

Seen Any Bad Movies Lately?



By Andrew Christie, Chapter Director

I'm not the first person to make this observation, but it really is something I'd love to see put in the form of a question that somebody really should ask Michael Moore:

Mr. Moore, how is it that you supported Bernie Sanders' presidential campaign, a campaign which prominently featured a pledge to take the country to 100% clean, renewable energy, but you are now the executive producer and biggest booster of a film that roundly disses that same goal, any efforts to achieve it, and the organizations and individuals working toward that end?

“Planet of the Humans” is riddled with inaccuracies, distortions and outright falsehoods about clean energy, climate activism and the Sierra Club. The film makers chose not to contact our national

office, or even do a simple search for our [recent statements](#) or [editorials](#) on basic policy issues. The Sierra Club's advocacy for a 100% clean energy economy aligns with our 127-year-old mission to explore, enjoy, and protect the planet, and we are committed to seeing it through.

The response to the film from people who know whereof they speak when it comes to both clean energy and climate change has been swift and devastating. Here's [Leah C. Stokes](#), from “Michael Moore produced a film about climate change that's a gift to Big Oil” on Vox:

“One of the film's main theses is that the climate movement is captured by corporations. The evidence for this assertion? The Union of Concerned Scientists' support for electric vehicles. And Sierra Club's promotion of solar. And the fact that 350.org has received funding from environmental foundations. I fail to see how any of these facts are problematic.

“If the corporate capture of the environmental movement is the problem, it's puzzling why the film has almost nothing to say about corporations themselves. You know, the [fossil fuel companies](#) and [electric utilities](#) that lied about climate science for 30 years? The climate denial campaign is not mentioned. Instead, the film denigrates the crucial work of the Sierra Club's [Beyond Coal](#) campaign. Led by Mary Anne Hitt, this program helped stop the construction of 200 coal plants, and successfully pushed for the retirement of 300 others. Rather than recognizing the Sierra Club's achievement, the filmmakers falsely attribute the [growth in natural gas](#) to Beyond Coal. Alas, environmental groups are not in charge of planning new power plants: if they were, we would have a lot less fossil electricity. Utilities propose power plants to regulators,

who approve them. Over the past decade, electric utilities have proposed [an enormous amount](#) of new gas facilities, which groups like the Sierra Club have [opposed](#).”

Planet of the Humans has also been debunked by:

- [Scott Johnson in ArsTechnica](#)
- [Michael Mann in Newsweek](#)
- [Ketan Joshi, blog post](#)
- [Shannon Osaka in Grist](#)
- [Dale, the Solar Nerd](#)
- [American Wind Energy Association](#)
- [Josh Fox in the Nation](#)
- [Cathy Cowan Becker in Medium](#)
- [Dan Gearino in InsideClimate News](#)
- [Paul Gipe at Wind Works](#)
- [Graham Readfearn in the Guardian](#)
- [Tom Athanasiou in EcoEquity](#)
- [Dana Nuccetelli in Yale Climate Connections](#)
- [Julian González on LinkedIn](#)
- [Mark Deisendorf in RenewEconomy](#)

...and Michael Moore’s former fact-checker, to name a few

You can read the apology for Planet of the Humans by its distributor [here](#).

And, of course, you can read hosanas of praise on every climate denial and alt-right website on the web.

Climate journalist Emily Atkin summed it up: “Planet of the Humans reminded me more of an argumentative essay from a lazy college freshman—as if, after a few hours of studying, he realized there wasn’t enough evidence to support the argument he chose for the assignment. But he was so wedded to the original idea and didn’t want to waste the hours of work he did, so he over-compensated by being an overly aggressive

narrator instead of starting over with a new argument.”

I would add that “Planet” promotes the notion that the flow of history is best apprehended in the form of a Polaroid picture, or that you can look at a frame of film and claim you’ve seen the movie.

Case in point: Yes, Bill McKibben once said, eleven years ago, that burning wood chips (biomass), a timber industry byproduct, in combination with reforestation, seemed like a good way to achieve carbon reduction goals. So did a lot of scientists. Scientists continued to examine the process, and better research produced better models, showing that this was, in fact, not a good idea at all. McKibben accordingly changed his mind and has opposed biomass for years, but “Planet” has a thesis to flog which requires that it stay put in 2009 and insist the McKibben stay there, too. (Placing a statement in the end credits stating that McKibben supported biomass burning until just before the film came out – with the implication that he heard he was not going to look good so he quickly changed his position – is, as McKibben has pointed out, not just bad journalism, it’s an act of bad faith; a demonstrable lie by the filmmakers.)

Defenders of the film claim it’s saying something vital and important by pointing out that bringing more renewable energy on line, *by itself*, won’t serve to curb the climate crisis or alter the economic status quo of exploitation and inequality that got us into this mess.

Yes, we know. That’s why we support [the Green New Deal](#).

Hopefully, so does Michael Moore. But it’s hard to tell.