Naomi Klein and Carolyn Beeler: Covering Big Ideas and Personal Stories

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Greg Dalton: This is Climate One. I'm Greg Dalton.

Ariana Brocious: And I'm Ariana Brocious

Greg Dalton: The climate crisis can be difficult to cover in a way that most people can relate to. The mechanism goes from a person's gas stove to the atmosphere and back again in the form of a flood or a fire. That's a more complicated story than one person punching another in the face.

Ariana Brocious: That's why true stories of individuals or families experiencing the effects of the climate crisis not only puts their story in the spotlight, it makes it easier for people to relate to human-centered stories.

Greg Dalton: The news is important. We need news. And personal stories can help drive people to action. That's why we're talking to two journalists who recently won the Covering Climate Now Journalism Award for their work.

Ariana Brocious: Later in this episode we'll hear from Carolyn Beeler. She covered the story of a family in Pakistan dealing with the aftermath of historic flooding in the country. And I remember that. I distinctly remember looking at the photos and reading some news stories and being horrified by the scope of that disaster. It was really, really shocking.

Greg Dalton: I remember that too, and being horrified at how little Pakistan has contributed to the climate crisis, yet they're suffering terribly. And then, it faded. And I'm embarrassed and sad to say it was replaced by others: the Canadian wildfires, Maui.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah, and I don't think it's something to be embarrassed about. I think it's a simple fact that it's overwhelming. There are just so many things happening at an increasing pace. And it can be really heart-wrenching to read the day's news. I mean, one of our producers said it's like mass shootings. You feel the pain and anguish and then it's replaced by the next one. And we kind of get numb to it. Now there's major flooding in Libya.

Greg Dalton: Right. I've become numb to those mass shooting stories and numb to some of the climate stories. I intentionally decided not to read the Libya story for the first few days.

Ariana Brocious: And as we talk about all of these climate disasters, it also underscores why policies that address loss and damage are so important. Loss and damage is this idea that wealthy countries pay developing countries for the climate damage and harm that the wealthy countries have caused by burning fossil fuels for more than a century.

Greg Dalton: That was a big focus of the UN climate conference in Egypt last year where a fund was created to address loss and damage.

Ariana Brocious: That fund has yet to be funded, but we'll talk more about that later in the episode. But what I keep coming back to is that addressing the climate crisis revolves so much around addressing multiple areas at once: science literacy, racial and social justice, the economy. There are so many factors.

Greg Dalton: It really does take multitasking, which is a big part of the conversation I had with journalist, social activist and bestselling author Naomi Klein. I'm really excited to have her on the show. She's a true thought leader. Her books are highly influential and her book, the Burning Case for a Green New Deal inspired Jane Fonda to start her Fire Drill Friday climate protests in front of the US Capitol. Fonda will tell that story on the show next week. This week, I began my conversation with Naomi by asking how she's been dealing with the climate fueled wildfires near her community.

Naomi Klein: I live in British Columbia on the unceded shíshálh territory on the so-called Sunshine Coast. Weirdly, it has been for us on the coast, we've actually had less smoke than many other summers, even though the interior of the province in the north are very, very much on fire, you know, it's about wind direction. The last week has been pretty hazy but there have been whole months in previous summers and in the last few years when we could barely see a few feet in front of us. So where I am we have gotten off easy so far, knock wood. We had a, I really should knock wood, because last night and early this morning we had some really terrifying lightning storms. And so we're just, you know, it's very much drought conditions. We are in stage IV water restriction where I am and have been now for weeks. And last year we were off the charts in terms of our water restrictions. It was a state of emergency for water where I am. And, you know, it's technically a temperate rainforest, which is one of the things that is really sort of uncanny about this moment. There was a headline last year that said, you know, the Sunshine Coast is technically no longer a rainforest. So you really seeing this the ecology flip from one thing to another. And, you know, of course, the people who are really on the frontlines are migrant workers, farmworkers who are in a very precarious status. And when the farms where they're working shut down, they just get sent back home. And this is money that they need so you know we've been doing some work at the Center for Climate Justice which I codirect lobbying our government to grant status and rights to the migrant workers who have not been able to do the work that they came here to do and are so vulnerable. But, yeah, it's a lot and I guess Canadian fires have really gotten famous this year because the smoke reached to the center of the universe there in New York so everyone found out what our summers are like.

Greg Dalton: Right. And of course, in Northern California we've had our own bad years so I have

empathy for you what you're going through and for Canadians. Roughly a year ago the headlines were on another disaster amplified by burning fossil fuels, the horrific flooding in Pakistan. And I'm embarrassed to say I had forgotten about Pakistan's floods or block them out in my mind because these disasters are coming so fast and frequently. And those images helped advance an agreement at the UN Climate Conference in Egypt, COP 27, about wealthy countries paying for loss and damage that our lifestyles have inflicted on the Global South. You criticized COP 27 for several reasons. I'm curious what's your critique of that process?

Naomi Klein: Well, I guess just backing up. The climate crisis is not the only crisis that we humans are facing right now. We really are in this moment of overlapping and intersecting disasters that often fuel each other, right. So we have obviously a pandemic that we're just sort of slowly coming out of but it's still in our midst. There is an inequality and injustice crisis. There is a housing crisis where you know you mentioned Northern California, you know, I'm sure you remember what happened in the aftermath of the Camp Fire, the Paradise Fire where people were displaced needed to move to neighboring communities and then there was a big backlash against unhoused people. It led to a right-wing city council being elected in Chico. So that interplay between kind of hard right and in some cases, actually kind of fascist politics and the climate crisis I think we need to look very, very closely at, right? I mean more people were displaced by the Pakistan floods than live in Canada. I mean it was absolutely huge. And so the climate crisis is one of the big drivers of displacement within our countries and between our countries. And one of the other crises that we're facing is surging authoritarianism. And there is no it's seemingly more potent weapon in the hands of authoritarian politicians than fear of the other. You know, even if the other is internal within the country, but certainly if the other is, you know, a noncitizen on the border and we're seeing that in the United States. But this relates to I guess the criticism that I and many others had of the fact that we now have a couple of UN climate summits in extremely authoritarian countries. So last year was Egypt in Sharm El-Sheikh. Egypt was the site of an extraordinary youth-led revolution in 2011. There was a brief period of hope that it was finally going to perhaps become a democracy only for the Muslim Brotherhood to come to power and repress and then the military to come back to power and introduce more repression than existed under the previous military dictatorship of Hosni Mubarak. So my criticism made with others was that we are not gonna make any progress when it comes to climate if we aren't forcefully defending political freedoms, right. The work of climate scientists requires free publication; it requires the ability to disclose your research even when it is unflattering to governments. And it requires people being able to go out and protest and exercise their freedom of expression. It requires the ability to dissent. And so yes, there was the loss and damage agreement made at COP in Sharm El-Sheikh, but we'll see what comes of that because it was an agreement without money attached. And I think we should be very concerned about rising authoritarianism tens of thousands of political prisoners in Egypt. And now next COP is happening in the UAE where you know there are very, very few political freedoms. And so it becomes you know more and more like a weird sort of charade where I mean COPs always feel a little bit like a charade, but you know there's like a little pen where there's a sort of a theme park democracy zone where people get to wave signs and say things that people in that country are not able to do, right. And so I think it's a moment where we need to push ourselves in the climate movement to draw these connections between political freedoms authoritarianism climate action build real relationships solidarity with folks on the ground.

Greg Dalton: One of your other critiques I think is the infiltration of fossil fuel interests at the conference of the parties this UN Climate Summit. That was a big topic of discussion last year. It's also a topic of discussion this year. how is that damaging what we know is this collective action problem where we have to come together?

Naomi Klein: Well, I mean it's going into high parody now, right. I mean it was already pretty

absurd when Poland was hosting, you know, and they were having like parallel festivals of coal you know alongside the summit. But now, you know, to have an actual executive of a major oil company be the chair of the COP as is the case for the UAE I think points to really why we have been talking and talking and talking, you know, what is this COP 28. So that means there have been 28 of these summits and all the while emissions have been going up globally. And, I'll never forget the moment when I was at the pivotal climate summit in Paris and I have never told this story before but there was a protest at the bottom of the Eiffel tower after the final agreement was launched. And I had to write an article and my research assistant was back home. And we were texting I was saying his name is Rajiv Sicora he now works on The Hill. And I said like, Rajiv what is the final agreement say about fossil fuels? And Rajiv texted he's like, I just did a word search it doesn't say fossil fuels. I said, do word search for gas. He said nothing. I said do a word research for all -- and like is it possible that we have a climate agreement that does not mention fossil fuels? And so that's the hear of it, I mean how are we gonna do this work if we're not able to name the single largest contributor to the crisis? And the fact that we now have the chair of the COP, you know, who is himself a fossil fuel executive I think just sort of perhaps it's just going to create a crisis to extent that we now can actually surface it, you know, I don't know, we'll see. I'm not going. Are you?

Greg Dalton: I'm actually I'm gonna go. I was in Sharm, I didn't go for a number of years. But you're right it's an odd thing when it's considered a big win just to get the word coal into the document. Fossil fuel companies are infiltrating the diplomatic realm also, the academic realm. They have a lot to defend including their support of elite research universities as climate catastrophes accelerate, that's becoming controversial. We saw a Harvard Law school recently stepped down from the board of Conoco Phillips. Controversy swirling around the Doerr school of sustainability at Stanford now there seems to be a focus on MIT. What do you think should be the role of energy companies and elite research universities?

Naomi Klein: I don't think they should be an elite university, or any other universities. It's not just that they are fueling the climate crisis, it's that their money has fueled attacks on scientists over all of these years. And they've underwritten the whole messaging machine that led to the hacking of climate scientists' emails. And so there's a core conflict of interest between an institution that is priding itself on standing for following research wherever it leads and defending academic freedom and being in league with these corporate actors, many of whom have been very active players in a scientific misinformation and attacks on climate scientists in particular. So it's a huge issue I think it's also an issue that you have like tenured professors who take like patents out on technologies that act as greenwashing for these oil companies and then in some cases sell them to those companies. So it isn't just like funding the research it's also a business model. It's interesting because, you know, I was part of the kicking off of the fossil fuel divestment movement with my friend Bill McKibben when we read the carbon bubble report, the stranded asset report. And I was on the board of 350 at the time, were campuses like sophomore where there were campaigns against coal investments by the university endowment. But there wasn't a national and then international fossil fuel divestment movement. It was you know, it's really wonderful to be part of kicking that off. I was on the do the math tour with Bill and others. And was a real but wonderful tool for organizing on campuses. That's one thing I will say for the fossil fuel divestment movement including building relationships and alliances between faculty who wanted action and wanted a way to have their institutions really stand for their stated values. But, you know, I work in a university and, University of British Columbia, and I didn't always work in the academy. I'm new to the academy just the past five years. And I'm really struck by the difference between the discourse around talking about fossil fuel funding for research and divestment. It's a lot easier for faculty to criticize where a university's pension fund goes or endowment goes, than it is to talk about where one of their colleagues is getting their funding. Really that violates like a core principle around collegiality

Greg Dalton: Yeah, most professors don't interact with the university endowment. They may get some money from it, but it doesn't touch their daily job which is the grants and you're right their colleagues. Now you're talking about scholarships for earth sciences and earth science departments are full of fossil fuel funding.

Naomi Klein: And you're talking about you know your friend down the hall. You know you're talking about people that you know that you like it just gets trickier. And so I think that this is a huge issue, but part of the reason why it hasn't taken off like divestment is because this sort of collegiality which in principle is a good thing. but not if we're self -censoring about something important.

Greg Dalton: This week I saw social media personality post about Thomas Piketty's book Capital in the Twenty-First Century which was published a decade ago. then came doughnut economics, degrowth, post growth, we recently did a whole episode on that. As an intellectual leader in that arena I'm curious how you see the shape and scope of that conversation. And if the Overton window, the zone of socially acceptable discourse is expanding.

Naomi Klein: You know my answer to that depends on the day. On my bad days I feel like it's more possible to talk about it because there's less action. Like that it sorts of more kind of social media performance. The boundaries of acceptable discourse are expanding at a time when sort of speech itself is experiencing a sort of a currency devaluation or to quote Greta Thunberg, there's just a lot of blah, blah, blah going on. I mean it's easy to say things if you don't plan on doing them, right? And so I think the moment we're in and I would say that's not just about climate. I mean, I think there's a lot of feeling around racial justice that post 2020 there was just a lot of discourse, a lot of positioning, a lot of companies talking about how they stood with Black Lives Matter, but like really seeing the changes? That said, I do think that discourse matters. I mean I engage in it for a living. And I do think words matter when we attach them to real actions. And I am heartened that there is more discussion around degrowth in particular, less so the sort of like normalization of a critique of capitalism. Sometimes I do feel like it's almost trendy to just be like oh, this is just like, you know, necropolitics capitalism, and it's coupled with a resignation that it's just the way things are and you're not trying to change it. If it's connected with ways that people are organizing in their workplaces in their institutions in their neighborhoods in their communities, trying to change those systems, whether they're suing big oil, they're demanding that their employers kick out the fossil fuel funders. I mean that gives me hope because it means that we're connecting discourse with action. And degrowth in particular, you know, I think it does start to get to the heart of the problem which is that we have an economy that we have a definition of success that equates a healthy economy with growing consumption. And yes, you can say oh you can decouple growth from conception, but we haven't done that we haven't done that at all. the extent it's possible it's so marginal. it doesn't mean that we can't grow the parts of our economy that we absolutely need to grow as we rollout renewables as we invest in low carbon sectors like the care economy. But we have to have a much more deliberate economy where we decide based on our goals and our values where we want to grow and where we need to contract because the earth systems can't handle it. And so I am heartened by that discourse but the challenge is always to connect it with actions in our real lives.

Greg Dalton: You're listening to a Climate One conversation about how journalism can help make personal connections to climate impacts. If you missed a previous episode, or want to hear more of Climate One's empowering conversations, subscribe to our podcast wherever you listen.

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Greg Dalton: Coming up, how housing policy is an overlooked climate issue.

Naomi Klein: In terms of who dies during these disasters. It's often inadequate housing, inadequate circulation, inadequate weatherization.

Greg Dalton: That's up next, when Climate One continues.

It's important to remember that the climate crisis is intertwined with so many other crises in people's lives. And if we try to address climate without addressing housing, the extreme concentration of wealth, environmental racism, we won't get to the deep roots of the intertwined problems. But tackling all those things at once is daunting.

Let's get back to my conversation with best selling author, journalist and activist Naomi Klein.

Naomi Klein: Most people have a lot of different crises that they're contending with in their lives, including an affordability crisis, including a housing crisis. And if we just sort of try to lift climate out of all of that that whole web of interlocking and intersecting crises then we're probably gonna end up with policy responses that don't take them into account, right? And so I think a lot of backlash to climate action comes from the fact that a lot of climate policies are seen as increasing the cost of daily living for regular people, that it is gonna be just switching from fossil fuels to wind and maybe the wind will be more expensive because we haven't challenge those ownership structures and we haven't introduced community controlled wind which is possible to do. Denmark has done it, you know, and then you have the real community buy-in because the extent to which it generates profits, they stay in the community, it funds services, it creates jobs. And that's how you get like robust and sturdy buy-in. Because if you do it the other way, what you end up with is backlash and we're seeing that in all kinds of different contexts.

Greg Dalton: Right. The cost is direct and personal and immediate and the benefits are for somebody else tomorrow. You talk about climate justice as multitasking, which I think is a really relatable and useful term. mean by that?

Naomi Klein: Well, I think we start from the premise that climate is one of multiple crises, a really big one, and I would certainly argue that all the others fit inside it because we're talking about the infrastructure in which all of life on this planet unfolds. But it's in this web; it's in this web of other crises. So when we design policy responses those policy responses need to multitask, right. So, you know, where I live in Canada many first nations don't have adequate water, don't have clean water, don't have electricity, and are owed reparations for the theft of their land. And so a multitasking response to the climate crisis would say that first nations should be first in line to own and control their own renewable energy projects and that should include training, jobs, profits flowing to the communities. And that isn't a replacement for getting clean water and health care and actually respecting treaty rights and land rights. You know another example where I live in the Pacific Northwest there is a housing crisis. It's a desirable place to live in part because of climate change, right, we've got migrants coming from California. Vancouver is a ridiculously unaffordable city. And it's so bad and tenants are so vulnerable to what is called renoviction, right. Their landlord improves their housing a little bit and they up the rent and kick them out, that even though 600 people in British Columbia died during the heat dome in, there is still a lot of concern about landlords installing heat pumps and doing retrofits that could save lives in the next heat dome because tenants are convinced that they will be evicted in the name of green retrofits. and they're not wrong, they're not wrong. They could very well be evicted because of that. So the question like a multitasking solution would be how do we lower the rent and lower emissions at the same time? How do we recognize that housing is actually a human right and really get serious about nonmarket housing and tenant protection? I realize this doesn't sound like a climate issue, but it is a climate issue because

housing is a big, big emitter.

Greg Dalton: I totally agree. And I've been trying to get climate people to talk about housing for a long time and they think oh that's not why I went to school for that's not my thing, Housing is very urban. Yeah, it's not their thing and housing is a huge climate lever it's just not often seen as such.

Naomi Klein: Yeah, it's both a climate risk, right, I mean in terms of who dies during these disasters. It's often inadequate housing, inadequate circulation, inadequate weatherization. But also, people will resist the changes if they're not fair, right. Like often climate justice advocates get treated like, oh, you're slowing us down you're making it more complicated can't we just do a carbon tax can't we just like, you know, make this really simple. But that doesn't account for the backlash. Because when you have unjust climate policy it's one step forward and two steps back.

Greg Dalton: You have been an influential thinker on what happens after fossil amplified fires, floods and hurricanes. What is disaster capitalism and how was the disaster capitalism complex evident in Maui today?

Naomi Klein: Yeah, this is what actually brought me to climate research. first books in my early journalism was really about economic inequality and human rights, which is, you know, probably why keep coming back to it. And in 2005 I had just returned from Iraq and I had done some writing for Harper's about the privatization of war and occupation and reconstruction in Iraq in the aftermath of the US invasion, right. So casting our minds back some people were probably too young to remember but it was a little bit shocking the extent to which that was a privatized endeavor, right. So yes you have the US military, but the bases were built by Halliburton and you know all of the juicy reconstruction contracts were given to American companies in really sweetheart deals like Bechtel. You had the highest percentage of mercenary soldiers fighting alongside American military officers. You have Blackwater there, you know, in the theater as they say. And then, so I was working on this as I said, you know, reporting on it for Harper's and I was thinking about expanding it into a book and then Hurricane Katrina happened. And the photographer who I had been in Baghdad with Andrew Stern called me from New Orleans and said, they're all here it's Halliburton, Blackwater like, you know, one reporter described it as Baghdad on the Bayou. And so that's when I started writing about the disaster-capitalism complex and also something that I call the shock doctrine. So that research led to my 2007 book The Shock Doctrine. And The Shock Doctrine refers to the strategy of exploiting states of shock when people are necessarily focused on the day-to-day business of staying alive, whether it's because they're under evacuation or their home, you know, their neighborhood is under assault, military assault. And moving in so quickly, precisely because people can't be engaged in politics in a moment like that or it's very hard to be to push through a kind of policy wish list. So after the flooding of New Orleans and after it was evacuated it became a laboratory for education privatization. New Orleans is the most privatized school system in the United States because public schools were shut down and reopened as charter schools. Public housing that wasn't storm damaged but was on desirable higher ground was bulldozed and replaced with market housing. So, you know, whenever there is one of these huge disasters, I almost always get some emails from folks on the ground saying it's happening again and I take no pleasure in this, you know. But I did hear from some colleagues in Maui and on other islands as well. And they were telling me that it wasn't only real estate agents who were calling residents who had just lost their homes on Maui and trying to urge them to sell their ancestral homes. But also, that there had been this big victory for water rights right before this. And that was being rolled back under cover of emergency. So yeah, it's a pretty old playbook. It's very cynical. It happened in Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria as well. I wrote a piece for the Guardian with Kapuaʻala Sproat who's a wonderful legal scholar. And she calls it plantation disaster capitalism because she wants to really underline that this is not new, this is part of a long history of resource grabbing in Hawaii.

Greg Dalton: Right. The whole colonial history laid the foundation for that. The very positive story out of Yasuni National Park I know you've written about Ecuador. That surprised me honestly, I wasn't following it I didn't think that would happen. Does that give you hope?

Naomi Klein: I mean, yes, and, you know, that is a victory that is just decades in the making. I don't think people really understand how deep it is. The whole concept of ecological debt of the idea of there being a debt owed from north to south and to the south in the north comes from the environmental justice movement in the Global South and the North, but in particular in the Niger Delta where the oil fields have decimated so many lives, and continue to and in Ecuador because of the despoliation of the rainforest there. And so for a long time there's been a lot of movement thinking about what it would mean to really to leave the oil in the ground but not say, well, this is only the responsibility of some of the poorest people on the planet to keep it there that we all benefit when that oil in the Yasuni rainforest stays underground. That that is a gift to all of humanity. And the burden of it should not only be carried by those in Ecuador who made that extraordinary decision. So I would say it's a victory but it's actually only a partial victory. They did their part by saying we want to keep it in the ground but we still haven't done our part in the wealthier countries to push our governments help them pay for the healthcare and other forms of poverty reduction so that there isn't been a backlash against this because it could happen; it could happen in a few years.

Greg Dalton: Right, the Ecuadorian government asked the international community to pay to keep that oil on the ground and no one came up with much money, but then Ecuador and people voted to do it anyways. As we get through the end, "hopium" is a term I'm starting to hear in the climate conversation. You say you have a complicated relationship with hope. Can you tell me about that?

Naomi Klein: Hey, that's funny I first used that term a long time ago. It's funny. I used it after Obama was elected on a campaign of hope.

Greg Dalton: There you go.

Naomi Klein: Yeah. I have a complicated relationship with the term hope only because I think hope is something we earn; it isn't something we have. And I guess it comes back to what we're talking about earlier about connecting words with language. I sometimes think that that people think that it's just almost like a commodity like I have hope. And I have it like a lot of things on some days but not on others, and the days when I have it it's because I see amazing organizing going on and there is still incredible organizing and I see new people coming into this movement and making all of these connections and insisting on intersectional climate movement. And that's when I think we've earned the right to a ray of hope.

Greg Dalton: Naomi Klein is a professor of climate justice at the University of British Columbia award-winning journalist, syndicated columnist and New York Times best-selling author of many climate books. Thank you, Naomi for coming on Climate One I hope we get a chance to talk again.

Naomi Klein: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Greg. Take care.

Greg Dalton: You're listening to a conversation about a human-centered approach to covering climate. This is Climate One. Coming up, how do you tell a story about loss and damage that makes that policy human?

Carolyn Beeler: This family lost their house and they lost wages for several months. So would there be a way that money could have flowed from for example, the Global North or historical emitters into Pakistan and get right into the hands of these families.

Greg Dalton: That’s up next.

Last year’s UN Climate Conference in Egypt concluded with one major positive outcome: the creation of a loss and damage fund for wealthy, high-emitting countries to pay developing countries to reduce future climate impacts and adapt to harms that will inevitably happen. The details are still being worked out. Some developed countries - scared about setting a precedent for liability - are looking to limit the scope and size of the fund.

Ariana Brocious: But rich nations even acknowledging their responsibility was a meaningful step forward. It’s easy to think about the fund and payments in a macro sense, but there are people who are suffering from fossil amplified disasters they aren’t responsible for, desperately in need of help.

Greg Dalton: Last August Pakistan suffered historic flooding, UNICEF puts the damage around $30 Billion. Caroyn Beeler, Environment Reporter and Editor for The World, went to southern Pakistan’s Sindh province to report one family’s experience of the life changing floods.

Caroyln Beeler:

Abdul Ghani's family fled to the roof of a nearby school when the floodwaters came in August. They were here on this sun-scorched spot when waves in the floodwaters, whipped up by heavy winds, destroyed their home.

Our hearts sank, Ghani says. The house that was our shelter, our children's home, was destroyed. Ghani lived in that house with his wife and three kids, along with his seven brothers and their families. From the roof of the school, you can see one remaining room, surrounded by water. This is my home, he says, pointing to what remains.

I built this house on my own, he says. No one helped me. When it fell, it was heart wrenching. The floodwaters only receded enough for them to come down from the school roof two weeks ago. So you spent two months living on this corner here of this roof. Yeah, he says. Now they've moved off the roof and down into the school itself.

Each family has one of the classrooms to sleep in and people hang out in the courtyard. Ghani's wife, Hir Mala, is squatting over a fire in the hallway, stirring a pan of stewed greens and potatoes. Their three and five year old stand watching behind her as we talk. How have your kids been? Have they been healthy?

The children are not healthy here, she says.

But what can we do? We're helpless until we return home. Our children play in the flood water. We try to stop them, but they won't listen. She thinks that's where her son's cough came from. Her two oldest also have malaria. Their fevers just broke yesterday. Cases tripled in this province at the height of the floods.

We dream that our kids will get educated and become doctors, she says, with a smile. But how are they going to do that if they can't go to school? Scientists say climate change made this flooding more intense, and it's largely impacted poorer folks in Pakistan who've done the least to cause it.

Mullah tells me she's only ridden in a car once on their wedding day. UN negotiators pushing for loss and damage funding argue that post disaster aid comes at the whim of donors. So far, a UN appeal for Pakistan has brought in only a third of its goal. And when aid comes, it can be slow, which means that an initial disaster can cascade into massive health and economic problems.

Five of Abdul Ghani's brothers and their families are sheltering in the school now. Ghani's niece, 12 year old Fatima Mullah, now sleeps in a classroom a few doors down from where she used to be in second grade. Where was your desk?

She and a few of her cousins in the same class point to spots in a room where an aunt and uncle now sleep. English was one of Fatima's favorite subjects and she shows hers off to me. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P. So it's like a, a, candlelight. She says she likes it here because she plays a lot with her cousins.

They tear through the courtyard playing tag while I visit. But Fatma says she really misses school. Her mom, Shehzadi Mala, says it's true.

She cries and says, bring back my books, but we can't because we don't have money. Shazadi Mala says we can't even eat three meals. How can we buy books? The family is down to two meals a day. The cow whose milk they used to sell this tied up in the school's courtyard under a line of drying laundry. All the cows grazing land is flooded.

So she's not producing enough milk for the family to sell. The places where Abdul Ghani used to work as a Mason are all flooded too.

He shows me the nets he just bought to start fishing the floodwaters. It's hard to tease out how much climate change contributed to the losses suffered by Ghani and his extended family. Warming made the rains more intense here, but other factors also drove the damages, like development on floodplains, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of good warning systems.

Ghani tells me he didn't know the floods were coming until water from breached embankments arrived at his house. The difficulty of attributing damages to climate change is part of the reason that until this year, no national government had pledged money for them. But as climate fueled catastrophes have started to accelerate, that has started to change.

For The World, I'm Carolyn Beeler in Dadu District, Pakistan.

Ariana Brocious: Carolyn won this year’s Covering Climate Now Journalism Award from for that piece. When I spoke with her, I asked her to tell me the backstory behind that reporting in Pakistan.

Carolyn Beeler: So I went to Pakistan in November of last year when the COP climate conference was happening. And I went very intentionally at that time because I knew that Pakistan would be raising the call and leading the charge to create a fund for loss and damage, loss and damages at this climate conference. And, you know, I knew a lot of journalists would be at the conference itself doing great coverage of what was happening there but I wanted listeners to understand what the real stakes were for people on the ground. What loss and damage actually meant and what that felt like specifically in this story for one family? So while I was in Pakistan I was keeping an eye on the news that was coming out of the COP climate summit and reporting some of that but tying it in really to the lived experiences of people on the ground.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah, and this is really striking because I think those climate negotiations can feel very distant and kind of esoteric even though they are of course dealing with issues that are facing people every day. And so being able to connect that to this experience does I think for our listener help them understand. So these floods were horrific, extraordinarily damaging. If you could, tell us like what would be a connection to loss and damage at the climate conference like what might be a solution or something that could help families like this if that was actually being discussed at the COP conference.

Carolyn Beeler: Yes, so I mean I think the primary objective of me during this reporting was to actually just show what loss and damage means on the ground to families. So this is like very early days for the idea of this fund and it is not at all clear how money might be distributed. But in this case, this family lost their house and they lost wages for several months. So would there be a way that money could have flow from for example, the Global North or historical emitters into Pakistan and get right into the hands of these families to be able to rebuild the house or make up for lost wages things like that. Again, that's the idea that some people are talking about loss and damage but it's very political. There's a lot being discussed, and it's not at all clear how that money might flow. Another difficulty that I think I pointed to in the story is that you know, how much of a disaster is fueled by climate change, how much is natural more natural less man-made event. How much might be have been able to be prevented with better early warning system. So another problem with following the money from any sort of loss and damage fund into the hands of a family like this is exactly how much of their house being destroyed was because of climate change versus "normal flooding" or poor early warning system, things like that.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah, and it's interesting we had an interview recently with someone from the Union of Concerned Scientists about the increasing ability of scientists to actually parse out that data. It's becoming a really interesting field where they can say with more specificity this, you know, hurricane was amplified X amount by climate and these emissions even came from this particular sector or particular area which is really interesting. So I do want to note for listeners that that fund, there was a success last year at COP 27 there was a fund for loss and damage created. However, it has yet to actually be funded, money has not been transferred. So climate is a natural and of course embedded part of the environment which is your coverage area, but it intersects with so many other areas as well. How does climate appear in the stories that you report all across the world?

Carolyn Beeler: Yes, so I am the environment correspondent and editor. So I'm kind of the most visible person who covers climate change. But it is part of a lot of the stories that we do. So most of what I do these days is climate coverage. So I was in Pakistan in November reporting on these floods. I've been to Antarctica reporting on glacial melt there. I've done post-disaster reporting looking at climate resilience in places like the Caribbean Island of Dominica. So, you know, a lot of my reporting around the world is really focused on climate, the human impacts of climate adaptation, mitigation, things like that. But I'm proud of the coverage that we do, that I don't do the fact that we have really worked hard to integrate climate coverage into all of our reporting. We have reporters based all over the world and they all do climate stories. They all do stories that have to do with environmental science or climate impacts. Because we acknowledge and understand and want to share with listeners that climate change impacts every facet of life, not just what you think of as "environment stories."

Ariana Brocious: Yes, exactly, right. Earlier this year you did some reporting from Ukraine, both on the war there itself and on the environmental fallout of that. Tell us a bit about what you saw and heard reporting there.

Carolyn Beeler: Yeah if you want to focus on the environmental fallout. I was reporting in June on this topic and it's one that I think doesn't get a ton of coverage because a lot of the more immediate and frankly devastating impacts of the war are so front of mind. You know, obviously we should be thinking about loss of life, livelihood and property first, especially loss of life. But the environmental impacts of the war that's going to be around for decades to come. So some of the main impacts especially early in the war Russian hits were targeting industrial sites things like oil depots. And so you had just tons and tons of industrial chemicals and oil that reached into the groundwater and soil. So I visited one community outside of Kyiv where a giant oil depot was hit. It burned to this black thick smoke for five days early on in the war. And then a couple months later, residents of the closest village notice that this lake that they use to visit to swim out and sunbathe by was being

covered by oil. So that's just one example of how that can impact one community. People there do drink water out of wells and that area with the lake used to be a fun spot for recreation was no longer. I also saw a place in the national forest outside of Kyiv where a Russian missile that had been intercepted and exploded before it hit the ground, landed. And even though it had been destroyed, you know, mostly before it hit the ground, you know, there's this big ring of forest that was burnt to a crystal that looked like charcoal and you could still smell this jet fuel that had leached into the ground after that happened. And that was just this one tiny, tiny example of how forests all around the country are being decimated. If you think about the front line is like 600 odd miles stretching along the eastern border of Ukraine and there's this old-school trench warfare there that is digging up forest, ripping up forest creating forest fires everywhere. So that is having a big impact in forests and also in protected areas around the country.

Ariana Brocious: You also traveled to Norway on that trip if I'm not mistaken. So what were you doing there what were you reporting on?

Carolyn Beeler: Yeah, so Norway became the biggest exporter of natural gas to Europe in 2022 as Europe try to wean itself off of Russian fuels and also Russia cut supplies of gas heading to Europe. So increased about 8% in 2022. Their oil exports are expected to increase about that much maybe 6, 7% this year. So Norway has stepped in as a reliable source of fossil fuels to Europe and increased their expansion. You know not a huge amount but not an insignificant amount either. And so I was reporting on that there and really looking at this idea of whether the increased demand for their fossil fuel products and increased higher prices might increase production far down the road, not just in the near term. Europe really needs those additional fuel sources, but whether this will trigger investments that will lead to more exploration and then production, you know, for decades to come. So there are green party members and environmental activists who are really concerned that the high prices and investment now will lead to a lot more extraction 10, 20, 30 years from now when the world needs to be burning almost no fossil fuels in order to reach net zero and the climate targets that countries including Norway have signed onto. So I think the top line is that it's probably too early to say if Norway's long-term fossil fuel extraction will increase because of this war, but there is right now additional investment including in exploration that could lead that way. So, Norway is an increasingly important provider of energy to Europe and the way that energy thing talked about there has really changed. And the political conversation about it has changed a bit. And so there might be repercussions of that down the road.

Ariana Brocious: Yeah, that's interesting. It's interesting to travel to some other places that are experiencing these effects of the war. Elsewhere in this episode we talk with author and activist Naomi Klein who is very critical of last year's UN climate summit as we've called, you know, COP, known as a conference of parties in Egypt. What are you paying attention to for this year's upcoming conference of parties in the UAE?

Carolyn Beeler: Yeah, I mean the challenge of these climate summits is that they are based on consensus, and you have countries from the Marshall Islands to giant oil and gas producers like Saudi Arabia who are trying to agree on something. So you're never going to get giant steps forward. So far, we've seen you know very incremental progress on a problem that needs very rapid progress. However, they are the only place that international climate policy gets made. So as flawed as they are, they are a place where everyone comes to the table and has to talk about these things. So this upcoming COP I think will also have a lot of challenges being hosted by a major fossil fuel producing company. We've seen a lot of potential conflicts of interest in the leadership of that COP. So I will be interested to see what if any sort of real progress comes out of that meeting. Also, again this year I think you know it'll be important to see how civil society activists are treated, you know, freedom of the press, etc.

Ariana Brocious: Carolyn Beeler is environment correspondent and editor at The World. Carolyn, thank you so much for joining us on Climate One.

Carolyn Beeler: Thank you for having me. It's been a pleasure.

Greg Dalton: On this Climate One… We've been talking with award winning climate journalists Carolyn Beeler and Naomi Klein. This episode was produced in collaboration with Covering Climate Now.

Climate One's empowering conversations connect all aspects of the climate emergency. To hear more, subscribe wherever you get your pods. Talking about climate can be hard-- AND it's critical to address the transitions we need to make in all parts of society. Please help us get people talking more about climate by giving us a rating or review. You can do it right now on your device. You can also help by sending a link to this episode to a friend. On our new website you can create and share playlists focused on topics including food, energy, EVs, activism. By sharing you can help people have their own deeper climate conversations.

Ariana Brocious: Greg Dalton is Host and Executive Producer. Brad Marshland is our senior producer; Our managing director is Jenny Park. Austin Colón is producer and editor. Megan Biscieglia is our production manager. Wency Shaida is our development manager, Ben Testani is our communications manager. Our theme music was composed by George Young (and arranged by Matt Willcox). Gloria Duffy is CEO of The Commonwealth Club of California, the nonprofit and nonpartisan forum where our program originates. I'm Ariana Brocious.