What’s So Funny About Climate Change?

Does Comedy Have the Chutzpah to Say What Other Media Won’t?
The Norman Lear Center
The Norman Lear Center is a nonpartisan research and public policy center that studies the social, political, economic and cultural impact of entertainment on the world. The Lear Center translates its findings into action through testimony, journalism, strategic research and innovative public outreach campaigns. On campus, from its base in the USC Annenberg School for Communication & Journalism, the Lear Center builds bridges between schools and disciplines whose faculty study aspects of entertainment, media and culture. Beyond campus, it bridges the gap between the entertainment industry and academia, and between them and the public. Through scholarship and research; through its conferences, public events and publications; and in its attempts to illuminate and repair the world, the Lear Center works to be at the forefront of discussion and practice in the field.

For more information, visit www.learcenter.org

Hollywood, Health & Society
Hollywood, Health & Society (HH&S), a program of the Norman Lear Center, provides entertainment industry professionals with accurate and timely information for storylines on health and climate change. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The California Endowment, the Grantham Foundation, ClimateWorks, Skoll Global Threats Fund, among others, HH&S recognizes the profound impact that entertainment media have on individual knowledge and behavior. HH&S supplies writers and producers with accurate health information through individual consultations, tip sheets, group briefings, a technical assistance hotline, panel discussions at the Writers Guild of America, West, a quarterly newsletter and web links to health information and public service announcements. The program also conducts extensive evaluations on the content and impact of TV health storylines.

For more information, visit www.usc.edu/hhs

To watch a video of the full panel discussion, part of the HH&S outreach to writers, click or tap here.
NORMAN LEAR has enjoyed a long career in television and film, and as a political and social activist and philanthropist. He began his television writing career in 1950, later teaming up with director Bud Yorkin to form Tandem Productions. They produced several feature films, with Norman taking on roles as executive producer, writer and director. He was nominated in 1967 for an Academy Award for his script for *Divorce American Style*. In 1970, CBS signed with Tandem to produce *All in the Family*, which ran for nine seasons and won four Emmy Awards for best comedy series as well as the Peabody Award in 1977. *All in the Family* was followed by a succession of other hit shows including *Maude*, *Sanford and Son*, *The Jeffersons*, *One Day at a Time*, *Good Times* and *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*. Concerned about the growing influence of radical religious evangelists, Mr. Lear decided to leave television in 1980 and formed People for the American Way, a nonprofit organization designed to speak out for Bill of Rights guarantees and to monitor violations of constitutional freedoms. Norman is chairman of Act III Communications, a multimedia holding company with interests in the recording, motion picture, broadcasting, publishing and licensing industries. In addition to People for the American Way, Mr. Lear has founded other nonprofit organizations, including The Norman Lear Center at the USC Annenberg School, which studies and shapes the impact of media and entertainment on society, and the Business Enterprise Trust to spotlight exemplary social innovations in American business. In 1989, he co-founded the Environmental Media Association with his wife Lyn to mobilize the entertainment industry to become more environmentally responsible. He was among the first seven television pioneers inducted into the Television Academy Hall of Fame (1984). In 2001 he and his wife bought an original copy of the Declaration of Independence and for the next 10 years toured it to all 50 states. Norman is married to Lyn Davis Lear and has six children and 4 grandchildren. His biography, “*Even This I Get to Experience*,” was released by Penguin Books in October 2014.

RORY ALBANESE, Emmy Award-winning comedy writer and former executive producer for *The Daily Show With Jon Stewart* (1999-2013) is the show runner/on-air contributor for Comedy Central’s series *The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore*, which premiered in January 2015. Currently on tour across the country with his own standup show, he has performed with Lewis Black and entertained American troops in Afghanistan. In 2010 Rory starred in his first own half-hour comedy special and was a featured performer on John Oliver’s New York Stand-Up Show. He also wrote *The Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear* special starring Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert, and co-authored *Earth The Book* with Jon Stewart and *The Daily Show* writers. Follow him on Twitter @RoryAlbanese.
CHRIS ALBERS, comedy writer/producer, has worked at Late Night With Conan O’Brien and The Tonight Show With Conan, and has written for David Letterman and Politically Incorrect With Bill Maher. He has won six Writers Guild Awards as well as an Emmy. He’s also written for Borgia as well as produced and written numerous award shows and specials, including the 2012 Comedy Awards, Film Independent Spirit Awards, Kennedy Center Honors, MTV Video Music Awards and MTV Movie Awards shows and Comic Relief. Chris is a past president of Writers Guild of America, East. He teaches a comedy-writing course at Columbia University’s Graduate Film School. Follow him on Twitter @ChrisAlbersNY.

SIDNEY HARRIS, is best known for his cartoons about science and technology. Thousands of his witty and insightful illustrations have appeared in magazines, notably over 600 in American Scientist, The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal, Harvard Business, Discover and National Lampoon, as well as textbooks and ads. He’s published more than 20 book collections of cartoons including What’s So Funny About Science?, You Want Proof? I’ll Give You Proof, and on climate change—101 Funny Things About Global Warming and There Goes the Neighborhood: Cartoons on the Environment. He was elected as a member of Sigma Xi, a scientific honor society, which created a traveling exhibit of his work. A graduate of Brooklyn College, he attended the Art Students League in New York. His website ScienceCartoonsPlus.com states: “Harris works night and day, on holidays too, trying to fill his self-imposed quota of an endless number of cartoons.”

LYN DAVIS LEAR is a social and political activist and philanthropist whose main passions are the arts and the environment with a specific focus on climate change. A native Californian, she is the president of Lyn Lear Productions, a member of the board of trustees for the Sundance Institute, and serves on the board of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She has been credited as producer and executive producer on a number of different documentaries, including Cesar’s Last Fast, which screened at the 2014 Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for the Grand Jury Prize and an Environmental Media Association Award. In 2014, she was asked by the United Nations to produce the opening ceremony for the UN Climate Summit in New York and as a result she executive produced a short film alongside Louis Schwartzberg that will open and set the tone for the summit. In 1989, while pregnant with her first child, Ms. Lear combined her driving passions for art and the environment and co-founded the Environmental Media Association (EMA), a nonprofit organization created to inspire, educate and coordinate...
responses to global environmental issues in television, films and throughout the media. Vice President Al Gore presented her with the Ongoing Commitment Award on behalf of the EMA. In 2008, Ms. Lear was given the Global Green Millennium Award for Entertainment Industry Environmental Leadership, and in 2013 she was honored alongside Vice President Gore by UCLA’s Institute of the Environment and Sustainability. Ms. Lear, who holds a license in marriage and family therapy (LMFT) and a Ph.D. in clinical psychology, is married to producer Norman Lear and is the mother of three children.

ANTHONY LEISEROWITZ, Ph.D., director of the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, is an expert on American and international public opinion on global warming, including public perception of climate change risks, support and opposition for climate policies, and willingness to make individual behavioral change. His research investigates the psychological, cultural, political and geographic factors that drive public environmental perception and behavior. He has conducted survey, experimental and field research, including international studies, the U.S., states, municipalities and with the Inupiaq Eskimo of Northwest Alaska. He recently conducted the first empirical assessment of worldwide public values, attitudes and behaviors regarding global sustainability, including environmental protection, economic growth and human development. He has served as a consultant to the John F. Kennedy School of Government (Harvard University), the UN Development Program, Gallup World Poll, Global Roundtable on Climate Change at the Earth Institute (Columbia University) and World Economic Forum.

LIZZ WINSTEAD As co-creator and former head writer of The Daily Show and Air America Radio co-founder, Lizz Winstead has helped changed the very landscape of how people get their news. As a performer, Winstead also brought her political wit to The Daily Show as a correspondent and later to the radio waves co-hosting Unfiltered, Air America Radio’s mid-morning show, with Chuck D and Rachel Maddow. Known as as one of the top political satirists in America, Winstead has been recognized by all the major media outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, and was among Entertainment Weekly’s 100 most Creative People. Winstead’s first book, Lizz Free Or Die, Essays, was released in 2012 and the paperback was released in May 2013. Lizz is currently working on a second book and is spearheading Lady Parts Justice, a reproductive rights organization using humor and outrage to expose anti-choice zealots in all 50 states in an attempt to return state legislatures to a pro-choice majority. To keep up with Lizz, follow her on Twitter @lizzwinstead, or like her on Facebook: www.facebook.com/lizzwinstead.
KATE LANGRALL FOLB, M.Ed., is director for Hollywood, Health & Society, a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center, and a veteran for more than 20 years in the entertainment education field. After an early career in television and music production/management at Don Kirshner’s Rock Concert, Shep Gordon’s Alive Enterprises and Borman Entertainment, Kate joined the Scott Newman Foundation as director of special projects. There, she worked with top TV shows and films on portrayals of alcohol and other substance abuse, developed a media literacy program for middle and high school students and produced the foundation’s annual public service announcements. Later, she spent nearly 10 years as director of The Media Project, a partnership of Advocates for Youth and the Kaiser Family Foundation, which addressed portrayals of adolescent reproductive health in the media, working with dozens of primetime and daytime television shows on storylines featuring HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy prevention, condom use and sex education among other topics. She also produced the annual SHINE Awards for sexual health in entertainment and developed a cutting edge media campaign for Viacom to normalize condom use and encourage healthy relationships.

From 2001-2012 Kate led Nightingale Entertainment, an independent consulting firm working with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on the multi-year Cover the Uninsured Week and Covering Kids and Families campaigns, and with Planned Parenthood Federation of America on Birth Control Matters and I Stand with Planned Parenthood garnering celebrity involvement, producing PSAs and coordinating national media events. She joined Hollywood, Health & Society in July of 2012 as senior program manager, and became director in the fall of 2013. Kate speaks fluent Spanish, holds a bachelor’s degree from the University of Denver, and a master’s degree in education from UCLA.

MARTIN KAPLAN holds the Norman Lear Chair in Entertainment, Media and Society at the USC Annenberg School, where he was associate dean for 10 years. He is the founding director of the school’s Norman Lear Center, whose mission is to study and shape the impact of media and entertainment on society. He was Vice President Walter Mondale’s chief speechwriter and deputy campaign manager for Mondale’s presidential bid. He worked at Walt Disney Studios for 12 years, where he was first a feature films vice president and then a screenwriter/producer. His movie credits include The Distinguished Gentleman, starring Eddie Murphy, and the film adaptation of Michael Frayn’s Noises Off. A summa cum laude in molecular biology from Harvard College, where he was president of The Harvard Lampoon, he won a First in English as a Marshall Scholar at Cambridge University, and he holds a Ph.D. from Stanford in modern thought and literature.
MICHAEL WINSHIP, president of the Writers Guild of America, East (AF-L-CIO), is the Emmy Award-winning senior writer of the public television series Moyers & Company and its website BillMoyers.com. He is a veteran television writer and producer whose credits include NOVA, American Experience, Nature, Smithsonian World and Television and Bill Moyers Journal, as well as many arts, documentary and public affairs specials. Winship has also worked for CBS, the Discovery and Learning channels, A&E, Lifetime, Turner Broadcasting, History Channel, History Channel and National Geographic. He's written for The New York Times and Salon and is the author of Television (Random House) and is a winner of three Writers Guild Awards for outstanding achievement in writing and an Emmy for Moyers & Company. Winship is a senior writing fellow at the public policy and advocacy group Demos.

Participants

THE NORMAN LEAR CENTER
Want to welcome all of you here. This is such a great occasion for us. I’m Michael Winship. I’m the president of the Writers Guild of America, East, and also senior writer of the TV show Moyers & Company on public TV and our website, billmoyers.com, where you will find a ton of climate change and environmental coverage, among other things, including a number of shows that we’ve done on those topics.

This is the latest event that we have been doing in partnership with Hollywood, Health & Society. It’s a tremendous organization. We did a panel on Obamacare a few months ago; we hope to do much more together. I’m fortunate to be on the board, as is my counterpart, Chris Keyser, from the Writers Guild of America, West.

And this event sort of helps kick off an enormous number of events related in the next few days to climate change and global warming, the big march on Sunday and the UN Summit on Climate Change on Tuesday. And in between and around and through, there are any number of events that are going to be taking place, any number of panels, any number of rallies. There’s a big sit-in Monday on Wall Street.

And we are going to start this conversation. Marty has a couple of presentations he’s going to make. And then we’ll get around to introducing the panelists to you. We will do some discussion amongst ourselves, question and talk. And then we’re going to open it up to all of you.

So it’s my pleasure to introduce my colleague at the other end of the table, Marty Kaplan, who’s the principal investigator of Hollywood, Health & Society. And he holds the Norman Lear Chair in Entertainment, Media and Society at USC Annenberg School; and also founder of USC’s Norman Lear Center.

Marty’s career has been unbelievably varied. You can read more about him in your program. But he has been a political and policy advisor, speechwriter, studio executive and, most importantly to our membership, a screenwriter. His credits include The Distinguished Gentleman and the film adaptation of Noises Off.

“So today, we are the other side. We’re not climate despair. We are the opposite of that. I was interested to see that at the march on Sunday, there will be a moment of silence followed by a moment of cacophony. We are the cacophony.”
— MARTY KAPLAN, LEAR CENTER DIRECTOR, CO-MODERATOR

So with that, I kick it over to Marty.

Marty Kaplan: Thank you so much. And Michael, thank you so much for this partnership.

As you mentioned, this is not the first one. About seven months ago, we did an event here about access to healthcare. And I’m happy to say that since then, 7.3 million people have enrolled in Obamacare. So we must’ve done something right.

(Laughter)

Michael Winship: It must’ve been all that Internet and—
Marty Kaplan: Exactly.

As Michael said, I have the honor of holding the Norman Lear Chair and directing the Norman Lear Center. And I never tire of expressing gratitude to Lyn and Norman Lear and their family foundation for giving us the gift that allowed the Lear Center to begin. And out of any order, I must say thank you both so much for being here. It’s a great pleasure.

(Applause)

You can read about the Lear Center online. You do have the brochures. Our intros will be quick, because you have that material.

Hollywood, Health & Society is a program of the Norman Lear Center. And I would like to introduce to you the director of Hollywood, Health & Society, Kate Folb.

(Applause)

Kate Folb: If I can juggle my notes and the microphone.

Welcome, everyone. We’re so delighted to see everyone. This is a full house, and it’s thrilling. And we’re very, very excited to be here co-hosting this panel with the Writers Guild of America, East.

Hollywood, Health & Society was established in 2001, and it provides television and screenwriters with accurate information on health and climate change, free of charge. We are your one-stop shop for all medical, public health and climate change information. Operators are standing by to take your calls or your emails. So reach out.

We’re funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Skoll Global Threats Fund, Grantham Foundation and a number of others. And we work with dozens of top-rated network and cable shows providing information, access to experts, and real people who have stories to tell. And we do this for no fee or credit. Just to help you ensure that your storylines are accurate, relevant and impactful.

Today kind of kicks off a week of exciting events and activities centered on the topic of climate change in New York and across the country. We hope today’s discussion—like last year’s or last winter’s discussion on Obamacare—we hope today’s discussion will inform and inspire you all to address this extremely critical issue in your work, and that when we come back here next year, the problem will be solved.

(Laughter)

When you decide to do so—incorporate this into your work—Hollywood, Health & Society is here and ready to help. So please, give us a call. Send us an email. Drop by the office. Whatever you want.

So before we begin, I just want to take a moment to thank our project specialist, Roberta Cruger, for her very tireless hard work and endless enthusiasm putting this event together. You can wave
to us, Roberta.

(Applause)

And I’d also like to thank Marsha Seemen and Dana Weissman of the Writers Guild East for their help and support. You can wave.

(Applause)

And is going to be terrific discussion. So without further ado, let’s get to it. Marty?

**Marty Kaplan:** Thanks so much, Kate.

And Kate also has done a huge amount of work, not only for this event but for all of Hollywood, Health & Society. And we couldn’t be happier to have her as a program director.

So if you saw today’s *New York Times*, if you saw Paul Krugman’s column, he spoke about the issue of economic growth and the idea that climate action kills economic growth. And he took that head-on. And he said that’s false, and he named it “climate despair.” So today, we are the other side. We’re not climate despair. We are the opposite of that.

I was interested to see that at the march on Sunday, there will be a moment of silence followed by a moment of cacophony.

(Laughter)

*We* are the cacophony. That’s what we’re here today to do. There’s a subtitle for today’s event, which is: *Does Comedy Have the Chutzpah to Say What Other Media Won’t?* So that’s what brings us together.

And maybe to explore that, we’re going to show a video, a little compilation, to make the case that comedy does have the chutzpah. So if we could lower the lights and roll the video?

(Video Presented)

**Michael Winship:** Kate gave such a nice description of Hollywood, Health & Society, I just wanted to very quickly say, if you’re not familiar with the Writers Guild of America East, we are a union, part of the AFL-CIO. We represent 4,000 writers east of the Mississippi, who work in television, motion pictures, radio and new media, in both episodic television and feature films, and digital and news.

So it’s my duty to do the first round of introductions. And very quickly—and again, much of this information is in your programs and more, so I refer you to your programs—but to my immediate right is my good friend and colleague, Chris Albers, who actually is my predecessor in this job as president of the Writers Guild East. He’s an Emmy Award-winning comedy writer. He’s been with Conan O’Brien, David Letterman, Bill Maher. He’s won six Writers Guild awards, he teaches at Columbia. He recently worked on the television series *Borgia.*
To Chris’s right, Tony Leiserowitz, director of the Yale Project on Climate Change Communication, research scientist at Yale’s School of Forestry and Environmental Studies. A geographer by training, but he has become an expert on the public’s perception of climate change and whether people are willing to change their behavior to make a difference.

Number three, Rory Albanese, multiple Emmy winner for his work as a writer and executive producer of The Daily Show With Jon Stewart, co-author of Earth (The Book), with Jon Stewart and Daily Show writers and executive producer of The Approval Matrix. And he is the show-runner and will be an on-air contributor, I guess, as well on the upcoming Minority Report with Larry Wilmore, which starts in January.

And then, another friend—Lizz Winstead. Marty and Lizz and I are all alumni of Air America. I was on—used to be on Lizz’s show with Rachel Maddow and Chuck D long ago. She’s a great standup comic and writer. She’s the co-creator and former head writer of The Daily Show, co-founder of Air America. Her show over there was called Unfiltered. First book, Lizz Free or Die, is out in paperback now. She’s working on a second one. And she’s been doing—if you’ve been following Lizz on Facebook or Twitter, she’s been doing amazing work with Planned Parenthood and is spearheading a reproductive rights group called Lady Parts Justice, which is just doing great things.

Marty Kaplan: Sidney Harris is a cartoonist and illustrator whose cartoons have been collected, and drawings, in more than 20 books. One of them is called 101 Funny Things About Global Warming. And we’re going to have a drawing for who gets an autographed copy later on.

Lyn Lear, besides being a dear friend, is a founder, with Norman and some others in Hollywood, of the Environmental Media Association 25 years ago. It wasn’t as easy then to try to use storytelling as a way to get out the message about the environment. But they were the ones who began that effort in Hollywood. She’s on the board of the Sundance Institute. And most relevant to what we’re talking about today, she’s an executive producer, along with Louie Schwartzberg, of the film that will open the UN Climate Summit on Tuesday.

Lyn Lear: Producer.

Marty Kaplan: Producer. Producer, sorry—and president of Lyn Lear Productions, which it is a production of.

Norman Lear has a page which is the front of your bio sheet. The piece of it that I want to emphasize is that on October 14, Penguin will publish his memoir, Even This I Get to Experience. The “this” refers to his—what his tombstone will say.

“[On] those shows . . . there was no race issue in America, families were not suffering economic problems, cancer did not exist in their lives. Their children had no problems with education or sex or anything. And if that wasn’t a message, wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling, I don’t know what was.”
—TV PRODUCER/PHILANTHROPIST NORMAN LEAR

As a special treat, in addition to buying his book, I warmly encourage you to also get the audio version of it, which he recorded. And if you want to know what pleasure is, to listen to Norman Lear tell you these stores in his own voice is truly just amazing.

So please, welcome the entire panel.

(Applause)

So Norman, I’m going to toss you the first question. We’re going to—it’s going to be very informal. People can interrupt, cross-talk, ask questions of one another. We will invite you to join the conversation after a bit. Norman, a lot of people have been—when we’ve been talking to people about climate change, and what it’s like at the
networks, for example, one of the things that we’ve heard is—well, the networks don’t want to do it because it divides the audience. You’re going to lose half the potential viewers because these are controversial issues. So you better do stuff that everyone is together on and won’t tune away. Was this an issue when you were doing your number-one-rated shows?

Norman Lear: Well, what preceded those shows was *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Green Acres*—

(Laughter)

—a couple of others like that. The biggest problem that any family faced on those shows was that the roast was ruined and the boss was coming to dinner.

(Laughter)

So I had to ask myself, because I was accused of—and told—a lot of people here won’t remember—know the expression “Western Union.” But I was told—listen, you want to send messages, there’s Western Union.

And I thought for years to avoid (inaudible) we’re doing them or not. And then I realized that those shows, the *Green Acres* and *The Beverly Hillbillies*, and a number of others—there was no race issue in America, families were not suffering economic problems, cancer did not exist in their lives. Their children had no problems with education or sex or anything. And if that wasn’t a message, wall-to-wall, floor-to-ceiling, I don’t know what was. There are no problems in American life. That was the message. Am I answering your question?

Marty Kaplan: Absolutely.

Norman Lear: It seems very long.

Marty Kaplan: That’s why I went to you first.

Norman Lear: So, these subjects were simply avoided, just like we avoid the subjects of—you know, I don’t hear much talk going on about where the hell is America headed. You know, we just hear bumper sticker arguments on television. But they don’t give us any context. And the same problems are being avoided in different ways.

Michael Winship: I was wondering, Norman, hypothetically, how you would’ve handled *All in the Family* with Archie Bunker confronting this issue. And then I was thinking about all the chemicals that George Jefferson must’ve had at that dry cleaner.

(Laughter)

And was wondering how—if these shows were around today, how you would see them taking on—

Norman Lear: If I had a television show—and I’ve said this to a
number—as Marty knows—to a number of people who are running shows—I would have an 11-year-old kid that knew everything that—

**Marty Kaplan**: Steve—

**Norman Lear**: Hansen, or—no, I mean climatologist.

**Marty Kaplan**: Jim Hansen.

**Norman Lear**: Jim Hansen, and the other fellow—

**Lyn Lear**: Oh, Bill McKibben.

**Norman Lear**: Bill McKibben. I would have an 11-year-old who knew everything Bill McKibben knows and was the biggest pain in the ass, because he was constantly nagging everybody about what are you doing, what are you doing, what are you doing? But coming from an 11-year-old, with all the scientific information of a Bill McKibben—because he read, even at 11, assiduously—would be funny as hell. And that’s the way I would handle it. I would have a neighbor, if it was All in the Family.

But I’d get a kid in there who was looking at the world and saying—what’s in it for me at 30?

**Marty Kaplan**: A little bit like the Jesse Eisenberg character on Modern Family that was saw—

**Norman Lear**: Yeah. Well, that was something I told Steve Levitan, and they tried it.

**Michael Winship**: Yeah. We actually have a real kid on our show this week named Kelsey Juliana, who is 18 now, but at 15 became co-plaintiff in this really pivotal Oregon Public Trust doctrine suit on global warming. And she’s remarkable, and smart and self-possessed. And I’m sure she’s read everything Bill McKibben’s written. But she’s the first one to say that—I don’t know how to stir up interest among my generation.

**Marty Kaplan**: So Chris, I’m just wondering—you have worked on shows which are meant to have broad audience appeal. Is this issue of taking a side and dividing the audience and cutting your potential ratings—is this an issue that comes up or has come up?

**Chris Albers**: Well, first of all, I want to blame climate change for my face. So, sorry about that, everybody. No, it’s definitely—worked for four of those guys, including Jon Stewart, but before he was The Daily Show. And even Jon, when he was doing a regular talk show, didn’t touch issues like that.

So, you know, I was always envious of the shows like Colbert and Daily Show. And then, when I worked for Maher, you were allowed to touch anything. So it’s a lot more fun, because you seem like you’re saying something more.

The other shows—they are all scared of alienating part of their audience. And so very rarely do you touch those issues at all, unless something huge happens. Like there’ll be jokes about the march. Because they have to talk about it. But if it weren’t for that, they don’t want to go there.

I think where they do, or are more likely to go there—Letterman’s

“The perception among many in media and in politics . . . that you cannot talk about this issue because half the country is against you [is] false. And the reason why we have it is because the other side—a small minority—has intimidated this country into talking about it.”

—ANTHONY LEISEROWITZ, DIRECTOR, YALE PROJECT
pretty good about having people on where he can have serious discussions about serious issues. And he will bring up those issues in question form during an interview. But very rarely do you find it in the body of the comedy.

And the other thing I’d say is, you know, when you have Maher and Stewart and Colbert, I think that they’re also able to get away with more because they know that the majority of their audience agrees with them. I said this to somebody, you know, earlier, that I think there’s a small segment of the audience that watches it just to get pissed off at them, the same way that I watch O’Reilly and Sean Hannity. I enjoy getting really mad when they say things that aren’t true. And I think there’s a segment of those comedy shows where, whether it’s true or not, that audience thinks it’s not true. They think it’s a hoax.

So, I think they’re able to get away with a lot more for that reason, because they’re not worried about alienating anybody.

Michael Winship: You were very personally affected by Sandy, by Hurricane Sandy. And is it ever—I mean, have you ever thought about—

Marty Kaplan: Do you want to describe that?

Michael Winship: —about using it at all in your own work, or—

Chris Albers: Well, I think that’s what’s wonderful about Twitter. I have definitely gotten some aggression out on Twitter. I think one of the things I wrote was—just found out from FEMA that they don’t have to give me money to rebuild my house, because there’s already a sand dune in my living room.

(Laughter)

So yeah, my house—I live down in Point Pleasant Beach, about two blocks from the ocean. There was six, seven feet of water up in front of my house. So the whole first floor was washed out. And it doesn’t look any different than it did three weeks after the storm. Because I’ve been waiting for FEMA.

And real quickly, the reason that the flooding was so bad was that during George W Bush’s administration, they stopped the beach replenishment program, which was just automatically done, Republican, Democrat administrations. And because they were all East Coast blue states, they were able to frame it in a partisan way. And we basically let those shorelines get really weak, and there was so much sand washed away.

And then, it was the first national disaster in our country’s history where they started to play politics before they helped anybody out. They said that in order for the FEMA money to be approved that we had to find a way to pay for it. And we’ve never done that before for tornadoes, earthquakes, whatever.

And just a month or so later, there was the tornado in Moore,
Oklahoma, which I think you know a little bit about, Lizz.

**Lizz Winstead**: I do.

**Chris Albers**: And they approved funding the next day after the town was destroyed.

So it seems to me there’s a lot of East Coast blue states that had destruction—that we don’t need to worry about. Red state, we do. It should never be that way with any disaster. So you know, definitely that has had a personal impact on me.

**Marty Kaplan**: Sidney, your cartoons, for example, have appeared in *The Wall Street Journal*. Is that a hard thing to do? Do you have to pull back, or not deal with climate change, for example?

**Sidney Harris**: I don’t think they would touch climate change. They do things are pretty bland, everyday events. In fact, any magazines that did touch climate change are pretty much out of business now, I think.

(Laughter)

And there’s so few—they mentioned that I have something to do with *The New Yorker*, but they would never touch anything like that, either.

**Marty Kaplan**: Really?

**Sidney Harris**: They want insult jokes, and husbands and wives, essentially. So it’s very difficult to get something like that in print.

**Marty Kaplan**: And so where have you gotten into print this edgy side?

**Sidney Harris**: Well, I would put a good word in for *Playboy*.

(Laughter)

Some of my best—several were about global warming. And this book I gave, which—fortunately, a lot of it is new material.

**Marty Kaplan**: Oh, I see.

**Sidney Harris**: Yeah. If I can quote, I had some caricatures. They were on the screen before, but everybody was walking past. I did caricatures of noted people and found quotes that they said. And here is one—it isn’t pollution that’s harming the environment; it’s the impurities in our air and water that are doing it.

(Laughter)

This was said by a vice president of the United States, Dan Quayle.

“What’s brilliant about Steven Colbert’s character is that he is able to say some of the arguments that the extreme other end of the spectrum has that are laughable. But you don’t really see that until he commits to it so much.”

—**COMEDY WRITER/PRODUCER CHRIS ALBERS**

(Laughter)

**Marty Kaplan**: The spelling is perfect.

**Sidney Harris**: Except for the tomatoes.

And one other one, which I really loved, is—we’ve got to ask ourselves, how much clean air do we need?

(Laughter)

Lee Iacocca.
So obviously, he was afraid of having the air get too clean.

And I could’ve made up more. These were legit. But it turned out the publisher didn’t even ask me where I got them. And I did all this research, and the [Austin] book of quotations.

**Marty Kaplan**: And you could’ve made them up.

**Sidney Harris**: I could’ve made up—I could’ve made up better ones than these, but they never asked me.

**Michael Winship**: Tony, I’ve always been very, very taken with a quote of yours, which has sort of become kind of famous, which is that you—talking about global warming and climate change, you said you almost couldn’t design a problem that is a worse fit with our underlying psychology. What’s that about?

**Tony Leiserowitz**: So this is an issue that is invisible, okay, for most of us. If these windows were open, we could all look outside right now. And there’d be CO2 pouring out of tailpipes, pouring out of the buildings, pouring out of smoke stacks. In fact, there’s CO2 pouring out of your mouth and nose right this very second. But until I said it, you weren’t conscious of it. Because it’s invisible.

And as a result, the causes of this issue are largely invisible to most of us. And the impacts are largely invisible to most of us. And if you don’t see it, it seems almost literally out of sight and out of mind.

So one of the challenges for this issue is helping us actually visualize what it is, where it comes from, what it means and, most importantly, how it connects to our everyday lives.

But if I may, I’d like to actually address your original question, which is really, really important—and that is the perception among many in media and in politics and so on that you cannot talk about this issue because half the country is against you. It’s false. It’s wrong. Okay? And the reason why we have it is because the other side—a small minority—has made it so. They’ve intimidated this country into talking about it.

In our work, we’ve identified what we call global warming’s six Americas. Okay, these are nationally represented surveys; we’ve been doing them for over 10 years. And what we find is that there is no one America. Americans have different views on this.

About 15 percent of Americans are alarmed. They think it’s happening, human-caused, it’s urgent, they want to know, they want to engage. They want to get involved in this issue.

A second group is about a quarter of the country, and they’re concerned. They think it’s happening and human-caused, but they tend to think of it as distant in time and space, that’s going to impact people in a generation, or polar bears, or developing countries; not us. So they need to see—how does it affect me?

Then, another quarter of the country we call concerned...
—or, I’m sorry, cautious—who are kind of still on the fence. Is it happening, is it not? Is it human, is it natural? Is it a serious problem, or is it kind of overblown?

Then, a small group that we call the disengaged, five percent, who don’t know anything about it. For them, it’s basic awareness.

Then another group, that’s 12 percent, and we call the doubtful. They think it’s probably not happening, but if it is, it’s natural. Nothing we had anything to do with, nothing we can do anything about. And then last but not least, it’s about 15 percent that we call the dismissive. And they’re firmly convinced it’s not happening, it’s not human-caused. And most of them are what we would lovingly call conspiracy theorists. They say—it’s scientists making up data, it’s a UN plot to take away American sovereignty, it’s Al Gore and his friends trying to get rich, and many, many other such narratives.

The point is, that’s 15 percent. It’s only 15 percent. And yet, they’re a really loud 15 percent. They’re a really vocal 15 percent. And as a result, they have convinced much of the rest of the country that it’s not safe to talk about it. When it’s just not true.

We did a study of evangelicals for a magazine that writes to evangelicals. They wanted to talk about climate change; they were afraid to talk about climate change, because we might lose our audience. They did a study of their audience. Turns out their audience wants to hear about it. What does this mean to us? What does our faith tell us about how we should be dealing with this issue? So, it’s a myth.

Marty Kaplan: I want to ask you a follow-up to bridge to a question I’d love Lyn Lear to talk about. There’s—you all read Risk Analysis, the journal Risk Analysis, I’m sure.

(Laughter)

In the recent issue, there was piece called “The Role of Emotion in Global Warming Policy Support and Opposition,” Tony and a co-author did. And you looked at emotion and its relation to where people stood. And you talked about fear versus interest, worry and hope. Could you explain a little about that?

And then, I’d like to ask Lyn how she thought about the film that she produced, and where those fit in.

Tony Leiserowitz: So I’ll root this in psychology. Basically, human beings have two different ways of processing information. One is the analytic systems of which science is perhaps one of the preeminent forms. It’s abstract words, numbers, deliberate, hard work, kind of thing. The other is experiential. It’s where our values and our emotions and the images—it’s where our stories and narratives are. And it turns out that’s the one that’s far older, from an evolutionary standpoint. It’s how we navigate the vast majority of our life.

And this is the realm in which you all live in. This is what you work with. And that’s the most powerful system.

And so we’ve been studying for many years now the role of these emotional, imagistic dimensions. And they’re far more powerful than just telling a bunch of scientific facts. That’s the problem, in large part, with the climate communication space is that it has been very cerebral. It has not been in the heart. And it really hasn’t been in the
gut. That’s what we need. That’s what’s so great about entertainment education is that it frames everything within these narratives.

And so what we found, though, is that fear is not the way to go. That’s not the most powerful way to engage. It’s worry. Fear shuts people down, or it sets you up for fight or flight. It’s a very short-term kind of emotion. It’s not sustainable.

But worry is the sustainable emotion. When you’re worried about your kid’s future, your health, your retirement, you set plans, you’re motivated. You will work, you will check in, you will adjust, you will recalibrate, you will do things for decades because of worry. Not fear.

But critically, the other one that is really, really important is hope. And this is, I think again, one of the key things that we in this country and around the world lack. Because there’s a major hope gap. Even for those people who think that this is real and that it’s serious, they don’t know what we can do. They don’t know that the solutions are actually happening all around us. But they don’t know it.

And as a result, if you’re frightened by something, and you think it’s overwhelming, I think the natural instinct is to just try to push it away.

Marty Kaplan: So Lyn, as you navigated this terrain, where did you strike a balance?

Lyn Lear: Well, I think, about three years ago, when Bill McKibben came to the home, when we launched the Lear Center Project, that’s when I had my aha moment. Kind of like wow. I mean, being in the environmental movement for a long time, but really getting how serious this problem was, and then taking it on full time ever since.

The first couple of years of learning about it, how serious this was, it was pretty devastating, frightening. And how do we get this across? Because it is too difficult, too overwhelming, for most people to even think about when they’re trying to pay their bills and just get through the day.

But about a year ago, something sort of changed, at least in the atmosphere. It felt like there—people in the climate movement were becoming optimistic. I don’t know what happened, it was sort of a shift.

I was at a retreat last June with 43 women in this sort of climate movement for about, I don’t know, 20 years or several decades. And every one of these women felt we were at, or beginning, or sort of in the midst of a tipping point, that was optimistic. Everybody was feeling like something was in the air. It wasn’t just, you know, a feeling.

I mean, these were happening—solutions were happening all around us. We were feeling that corporations were finally understanding that going to new forms of energy, this was the way we had to go in the future. They were understanding that. We’re becoming competitive with fossil fuel. Solar and wind were becoming competitive all over the world, and less expensive. And products were becoming—organic
products were becoming competitive and so forth. So, there’s just this sense that things are turning around. And so there are reasons to be optimistic.

In terms of messaging, a lot of messaging gurus feel that there’s a sort of formula—it’s one-third fear or worry and two-thirds optimism. That’s how you reach people. And it does have to be emotion, in a sense of the spiritual, in a sense of just feeling that this was something that people can relate to in their personal lives—that they’re dealing with health, asthma, all sorts of—you know, extreme weather and storms that affect people. They’re being affected by their pocketbooks. And if you can get that across in some way, that it’s affecting their everyday lives, and it is. So—

**Marty Kaplan:** We have a teaser, I think, from the film, which—

**Lyn Lear:** Well, the film—the film, yes. This film came about, we’re showing this three-and-a-half-minute film in front of—it’s opening the ceremony for the summit, the climate summit, that’s coming up this Tuesday. And it took about four and a half months to put together. And it’s up—

**Marty Kaplan:** Can we show the teaser?

**Lyn Lear:** Please.

(Video plays)

**Morgan Freeman (narrator):** One day, we will wake up to find we have literally changed the face of the earth. We have never faced a crisis this big. But we have never had a better opportunity to solve it.

We have everything we need to wake up to a different kind of world. What is needed is a concerted effort.

We can make today the day we turn toward the solutions we need. We can make today the day we chart a new course together.

We have every reason in the world to act. We can’t wait until tomorrow. You can choose today to make a world of difference.

(Video ends)

**Michael Winship:** Is Louie here?

**Marty Kaplan:** No.

**Michael Winship:** Oh.

**Marty Kaplan:** He was meant to be, but he’s in Washington.

“I think the challenge is . . . now people can watch—when Norman was producing television, there weren’t 150 channels. So you could just change the channel now and just find somebody who’s talking about what you want to hear.”

— COMEDY WRITER/PRODUCER RORY ALBANESE

**Michael Winship:** Okay.

**Marty Kaplan:** Right. Cinematography by Louie—

**Lyn Lear:** —Schwartzberg.

**Marty Kaplan:** —Schwartzberg. Words by Scott Burns.

**Lyn Lear:** Scott Burns.

**Marty Kaplan:** Music by Han Zimmer.

**Lyn Lear:** Yup.
Marty Kaplan: And narration by Morgan Freeman.

Michael Winship: And the voice of God by Morgan Freeman.

(Laughter)

Lyn Lear: [I’m with] the other God.

(Multiple speakers)

Lizz Winstead: I went to college with Scott Burns. Yeah, I want to college [with] Scott Burns.

Marty Kaplan: Really?

(Laughter)

Lizz Winstead: Yeah. He wrote the very first article about me ever (inaudible) onstage, doing comedy for the college newspaper. Yeah.

Michael Winship: Well, Lizz and Rory, you both have done a lot of standup, you travel around the country.

One of the big issues is people say—well, this is really low on people’s priority lists. They don’t really care about this issue, we’ve talked—do you hear people talk about it as you’re going around the country at all? I mean—

Lizz Winstead: Go ahead, I’ll—

Rory Albanese: You know, I would say that I think the biggest issue I find with climate change in general is that it’s become a political issue. So—and, like, as much good as Al Gore did for it, he’s also—it’s not his fault, but because he’s such a left-wing icon, it just turned people off to it.

So what happens, I think, in America—I mean, particularly in this country, it seems like people pick a side. And then whatever issues come up on their side, they’ve already predetermined their answers, which is kind of a problem. I mean, I know that thinking for yourself is hard. But, you know—

(Laughter)

— it’s also—so we’ve got this—the left. So it’s like—oh, well, the left likes the environment; therefore, the right has to hate it; as opposed to it just being like a problem we’re all experiencing.

And then we’ve got, you know, a group of people on the other side who think hurricanes are caused by gay marriage, which is a whole other problem.

(Laughter)

So it’s like—you know, you like—
Marty Kaplan: You didn’t make that up.

Rory Albanese: No, I didn’t make that up. I couldn’t make that up, I’m not that creative. But that’s a problem.

So it’s like we’re not dealing with two—we’re not dealing with two sides that are using in equal—like, one side’s playing chess, and one side’s playing, like, magical unicorn game, or some—you know what I mean? Like it’s not—so that’s the bigger issue is that it’s become political.

So I think the challenge is, like you said, now people can watch—when Norman was producing television, there weren’t 150 channels. So you could just change the channel now and just find somebody who’s talking about what you want to hear. And I find with standup, you can make a joke about—I can make a joke about gun rights, and people who hate guns laugh. And then I can make a joke about, you know, women’s lib, in the wrong way, and the same people who laughed go—whoa, whoa, that issue matters to me. You know what I mean?

So there’s like selective outrage now, like people just sort of like—but they only want to hear—and The Daily Show experienced that a ton during the Hillary Clinton-Obama race. Like when we sort of started making fun of Hillary, our audience was going—what are you guys doing? You know, like, you’re not supposed to do that. Or the Occupy Wall Street movement—like our audience got mad at us.

So it’s like—it becomes very complicated. Because people can find the views they want to hear and then just stay in that bubble. So it’s complex.

And I think the thing that really has made climate change difficult to sort of explain to people is that it’s not right versus left. It’s like—oh, there’s a giant garbage patch floating in the Pacific that is scary to look at. I don’t know if you guys have seen that island that’s made of bottles? But that’s something that most people don’t even know exists. I think there’s certain things you can show people that would sort of bring it away.

But I would just say—so I think the hardest part of what I’ve seen as I travel is like people like to laugh at what they agree with, and they don’t like to laugh at what they don’t agree with. They seem to shut down. And they don’t listen to what they don’t agree with anymore.

So I don’t know how to fix that, other than to say—if there’s a way for people like Sean Hannity or O’Reilly, or any of those guys, to realize that it’s not a right or a left issue—and I think the way to do that is to try to get one or two reasonable people on the right to agree.

But recently that happened, with Christine Todd Whitman and a few other people who worked—

“They want simplicity. And the right gives them simplicity. When 96 percent of all talk radio is like way right of center-based, that’s a lot of information that’s coming from one side, that’s feeding one side of a narrative, the incorrect side.”

– COMEDY PRODUCER/WRITER LIZZ WINSTEAD

Lizz Winstead: Huntsman.

Rory Albanese: Yeah, a few other people who worked for Nixon and Reagan and all these people, said—oh no, this is real. And you know, I don’t know.

I think that this other problem is I think we give—everybody in this country has an equal say. But it’s hard when one side is, you know, talking about magical cloud man, and the other side’s talking about, you know, children dying. It’s a really difficult debate to have.

So, comedy does help. But the problem is you can pick the comedians you like, and then not listen to the ones you don’t. So I don’t know how to get around that.
I don’t know if that even answered the question.

**Michael Winship:** [It does.] Lizz?

**Lizz Winstead:** There’s so much to talk about. And I think when we talk about that we don’t see climate change, that’s a very privileged place to come from. Because if you’re going to talk about climate justice, and you look at the asthma levels of kids in poor neighborhoods, they see it. They don’t identify with it, that it’s that. But I think that’s our biggest problem is connecting it to other things.

I often—when I talk about it in my act, whether it’s climate or, you know, fracking or something, I like to ask a question like—you know, when you turn your faucet on, and fire pours out—

(Laughter)

—maybe that’s something we should think about. You know. And when you see that cows are drinking fracking water, and you know that cows, when they fart, have methane—I don’t want a cow that farts and then drinking fracking water to basically explode and become a self-barbecuing cow. That seems like something Monsanto would invent. And maybe have, I don’t know.

So I think that if you try to ask questions of people, and pick bad guys, rather than try to—sometimes it’s just too hard to explain the bigger issue of it. But to take on—like a term like clean coal, like what does that mean? There’s not a single person who looks at coal and thinks—I want to bathe with that, or bathe my baby in that, or drink that.

(Laughter)

Like, it’s a [expletive] thing that you can rally people around. But it’s one of the hardest things, you know, because of the I-can’t-see-it. And it’s the other reason why this country doesn’t deal with mental illness in a real way. Because you can’t see it.

And I think that making the connection of seeing it is where we can come into play. But it’s a long—it’s hard. Because comedy isn’t based on hope. It’s based on not hope. It’s based on finding a common enemy and then pointing up the hypocrisy of that enemy. My comedy is, anyway, much of it is.

So I think if you can find it and kill it—you had really good clips of how people did that, and having the conversation, I think it’s great. But I do think we—everything is tied together. The way that we’re defunding public education, so that we have now swaths of people who mistrust smart people. Have you heard like—those Harvard-educated people—like that’s a [expletive] bad thing. It’s like—no, that seems good, I would like people to go to Harvard, so that they’re good doctors and stuff.

But I think that they feel so afraid, they’re made to feel so afraid, that when they see someone speak in their (inaudible) they won’t understand it. They’ll think that someone’s pulling the wool over their eyes. So they want simplicity. And the right gives them simplicity.
When 96 percent of all talk radio is like way right of center-based, that’s a lot of information that’s coming from one side, that’s feeding one side of a narrative, the incorrect side.

Marty Kaplan: Lizz, I just wanted to follow up. I know you were speaking to Kate Folb before today about when a woman talks about issues.

Lizz Winstead: Yeah.

Marty Kaplan: Can you just—

Lizz Winstead: Yeah. So I started doing comedy in 1983, standup. And I was just going along, doing my act. And I wasn’t particularly political. And I was saying, you know, observational humor. And all of a sudden, these jokes that were perfectly forgettable—I didn’t want to collect them, because they weren’t that funny, but they would get laughs, they were fine, you know—they just stopped working. Like, weirdly.

So I thought I would tape my act to see if I was dropping something, I was just getting lazy, and I’d forgotten like a crucial part of the joke. And what I realized was I had switched the way I presented my material ever so slightly to myself. And instead of saying “ever notice,” I started saying “I think.” And when I said “I think” onstage, the audience had the hackles up. Because I was a woman onstage saying that I think something. And the next thing that came out surely was going to be horrible.

And it was a very interesting dynamic to watch and to—when you take your power, instead of hedge on your power, that wasn’t part of the deal with the comedy audience at the time. And then I decided, if I’m going to say “I think,” and they’re pissed, I might as well say “I think” and then say something smart. Instead of, you know, dog’s balls joke, or whatever I was telling.

Rory Albanese: Whoa, whoa, whoa, nothing wrong with dog’s balls jokes, I just want to be—

Lizz Winstead: No, I like a dog ball joke. No no, the good ones, good.

(Laughter)

So I decided to think aloud.

Michael Winship: Chris, you wanted to jump in on that?

Chris Albers: You know, I think it has a lot to do with how you say it. Like, the way you’re talking, but with global warming as well. I think that’s what’s brilliant about Steven Colbert’s character, is that he is able to say some of the arguments that the extreme other end of the spectrum has that are laughable. But you don’t really see that until he commits to it so much, and it’s so obvious that he’s off-base. And so, that’s a way to disarm people and to get that across.

Same way with the Modern Family clip, the way that they basically—you know, there’s a lot of people that—I myself included—that agree with a lot of the global warming, environmental things. And then you’re a hypocrite in so many ways that you don’t live your life the way that you think everybody else should. That show pointed that out. And the way that Norman said, you know, to have a kid say it. That’s a way to break through that.

I wrote a joke not long ago that was—you know, I’m tired of all these people whining about global warming. If the climate is—and if the
environment’s in such trouble, somebody explain why the Rain Forest Café has increased like [restaurants] by 85 percent—

(Laughter)

—you know, (inaudible) locations.

You know, so I mean obviously, that’s a ridiculous thing. But you can hear somebody saying something like that. And so, I mean, I think it’s just finding the way to back into it that works.

**Lizz Winstead**: Well, and the other thing that is terrifying is when you—if you’re having a discussion about climate change or evolution, and you point out a fact, the ad hominem attacks are so unbelievable.

I was on Twitter watching that debate with Bill Nye and the guy from the Creation Museum. And they’re talking about the Earth being 6 millions years old—or 6,000 years old. And I was like—I just tweeted, you know—awkward, fire was invented 10,000 years ago.

(Laughter)

And then somebody comes at me and just says “whore.”

(Laughter)

**Rory Albanese**: Listen, in my defense, I thought that was a pretty good comment.

(Laughter)

I don’t know.

**Chris Albers**: And I retweeted, too.

**Rory Albanese**: I mean, you only get 140 characters, guys. I thought was pretty good.

**Lizz Winstead**: [Was] so crazy!

**Michael Winship**: But if you had spelled it right—

(Multiple speakers)

**Rory Albanese**: Yeah, well, that’s my fault.

**Lizz Winstead**: But what’s so crazy is that I wasn’t even—you know, maybe I’m a whore. You’re still wrong. You know, I mean—

(Laughter)

—that was the part that was so upsetting to me was that I don’t care if you think I’m a whore. I care that you’re so committed to perpetuating wrongness that you’re just like—whore! Like—

**Chris Albers**: It’s the wrong reason to call you a whore.

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**Norman Lear** told the audience that early TV shows simply avoided tackling social issues. Today, he says, “We just hear bumper sticker arguments on television. But they don’t give us any context. And the same problems are being avoided in different ways.”
Rory Albanese: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

(Laughter)

Lizz Winstead: Wrong reason!

Rory Albanese: Plenty of reasons.

Lizz Winstead: Five [expletive] in my mouth at once for money—

Rory Albanese: Whoa!

(Laughter)

Rory Albanese: No, but I think that’s part --

Michael Winship: Okay.

Rory Albanese: I do think that that’s part of the problem, though, is like that you end up having—again, it’s like you have—it’s like you’re talking at the political debate, and you’re giving somebody who believes the Earth is 6,000 years old as much attention and as much respect as you’re giving a scientist.

And I know like, you know, all men are created equal and stuff. And my theory on that is like—yeah, like when we’re babies, we’re equal. But then like—there was a guy—I talk about this in my act, that there was a guy in South Carolina who got arrested for having sex with a horse. You know, and then, I bring it up, and I say—people go—you think you’re better than that guy? I go—yeah. Like, I’m much better than that guy. You know?

(Laughter)

And I hope everyone in this room can wake up in the morning and go—well, at least I’m not [expletive] a horse, you know.

(Laughter)

And like—it’s like we give everyone an equal platform and equal respect, which is—and then, there’s the whole thing. It’s like we’re supposed to judge people on the content of their character. Right? So it’s like not on their looks, we got that, right? But like, some people’s content—

Lizz Winstead: Whore.

Rory Albanese: Exactly.

(Laughter)

“[The right doesn’t] have reason. They just, you know, bumper-sticker it and go. But we have . . . the truth. I don’t see sufficient anger on the left. I don’t—I always ask myself—where’s the dust being raised around these people?”

—TV PRODUCER/PHILANTHROPIST NORMAN LEAR

Rory Albanese: Yeah, exactly. But like some people—that’s the problem.

So like you talked about those small percentages. And I feel like if we just approach it—when I say “we,” or I don’t know who— if the people involved approach it from that angle, like it’s not really worthy—there’s not really a counter-argument, other than, you know, a guy with a beard pointing his finger and made dinosaurs, and Jesus—or whatever. You know, it’s just—or the devil made dinosaurs, I think? I’m sorry. There’s a whole thing with dinosaurs and the devil.

But—you know what I mean? And that’s the problem—I think we give equal voice to both sides, and it’s a one-sided issue.
Marty Kaplan: By the way, we are live webcasting this to 7,000 middle schools.

Rory Albanese: Oh.

(Laughter)

Oh, you should’ve told us that before the whore bit started. I didn’t realize.

Lizz Winstead: They’re really progressive schools.

(Laughter)

Marty Kaplan: Norman, we tend to think that—okay, *All in the Family* and the shows that followed—they broke the taboos, and things have been different ever since, that television has opened up wide, anything goes. You have remained in the television business, working on stuff, meeting with executives, pitching things. Do you think it’s just been anything goes and wide open ever since then? Or have there been cycles, has it changed?

Norman Lear: Oh, I think everything has changed. I think, you know, the 2,000 or more years of the Judeo-Christian ethic didn’t work. But *All in the Family* did.

(Laughter)

And, yeah, we changed everything.

(Laughter)

And what really is the problem with [expletive] horses?

(Laughter)

Rory Albanese: Well . . . I like that the panel—that [it] just becomes about [expletive] horses.

(Marty Kaplan) That was the question that Timmy L. has submitted.

(Laughter)

Rory Albanese: From Chester A. Arthur Elementary.

(Laughter)


Michael Winship: Sidney, I was—I’m telling tales out of school, slightly, but I heard you say earlier, before we were up here, that The *New Yorker* doesn’t like environmental cartoons?

Sidney Harris: Well, I don’t think they like cartoons about anything.
Michael Winship: Really?

Sidney Harris: Except, you know, they want—

Michael Winship: Why is that?

Sidney Harris: Like, *Seinfeld* was about nothing.

Michael Winship: Yeah.

Sidney Harris: I don’t know. The articles in the magazine are interesting and controversial, but the cartoons are rather bland and insipid. It comes down to David Remnick, who’s the editor, who’s a very good editor except for that. I think he doesn’t . . . doesn’t care.

I’d like to interject also about the Democrats and Republicans—when I did these quotes from—stupid things that people said for this book, *Stupid Things About the Environment*, I looked up in the library—I was going through all these books of quotations. There’s the Oxford book and there’s a Yale book, and there’s contemporary quotations. And you can look up categories—pollution, environment. And I couldn’t find a liberal or a Democrat saying anything stupid.

(Laughter)

And I really wanted to. And in fact, I live just a block away from Joe Lieberman. He was still a Democrat then. So I couldn’t ask him. Then he became a Republican shortly afterwards. But I was thinking later, I should’ve asked Joe Lieberman—can you say something stupid as a Democrat about the environment?

(Laughter)

Marty Kaplan: So Lyn, when you started with the Environmental Media Association, the environment was a less divisive issue, wasn’t it, between parties? Could you find support?

Lyn Lear: Yes. That was actually before Al Gore started *Inconvenient Truth*. There wasn’t really much happening with messaging at that time. I think [it] was planting commercial items like Coca-Cola cans and such.

But we actually went to the show runners and talked to them about putting messaging into their shows and coming up with ideas. And before the internet, too. So we had resources if they wanted to get, say, a show on whales, or whatever, you know, to be correct. So it was an interesting time. You know. You were doing that, too.

Marty Kaplan: But did you find that the Republicans who might’ve supported conservation, as it was called then—

“Because this is an issue that we cannot solve through individual voluntary action. We can all do everything we can possibly do as individuals, and it would help. . . . In the end, we need systemic change, we need political change.”

— ANTHONY LEISEROWITZ, DIRECTOR, YALE PROJECT

Lyn Lear: Oh, no, it wasn’t so divided at all. I think you’re right that Al Gore was really divisive for—wasn’t his fault at all. But they—I think the Republican Party made it an issue.

Norman Lear: Is it because we just swim in a—you know, in a social circle where people are left-of-center for the most part?

Lyn Lear: It was because of the oil and coal industry.

Norman Lear: Well, the right then was tending against belief that there might be some problem associated with the climate.

Lyn Lear: Right. Because of the coal and oil industry, ExxonMobil and the Koch Brothers, spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year to
back these pseudo-scientists, to say there’s no such thing as climate change. And it’s caught on.

**Michael Winship:** To top it off, there was a study that was published last week that—I can’t remember how many hundreds of millions of dollars, but have gone to the climate deniers in Congress. It’s hundreds of millions of dollars. And it also—it’s Microsoft, it’s UPS, it’s eBay. And in fact, 90 percent of all that money came from non-fossil fuel companies. So it’s really insidious.

**Lyn Lear:** They need fossil fuel to deliver their goods.

**Michael Winship:** Yeah, well, that’s true.

**Lizz Winstead:** I also think, too, one of the things that the left does horribly is that it doesn’t invest in messaging that sustains the way the right does. So we have these fossil fuel-funded studies, right, that are transmitted to the right-wing media and to crazy climate politicians. Then, they also fund websites, like Breitbart and Red State, and a conglomerate of all of them.

So you’re sitting at home, you’re new to politics, let’s say. You all of a sudden decided you hated politicians when a black one was elected — whatever, you jumped on the bandwagon of hating. So that’s when all this stuff popped up, for big-time real. And so you’re at home, and then you’re like—I saw on Fox News that there was a study that was done by the Initiative for Greening of Figgy Thingy, sounds kind of good. And then you go to Breitbart, and you go to Red State, and you find three different places that cite it as a source. So now, you’ve seen it on the news, it’s a study, and you’ve seen three other places where it lists. Then it becomes a truth of people who don’t know any better.

And then you go to Breitbart, and you go to Red State, and you find three different places that cite it as a source. So now, you’ve seen it on the news, it’s a study, and you’ve seen three other places where it lists. Then it becomes a truth of people who don’t know any better.

And that’s the part that scares me. We need more of our own like facts and stuff. It can’t just be the comedy shows and a couple of hosts on MSNBC that are carrying our water. You know, we need really strong, funded websites that will be constantly up on our environment that do it. I mean, ThinkProgress does it and stuff like that. But it has to be places that regular folks would be maybe inclined to go to.

**Rory Albanese:** That I think is the trick. Sorry to interrupt. We did say interrupting was allowed.

**Lizz Winstead:** No, you can interrupt me.

**Rory Albanese:** The trick has to be it can’t be associated with the left. Like the website has to be like machineguns.com, you know what I mean?

**Lizz Winstead:** Yeah.

**Rory Albanese:** And then has to talk about—because that’s the trickery of the Koch Brothers and those people, is they—in other words, it has to be presented to people—the fact that it’s only Bill Maher, Jon Stewart, MSNBC—this casts it off to the left, you know. So then it becomes easily arguable by the right. Whereas if you found
that—

**Lizz Winstead**: Yeah.

**Rory Albanese**: —that way to like kind of draw people into something that was considered maybe more right-leaning and then acknowledge the problem, you’d probably—like I said, it’s just about trying to make it less of a political issue. Because it’s just not. You know, I don’t know how to do that, but I feel like there’s got to be some—

**Norman Lear**: I respectfully disagree with it. Because I think that’s exactly what we do. We don’t show our anger. And we don’t accept the fact that ours is the truth. They go ahead with theirs is the truth. They’re arguing with—you know, it’s—they don’t—I’ve often thought we are cursed with reason.

**Lyn Lear**: Yeah.

**Unidentified Speaker**: Right.

**Norman Lear**: And you know, they don’t have reason. They just, you know, bumper-sticker it and go. But we have to do a bit of that in the—because we have truth. I don’t see sufficient anger on the left. I don’t—I always ask myself—where’s the dust being raised around these people?

**Lizz Winstead**: Yeah, it’s hard. People tell you to be quiet a lot. In this project I’m doing now—which is, you know, it’s abortion access, and—

**Michael Winship**: Abortion what?

**Lizz Winstead**: Access and abortion rights. And I was on the radio today, and somebody calls me up, and is like—you’re supporting a holocaust of killing babies. And I said—I refute your argument that I am killing babies. It is against the law to kill babies, no one believes in killing babies. I believe in abortion rights. And I started to say abortion. Our movement hasn’t [said it] forever, you know. And it’s like if you don’t have a moral objection to a woman having a medical procedure, then why aren’t you saying those things?

And I think it’s—I’m just echoing back to you—why aren’t we screaming about certain things that are just true? We need a band of people saying—Jesus, stop putting these idiots on TV opposite really smart people. It’s Bill McKibben and then, like you said, some moron who is given equal weight all the time. There’s not two rights if somebody’s just a dick. You’re wrong.

(Laughter)

“I think the biggest issue I have with all news now is—particularly the cable news networks—is that they run on the same Nielsen business model that entertainment networks run on. So they’re basically just trying to get ratings.”

– COMEDY PRODUCER/WRITER RORY ALBANESE

**Chris Albers**: Can I ask Lyn and Anthony something? Who are these— as Seinfeld would say—who are these people? Who are the three percent? And are they all funded by corporations that are doing the studies saying that climate change is not reality? Or are there real studies out there that deserve, you know, being looked at? Obviously, it’s a minority. But are they all fake studies?

**Lyn Lear**: From what I understand, I mean, 97 percent of scientists say—I mean, there’s meteorological report—there’s that meteorological report that was just out recently—I mean, these are serious scientists—we have 20 years left to turn this around. I mean, that’s as serious as it gets.

And why—we always blame our Democratic, you know, politicians
for being so weak, and Obama. But the Aspen Institute won’t allow climate change panels. You know, TED—

**Lizz Winstead:** Really?

**Michael Winship:** Well, their funding. Aspen gets funding from the industry, I think. I’m pretty sure.

**Lyn Lear:** Well—but I heard last night at Moyers’s house that they are very, very—I mean, maybe I’m wrong, but I heard last night that they were—they don’t allow very often. Maybe I should say that.

And Chris Anderson was asked on the trip to Antarctica that—why doesn’t he do more about climate change. And he said—well, we like to go where the market, you know, takes us. And they do very few TED Talks on climate.

And so why are we being so shy? Why aren’t we out there, all of us, you know, working on this issue if our grandchildren aren’t going to have a planet that, you know, is livable for them?

**Chris Albers:** But if they’re all funded, all the people in the minority—if they’re all funded by corporations, then we should be able to point that out.

**Lyn Lear:** Absolutely.

**Chris Albers:** And that’s why I’m asking.

**Lyn Lear:** Yeah.

**Chris Albers:** Like, you know, obviously I agree with you on all of that.

**Lyn Lear:** Yeah. No—

**Chris Albers:** But are there real studies—

(Multiple speakers)

**Marty Kaplan:** And in fact—

**Lyn Lear:** Marty would know.

**Marty Kaplan:** —[Participant Media] is about to put out a picture called *Merchants of Doubt*, which is exact—based on Naomi Oreskes’s book—exactly about the deception industry.

But Tony, you have through the years—you have studied the ups and downs of public opinion about this. And would love to know what you found. I mean, we talk about Al Gore. Where does that fit in the story? And all of these counter-narratives being spun by billions?

**Tony Leiserowitz:** So first of all, we’re as certain about the human causation of climate change as we are that cigarettes cause negative health consequences. Okay? Nobody argues that. And yet, you would never see, even on Hannity or anything like that, anybody claiming no, no, cigarettes don’t cause cancer, heart disease, et cetera. So—
Norman Lear: That’s the equivalent of the testimony of the six or eight heads of tobacco companies who all put their hands up and swore that there was no indication they knew of that there was a connection between cancer and smoking.

Tony Leiserowitz: So if I can come back to where we just were—so, look, clearly the fossil fuel industry has a vested interest in this outcome. Right? They have literally hundreds of millions [at] stake.

But there’s another side of this that we have to keep in mind, and that’s the role of values—that this is also driven by what we call radical individualism. People who have really, really deep commitments to individual liberty, individual autonomy, anti-government—the government is always bad, all taxes are bad, all regulations are bad. In popular terms, it’s styled as the Tea Party or the Libertarian movement, et cetera.

And for them, they’re deeply afraid of this issue. Because this is an issue that we cannot solve through individual voluntary action. We can all do everything we can possibly do as individuals, and it would help. That’s a good thing to do. But it’s only part of the solution. In the end, we need systemic change, we need political change.

This is the ultimate collective action problem. It’s not even something the US can do by itself. We actually need international cooperation. Okay? And yet, for these people, as soon as you mention the word “international,” or “the United Nations,” oh my God. Okay? So that really motivates a lot of this. So one of the things I want to just push a little bit is that—one, that’s what you’re also up against.

The other, however, is that—look for ways to harness that. Okay? This is where you got to be creative. And so let me give you just a nice, concrete story. In the state of Georgia, the Sierra Club partnered with the Atlanta Tea Party. Let me say that again. The Sierra Club partnered with the Tea Party, okay, to support to change—because in Georgia there was a single monopoly, electrical monopoly, that wanted to produce and sell all electricity within the state, and was trying to kill—and keep people from being able to put solar on their own roofs and sell that power back into the grid. Okay?

The Tea Party and the Sierra Club joined together to fight that, and they beat the utility. Okay? Why? The Sierra Club because it cared about climate change. The Tea Party didn’t care about climate change, but they cared a lot about consumer choice, okay, and individual freedom, and your own right to be self-reliant. One of the ultimate American values. Okay? Who doesn’t want that?

I went through Sandy, I went through Irene, I was—I mean, I didn’t have any of the devastation we had. But I was without power for

“Comedians . . . need [to have] a discussion that we can respond to. If you’re creating a drama or a comedy, you can write the script. Our shows respond to news. If the news isn’t talking about the issue, it’s even more forced if we bring it up.”

— COMEDY PRODUCER/WRITER CHRIS ALBERS

two weeks! This sucks. I wanted solar panels. I wanted to be able to provide my own electricity. I think we all want that.

So there are occasionally times when you can get the strangest of bedfellows to actually work together.

Sidney Harris: I think, to add to that—in front of the Metropolitan Museum now is a new plaza, with a beautiful fountain or a pool of water. And it says, nice clear letters, that it’s the Koch Brothers Plaza. Now, it’s very hard to hate the Koch Brothers if you walk past the Metropolitan Museum, you see this beautiful plaza. And it’s very good PR for them. They’ve become a benign name to people who aren’t that involved. And they won’t hate the Koch Brothers.
Michael Winship: And you’ve seen their new advertising campaign on television which they’ve been running around Colbert and around Jon Stewart and so forth, in which they are painted as being this blissfully pleasant company.

Sidney Harris: Is that—do they show that? I haven’t seen that.

Lizz Winstead: It’s one of those crazy ones, where it’s like—

(Multiple speakers)

Michael Winship: It’s running on TV now.

Lizz Winstead: —we don’t make things, we make things better.

Michael Winship: Yeah.

Lizz Winstead: Or you know, it’s like that—it’s really—

Michael Winship: Yeah. It’s really—it’s like morning in America.

Rory Albanese: But I feel like the things Tony’s talking about is kind of like an important point. Because it’s almost like a rebranding of the problem. And I think it’s like if you sell solar power or wind energy as, you know, a libertarian right to like screw over the man, then now it’s much more appealing to a certain sect of people. And like maybe their motivation to do it isn’t the environment, but it’s—

Lizz Winstead: Windmills and guns!

Rory Albanese: Yeah, that’s all, windmills and—you know, fine, whatever it takes, you know. I mean, it’s like—it may be—you know, it’s just like—I think it’s very difficult to put—this country is divided in a lot of things, and it’s very difficult to put like your priorities on somebody else. And they have to—people have to find their own rationale to make a change. And people changing anything is hard. So telling people to recycle, or, you know, having two garbage pails, that like blows your mind up. What do you mean? You just throw everything in one hole, and then it goes away. But it’s like—if you give them a reason—that’s all, I feel like if there’s a way to sort of inspire other people who maybe don’t really care at all if the ice caps melt, or the Earth heats or whatever, but, you know, they care about other things. And then you got to just sort of play into that a little bit, you know. And that may be—that’s a really interesting story. I don’t know how much press that got or not. But to me, that’s a pretty incredible marriage of two very different groups of people. And even though their motivation was different, they got something done. So that to me is like probably one of the more hopeful things I’ve heard yet about this.

Michael Winship: Well, AP did a story last week, or two weeks ago, just basically talking about various local governments in Michigan and Georgia and Florida, where they’re basically—they’re doing good stuff to combat climate change; they’re just not talking about—

Rory Albanese: Calling it what?
Michael Winship: They’re calling it disaster preparedness, and—

Marty Kaplan: A couple of years ago, Tony and I were both at a National Academy of Sciences Conference in Washington. And you ran a workshop on climate change communication. And I spoke about it briefly and said to a large room of scientists—don’t bring a dataset to a food fight.

Rory Albanese: Exactly.

Marty Kaplan: And storytelling is not a dataset. Storytelling does accomplish these kinds of goals. So thank you for adding that story to our armament.

Michael Winship: Although one aspect of the climate denial thing that I’ve noticed a lot is that one of the great arguments is to sort of baffle you with statistics. Mean, you’ll make a—I saw this just happen yesterday, a piece we put up on the web—is that within an hour, there were three people on there, just starting with this statistic, and this—and I’ve seen it done to people like David Suzuki in Australia, where he was basically attacked with all these people. And you just sort of snow people with numbers.

Tony Leiserowitz: So if I can just interject here—so there’s this wonderful old quote, attributed to Stalin, okay, who said that a death of an individual is a tragedy. The death of a million? A statistic.

Michael Winship: Right.

Tony Leiserowitz: Okay? If they want to fight with statistics, go to it.

Michael Winship: Oh, yeah. No, it’s just that they get you in a corner when you don’t have the—you know—

Tony Leiserowitz: Well, okay. But most of us don’t want to sit around and listen to a statistics fight.

Michael Winship: Right.

Tony Leiserowitz: I think most of us want to hear a story.

Michael Winship: I agree.

Tony Leiserowitz: And actually, just to come back to the Georgia example—they didn’t stop there, they kept going. They’re now working together on a whole variety of other issues where they find common cause. And they’ve even created what they’re now calling the Green Tea Party.

Michael Winship: I’ve always loved the great line about statistics, that they’re like a drunk leaning on a lamppost—that they’re more for support than illumination. You know. But I have seen this happen, with this sort of snowballing [of statistics].

Lyn Lear: I just want to say, as long as we’re talking about hopeful things—I just want to mention Tom Newmark is here in the audience. And he’s the National Chair of Greenpeace. And one of the things I know Tom is working on is a whole movement about regenerative agriculture and organic agriculture in this country and internationally that’s very helpful and optimistic that—if you want to talk to Tom on the way, if you’re back there later. But he knows far more about it than I do. But there’s a lot of hope that we can get many more people, farmers in the world, to go back to no-till organic farming in the next few—in the next decade or so, then pull enough carbon out of the air that we can rebalance our atmosphere in the next few decades or 40 years.
Michael Winship: I think maybe it’s time for us to open it up to the audience.

Marty Kaplan: Yeah. And Kate has a mic.

Audience Member: I have a show called Human Rights [in] the [Fifth] State. The fifth state always represents the people [inaudible] the realm. And so the show basically highlights the human rights issue and then has experts come in and give advice to the audience. And because I studied strategic communications at Columbia, it’s not necessarily a news show. It’s really to get people involved. What is your advice on getting people involved in the plight of those suffering in the Rockaways?

Chris Albers: My town is a very small town. Down there, about every mile and a half, you’re in a new town. And there’s, of course, local restaurants that everybody goes to. And we’re divided by the railroad tracks. There’s the beach people, and then there’s the library district. But all within about 15, 20 blocks of each other.

I could go up to this local restaurant, and I’ll sit at the bar and talk about myself and have dinner. And I’ll talk to people that live just across the railroad tracks. And they don’t know that on my block, out of 20 houses, only about 10 people are living there. And most of those are the people that raised their houses—were forced to raise their house, because they remodeled it before the storm.

These are people in my town. So I don’t know how we do that. And if people in my town don’t know, certainly the rest of New Jersey doesn’t know, and the rest of the country doesn’t know.

What really pisses me off is not Chris Christie, who does these commercials saying—leading people to believe we’ve rebuilt everything, when we really just rebuilt the boardwalk. What pisses me off are the reporters, and the fact that they’re not holding anybody accountable. And it’s not their fault, but the people who made the decisions to cut the bureaus, to lay off so many reporters.

And it’s also the society we’re in right now. We can only handle one or two stories at a time, according to the media. So, you know, when was the last time you heard about the Malaysian plane? And yet, for two weeks, that’s all they would cover. Now it’s all NFL, and some ISIL. Hopefully, we’re going to get them to focus on climate change, at least for a day.

But I think it’s insulting to the audience that we—and all the networks follow suit. They’ll all stay on one story. Whereas—October 30 will be the two-year anniversary, believe it or not, of Hurricane Sandy. They’ll talk about it that day. Most will be showing the boardwalks, and everything was rebuilt. And then they’ll do a few, you know, pull-at-your-heartstrings stories about people in the Rockaways or down at the shore. And then they’ll stop talking about it.

I think that—the same way that climate change—we as comedians and working on comedy shows—we need there to be a discussion that we can respond to. If you’re creating a drama or a comedy, you
can write the script, like *Modern Family* did. Our shows respond to the news. If the news isn’t talking about the issue, it’s even more forced if we bring it up.

And so, that’s what angers me is, with all of these issues, whether it’s, you know, the hurricane or anything—they’re not focusing on that. You know, how about we try to tackle a dozen stories at once? I think the audience is smart enough to follow that.

**Audience Member:** Since—there’s no such thing as broadcasting anymore, really, the way it was when *All in the Family* was on. Now it’s all narrowcasting. Do you all see that as an advantage? I think I do, in that if you have 20 shows that are narrowcasting to a million people, where you’re doing streaming, and they’re all interested in global warming, now you’ve got broadcasting. And do you guys see that as an advantage, or a disadvantage?

And I’ll give up the mic after saying the only problem with [expletive] horses is getting a bucket the right size.

(Laughter)

**Lizz Winstead:** I mean, I would say it’s twofold. I feel like on the one hand, there’s something really powerful in finding those people who didn’t know there was a problem, and when you explain it to them, then they jump onboard. Instead of trying to change the minds of people, like giving them—people are like just—preaching to the choir. I’m like, well sometimes, the choir needs new songs. And so I think that can be an advantage.

The disadvantage of the narrowcasting for me comes from when a politician or an expert doesn’t need to go on—isn’t forced to go on other media and be challenged. And I always say to people—never, ever trust anybody who doesn’t try to go on the other shows, as far as a politician. Because you know—sometimes it’s impossible. O’Reilly and Hannity set it up where there is no way to actually get your point across. But you can go on with Brit Hume, or you can go on with some of these other people. Because if you’re smart enough, and you have courage of your conviction, and you have the facts, you should be brave enough and be required to be put in the hot seat, you know.

I wish that there was a moderator on *Meet the Press* that was actually—do what they used to do, where you sat in a hot seat with real journalists. But it’s just more of the same, I think it’s going to be. But I think that the fact we don’t—

**Michael Winship:** Well, wait 20 months, they’ll change moderators again.

**Lizz Winstead:** That’s right. I know! Hooray!

“Good comedy comes from taking truth and then skewering it. And at “The Daily Show,” as much as people want to say it’s like a left-wing conspiracy show, it’s really not. It’s truly like—let’s see what’s going on and then talk about it.”

— COMEDY PRODUCER/WRITER RORY ALBANESE

**Rory Albanese:** I also think just media or news-wise, I think the biggest issue I have with all news now is—particularly the cable news networks—is all three of them—is that they run on the same Nielsen business model that entertainment networks run on.

**Lizz Winstead:** Yeah.

**Rory Albanese:** So they’re basically just trying to get ratings. So then, all they’re doing is saying—well—so the problem with the narrowcasting thing is everybody’s going—well, look, we’re going to find our little niche market, and we’re just going to exploit the hell out of it. And then we’re going to be the number-one name in news. So it’s like—you know, MSNBC was like—well, Fox is killing on the right; we’ll go left. And CNN, you know, was like—we’ll go with holograms,
or—you know, I don’t know.

But it’s like—and they’re just failing. But there is no—PBS is really like the only source or, I think—BBC America does a pretty good job. But nobody—you get to choose what you watch. So the problem with it is you’re not ever going to get anyone who didn’t tune in to hear what they want to hear.

And I really believe that’s true on both the left and the right. I don’t think it’s particularly either side. And I think when you’re living—when you’re able to create your own universe of the news you want to take in and the papers you want to read, and the things you want to tweet about or yell about, then that’s your universe.

And it’s—the same way, the right might not want to listen to global warming, there’s plenty of issues the left doesn’t want to listen to that are important to the right. And so, like—so the narrowcasting is a good—it’s a good start for getting people talking about it. But you still have to get the guy watching Fox to tune into that. And you know, I don’t know how to do that. It’s a real challenge.

**Tony Leiserowitz:** We’ve actually got studies of *The Daily Show* and *Colbert*. And about a fifth of your audience is Republican and conservative.

**Rory Albanese:** Hmm.

**Tony Leiserowitz:** And in fact, only about half are Democrats. Okay? The rest are all independents or Republicans. And what we’ve actually shown is that, first of all, those shows report on science and environment, and especially climate change, vastly more than any of the major networks do, and that they have a real impact. People who watch those shows become more engaged, and they’re more likely to then go seek out additional information about the topic, usually for those people who really didn’t know much about it in the first place. Not the people who were already concerned about climate change, but the people who were like—I don’t really know what this is, but I tune into your show because it’s funny.

**Rory Albanese:** Right.

**Tony Leiserowitz:** Right? Comedy is a gateway drug.

**Rory Albanese:** Yeah.

**Tony Leiserowitz:** It is! I mean—

**Rory Albanese:** That’s why the first episode’s always free. Know what I mean? Just want to hook you—

**Tony Leiserowitz:** Give some to your friends.

**Rory Albanese:** Yeah.

**Tony Leiserowitz:** Yeah. So really, I mean, we come back because we love to laugh. And in the end, it’s entertaining.

“We don’t accept the fact that ours is the truth,” says Norman Lear of those on the left in American politics. “I’ve often thought we are cursed with reason.”
Rory Albanese: But it’s only—you know, absolutely. But it’s still the audience we’re talking about, on our best night during the election, is like 2 million people.

Tony Leiserowitz: Fair enough.

Rory Albanese: You know what I mean? So it’s still a faction—you know, it’s still a fraction of a fraction of a—you know, when you—but it’s definitely an interesting—I’m sorry you had to study it, though. I do feel bad about that.

Tony Leiserowitz: Are you kidding? That’s a great —

Jeff Stolzer: Hi, my name is Jeff Stolzer. It’s well-established that Frank Luntz changed the branding from global warming to climate change, which sounds much more benign. And so I’m wondering if we have a branding problem. Because people hear “climate change.” Well, you know, in Buddhism, change is eternal, change is good.

In this case, we’re really talking about Earth destruction. So do we need to rebrand this movement to make it sound more serious? I know this is about comedy, but it’s a serious issue. So I’m just wondering what you think about that.

Michael Winship: I always liked the idea of calling it global weirding. But that didn’t catch on.

Tony Leiserowitz: All right. So, I’ve done a lot of work on exactly this question, and it is probably the most often question I get asked, is what should we call it. And I won’t give you the long version of this. But we just did a major national study on what happens when you use those two different terms. And what we found is that the term “global warming” engages people much more than does “climate change.” People are more engaged, they are more accepting that it’s real, that it’s human-caused, that it’s a serious problem. They’re more likely to support policy when you use the term “global warming.”

That said, I think it’s—all of this, it’s about context. Context is king. And so, you know, if you’re on a show where you’ve got 15 seconds to talk about this issue, then I might use the word “global warming.” When I’m in a setting like this, I’m going to use “global warming.” “climate change”—it’s no problem.

But the last thing I’ll say is that you get these calls—let’s rebrand it as global weirding, climate chaos, climate disruption. I just—my view is if you want to do that, great, work it in. Call it global warming first. Bring that stuff in. But recognize how hard it is to rebrand this.

If you were Koch, and you wanted to rebrand your product, you’d spend billions of dollars, billions of dollars, to try to rename yourself.

“I just think that the truth in the comedy part of all of this, that’s bigger than just climate, is—you cannot be beholden to anyone, even though it kills you sometimes to do it. You have to be beholden to being a voice for people who don’t have one and calling bullshit when you see it.”

– COMEDY PRODUCER/WRITER LIZZ WINSTEAD

Okay?

So, for better or for worse, these are the terms we’re currently working with. And they’re already working. So I don’t think we need to completely redo it.

Lizz Winstead: And I think—I mean, it would be great if we had a Frank Luntz. I think we say it to ourselves all the time—where’s our Frank Luntz? (Inaudible)?

But you know, I really think it comes down to—when you just look at the amount of information that is out there in the world, and the
information that is—there’s way more in that funded, inaccurate information than there is people to refute it or give good information. And also, the lack—the little amount of media we do have that is giving the truth spends so much of its time refuting the [expletive] that the amount of time it has then to get to but this is really what’s happening is shortened by half sometimes. Not to be Nancy Naysayer, but—

**Audience Member:** As you’re talking about the naysayers to this, it made me think of Neil deGrasse Tyson, his recent series on *Cosmos*. And people asked him why he didn’t include creationism as a subject in his series. And he just said—this is a series about science. And I’m not including anything that’s not science.

And that—what he just said has been going through my mind again and again. I think we just have to say—this is science. And that’s all we’re talking about. And it’s not very funny, but it’s a good thing to keep in mind, especially when we feel like we’re under attack from irrational whatever.

**Michael DiGaetano:** Okay, Michael DiGaetano.

First thing is, the problem with [expletive] horses is getting a commitment.

(Laughter)

And—I didn’t realize that was going to have such an impact on the room, I thought I’d—I didn’t realize the whole thing was [inaudible].

(Laughter)

When I was like a young lad and moved down to L.A. to be a TV writer, I had a 60-year-old veteran Emmy-winning writer ask me to partner up, because all the writers are having trouble finding work. Well, here I am 30 years later, and now I have a 28-year-old writing partner. But the thing about Josh—he is like completely straight-laced, totally conservative Christian from the middle of Pennsylvania.

Now, *The New York Times* had a big article last week about all these [hill song] churches and all the young people who are very, very into religion and God. Is there any kind of a breakthrough to get to people like this, who preach to people who are 20 to 25—[hi], this is going to be your planet. Because by the time you’re 40, the rightwing Republicans are all going to be dead who have said this isn’t happening.

(Multiple speakers)

**Michael Winship:** Have you seen Katharine Hayhoe? Have you seen—

**Unidentified Speaker:** That’s what I was going to ask—

(Multiple speakers)

**Michael Winship:** —seen Katharine Hayhoe, who is an atmospheric scientist and evangelical Christian who teaches at Texas Tech. And if you saw that series, *Years of Living Dangerously*, and you can see that first episode online—she’s with Don Cheadle in Texas, where the drought has been so incredibly intense that people are finally coming around to the idea that—oh yeah, it’s not just the normal kind of drought we get; this is global warming.

But she’s very much involved in this. And I’ve you’ve read her, she’s terrifically effective at talking to specifically the groups that you mention, and winning them over.

**Audience Member:** You all mentioned the idea that telling a story has an impact. And you go back to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, to Dickens. And those were much more effective—one with, obviously, the slavery, one with the judicial system in London.

And in the ’60s, there were a bunch of films about the dangers of nuclear, from *Strangelove* to *On the Beach*. And we don’t see that anymore. In other words, the problem isn’t fictionalized. We don’t see—in the hardware movies, the enemy is always some automaton who’s going to kill everybody. It’s not global warming.
Michael Winship: Tony, didn’t you a study The Day After Tomorrow?

Tony Leiserowitz: I did. So I mean, there’s a whole new genre —

(Multiple speakers)

Well, there is. I mean, there’s a whole new genre now that’s gotten dubbed cli-fi. I mean, of novels and—

Unidentified Speaker: Which sounds like the horse thing.

(Laughter)

Unidentified Speaker: Sharknado.

(Laughter)

Tony Leiserowitz: But to this point, when I was early in my career, you know, I saw this movie coming out, The Day After Tomorrow, which I said—look, this is a perfect natural field experiment.

So I actually got funding to go do a study where I surveyed the American people two weeks before it came out, and then four weeks after it’d been in theaters, and then again four months later. And the upshot was I found that the people who went to see that film—and it at the time was one of the biggest-grossing films of all time—changed their views in line with the science, even though they took a lot of artistic license with that film. But they told at least a halfway compelling story as a blockbuster. And, you know, people became more convinced it’s real, they became more worried about it, they became more supportive of policy. They even said it was going to affect their vote in the 2004 election.

So, I mean, in a sense, I’ve come to be completely convinced and so impressed by this broader field in entertainment education. That’s what it does, is it gives us a narrative. It makes sense of all this welfare of chaos and confusion around us, and gives us a simple story, with characters that we can identify with and, most importantly, who role models for us, who show us how we’re supposed to act in the world.

So if there was one thing I would wish to see somebody write about—I want to see somebody giving a story about the movement.

Lyn Lear: There are several films in the work right now. And there are—there’s episodic television, too, which is really a great way to get this across. Because you can get involved in the characters and be in their lives and see their whole story.

Michael Winship: Lyn, what happens to your film after Tuesday?

Lyn Lear: Well, it’ll have a life. It’ll have a life on the ‘net, hopefully, for a long time. It’ll be on [take part], it’ll be embedded on a lot of different NGOs, and it’ll be on the UN. It’ll be translated into six languages simultaneously.

Marty Kaplan: And there’s another version of it, too, isn’t there?

Lyn Lear: There’ll be a sequel [coming out].

Audience Member: I was asked to do a series on Christian fundamentalism by the Nova series. And they said—we want you to do a film called Fire and Brimstone. And I said—I won’t do that film. They said—what are you talking about? I said—because that—you’re taking a position. You’re making them look like nuts. And I want to understand them. And I think understanding is really important.

So I did a film called What About God? And I think we should do a show called What About Global Warming? Let’s explore it. Let’s not make conclusions. I’ve made mine; we all have here. But let’s begin. Or, as my fundamentalist teacher said to me, a bold lie is better than the truth—better than the timid truth. So I think maybe we should call the series A Bold Lie. It’s better than the timid truth, which is all we have.

Audience Member: I think Rory hit on the answer, even if he didn’t realize it. He pointed out the problem before was that a story goes
on the news, it shows up on three websites. And people see it on the websites and think it’s true. All you have to do—because anybody can set up a website—set up a bunch of different websites, link them together so that they’re links that Google picks up on. And call one of them windmills and machine guns, whatever you want to call it.

(Laughter)

But set up a whole bunch of things that don’t look like they’re related. Pitch your story on the Internet. Anybody can set up a website, nobody knows who it belongs to. Once it appears enough times, it shows up on the—people start believing in it.

Lizz Winstead: Well, I actually thought of that idea. The problem is it’s much more complicated than that. Because you have to sustain the websites. There has to be articles, they have to be real. I’ve tried to fund on that. And it goes back to my other point of—when I go and ask funding on the left to do things like this, people are like—what’s the return, I don’t get it—where the Koch Brothers will fund any psycho, as long as the message is out there and drumbeat is going. And it’s always been a problem. And I think that is a fabulous idea. If you can get writers—

Rory Albanese: No, but it’s—

Lizz Winstead: —I know a million comedy writers who would love to have that be their job—to actually do these crazy new sites that all link together and do all that. But that means you have to create jobs. What happens so much on the left is—we’re going to give you $10,000 to make a little video, to combat the juggernaut that is, you know, FreedomWorks and everybody else. It’s not—why don’t we give a whole bunch of money to the smartest people, to do sustaining messaging that it literally rapid-response from all the [expletive] that is all the time, that we actually create a place that happens? That’s what we really, really need, to start doing it, because [inaudible]. I want to hear—

Audience Member: Okay. I was just going to ask really quickly—and Rory brought this up earlier, and all questions will go through Rory.

But you said that it was really hard—or that you guys had kind of poked fun at the Occupy Wall Street crowd. And I just wondered—this is something that the left does a lot, but not the right. The left seems to poke fun at their own, and the right does not. And we’re here, you know, talking about climate change. No doubt, that’s probably going to be on the menu at some point between like The Colbert Report and The Daily Show, so on and so forth. It would pop up, you know, as a joke. Do you think that’s a challenge? I mean, is it such a like—can you help yourself from not like pulling the trigger and making a joke about your own, the left, you know?

Rory Albanese: I mean, I think for The Daily Show, the perception is that it’s—our own is the left. Well, I mean, I don’t work there anymore, but it’s not. The Daily Show is comedy. And comedy comes from—I think good comedy comes from taking truth and then, you know, skewering it.

And I think it would be weak for The Daily Show to avoid things—Occupy Wall Street was—one of the best field pieces we ever did on The Daily Show was about Occupy Wall Street, which was—Samantha B. went and basically figured out that Occupy Wall Street had divided within Occupy Wall Street to like a bourgeois Occupy Wall Street which is on top of the park and had like a lending library and all these things. And then it was like the hippie Occupy Wall Street, on the lower levels of the park. And they became the one percent of Occupy—it’s really—like, if there’s one field piece I would recommend, it’s my favorite piece, I think, of all time. And so there was comedy there.

So, I don’t know. I think not doing that weakens anything else we do or the show does. Because then it just seems like we’re taking a side. And at The Daily Show, as much as people want to say it’s like a left-wing conspiracy show, it’s really not. It’s truly like—let’s see what’s going on and then talk about it.

So, you know, it’s kind of like when the right tries to do a comedy.
They’re like—we’ll just do a right *Daily Show*. Like it doesn’t work, because it’s not—well, they also have a guy like Greg Gutfeld on it. But more importantly, it’s like—you can’t do it that way. You can’t come at it specifically [I think] and saying like we’re going to be right or left on this issue.

I mean, it slants left in a lot of cases. But that’s because, you know, Bush was in office for a while, and that was just gold, you know —

**Lizz Winstead**: When I talk about issues—we’ve come to a place that comedians have become very trusted, as far as people who take on the world and observe the world. They just—people think that they’re truthful, they think that they don’t have an agenda.

And so, if the bumper sticker people—I don’t know who the bumper sticker people are, really. I mean —

**Michael Winship**: Do they have horses, is the question.

**Lizz Winstead**: They have horses, yeah. But I just feel like it’s all about looking at who has the power, and if they use it stupidly or if they abuse it. That should be the target. And you can’t not, you know—FEMA is supposed to be good. FEMA royally messed up, and has royally messed up, as an agency and everything. You know what I mean?

So, I just think that the truth in the comedy part of all of this, that’s bigger than just climate, is—you cannot be beholden to anyone, even though it kills you sometimes to do it. You have to be beholden to being a voice for people who don’t have one and calling bullshit when you see it.

**Marty Kaplan**: So, we have had an amazing conversation about equine love.

(Laughter)

**Marty Kaplan**: You make one joke—you make one joke.

And what I’d like to do is invite anyone on the panel who feels that there’s something they’ve been dying to say and didn’t get said to say so now. Mr. Lear?

**Norman Lear**: I think when we talk about things of the heart that we have to have the perspective of an anonymous notion that the psychological burden of independent, subsequently awful, disgusting, perhaps masturbatory notions—

(Laughter)

— may altogether sustain those inalienable rights which we unfortunately have lost in the gutter of sociology and pretending to violate those instantaneous notions of social—and I could go on like this—

(Laughter)

— for the whole —

(Laughter)

That’s what I think.

(Laughter)

**Marty Kaplan**: Which is a perfect time to thank the Writers Guild East and all of you, and especially, please, our panel.

(Applause)