

Community for Change

Category: Code Red: Our Changing Climate
written by Ronna L. Edelstein | October 1, 2021

I confess that I am guilty of the sin of silence. I watched my neighbors spend every Sunday holding Black Lives Matter signs to remind drivers of the racism that pervades the country, but I never joined in. The largest mass killing of Jewish Americans occurred in my city's synagogue, yet the night after the shooting, when residents of all faiths gathered to remember the fallen and protest anti-Semitism, I remained in my apartment. I am silent because I do not think I can change systemic racism and prejudice, but I should raise my voice to address climate change because I believe it is possible to save the environment.

I tend to blame Mother Nature for our current climate crisis. Her wildfires consume the western section of our country, and her hurricanes and floods inundate the southern and eastern parts; she inflicts unnaturally extreme temperatures across the global community. I blame her, but I know that we humans share responsibility for climate change. We pollute the air, leading to people wearing masks even before the virus; we destroy rainforests and their wildlife. We toss lit cigarettes into grassy areas, refuse to support infrastructure bills that will enact programs to reduce littering and our reliance on pollutants that dirty our air and water, and we drive instead of walk to nearby destinations. By focusing only on ourselves and getting through the day, we remain oblivious to the reality that our children and grandchildren will struggle to survive the heinous effects of climate change.

After attending a lecture on how one person can make a difference, I did initiate changes in my life: not leaving my computer running all day; turning off the water while I brush my teeth; taking shorter showers; recycling according to the mandates of my building. However, I need to remember to bring my tote bags to the grocery store and not continue to ask the check-out person to pack my groceries in double plastic bags; I need to apply my writing skills to communicate with political representatives to encourage them to take a stand in support of the climate.

My silence shames me, but it also motivates me—to use my voice to make a difference. None of us has total control over all the choices people make, but together—as a community—we can combat climate change.

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