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Oil moguls shouldn't get off scot-free

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Before I begin this piece, let me just say: Climate change is real and it is caused by humans. I'm not here to convince you otherwise if you're in denial. All I have to say is that you're better off not defending people who are complicit with your drowning in 20 years. Oil CEOs need to be held accountable for the damage they've done to the environment. Time and time again, we see the responsibility of climate change and the destruction of the environment placed on the individual, which is incredibly disingenuous considering the statistics of the matter. The Carbon Majors Report compiled by the Climate Accountability Institute, a non-profit organization that monitors climate change and the impact humans have on the environment, states that just 100 companies are responsible for almost 71 percent of carbon emissions. Just 100 companies. China can also take the blame for the abhorrent amounts of carbon dioxide produced per year, with Shenhua Group being the top producer. But when considering carbon emissions per capita, the U.S. is still the leader by a large margin. Banning plastic straws in a single city may help waste for that region, but carbon emissions are global.

Now, I'm not saying that reducing your plastic waste isn't a noble goal. Please continue to monitor your own contributions to the global carbon footprint. What I am saying, however, is that it mostly isn't your fault. The blame should fall on people like oil executive Bob Dudley, who oversaw BP's disaster in the Gulf Coast in 2008. It should fall upon people like oil-executive-turned-diplomat Rex Tillerson, who gave millions of dollars to bad faith actors in favor of climate deregulation. It should be put upon the moguls who hold billions upon billions of dollars milked from the substances that are fueling the most destructive phenomenon in our planet's history since the Fifth Extinction.

On the topic of oil moguls, the late David Koch can be a good example of what these people are usually up to. Institutions like the Cato Institute, the Institute for Energy Research and the Heritage Foundation have all been funded by Koch and his affiliated businesses. The Cato Institute has been noted to oppose climate change reform, with their main page on the topic stating that "there is ample time to develop such technologies," to which I respond: There is not ample time. I'm sure you've heard the ultimatum from the United Nations that we only have 12 years to act. But it's only in these companies' best interests to spread misinformation. Companies like Exxon Mobil also participate in donating to bad faith actors, no doubt, whether they be institutes or political candidates.

The ultra-rich may claim innocence or ignorance, stating "it's just business" to keep the blood off their hands, but just like it was for Pontius Pilate, the evil deeds are their responsibility.

They're having planet Earth executed, and washing its blood over the masses that don't have the funds to ship themselves to Mars. They knew for years that climate change was happening, revealed in 330 pages of internal memos from companies like Exxon Mobil and Koch Industries. In 1968, a document given by the Stanford Research Institute to the American Petroleum Institute, a trade organization which included and still includes Exxon Mobil and Chevron, states that, though they were unsure of the true ramifications, "there seems to be no doubt that the potential damage could be severe," referring to the release of carbon dioxide and other pollutants. I find it completely ridiculous that there is a deliberate avoidance of responsibility and foresight by policy makers. If it were me personally, I would throw them in prison and forcibly seize all of their wealth and put it into research and development of clean energy. But that's a little too radical, so let's just stick with heavier taxes.

Climate change has been a focal point in the 2020 election, with multiple candidates pontificating on their own approach to solving the crisis. We've recently had a global climate strike. Awareness is increasing. You may be asking yourself why it would matter that these individuals walk free, saying things like, "Who cares?" and, "We should be focusing on the actual issue." But without accountability for actions, these same kinds of industries will get away with exploiting the planet for profit and make our efforts to solve climate change futile. The mere fact that these corporations would have consequences for their actions would send a message to those who threaten the environment. We care about our planet, and those who irrevocably send it to its death will not be tolerated.