

# Season 3.3 Genevieve Guenther

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

climate crisis, climate, people, climate science, fossil fuels, carbon footprint, book, climate change, design, designers, reporting, news media, politics, volunteer, solution, weaponize, renaissance, stories, uncertainty, genevieve

## SPEAKERS

Rachel, Narrator, Eric Benson, Genevieve

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Narrator 00:00

This podcast is a project of the climate designers network.



Eric Benson 00:03

Hey, this is Eric. Welcome to season three of Climify. This season, I'm talking to women across the globe, who are at the forefront of climate science and climate action. Each guest is a thought leader in one or more of the drawdown.org climate solutions sectors. What you may ask are the drawdown.org Solution sectors, well important topics like renewable electricity, soil and agriculture, architecture, oceans, health, education, so much more. The goal of this season is of course, to continue to help design educators incorporate a foundation of sustainability and regeneration into their courses, and, in turn, inspire more climate designers. Climate Solutions are already here, you can literally start being part of the solution today. Climify brings these solutions to you. So no matter what your skill or knowledge level, you can implement what you learned today in your personal life, and classroom.




Eric Benson 01:17


In this third episode of season three, the draw down area of focus is on education, and more directly centered on education through the media, and how politics and greed have shaped what we see in here. Dr. Genevieve Gunter joins me today to share her work with her group and climate silence. And through her upcoming book, the language of climate politics. I've been following Genevieve on Twitter for a while now. And her writing and work there and beyond inspired me to reach out for this season. I hope you take away from this discussion that although we all add carbon to the atmosphere, we are not the biggest problem. There are a handful of people creating the climate crisis. However, despite them, you can be part of the solution today.

 Genevieve 02:08


Hi, everybody, I am Dr. Genevieve Gunther and I am the founding director of a volunteer activist group called UN climate silence whose mission is to push the news media to cover climate with the urgency and accuracy it deserves. I'm also affiliated faculty at the new school and on the board of the Tishman environment and Design Center. And I am a writer and a researcher who is currently writing a book for the politics list at Oxford University Press entitled The Language of Climate Politics, which is about how we talk about the climate crisis and his solutions. And how we can better do that in order to actually decarbonize our economies fast enough to halt warming as soon as possible. Best place to find me is on Twitter, where I am very active, at least for now. And my handle is Dr. Vive and being misspelled v i v e and that's all one word, DRVIVE.

 Eric Benson 03:08

Well, welcome Genevieve, I'm happy to have you on the program today. And you do so much. Just listening to your introduction. You're an educator, former Renaissance scholar.

 Genevieve 03:21


Yes. Yes.

 Eric Benson 03:22

public speaker, author. And you started this great organization called and climate science

 Genevieve 03:28


end climate silence, that is mistakes that everybody makes. It's just wondering how climate science No, absolutely not. I mean, want to sort of keep that going for as long as possible.

 Eric Benson 03:39

Yeah, and you're I mean, that would make you an activist too. Right. You're you're involved in that? Oh, yes. Yeah. And consultant, you contribute it to the IPCC panel, which I find, well, I,

 Genevieve 03:52

I reviewed the drafts. So I don't know how much of a contribution that is, but at least I put in my two cents,

 Eric Benson 04:01

more than most people were involved, right. Well, what did I miss? I mean, there's so many things here that you do. And I just don't know how you do at all. How do you do it?

G

Genevieve 04:10

Well, I have a very strict schedule, which I try to adhere to. I'm also a mother of a 12 year old boy. And I have a very active little dog who needs a lot of attention. So I'm also a caregiver on some levels. No, but I think that all of the disparate parts of my identity and all the different, you know, jobs that I tried to do all feed into each other, because they're all essentially focused on how the climate crisis is represented in language, and how those representations have political effects. So it's not like I have to sort of take off one hat and put on a different hat. It's all sort of the same hat. Maybe I'll sort of kooz at different angles, but



Eric Benson 04:56

I like the different angles, everything designers here A lot of hats. But yeah, it's designed, right? Exactly. Yeah, exactly. Well, like many people, you started off in a different career. Super interesting, because you were in a renaissance scholar.

G

Genevieve 05:15

Yes, I was actually. And a very distinct kind of Renaissance scholar was very interested in Renaissance aesthetics. You know, which led me into actually the scholarly study of magic, because in the 16th century, poetry wasn't, you know, literature itself wasn't actually a sort of recognized cultural form, there wasn't such a thing as sort of English literature. In the beginning of the 16th century, there was elevated language, and some aristocrats wrote poems. But you know, when Shakespeare was born, there wasn't even a public theater. So, over the course of the English Renaissance, this thing, poetry, novels, theater, all of this wasn't like, new cultural development. But it had these deep roots with theories of beauty and theories of the power of language that went all the way back to the ancient Greeks that were connected to ideas about how magicians could use spells to conjure spirits and do all sorts of other things. So there's all of this weird crossover between literature and magic in the Renaissance, which is what my first book was about, like how those two discourses were intertwined and how they became increasingly separated. And literature became its own autonomous form over the course of the English Renaissance, but it didn't actually even really happen until the 18th century with Conte and not even there, it's still a little bit confusing and entangled there. But anyway, so that was the stuff that I did. But weirdly, it kind of prepared me to do the work that I'm doing now and the climate crisis. Yeah, I think this. But if you think about our historical moment, right, we're coming out of the fossil fuel era, where most of our ideology, no matter what our sort of political side is, most of our fundamental ideology under fossil fuel capitalism, is what has grown out of our economic formation and what grows out of the social relationships that we have in that economic formation. So it's our this sort of set of beliefs that we have, that have justified the way the world has been through the 20th century, and the climate crisis is asking us to remake that world. And it's sort of calling our beliefs into question. And it's making it harder for those beliefs to justify the system that we have in place. So we're also in this weird kind of historical transformation, where we're going from an old system to a new system. And right now, this new way of thinking about how we produce news energy, how we produce and

use goods, how we travel, how we relate to each other, what is work gonna look like, all of that is this new emerging form, which is still sort of drawing off this old ideology in the same way that poetry was drawing off this sort of magical ideology, which really wasn't what it was. But that was the language they had to think about it in. And that's kind of what's happening right now with, you know, the energy and the economic transition that we're going through. So that's what my book is about, in a way how this fossil fuel ideology sort of is emerging. Even in our the ways we're thinking about the climate crisis and its solution and sort of holding it back, holding our thinking back. So we want to sort of undermine those old beliefs and come up with new ways of thinking and talking about the climate crisis. And our and its solutions to sort of push that historical movement forward.



Eric Benson 08:50

Wow, that's a really good, that's a really good way to describe how I think many of us are feeling I'm feeling in this in this current moment in history, that it's this sense of uneasiness and hopefulness. At the same time, yeah. And that's, that's what my takeaway was from some of the stuff you've written. And what you're, what you're writing that will one day be able to read. And it's 2024 is when your book comes out, correct?



Genevieve 09:25

That's correct. The correct spring of 2024, just in time for the like the real ramping up of the presidential election campaign.



Eric Benson 09:35

Another era of uneasiness now



Genevieve 09:37

Exactly, yeah.



Eric Benson 09:40

So it does seem that you know, the work that you were doing before, in, in your scholarship and, and prior to what you're doing now has really prepared you very well to make the connections and to create the communication I think that we need to I don't know how would you just grab the way that you want people to feel or act or react to the things that you write?



Genevieve 10:09

Oh, that's a really good question. I mean, I don't think that I can say that I want everyone to have the same reaction. I think that, you know, people are going to have different reactions to what I'm writing, based on what they bring to the things that I've written, you know, what their

prior views are, what their personal situation might be, what they know about the climate crisis, or don't know, all of these things are going to sort of influence how they receive what I've written, and how they interpreted and how it may or may not inspire them. I mean, if I were to give a general answer to that question, I think I would say I would want people to see the climate crisis as a political struggle, not as a technological project, not as a you know, by technological project, I mean, not not only as the project of sort of substituting clean energy technologies for fossil energy technologies, and not necessarily as a sort of, you know, new form of the same kind of wealth creation that we've always had. But I want people to see it as a moment where we're really going to have to transform all of our systems. But in order to do that, we really do have to have this tremendous political fight, because there are very powerful forces doing everything they can to block that transformation. And then many people sort of just from the received wisdom of our culture, are kind of even if they think they believe in the climate crisis are kind of allied with the people who are trying to block the transition, because they think about the world kind of in the same terms. So I want people to come away seeing it as a conflict, feeling excited about being on the side of the people who will fight to transformer and save our world, and hopefully, you know, a little bit energized and sort of ready to get out there and contribute to this fight.



**Eric Benson 12:18**

Well, that's the way I feel about what's happening right now. And I wonder, too, with just your work prior, and any sort of like, historical precedents in that, I always have felt that with any sort of transition, maybe towards that, like progressive arc with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. talked about is that there's always these people trying to pull you back. It's maybe what they're used to, they don't want their habits to change. Is that also what you mean by politics, that it's, it's social politics, it's not just the politics that you imagine like you're in Washington, DC or the capital? Were in the state?



**Genevieve 13:03**

Yeah, I do think I have a very capacious understanding what politics means. I mean, there's the business of policymaking, which is certainly what most people think of when they think of politics. But I also have a kind of larger definition of politics, which is sort of how power dynamics emerge, in our culture and in our everyday lives, and how those power dynamics sort of restrict the possibilities for us, but also, you know, make other possibilities possible. So it's a sort of, it's not just policymaking, it's also attention to power dynamics in general, and thinking about how we might change those in order to, you know, halt global warming and make people's lives better at the same time.



**Eric Benson 13:59**

Yeah, so I'm guessing then, your, your, your book that you're working on right now, the language of climate politics. It's pretty self explanatory, and its title. But can you tell us more about why you're writing that book? And just just about sort of the the breakdown of what's inside?



**G****Genevieve 14:17**

Sure. So the book is made up of, I think, six chapters and a preface. And the preface is about the word we, and the chapters are about the words, each chapter sort of is centered on one word, and the words are alarmist cost, growth, India and China and I'm making air quotes, although the people listening to this podcast won't see them from India and China in air quotes, innovation, and resilience, because these are the words that sort of give us the concepts that are dominating the way that we think and talk about the climate crisis, and they're all concepts that have come from our fossil fuel economy and And they need to be their assumptions need to be excavated, studied, tossed out if they're outdated or inaccurate. And then we need a new sort of deep framing of the way that we think about these problems. So I got the idea for this book, when the New York Times hired a conservative columnist named Bret Stevens, who at that time was a sort of inveterate climate denier, who really thought that, you know, climate was just a religion, and there was absolutely no reality to it, or at least he claimed, this is what he thought, I don't really know what he believes or doesn't believe. In any event. His first column for The New York Times, was a piece called Climate of complete certainty. And he used the kind of denialist argument that had been sort of Oh current, since at least 2008 2009, which was that the science is too uncertain to justify spending money on decarbonisation, or any kind of like, you know, disruptive policy. And so we should just kind of do nothing and wait until science kind of gathers more certainty, through the research process and through debate over its findings. Okay, so I read this, this article. And I had this sort of Revelation. I had been studying climate science by myself, basically, through, you know, online platforms like edX, but also through reading, you know, climate science textbooks. I'm a big reader and a huge autodidact. And I, you know, and I also asked people, lots of questions about things I don't understand, I realized that I can't teach myself everything. But you know, I had been studying climate science. And so I knew that in climate science, uncertainty doesn't necessarily mean the state of not knowing. It can mean a range of possible outcomes. So a climate science will scientists may say, so we've run these models. And we're projecting a median of, say, three degrees Celsius warming by 2100, with the uncertainty of maybe you know, 1.7 to 4.3 degrees, okay. And in that case, uncertainty means range of possible outcomes that you can actually predict with relative confidence. And in fact, uncertainty and confidence in climate science as scientific jargon are synonymous. So you can say the uncertainty interval, or you can say, the confidence interval. But this is not the way that deniers were using the word uncertainty. Yeah, they were using uncertainty to mean the state of not knowing like, oh, do I want to have chicken? Or do I want to have fish for dinner? I don't know. I'm uncertain, maybe I'll think about it in a few hours. So they were talking about a certainty in a way that made the general public who doesn't have any familiarity with climate science, you know, disciplinary jargon, think that climate scientists weren't really sure about their findings. And then what's really diabolical about the strategies that anytime a climate scientist would communicate in public and you know, scrupulously acknowledge the uncertainty of their findings, they would simply reinforce this denialists message, they weren't really sure whether climate change was real. And so I saw how this dynamic from work to where there was a sort of disciplinary meaning of a word. And there was this kind of colloquial meaning of the same word. And then the climate deniers were weaponizing, this disciplinary word to make people who would use the kind of colloquial definition, confused about how confident scientists really were. And then, once I saw that dynamic, I was started seeing it everywhere.

**Eric Benson 19:13**

I started my own family where I won't call her out, but there's someone in my family who was basically the same thing. Like she'd say. Well. I'm gonna wait to there's more facts because

Yeah,

 Genevieve 19:27

exactly. Right. Exactly. Exactly. So this really well, it worked brilliantly. And it's still it's still it's still happening. So, for example, climate scientists themselves will we worried about accusations of alarmism right? And this is something that gets weaponized by climate deniers, you know, climate economists will study the costs of climate change. Right? And very often, their findings again, will be weaponized by people. who are trying to block the passage of climate policy. So the book is tracing out these relationships between these different ways of using this word, these words. But what I found in researching and actually writing the book, and this is what has been the most startling so far, is that, in fact, you know, our typical understanding of climate politics. And I mean, in the sort of policymaking sense, and also in the kind of, you know, partisan sense is that attitudes about climate change are very polarized, like everybody sort of on the left, believes that the climate crisis is real, and wants us to do something about it wants governments to do something about it, and everyone on the right, denies the reality of the climate crisis. And as opposed to clean energy. What I found in my research is that this actually doesn't really cash out on the level of elite discourse. In elite discourse. What's really crazy is that the deniers and the sort of center left, you know, the center left economists, the center left climate commentators in the media, the center left politicians, and even the center last, climate activists are all speaking about the climate crisis in the same way, we're using these attitudes that come from the fossil fuel economy. And so I've started to think that actually, the reason our politics is so stuck, is not even so much that there's polarization. But that there's actually a remarkable amount of unity in the attitude towards the climate crisis, and how we solve it, that's actually preventing us from getting ourselves off of fossil fuels and making whatever changes to our systems that are necessary to make that actually happen.

 Eric Benson 22:05

We're in the way of ourselves,

 Genevieve 22:07

in some sense. I mean, it depends. And this is what the beginning preface is about is depends on who we is, right? Who is this in this climate discourse? Like? Are you and I in this, you know, center left, elite group that's allying itself? perhaps unwittingly with the climate deniers? I don't know about that, you know, are most Americans in this group? Right? are certainly people of color in the Global South, this group? Absolutely not there. This is one of the things that I want people to understand once they finish the book is that there is no universal we there's no humanity who's causing the climate crisis, there are certain groups who are advancing the cause of fossil fuels. And then there are groups who are trying to end fossil fuels. And you know, and then there's a big muddled middle. But that's the polarization, that most people are still on the side of fossil fuels.

 Eric Benson 23:03



ERIC BENSON 23:05

Now, in that sort of what you described in terms of there's this, the we that we need to determine who that we is right, right, center left. Do you do you find that, you know, the, there's like a boat is 100 different companies are basically the problem. And the language about that is always about carbon footprint, which Right, right, right, right from them from from these companies. And we're all trying to make our carbon footprint small. Is that kind of what you're talking about?



Genevieve 23:38

Oh, I think I mean, the carbon footprint is a really interesting example of the way that fossil fuel interests will weaponize actual scientific research, because sometimes you'll hear that the fossil fuel companies made up the concept of the carbon footprint, and that's not actually entirely true. The carbon footprint is a sort of legitimate concept out of sustainability research, the carbon footprint, the ecological footprint, all of these are, you know, heuristics that the sustainability researchers use in order to kind of measure the impact of humanity on the biosphere. And but, you know, oil companies and their PR agencies are very, very, very good at mining, academic research are things that they can weaponize and use against climate action. So what they did BP did this. I'm forgetting the year it was either 2004 2008 I think they came up with a campaign for asking people to worry about their own carbon footprint, and to start measuring their carbon fiber.



Eric Benson 24:55

I remember seeing that Yeah,



Genevieve 24:57

yeah. And this is this is designed this camp Hane is designed to make you feel completely guilty. And despairing, right? Because as, as someone who lives in a fossil fuel economy, unless you basically pull yourself out of the world, you weren't going to be emitting carbon by living in the world, right. And even if you were able to somehow draw your own carbon footprint down to two or one tonne of co2 a year, until large corporations and energy companies start changing their practices, global emissions are still going to go up. So they're trying to sort of use this as a way to distract you from the sort of systemic challenge and the political necessity of having a kind of larger public fight about the laws and the way that money is distributed to fossil fuel interests and keep you worrying about like, whether you should have a straw with your ICT, you know, and this is, and also just feeling like, the whole crisis is too big for you to solve alone. And so hopefully, you'll just give up and forget about the whole thing. That's what they want, ultimately. Right. So, exactly. So yeah, the climate footprint is, I mean, the carbon footprint is a really not a very useful way of thinking about what we need to do.



Eric Benson 26:31

Yeah, actually, one of my students, this past year, worked on this video where she was basically pointing out that that same thing she said she was talking about, essentially, like, let's end the climate crisis. And she's using a reusable straw, right? And it transitions into like



showing what has actually going on, right are wasting your time trying to find great straw at the store. Right? And yeah, little things do matter, of course. But yeah, at least the big change has to happen.

G

Genevieve 27:03

Yeah, or I will, however, I'd like to just add one caveat to that just in the spirit of not making any universal claims about people in the climate crisis, there is one group of people who actually should start worrying about their carbon footprint. And that is though the mega wealthy, the 1%. And the people above them. I mean, these people, these people emit, you know, hundreds or even 1000s of tons of carbon a year. Like 99% of which is not necessary. And they are blowing through our remaining carbon budget. While you know, people in the global south are already you know, starving, having their homes drowned, suffering Heatwave, after heatwave? I mean, it's pretty egregious. So I think, I think there is a difference between someone say, who has to drive to work, because they don't have any other way to get to work. And they certainly can't afford even with Biden's rebates, an EV an Eevee. So, and someone who has, you know, bought a vintage Lamborghini, and then hired a luxury shipper to like some American who's bought a vintage Lamborghini and then hired some luxury shipper to ship this car over to Italy so that he can sort of, you know, drive it on the cliffs of the Italian Riviera, that act of carbon emission driving that Lamborghini is very different than the act of carbon emission in driving your fossil fuel car to work. You know, so, so yeah, so again, like, I think that mostly the carbon footprint is a terrible concept, but I do think it has its uses when we're talking about when we're talking about the mega rich, so



Eric Benson 29:00

Well, thank you. We're gonna pause here just for a few seconds to hear some messages. And we'll be back to talk more about your group and climate silence solutions, and to get to some more conversations about design.

R

Rachel 29:16

Where do young designers see themselves at the intersection of climate change and innovation? And how can we teach that intersection in the classroom designers are problem solvers capable of imagining solutions for a more sustainable future? We have a bigger role to play in all phases of the design process, not just the beginning. My name is Rachel cifre. Le graphic designer, recent college grad, and part of the climate designers. Edu team. And after graduating, I realized today's classrooms tend to skip over that universal side of design. So if you're a design educator, I want to hear from your students help set in motion the first ever project that centers students at the intersection of design education and climate change. I want to know what your students think about sustainable design. They see climate change impacting their future careers. And what even comes to mind when they hear the term climate design? Send your students to [climate-designers.org/edu/new](https://climate-designers.org/edu/new) Wave survey to take the five question survey or sign up for an interview with me, helped me inform a new wave of design education, one that teaches every designer how to be a climate designer.



Eric Benson 30:23

And we're back and I'm excited to talk to you more about one of the things that I find exciting about your work is your group and climate silence. And can you tell us more about this this organization, its mission, and maybe how we can get involved to volunteer and help?



Genevieve 30:43

That would be so lovely, thank you. So, wow, it's funny, because I will just confess that right now the group is in a period of transition, because we lost 90% of our volunteers over the pandemic. And it needs to be reconstructed. And you asked me how I do everything. And maybe I don't always do everything. Sometimes, right. So I this is something that is, you know, been on my to do list really literally for about six months is to build up that volunteer capacity again, just simply, if



Eric Benson 31:26

you're listening, if you're listening opportunity for you.



Genevieve 31:29

Indeed, our website is end climate silence.org all one word, and you can contact us through the Contact Us button at the bottom of the webpage if you scroll all the way to the bottom. So if you're interested in volunteering, I would love to hear from you. You don't have to be in New York City where we're based, we can do everything online. So yes, what we do is we try to get I mean, originally, our mission was very, very, very simple. We simply wanted journalists who were reporting on stories that we're actually about the climate crisis, to actually mention the words climate change in their stories. So repeatedly, journalists would report on extreme weather, for example, and even report on the findings of climate science explaining why this extreme weather event was so bad or sort of took the form that it did. But they would never actually mention the words climate change, there would be this sort of like low key form of denial, not mentioning climate change, as if it weren't happening as if it had nothing to do with the climate crisis. So our mission was to simply to get them to end that climate silence and actually mentioned the words climate change the stories, they were already reported about its effects. It wasn't like I was asking them to hire climate reporters or do anything different. Just bring those two sentences into the stories they were already reporting,



Eric Benson 33:07

language of climate politics, exact 100%.



Genevieve 33:09

I mean, our research at end climate silence showed that the vast majority of Americans have learned everything they know about the climate crisis from the news media. So that's pretty shocking, exactly chilling. So it's all the more reason to make sure that the news media is

doing, you know, a good job. In its sort of mainstream reporting. It's not just about these sort of deep dive stories, which admittedly have gotten, you know, infinitely better since the group started in 2018. And not because of our group, but just simply because there was an explosion of interest in climate change after the IPCC released the 1.5 degrees Celsius report in 2018, and made it very clear that we had to have emissions by 2030 and zero them out by 2050. And we're even going to have a chance of halting warming at this lower number. So climate reporting has gotten much better. Most major newspapers have climate desks. There are more climate stories in the TV news, although the climate silence in the network news is really still just really hot hauling. Yeah. So you know, that mission is ongoing. But now, I think when we kind of rebuild our momentum, I think we're going to expand our mission and ask that, not only reporters mentioned the climate crisis, but actually say that fossil fuels are the leading cause of fossil fuel use is far and away the main cause of the climate crisis, right, right. And that we can halt global heating if we stop using fossil fuels. I mean, that that I feel like is really, the point



Eric Benson 35:03

is, it's no, it's I guess it's not surprising that they're not doing that already. But I don't know, it just pisses me off.



Genevieve 35:14

Yes, and pisses me off too. I mean, part of the problem, I think, is that even, you know, even climate economics, even these mitigation pathways, that economists kind of model with their models that ended up in this sort of, you know, reports of the IPCC, even those models don't always model before, like, almost the almost entire phase out of fossil fuels. Like the the sort of that is something that is almost entirely universal, this idea that we're going to do everything we possibly can keep using fossil fuels, you know, and I get it. I mean, I get it, the amount of wealth that the economy has been able to generate for some people, due to, you know, the energy in these, in these resources, essentially, which has freed up so much labor for other kinds of productivity is something that, you know, people don't want to give up, you know, I get it. But it's like, the question is, is, is it worth destroying everything for, and you know, some people think, Oh, we're not going to destroy everything, it's not going to be that bad, you know, you're being alarmist or whatever. But, you know, global warming is going to keep going, the planet is just going to keep getting hotter and hotter, until we stop using fossil fuels and create a netzero economy. It's not like things end and 2100. We keep getting hotter, until we stop using fossil fuels as like, to the extent that we can, and having an economy that no longer emits greenhouse gases, or at least carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. So so it's like to spur people to say, No, you're being alarmist, it's not going to be that bad. It's like at one point, is it not going to be that bad? How many people are going to affect us right now? Exactly. But that's the problem. Yeah, right. But that's how I got into this. Because, you know, I really, I had seen An Inconvenient Truth in 2004. Two, and then I forgot about it immediately the theater to see I did to I saw it in a theater with the man who ended up becoming my husband and two of my and my girlfriend with a guy who she ended up marrying. But we went on with her, you know, building our lives and, you know, building careers and getting married and whatever. But once I, you know, had a child and all of a sudden I was like, actually wake up call. Yeah, none of this stops with me. This is just, I'm just a waystation on into the future. And oh, my God, you know?





Eric Benson 38:05

Yeah. Well, the reason one of the reasons why I love and climate silence is that it overlaps a lot with what I'm doing here with this show is I'm trying to get design educators to say, climate science, climate change is real. Fossil fuels are causing it. Amazing, we make things. And we're part of the problem, but also a part of the solution. So totally, what can we learn from experts like you to to help us on that journey? So that's what I liked that group. And I think words matter. I think they really do. And I That in itself, talking about it is a solution, especially when it's through like you said, was it 90% of Americans learn through media, our news media,



Genevieve 38:56

oh, my God, did I say 90? I think it was I think I might have misspoken if I said, 90, yeah, it's the majority. It's the vast majority, I'm sure. Tonight



39:07

the vast majority of us are learning things through the news media. So those media can be a solution.



Genevieve 39:14

100% Yeah.



Eric Benson 39:16

So can you can you talk a little bit more than about this organization in terms of what you need, from maybe some volunteers if they want to get involved.



Genevieve 39:25

Thank you, that would be great. So what we need are people who know how to do digital research, we subscribe to databases, which help us survey the reporting of the previous day or you know, of the past, essentially. So I mean, we do have a tendency to be a little retroactive like we be kind of reached out to journalists who have already written their stories, trying to ask them to do it differently the next time. But you know, I need people and I can train people to do this, but I need people who have some sort of experience doing digital research or working with databases like LexisNexis, or the database that we subscribe to, to monitor television coverage. So that would be ideal. I also would love to work with graphic designers on, you know, graphic designers on, you know, logos or, you know, other visual material for our sort of Marches or branding. I need people who I mean, people who work in the news media would be wonderful to connect with, you know, because it would be great to just have those kinds of I mean, and I know a lot of climate journalists, but I would need, I would love to meet people who don't necessarily work on climate change. Because I feel like those are the people who most need to bring this message to their colleagues. Right. The idea that climate is not a siloed story. But it's really the context for for every story that we are telling now.



Eric Benson 41:14

Yeah, that listen, that's what drawdown.org is saying, right now. Every job is a climate job. That's right. Yeah, so do you have any really I know that some of the some of the information right about climate is pretty negative. But do you have any, like, positive stories that have come out of the climate silence group in terms of impacting through the work that you do?



Genevieve 41:40

I mean, I have been told informally, that mostly people talk about climate now, as an everything story, in part, at least in part due to the work of and climate silence. Yeah, so that's been that's been very gratifying. You know, we because we don't fundraise it. Again, it's a volunteer organization. And because we don't fundraise, I don't have to spend any time tracking metrics. I have worked with my volunteers, you know, very heuristically. And very organically. So I wish I had more data for your listeners on this. On this, but we don't spend the time to produce it, because we don't need to show it to funders. And I actually think that that's, that's worked for us so far. And I don't



Eric Benson 42:42

need to change it. Yeah. Think would the big goal for you might to get to have what Fox News do? Do a show?



Genevieve 42:53

Well, I mean, if I wanted camels to fly, maybe



Eric Benson 42:59

that could be your ultimate goal.



Genevieve 43:03

Yeah, well, unfortunately,



Eric Benson 43:05

we're running out of time here. And that leads me to my favorite question that I asked everyone, and you are at the new school. So you might have actually already done this. But I'm curious to know about if you were asked to teach a design course, or design project, and knowing what you know, and the work that you do, what would this class or project be about?

 Genevieve 43:29


I mean, I think the most important thing that designers need to do right now is figure out how to redesign the suburbs, and the exurbs and the suburban home and suburban living to be sustainable to not center on the automobile. I think that that is the biggest design challenge of this century in the United States. And if I were a designer, or an urban planner, I would absolutely teach that course. Because I think it's the most it's a fascinating challenge, but it's also a really important one that we need to solve.

 Eric Benson 44:18

Well, my grad student would be happy to hear that because that's what she's working on. Fantastic. I just met with her today about this. And so I'll have to tell her because oh my god,

 Genevieve 44:26

fantastic. Great Minds. Yeah, yeah.

 Eric Benson 44:28

Yeah, we'll have to share it. Well, I guess she's not gonna graduate it for another couple years. But progress reports, right. Indeed. Absolutely. Well, it was really great having you on the program, Genevieve and just really appreciated all the time that you gave me since you have booked deadlines. A bunch of other things. Can you tell us again where we can find you online?

 Genevieve 44:50


Yeah, so my website is Genevieve gunther.com. And Gunther is spelled j e u e n t h e r and I'm mostly active on Twitter and my handle on Twitter is at Dr. Vive all one word and Vive is spelled v i v i e. It would be great to see you out there in the interwebs.

 Eric Benson 45:11

It would her book, the language of climate politics is coming out in 2024.

 Genevieve 45:18

Thanks for having me, Eric.

 Eric Benson 45:20

Climify is produced, edited and engineered by me. A huge Special thanks to Ellen Keith Shaw,

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