About Us

Explore Issues

Take Action

Oakland, CA Y

Get Outside

LOGIN

JOIN **RENEW Donate**

Building Our Own Bridge

By Michael Brune February 28, 2020

f Facebook

Twitter

Email



Photo by Kristiana Faddoul

According to Gizmodo reporter Brian Kahn, "The notion that natural gas is a bridge to a renewable future was first put in writing in 1979 by environmentalist Barry Commoner in his book The Politics of Energy. He called it a 'bridge between the present, unsatisfactory reality and the still abstract, hoped-for future."

More than 40 years later, you can still hear politicians and industry lobbyists talk about that

supposed bridge. But when we listen to the people who live with the impacts of the gas industry, it's clear that dirty fuels will never be a bridge to the "hoped-for future" they deserve. The new Regenerate California campaign is a joint project of the Sierra Club, the California

Environmental Justice Alliance, and groups within it, including Communities for a Better

Alliance United for a Sustainable Economy. It centers the experiences and aspirations of

those whose homes and schools and churches sit next to fossil gas infrastructure. Our

Environment, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, and Central Coast

vision for the future includes clean air for all communities -- especially those that have had

to inhale the fossil fuel industry's toxins for far too long. It includes a more democratic economy, where power and prosperity are distributed more equitably; good local jobs in green industries; and safety from climate chaos. Fossil gas can't lead us to that future. Gas power plants make the air smoggy and dangerous to breathe. They emit pollutants linked to myriad health problems, from asthma attacks to cancer. What's more, they disproportionately release these toxins in low-income communities and communities of color, where pollution burdens are already high. Here in

California, for instance, half of the gas power plants are located in disadvantaged communities. Fossil gas also won't help us escape catastrophic warming, as its backers have long claimed. It doesn't emit as much carbon dioxide as coal. But it emits so much methane -- a greenhouse gas 80 times more potent than CO2 -- that any benefit to the climate is

canceled out. While we're burning natural gas, we're still on track to suffer catastrophic

impacts from climate change. We've already seen how those impacts fall most heavily on

Californians who are low-income, elderly, disabled, or immigrants. And fossil gas won't help us make our economy fairer or more inclusive. At this point, building out new fossil gas plants -- or extending existing plants' lives -- is nothing more than corporate welfare for the fossil fuel industry and wealthy utilities. According to the Rocky Mountain Institute, renewable energy portfolios are already cheaper than 90% of the gas projects currently proposed in the US -- and they're projected to get even cheaper every year. Keeping fossil gas on the line merely raises costs for families while keeping the same

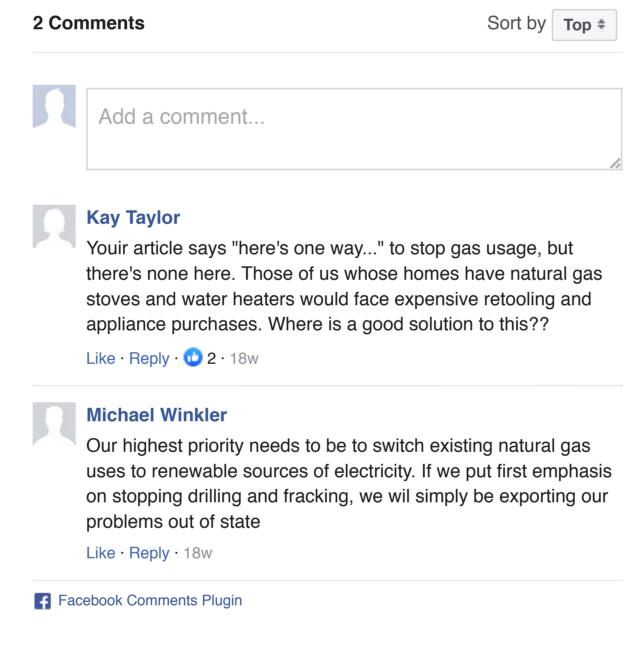
Instead of corporate welfare, we need investments in renewable energy, meaningful and tangible support for workers transitioning out of the fossil fuel industry, and benefits for the communities that bear the brunt of the dirty energy economy. That's the bridge that will get us from our "present, unsatisfactory reality" to the future Californians deserve -- not fossil gas. The Sierra Club is proud to join with our environmental justice partners to begin to build it.

Michael Brune is the executive director of the Sierra Club, the largest grassroots environmental organization in the United States. You can email him at michael.brune@sierraclub.org and follow him on Twitter (@bruneski) and Facebook. See more stories by this author

More Stories About:

few executives rich.

clean energy, environmental justice, see all stories **Like** 46 Share



Racial Justice

Up Next

Organizing Is **Environmental Justice Organizing** July 14, 2020 By Jocelyn L. Travis

Recommended for you



State Park, California

Oct 3 - 9, 2020



The Overstory: The Movement for **Black Lives Saves the Planet**

90% complete

Take Action

By signing up, you are opting in to receive periodic communications from the Sierra Club.

Sign up to receive updates from Executive Director Michael Brune

Zip



Accomplishments Ways to Give

Equity & Inclusion

JOIN

Email

RENEW

Search

SIGN UP





Press Room **Business Partnerships** Our VIsion

Policy Positions

DONATE

My Account

Get in Touch

Contact Us

More from the Sierra Club Store Local Chapters Team Sierra AddUp.org

Environmental Law

Sierra Student Coalition Climate Parents **Grassroots Network** Sierra magazine





