
The Matter Of Global Warming And Its Drastic Effects On The Ice in Greenland And West Antarctica

The warming of Earth is nothing new. In fact, it's been gradually warming since the end of the last ice age, approximately 7000 years ago. However, recently the earth has been warming at a rapid rate. Many believe this is an anthropogenic effect caused by the burning of fossil fuels and the resulting buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. Some claim that it's a result of deforestation. However, one thing is perfectly clear, this rising of global temperatures is a global issue, particularly dire in two locations: Greenland and West Antarctica. This is because these two locations are the primary areas for ice sheets and glaciers. Its effect is as far-reaching as it is because it is a result of the greenhouse effect, the warming of the earth that results when the atmosphere traps heat radiating from Earth. This trapping of heat results in rising global temperatures which, in turn, melt the glaciers and the ice sheets.

In addition to the higher temperatures, another issue melting Greenland and West Antarctica's ice is "algal blooms that quilt the snow-strewn ice every summer," also referred to as pink polar ice. These pink algae make the surface of the ice darker, which limits the ice's "ability to reflect sunlight back into space and results in more light being absorbed," in turn, leading to more melting. As the ice sheets and glaciers melt, water flows from them to the sea and causes ocean water to expand in volume, meaning the sea levels will rise. Within the last century, it has risen 8 inches; however, the rising rate in the 2 decades is nearly double that of the last century. The rising of sea levels is a particularly serious issue because it bears all-encompassing consequences that negatively impact the entire world.

The thing about the global warming is that everyone and everything is a victim. For example, as seawater reaches farther inland, it can cause destructive erosion, wetland flooding, aquifer and agricultural soil contamination, and lost habitats for fish, birds, and plants. Polar bears are also facing extinction as a result of the melting ice. They depend on sea ice for traveling around and hunting, so it is essential for their survival. Additionally, hundreds of millions of people will become very vulnerable to potential flooding. Because of this, many will be displaced from their original homes and have to relocate, abandoning their prior lives. In the event of a sea storm, coastal cities are particularly at risk as they will also face worse storm surges, in addition to the flooding. If not stopped soon, the consequences will only worsen.

Economic Structures are one the primary factors causing global warming. Today, companies such as Exxon, that focus on the use of fossil fuels and oil, are the primary contributors. Besides their practices spurring pollution and creating many greenhouse gases, which will get trapped in the atmosphere and cause warmer temperatures, Exxon has spent more than \$30 million on think tanks that promote climate change denial. If climate change was readily accepted by everyone, these companies would go out of business, so they try to deny it. As a result, this denial of climate change prevents the spread of awareness to the issue, and only further fosters it. However, while not directly causing global warming, political structures have also allowed global warming to worsen. The Trump Administration is a prime example of this. It has no interest in actually fighting global warming, as seen in the fact that Trump has appointed many officials who deny its existence. He has also defunded climate change programs and pulled the US out of the Paris Agreement. Additionally, as opposed to funding advances in

renewable energy, Trump chooses to focus on the use of coal, a fossil fuel. This is an issue because when coal burns, it releases many toxic pollutants in the air. Fossil fuels, like coal, release massive amounts of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, making it one of, if not, the main drivers of global warming. In 2017, Trump also signed an executive order vowing to roll back Obama-era climate change policies, including the Clean Power Plan limiting carbon pollution from coal-fired power plants.

The matter of global warming and its drastic effects on the ice in Greenland and West Antarctica is a social justice issue for many reasons. Firstly, it is a result of mankind's inability to exercise moral responsibility to care for the environment. We recklessly pollute the world and continue to use its resources in an unsustainable manner, failing to carry out the job God entrusted us: being stewards of the earth. To fulfill this occupation, we must "adopt a circular model of production capable of preserving resources for present and future generations, while limiting the use of non-renewable resources." In addition to failing as stewards, we also fail to meet the basic goal of social justice: achieving a right ordering of society, a society in which all people have equal opportunities to live decent lives free of inordinate deprivations.

We fail at this because society as a whole fails to ensure that access to beneficial resources is secured for all individuals, present and future. By neglecting "to consider the effects on people's lives of environmental deterioration,"⁷ we are violating our most basic inherent right: human dignity. Because "every man and woman is created in God's image,"⁷ they inherit this inviolable right. It holds that all life is sacred and, as a result, deserves free and equal opportunities to life. In order to ensure that future generations receive the same pleasures we enjoy today, we must consider treating them with the same dignity with have today.