



La Lucha Sigue

Why Climate Justice Matters to San Antonio

Greg Harman

Last year, San Antonio joined hundreds of cities around the country determined to improve the health and security of their families by supporting the values given expression in the Paris climate agreement.

But why should the people of San Antonio care about an international agreement hammered out a world away? What brought more than 40 organizations together to press our demand for climate solidarity? Was this a blip? Just one more display of anti-Trumpism?

The formation of a continuing coalition—dedicated to realizing climate justice in San Antonio—suggests not.

Just like the Paris agreement itself, now joined by every nation on earth except the United States, our new coalition, Climate Action SA, is about much more than just the reduction of greenhouse gas pollution; it is more than simply a call for a technological switch to clean energy.

This is a movement that recognizes the crisis we are in globally and also the historical violence we are exposed to here in our neighborhoods right now—the brutal legacies of colonialism,

racism, and gender—and identity-based exclusion—as well as the gathering risks from extreme weather.

We want recognition that those who have the least ability to respond to sweltering heat waves, punishing storms, and other growing natural disasters be prioritized in a plan now being prepared by the City of San Antonio, CPS Energy, and University of Texas at San Antonio to reduce our contribution to the greenhouse pollution and prepare communities to better survive climate shocks.

And where it comes to plan development, communities should be treated as equal partners in the process.

In other words, the climate justice movement is one that pairs the historic struggles of civil rights with a call for environmental justice and restoration of right relationships, both between one another and between ourselves and the rest of the planet.

As Robert Bullard, considered the father of environmental justice, says:

“Climate change is more than parts per million and carbon; it’s also about justice. Climate change is a human rights issue.”

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Just as we are moved as human beings to respond to the extinction crisis now eradicating plants and animals species at a pace the earth has not seen since the demise of the dinosaurs. Just as we are moved by the destruction of the forests and coral reefs, the lungs of our mother earth, la tierra madre. We also recognize and seek to address the patterns of social and political discrimination that place the burden of climate chaos on those least able to withstand it.

When it comes to extreme heat waves, for instance, we know that a one degree of additional heat experienced in leafier areas of the city, such as the Northwest and North sides, could result in five or six degrees added heat in highly paved and denuded areas of the near Westside.

In addition, we also stand with the First Nations, the original caretakers of this land who have not stopped advocating for their rights while generously offering a vision of right relationship with the earth. We reject the suffering of those millions who are forced from their homes by extreme weather and withered crops and economic injustice, only to be criminalized and jailed when they seek refuge across borders.

vancing their interests—particularly those most at threat from rising temperatures and extreme weather—and to put our city on a path to 100-percent renewable power.

We won on both points. San Antonio also won as a result. The same day Mayor Ron Nirenberg signed a resolution to



stand for the principles of the Paris Agreement, CPS Energy announced it was giving University of Texas at San Antonio \$500,000 to develop a Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP). The scope of this work will move far beyond navigating a transition from coal, gas, and nuclear power to solar, wind, geothermal and battery storage. Just like the earlier Sustainability Plan, the work is expected to treat housing, mass transportation, parks and recreation, downtown development, and much more.

It is on these points that we bring—as city leaders themselves promise to promote—a demand for equity each step of the way.

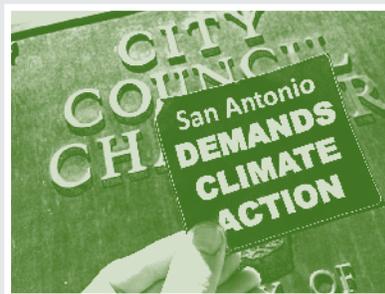
We are not calling on our city leaders to merely meet the emissions reductions President Obama committed to. They are not enough to prevent catastrophic levels of climate disruption this century anyway. What we want is justice in this transition.

The Paris Agreement is at its core also a justice document. It interprets climate action as a matter of “human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”

That is the Paris agreement we support.

That is the heart of a San Antonio climate action and adaptation plan we demand.

Bio: Greg Harman, an independent award-winning journalist based in San Antonio, was formerly an editor and staff writer at the San Antonio Current. His writings on the environment have appeared in major publications throughout Texas and beyond.



But our anger over these deep and long-standing abuses is also grounded in love.

Last summer, in the midst of a mayoral runoff election, our coalition joined together to reject Donald Trump’s misguided decision to walk away from the historic Paris Agreement and committed ourselves to working together to bring to a collective stop to these practices and slow the now-rapid warming of the earth.

We demanded:

1. **Our mayor join their colleagues in Houston, Dallas, and Austin—and hundreds of their colleagues from around the country—in committing to adopt, honor, and uphold the the goals enshrined in the Paris Agreement.**
2. **Our mayor and city council commit to funding and helping develop a community-led Climate Action Plan that works w/ our residents, ad-**

The Climate Action & Adaptation Plan (CAAP)

being led by UTSA, the City of San Antonio, and CPS Energy has been slow to get rolling. Funded in June, 2017, and announced to a packed auditorium in December, 2017, it was only in February, 2018, that the plans for community engagement were shared in a public forum. Of course, Climate Action SA members, including the Esperanza Peace & Justice Center, have been working behind the scenes, to make sure justice and inclusion remain the bedrock of this process and not just a talking point.

Specific to the process of informing our communities about the challenges posed by climate disruption and tapping into grassroots leadership to craft solutions within the CAAP, we must:

- Treat community organizations working for climate justice as equal partners.
- Reach the public through existing local social justice organizations and experienced and trusted organizers.
- Draw on multiple sources of funding to fuel this engagement, including CPS Energy, COSA mid-year budget adjustments, local foundations, among others.
- Increase the budgets of both the sustainability and health departments for ongoing community work.
- Not stop with the completion of this plan—or even its ultimate adoption. The pressures of a rapidly warming planet are expected to accelerate. So must our labors together.



Climate Action SA

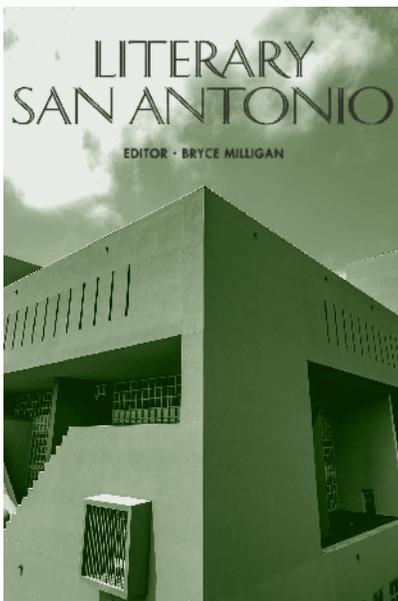
Working members:

Esperanza Peace & Justice Center; Public Citizen, Texas; Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance; Texas Victory Project; Our Revolution San Antonio; William C. Velasquez Institute; Sierra Club, Alamo Group; South-Central Partnership for Energy Efficiency as a Resource (SPEER); Vecinos de Mission Trails; Bexar County Green Party; San Antonio Progressive Alliance; Environmental Defense Fund; Lone Star Chapter of the Sierra Club; Imagine San Antonio; Ignition Green; Moms Clean Air Force; SustainableSA.com; Politiqueers; Deceleration.news

Supporting organizations:

Citizen's Climate Lobby-SA; San Antonio Interfaith Environmental Network (SAIEN); Native Plant Society of Texas, SA Chapter; American Indians in Texas at the Spanish Colonial Missions; Martinez Street Women's Center; Deceleration.news; Texas Drought Project; Society of Native Nations; Build San Antonio Green; Bexar County Young Democrats; Bexar County Democratic Party; Southwest Workers Union; Stone in the Stream/Roca en el Rio; Greater Faith Institutional Church

Contact: climateactionsa.com



Literary San Antonio

is a collection of writing about San Antonio, by San Antonio poets, fiction writers, playwrights, journalists, historians, political writers, and 18th and 19th century travelers. It covers three centuries of writing done in this place from Zebulon Pike, Madam Candelaria and Emma Tenayuca to Naomi Shihab Nye, Sterling Houston, Sandra Cisneros and many, many more including an historical introduction by Bryce Milligan.

San Antonio is often described as the “mother” of Texas cities—the oldest and, for two and a half centuries, the largest city in Texas. To many it is, as novelist Larry McMurtry once

famously proclaimed, “the one truly lovely city in the state.”

Here the Mexican Revolution was called into being, and here were the political and literary origins of the Chicano Movement. *Literary San Antonio* provides dozens of examples of the interplay and cross-pollination of Anglo and Latino literary forms, ideas, and traditions that led to the creation of a unique borderlands or fronteraliterature.

As San Antonio celebrates its tricentennial, this is a must-have book! —*La Voz*
Published by TCU Press. Available for advance purchase at WingsPress.com

Literary San Antonio documents the complex and reciprocal interaction of Tejano and Anglo writers. It records how they have maintained and renovated their particular literary traditions while sustaining a diverse bi-cultural heritage. This compelling and powerful anthology provides a historic and social context for understanding the enduring and enchanting allure of San Antonio. A break-through, foundational and necessary book.

—Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, Ph.D.
Independent Scholar of Latino Arts and Culture

Bryce Milligan offers us a guiding thread for a profound journey celebrating this place. We are led from sacred pre-Columbian song to the Missions, the Mexican Revolution, the Chicano Movement, and our own time, each voice a note in the literary music of a great transcultural city. This book is who we have been in the place we love. It also points the way to who we may yet become. ¡Adelante!

—Rosemary Catacalos, *2013 Texas Poet Laureate*
Author of Again for the First Time and Begin Here