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Exxon's Own Studies Warned of Climate Change Risk Years Ago

Inside Climate News | At a meeting in Exxon Corporation's headquarters, a senior company scientist named **James F. Black** addressed an audience of powerful oilmen. Speaking without a text as he flipped through detailed slides, Black delivered a sobering message: carbon dioxide from the world's use of fossil fuels would warm the planet and could eventually endanger humanity.

"In the first place, there is general scientific agreement that the most likely manner in which mankind is influencing the global climate is through carbon dioxide release from the burning of fossil fuels," Black told Exxon's Management Committee, according to a written version he recorded later.

It was July 1977 when Exxon's leaders received this blunt assessment, well before most of the world had heard of the **Exxon**, continued on page 2

Poverty Casts a Wide Shadow on the Health of Poor in L.A.

Blueprint | Life was rough for **Michelle Martinez**, a 33-year-old mother of three. She and her family had moved in with her parents, who were paying \$800 a month to rent a three-bedroom home in Eagle Rock. Then the landlord died and left the house to new owners, who raised the payments to more than Martinez, her partner or her father and mother could afford.

Martinez and her partner had already lost their own home in Commerce because their jobs ended. It wasn't fancy work, cleaning air conditioning units six days a week, but it had paid enough to live on. Now they were struggling to find something else. Her partner took buses around Los Angeles, where he stood at pick up sites for day laborers along with as many as 40 other men looking for work. In July, Martinez went to the emergency room at LAC+USC Medical Center. She had not been able to eat for five days because **Poverty**, continued on page 3

Photo Gallery | Deep Trouble

The Guardian | Gideon Mendel has traveled the world photographing people whose lives have been devastated by extreme-weather flooding brought on by climate change. Click or tap on image to see more photos and information.



As Clinics Close, Texas Women Try to End Pregnancies on Their Own

The Atlantic | "I didn't have any money to go to San Antonio or Corpus [Christi]. I didn't even have any money to get across town ... I was just dirt broke."

That was the response given by a 24-year-old woman in Texas' Rio Grande Valley when asked by researchers why she had attempted to terminate her pregnancy on her own, without medical help.

Between 100,000 and 240,000 Texas women between the ages of 18 and 49 have tried to end a pregnancy by themselves, according to a pair of surveys released Tuesday by the Texas Policy Evaluation Project, a University of Texas-based effort aimed at determining the impact of the state's reproductive

Pregnancies, continued on page 2

The survey results are important—the Supreme Court will hear a case concerning a Texas law on how abortion clinics are operated.

Boomers Could Be Remaking the Landscape for Retirement

Pacific Standard | Residents call life at Pismo Dunes Senior Park "Pismodise." Park manager **Louise Payne** calls it "a holding tank for the great beyond." Louise has short hair and blunt bleached bangs that give her the air of a preteen skateboarder, but at 72 she's often found rolling by the park's 333 trailers in her electric golf cart, alternating between her roles as mother **Boomers**, continued on page 3

She's 10. She's About to Be Told That She's HIV Positive

The Washington Post | The fifth-grader with cornrows stepped from an elevator at Children's National Medical Center and walked over the polished tile floor she had first crossed in a baby carrier. She rounded a corner and opened the door to Room 3400, its purposely generic name inscribed on a white panel: "Medical Specialties." Her adoptive mother, right **Children**, continued on page 3



Exxon oil drilling platform in the North Sea.

danrandom/Wikimedia Commons

Exxon, continued

looming climate crisis.

A year later, Black, a top technical expert in Exxon's Research & Engineering division, took an updated version of his presentation to a broader audience. He warned Exxon scientists and managers that independent researchers estimated a doubling of the carbon dioxide (CO₂) concentration in the atmosphere would increase average global temperatures by 2 to 3 degrees Celsius (4 to 5 degrees Fahrenheit), and as much as 10 degrees Celsius (18 degrees Fahrenheit) at the poles. Rainfall might get heavier in some regions, and other places might turn to desert.

"Some countries would benefit but others would have their agricultural output reduced or destroyed," Black said, in the written summary of his 1978 talk.

His presentations reflected uncertainty running through scientific circles about the details of climate change, such as the role the oceans played in absorbing emissions. Still, Black estimated quick action was needed. "Present thinking," he wrote in the 1978 summary, "holds that man has a time window of five to ten years before the need for hard decisions regarding changes in energy strategies might become critical."

Exxon responded swiftly. Within months the company launched its own extraordinary research into carbon dioxide from fossil fuels and its impact on the earth. Exxon's ambitious program included both empirical CO₂ sampling and rigorous climate modeling. It assembled

a brain trust that would spend more than a decade deepening the company's understanding of an environmental problem that posed an existential threat to the oil business.

Then, toward the end of the 1980s, Exxon curtailed its carbon dioxide research. In the decades that followed, Exxon worked instead at the forefront of climate denial. It put its muscle behind efforts to manufacture doubt about the reality of global warming its own scientists had once confirmed. It lobbied to block federal and international action to control greenhouse gas emissions. It helped to erect a vast edifice of misinformation that stands to this day.

This untold chapter in Exxon's history, when one of the world's largest energy companies worked to understand the damage caused by fossil fuels, stems from an eight-month investigation by InsideClimate News. ICN's reporters interviewed former Exxon employees, scientists, and federal officials, and consulted hundreds of pages of internal Exxon documents, many of them written between 1977 and 1986, during the heyday of Exxon's innovative climate research program. ICN combed through thousands of documents from archives including those held at the University of Texas-Austin, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Read the **series**, and find out **more** about climate change and the impact on our planet. ■

Pregnancies, continued policies.

The figure was found by asking an online, representative sample of 779 women whether they themselves or whether their best friends had ever tried to self-induce an abortion. Of the Texas women surveyed, 1.7 percent said they had performed an abortion on themselves, but 4.1 percent of them said their best friend had or they suspected she had.

The most common method reported was by taking the drug Misoprostol, also known by the brand name Cytotec. Other reported methods included "herbs or homeopathic remedies, getting hit or punched in the abdomen, using alcohol or illicit drugs, or taking hormonal pills."

The finding is important because the Supreme Court has agreed to hear a case, *Whole Woman's Health v. Cole*, that concerns abortion law in Texas. The court will decide the constitutionality of a 2013 law requiring the state's abortion clinics to meet the standards of ambulatory surgical centers and for their doctors to have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital.

At the time, most of the state's clinics didn't meet these requirements. It's too expensive for them to make the necessary renovations, they say, and there are not enough nearby hospitals for every abortion provider to gain admitting privileges.

As a result, Texas now has just 17 abortion clinics, compared to 41 in 2012, and almost all the remaining clinics are in major cities.

Read the **story**, and get **information** on reproductive health. ■



Who We Are

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Poverty, continued

her throat was inflamed. She was running a fever, and she could hardly get out of bed. The diagnosis: tonsillitis.

Financial pressures were taking a toll. “It’s probably why my body is breaking down,” Martinez said, sitting in the waiting room at County/USC on a recent afternoon.

Linda Rosenstock understands. She is a professor in the UCLA departments of Medicine, Environmental Health Sciences, and Health Policy and Management. Rosenstock knows that health problems for people in Martinez’s financial situation can stem from poverty and income inequality. The social and economic conditions of the poor can even shorten life spans, Rosenstock has found, based upon her assessment of peer-reviewed research. Ill health is the shadow consequence of unequal distribution of wealth, particularly in the United States, which has the greatest income inequality of any democracy in the developed world.

California is near the forefront of this disparity. An analysis of Census Bureau



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data by the Corporation for Enterprise Development shows that the top 20% of earners in California have an income of at least \$124,936—in contrast to \$23,980 for the bottom 20%.

Read the **story**, and get more **information** on the health of at-risk populations. ■

Children, continued

hand on a metal cane, limped through the crowded waiting room as JJ pulled a Care Bears coloring page from a plastic file and sat down at a miniature table. She began outlining stars with a blue crayon, then spotted a pair of familiar performers.

“Mommy, the clowns,” JJ said, pointing. “They were here last time.”

The 10-year-old was wearing three puffs of a cherry blossom perfume and a kaleidoscopic dress she had pressed the night before. She looked forward to these visits to the renowned medical center in Northwest Washington, in part because she knew a treat from McDonald’s or Checkers would follow and, in part, because amid a young life rife with turmoil, she found reassurance in her hospital routine.

She knew her measurements would be taken and hoped to crack 5 feet but not 100 pounds. She was ready to breathe in and out, and then, without prompting, produce a vein from which blood would be drawn, a ritual she had mastered before learning

how to steady a bicycle. She expected to be reminded of the bad germs in her body and told, yet again, that she must—must—take her medication every day.

Since the AIDS epidemic erupted in the 1980s, hundreds of children born with HIV have been brought to this hospital for treatment by medical specialists who become surrogate aunts and uncles. The doctors, nurses and therapists buy them birthday gifts, attend their graduations and teach them how to take pills. They monitor their life-defining numbers and strategize against a relentless virus for which no cure exists. They keep them alive.

They do all of this without telling their youngest patients why. And when the time to tell them does come as they reach puberty, the staff plans for weeks how to do it, debating whether the kids are ready to know — whether they can handle it.

And now they hoped that JJ could handle it, because she was about to learn the truth.

Read the **story**, and **more** on HIV/AIDS and **children** born with the virus. ■

Boomers, continued

hen and whip-cracker. California is a notoriously youthful culture, but eventually the perpetually young get very old. If they’re lucky enough to live in Pismo, which is on the Central Coast, they can exit its palm-lined entrance, cross the road, amble across the capacious sand of Pismo State Beach, and dip their toes in the Pacific Ocean while contemplating eternity (or a cocktail).

To move into Pismo you must meet four conditions: Be 55 or older, keep your dog under 20 pounds, be present when guests stay at your home, and be comfortable with what most Americans consider a very small house. “If you need more than 800 square feet I can’t help you,” says Louise with a shrug. There seems to be some leeway on the dog’s weight. The unofficial rules are no less definite: If you are attending the late-afternoon cocktail session on the porch of Space 329, bring your own can, bottle, or box to drink. If you are fighting with other residents, you still have to greet them when you run into them. Make your peace with the word “trailer trash.”

No one in California aspires to be old or to live in a trailer, but we need to be more open to the possibilities inherent in both. Every day since January 1, 2011, some 10,000 American baby boomers have retired, and that will continue until 2030, when people over 65 will make up 19 percent of the population (up from 13 percent today). Old is the new boom and it is changing the culture and the conversation. (Have you seen all the sexy talk in Betty White’s reality show?) In Washington, D.C., anxiety about the decreasing proportion of workers to retirees underlies the frenzied discussion of “entitlement reform.”

Read the **story**, and **more** on aging well with dignity and independence. ■

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