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What Did You Do to Fight the Climate Crisis?

Why not a New Year's resolution for the planet? Something that can make a difference with the biggest threat in the history of humanity.

The earth is heating at an almost incomprehensible rate: the equivalent of exploding 400,000 bombs the magnitude of the bomb the U. S. dropped on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945 every day! This is why it is crucial to stop burning fossil fuels as quickly as we can to keep as much carbon as possible in the ground.

The U. S. Department of Defense identified climate change as a national security threat, a "threat multiplier" that makes existing problems worse. More wildfires, more devastating storms, more illness and death, more climate refugees, the melting of the permafrost with the potential release of more carbon than has been released by humans thus far.

I have heard many presentations on climate change. In almost every one, the question is asked, "What can I do to make a difference?" Few provide practical actions everyday people can take to fight the climate crisis.

At THIS! Is What We Did, the nonprofit I started to fight climate change, we thought long and hard about how we can answer the Ultimate Question: "What did you do to fight the climate crisis?"

One of the best chances to preserve the planet for future generations involves interrupting three crucial flows of money. There is the money that we everyday people give banks whose lending is destroying the climate ("climate-bad" banks for short). The worst of the U. S. climate-bad banks according to Rainforest Action Network's 2020 report are, in order of most destruction financed: JPMorgan Chase, Wells Fargo, Citi, Bank of America and Union Bank.

The second flow is money with which climate-bad banks finance the fossil fuel industry's destruction of the planet. Fracking, pipelines, other deadly projects cannot happen without bank loans. Stop them and we can slow the destruction of the planet.

Finally, fossil fuel industry money flowing to politicians keeps governments from addressing the greatest challenge in the history of humanity.

Politicians typically have two constituencies: a money constituency and a voter constituency. They tend to focus on problems of their money constituency, less so for their voter constituency although they may talk a good game. Contrary to myth, government is actually very effective at solving the problems of those who control it (P.S. it's not us!).

This is not a partisan political issue. Both major parties are awash in fossil fuel money.

What can we do to rescue the future? Start with a new year's resolution to sever our relationships with climate-bad banks. Removing our money from climate-bad banks is powerful if we do it in solidarity with each other.

Our relationships with banks are by their nature "sticky." Auto-pays and auto-deposits, once established, seem to have a life of their own. Unsticking ourselves can be tricky.

So we developed a Move-Your-Money initiative, where you can do this with a cohort of others. One cohort member said, "I felt so angry when I found out my bank was funding climate change." Another: "I felt so much integrity after I moved my money." A third: "The cohort was educational, great people and helped me do what I've been wanting to do for so long."

You can join a Move-Your-Money cohort at our website (ThisIsWhatWeDid.org).

Some years ago business thinker Jim Collins encouraged people to resolve to stop doing what gets in the way of making our lives what we want them to be. There is nothing better to put on your Don't-Do List than funding climate disaster through climate-bad banks.

Jim Thompson is founder of THIS! Is What We Did (ThisIsWhatWeDid.org) and founder and former CEO of Positive Coaching Alliance.