're fighting entirely for ourselves. We owe it to those who will bear the greatest consequences for our collective destruction, and these people will be our children and the communities that are disproportionately impacted due to deeply rooted oppression in America. **We need to fight now, for the people of the future and for those who have not been given the opportunity to fight for themselves, so that they can have a future to fight for as well.**

Kira Jones:

To the members of the Leaders Summit on Climate, as you sit together discussing the future of environmental legislation, I would like to remind you all that the process of addressing climate change is about so much more than statistics and dollar signs. With the privilege and power you possess as world leaders, there is potential in the decisions you make throughout this conference, however, the possibility of creating truly equitable and sustainable solutions is only possible through the prioritization of the needs and actions of the communities that are forced to live with and through the consequences of climate change every single day. Because of this, **I, a young Black woman who has seen first hand the effects of systemic environmental racism within America, am asking you to recognize and uplift the voices, stories, and experiences of the Black, Brown, Indigenous, Poor, and young activists that are leading the movement of creating greener and healthier communities. There is power in empathy, conversation, and creating space to listen to and recognize experiences that are different than your own, with the future of the wellness and safety of our communities and the natural environment at stake, it's no longer enough for you to offer us a seat at the table, but rather, it's time for you to recognize our work and follow the lead of the community leaders and grassroots organizations that are fighting for the future of our shared earth.**

Grace Keller:

From a quick google search, I was able to see that **each world leader invited to this summit is religiously affiliated. With following a certain religion, you follow the values, morals, and responsibilities that come with that faith.** Religion highlights the most beautiful parts of life; but it is a life we cannot continue to live as normal. The state of our planet requires change on a global scale. The narrative cannot anymore be shifted onto individual actions. **We must come together and provide concrete solutions to climate change through massive policy reform. I should not have to wonder what my future will look like.** What world I am still growing up in, and what world my children might grow up in. **I should not have to ask world leaders to care about the planet, just as students my age have been begging the same question for over 50 years. But here I am, asking--begging-- for you to take the shared values, morals, and responsibilities each person reading this holds, and care.**

Valerie Kronson:

Dear Leaders, The people of the world look to you to make change. For decades, we have demanded change for the sake of our planet and for ourselves, which has fallen on deaf ears. You hold the power to reform policy and demolish the foundation of pollution and corruption

that our nations have perpetuated for so long. This Earth belongs to everyone, and everyone belongs to the Earth. When you are no longer in a seat of power, me and my family will remember the decisions you've made and the way they impacted us. Your legacy lives in the actions you take now. **Greedy corporations will try to sway you with money, but you can't buy a legacy. Companies that corrupt your voice are not invisible to us; we see the ways they are killing entire communities with drought, cancer, and famine.** Wars over land, water, and clean air will be rampant within the century because of climate change and pollution. Wars within our own communities are present now over jobs, drugs, and money for healthcare. **We are not stupid, and we rely on you for help. Please help slow climate change, create opportunities for less fortunate communities, and break the cycle of poverty and pollution for so many people in this world. Thank you.**

Jordan Lambert:

In reference to the economic benefits of climate action: You say that this will create a better job market for those areas in need, but what about places like Michigan and West Virginia? Places that built this country. A country that up until now was built on oil and fossil fuels. As an environmentalist, I understand the need for an upgraded energy system, whether that be electric, solar, wind, etc., but we must stop abandoning our own people at the very heart of our country. What is your plan to boost the economy in these forgotten about places and how will you implement said plans?

Alexander Larzelere:

To the Biden Administration and World Leaders: How will you be remembered? What you do to impact climate change and the ecological crisis we face now will be your legacy for future generations. When we look back at this summit in the next 5, 10, 20 years and so on what you do in this moment in time will have lasting impacts on our world. We can no longer overlook the environmental problems we are facing. Many people are comfortable with the life they live without giving others a second thought. Poorer nations and demographics are suffering due to this. This happens globally and it is not okay that some live comfortably without any consequences for the environmental problems they cause while those who do not cause them are the ones suffering from them most. **It is time to act and for those in charge to step up and be real leaders.** The comfortable need to be made uncomfortable by what is happening surrounding the ecological crisis we are facing. It is only when we are uncomfortable when real change can occur. The fight to save and protect our planet and those on it is not political. **The United States spends \$686 billion annually on national defense but only give a budget of \$8 billion to the EPA. It is time we all reevaluate our priorities and step up to save our planet. We still have time to act but the window is closing. Now is the time, if we truly want a better tomorrow for future generations something needs to be done now.**

Meredith Light:

Environmental injustice is happening all around us. There are populations, usually poor communities of color, with unequal access to clean air, water, and food. These populations simultaneously experience the most strain of environmental degradation. **There needs to be policy put in place that not only holds major corporations accountable, but also protects the**

most vulnerable populations from climate change. I see the effort that world climate leaders are putting in, but this effort needs to be made into action to save our home and shelter our neighbors.

Matthew Lincicome:

Climate change and environmental damage is an issue on a catastrophic scale that affects each and every individual on this planet. Damage to the environment such as the dumping of hazardous waste into both water and land are becoming more regulated, but many aspects of this damage are still lacking in management and regulations. One big example of this is scrapyards, which are largely unregulated compared to landfills, despite the prevalence of large amounts hazardous waste leaching into the environment from them being just as damaging. **Industries currently are willing to pay fines to the EPA instead of fixing their negative impacts on the environment, encouraging them to continue to do so here in America and abroad. The fines should be further compounded on each infraction for consecutive negligence until resolve is met. If resolve cannot be met, industries should be dismantled and barred from further production on a larger scale until changes in production take into account the impact created on the environment, people, and wildlife who utilize this environment.**

Evan Lindsey:

It is encouraging to see the Biden administration rejoin the Paris Climate Accord, however it is a useless gesture unless significant revisions are made to the Accord and the goals of the 148 countries that pledged to reduce carbon emissions by 2030. As the world's second largest carbon contributor, the United States must set an example for other nations to follow; and this begins with recognizing that the future of our world depends on the decisions made now. The Biden administration must push the world's leaders to strengthen their countries carbon emission reduction goals based on the recommendations of an international panel of scientists. **The Biden administration must further work with the United Nations to grant the Paris Climate Accord the power to ensure countries are held legally accountable for meeting their carbon emission pledges, despite their sovereignty.**

John Narouze:

I don't know what I could say that hasn't been said by professionals for decades. My why is because I can at least say I did something to take care of our resources that have provided me with so much.

Maura O'Connor:

As a college student, I look out into the world and am told I am the future. My voice wants to be heard; the world is ready for new leaders! But what if there is no future? What my generation fears is that it might already be too late, that the environment might not be able to recover. What we must instead rely on is hope; hope that our leaders are doing all that they can do in order to better the environment as stewards of God, that the worlds vulnerable are being taken care of in the face of pollution, and that businesses partner with the environment rather than fight it. Reading from Socrates, "An unexamined life is not worth living"; I hope that

as leaders from around the globe meet an open and reflective dialogue is able to ensue for the sake of our world today and tomorrow.

Rohith Paidikondala:

When you care for the planet, you care for everyone. It may seem daunting now, but doing a little now will go a long way. **Taking action now will inspire my generation to want to take action, and pass this love for the planet on to future generations.**

Sydni Porter:

Oftentimes, climate change and its impacts are discussed in terms of the future. We set lofty goals to give ourselves time to adjust the course we're on, to solve the problems we've created for ourselves. The issue is, we're out of time. Climate change isn't some far out problem for the next generation, it's impacting us and our communities, families, people, today. We cannot keep waiting to invest in our people, in our environment. Our people need help, and not in 2035 with lofty carbon neutral goals. We need tangible changes, today.

Jordan Raudins:

The climate crisis is a problem of such magnitude that it demands a solution beyond the reaches of the average citizen. Yet it is the average, more unfortunate, citizen that is hurt most by climate impacts. That being said, climate justice is not just about the earth. It is about the life the earth sustains and how that quality of life is impacted, how it is threatened. It is about how injustices brought against the environment are injustices brought against us all. The ones brought against the children exposed to toxins and the coral reefs facing complete destruction. This is an issue that cannot be put off anymore. **The people are counting on their leaders to advocate for them, for their lives, and every second where climate action is not taken is one where any chance of reversing the damage climate change has caused gets further out of reach. Climate action is not a matter of if, it is a matter of when. When do the earth and its inhabitants finally come first? Will it be today or will it be too late?**

Beyla Richman:

Joe Biden: The lack of tangible change and impact on global warming is killing the American people every day. If you believe America stands for equality, making strides towards mitigating the effects of the climate crisis is so important. By not taking immediate steps towards facing this struggle, we as a society are saying that we are okay with the impacts the environment has on low-income communities, especially those of color. If you believe in equality for all and not just for some, make this a priority.

Ethan Shun:

Over the past decade we seen a tremendous increase in carbon in our atmosphere. With that, we have had more natural disasters, warmer oceans, a rising sea, and millions displaced. **I want to have hope for our future, but as every climate summit passes my hope fades. I urge world leaders to give me hope again. We are not just in an environmental crisis, but a human crisis. We need to heal our relationships with each other and then, this small, blue marble that we share.**

Monica Stevenson:

With great power, comes great responsibility. Throughout history, powerful nations have been considered custodians of the international system. **The United States is now the most powerful country on earth, and as a result, it has a moral responsibility to aid vulnerable populations that are most affected by climate change.** It is not a secret that industrialized countries, such as this one are the largest contributors of greenhouse gas emissions; yet, it is developing countries the ones that are more heavily impacted by the climate crisis. While we enjoy the benefits of the commodification of nature, we are destroying habitats and displacing people from their land. Our obsession with consumption has blinded us to the social inequalities that have resulted from a globalized market. It is a matter of justice to aid impoverished and developing countries because they have provided us with the raw materials and labor for our commodities. We owe them our progress and our cooperation. **It is time for the United States to rise to the challenge** and protect vulnerable populations from the environmental crisis. It is only by recognizing the interconnectedness of our natural and financial systems that we are going to cease seeing developing countries as “the other” and start working on a cosmopolitan approach where the worth of someone’s life is not determined by state boundaries.

Katelyn Stickney:

We need action regarding our environmental impact on the world and there is no better time to push for change than now. **For years scientists and environmental groups have been pushing for change and no one has been listening, but I feel like now we have a chance to start moving in the right direction. We need to make these changes now because we do not have time to keep pushing this issue further down the line.** We have a responsibility to care for our environment and do what we can to protect it from further damage.

Jessica Thow:

We are living in a time where a person as young as me has gone through many life changing events through my life. I have had the misfortune of experiencing a lot of “hottest” and “coldest” days on record as well as many major hurricanes hitting the Gulf of Mexico this year alone. **Climate change has come to impact many religions, socio-economic statuses, and careers.** Many students no longer are able to go into environmental careers as there is no way to tell if there will be marine life to study or forests to save in the near future due to the state of our climate crisis. If we do not act now we may end up losing our planet due to our own acts; **I believe religions provide a way for us to unite people across the globe and across multiple cultures in the fight to protect our environment.**

Liz Vukovic:

The effects of our ecological crisis have already harmed our most vulnerable neighbors. Farmers’ crops are failing due to droughts, jobs in the fossil fuel industry are dwindling as resources are depleted, and children do not have clean water to drink. **When we look at the hardships that members of our human community face and think “Oh, that’s terrible. Someone should help them. Someone should do something,” we must remember that we are all someone, and we can all do something.** It is not enough to know the pain one is going

through. It is not enough to feel for those who are hurting. It is not enough to move recklessly through this world, hoping that our choices are right. **Justice lies at the intersection of knowledge, empathy, and action. We have gained the knowledge and extended the empathy for decades. The only thing left is our most urgent challenge: act.**

Sydni Ward:

Everyone deserves to be treated equally. Whether that is within education, housing, speech or for the purpose of the Summit, within the environment. Those that are living in poverty are vulnerable to be affected by climate change. This is not equal. As leaders, I think the focus should be to not only focus on the impacts of climate change but more importantly who it impacts. These communities are in the position they are in because of many reasons, the main reason being city zoning. **If the focus was more on the people and not completely on eliminating climate change, we would be able to both protect vulnerable communities from climate change as well as slow down climate change and possibly reach the goal of being net zero by 2050.**

Anonymous:

It is important that world leaders make global climate action a priority because it is in the best interest of all people. The lives and livelihoods of vulnerable communities rely on international intervention to alleviate the effects of climate change. Additionally, without significant efforts to slow the progression of climate change, the future will be characterized by extreme weather and an increase in natural disasters, more difficult food production, and the extinctions of millions of plant and animal species. **Every region of the world will feel the impacts of climate change and it is world leaders who have the capacity and responsibility to fight these injustices.**