

"He's been right about global warming . . . health care . . . the war in Iraq. I think the country would like a moment of redemption to right the wrong [of the 2000 election]. . . . I really hope he gets into this race." — Michael Moore on Al Gore

THE WORLD ACCORDING TO GORE



The Incredible Vision of the
Man Who Should Be President

Edited and with an Introduction by Bill Katovsky

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INTRODUCTION

This is no time for irony. Given that his personal crusade is halting global warming, former Vice President Al Gore is a man on fire.

He's burning up airwaves and electrifying packed auditoriums with his impassioned warning that our planet is teetering towards catastrophic meltdown. As co-organizer and impresario of Live Earth, the 24-hour, seven-continent concert series seen in 130 countries, Gore brought home this urgent message to millions of viewers. To help preach the secular gospel of a climate in crisis, he trained a small army of volunteers to present the slide show that formed the basis of *An Inconvenient Truth*.

His popularity among Democrats continues to trend upwards, almost like one of those temperature graphs in the Oscar-winning documentary. Some of this support comes from his scathing criticism of the Bush administration's chicanery and abuse of power.

From Madison to Manhattan, Gore followers wait for that day when he flicks on the campaign switch and says, "America, I'm in!" They include his pal, Steve Jobs of Apple, who told

Time, “We have dug ourselves into a 20-foot hole, and we need somebody who knows how to build a ladder. Al’s the guy. Like many others, I have tried my best to convince him. So far, no luck.”

The party faithful are waiting for Gore who will take back the White House from Republicans in 2008. A spirited group of netroots activists who have launched Web sites—DraftGore.com, AlGore.org, and RunAlGore.com—have attracted more than 100,000 online signatures.

As this book goes to press, Gore has repeatedly told interviewers that he’s simply not interested in running again. But he won’t entirely rule out the possibility that maybe, just maybe, he’ll reconsider. “I am not thinking about being a candidate,” he said to CNN’s Larry King on May 22, 2007. “But, yes, it’s true, I have not ruled it out for all time. I see no reason or necessity to do that.” So the tiniest sliver of daylight remains for a late-in-the-game candidacy while Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John Edwards distance themselves from the Democratic field.

Buoyed by the success of the film, which grossed over \$50,000,000, and his recent bestseller, *The Assault on Reason*, which is a forceful indictment of America’s political system undermined by an overreaching Executive Branch and apathetic public, Gore 2.0 is having way too much fun and making too much of an impact to give all that up and subject himself once more to the soul-crushing grind of the campaign trail.

Gore is the first to admit his own limitations as a crowd-pleasing vote-getter. “Most people in politics draw energy from backslapping and shaking hands and all that. I draw energy from discussing ideas,” Gore told *New York* magazine. Need proof?

One of the biggest surprises about *An Inconvenient Truth* is his persuasive and genuinely captivating performance. He's the best science teacher you never had. Absent is the wooden Democratic nominee clumsily duking it out with his flat-footed Republican opponent in three 2000 presidential debates. The old, stiff Gore is stashed away in a lockbox. The new, limber Gore has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

There are other considerations keeping Gore out of the 2008 White House hunt. Most of his waking hours are devoted to sounding the alarm about climate change, which he insists "is the biggest challenge of our time." He's also involved in several successful business ventures that embody his lifelong fascination with technology and media. He co-founded youth-oriented cable network Current TV with former Democratic Party finance chairman Joel Hyatt. Predating YouTube in the creation of user-generated amateur content, Current TV reaches 46 million homes worldwide. In 2004, he teamed up with British money man David Blood to create an investment firm, Generation Investment Management, which funds companies in sustainable eco-friendly fields such as photovoltaic cells, wind turbines, wave energy, and solar power. Additionally, Gore sits on the board of directors at Apple and serves as a senior adviser to Google. Probably one of the smartest financial moves he ever made was joining Google in pre-IPO 2001 and receiving stock options now worth \$30 million. And then there was Live Earth, which he tirelessly championed on behalf of its founder, British music promoter Kevin Wall. Gore even went backstage at the Grammy Awards and convinced the Red Hot Chili Peppers to perform at the star-studded ecopalooza.

In a recent interview with *The Tennessean*, Gore joked, “A couple of my friends have said over the last year, ‘Al, why don’t you take a break and run for president?’” With cover stories in *Wired*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Time*, Gore, 59, is having a breakthrough second career, happily basking in a newfound celebrity that must make his former political foes seethe with envy. Ozone Man is flying sky high.

Meanwhile, climate-change skeptics are retreating like melting glaciers. “The debate on global warming is over,” declared *Scientific American* in a 2006 cover story. The planetary prophet had been correct all along regarding the danger of carbon-dioxide buildup in our atmosphere and oceans. Despite constant ridicule from naysayers as an owl-loving, tree-hugging alarmist, Gore always stayed true to his conviction that action is required to halt this frightening development. When he served in Congress and couldn’t get his colleagues to pass legislation, he started giving his slide-show talk throughout the country. The creaky slide carousel got a tech makeover in 2001 when he digitalized the images and charts. He estimates that he’s given the presentation at least a thousand times—in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. One city he missed was New Orleans. Gore told *Fast Company* that he had planned on being there the day Katrina hit. “The audience was the state insurance commissioners who wanted to learn more about hurricanes and global warming.”

Environmental activist and Hollywood A-list player Laurie David encouraged Gore to turn his multimedia lecture into a documentary (she’s the producer and Davis Guggenheim is the director), and as a consequence, Gore’s message about climate change migrated far beyond the eco-fringe and reached the mainstream with surprising speed. A book based on *An*

Inconvenient Truth sold over 800,000 copies. Citizen Gore had awakened America, which emits one-quarter of the world's greenhouse gases. Grist.org, a heavily trafficked environmental Web site, nicknamed him Al Revere. Instead of redcoats, the new enemy is record temperatures in the red zone.

Throughout his twenty-four-year career in public office, first as a Congressman (he was only 28 when elected to the House), then as Senator (including a short-lived 1988 presidential run) and later as Bill Clinton's two-term vice president, the cerebral Gore was that rare breed of politician who could recite by chapter and verse complex policy issues—arms control, environment, government reform, technology—with the wonkish air of a think tank expert. His mind operates like a portable Wikipedia that's being continually updated with fresh facts and ideas. He relishes the role as public educator, and it's a pedagogical calling that he thought he could best achieve as U.S. president.

That 2000 election dealt a crushing, demoralizing blow to him, and to Democrats. Despite winning the popular vote, the Supreme Court narrowly sided (5–4) with George W. Bush's legal team concerning a Florida recount. It hurriedly handed a suspect victory to the Texas governor. The lesser man won. Gore nonetheless handled the defeat with steely grace and remarkable composure. During his televised concession speech on December 13, 2000, he said, "Let there be no doubt, while I strongly disagree with the court's decision, I accept it. I accept the finality of this outcome."

Asked to look back upon that tense, uncertain episode in America's electoral life nearly seven years later, Gore said this on *Charlie Rose*: "I've chosen not to challenge the rule of law because in our system there really is no intermediate step between a final Supreme Court decision and violent revolution."

Yet try to imagine his personal pain after Bush took the oath of office in January 2001. Somehow Gore managed to repress this enormous private hurt and found the inner strength to move on in life. Even among close friends, he refused to bare his soul regarding the gut-wrenching defeat. (To this day, the subject remains taboo.) He and wife Tipper vacated the capital and retreated to Nashville. He vanished from political life for months. *The Washington Post* noticed that he had become “the Greta Garbo of contemporary American politics.” He taught classes at several universities. He co-authored two books about the American family with Tipper. They went on a summer sailing vacation in the Mediterranean. He grew a beard. They bought a 100-year-old home in an upscale neighborhood.

A speech at San Francisco’s Commonwealth Club on September 21, 2002, marked Gore’s return to the political arena. But it was a different, more outspoken man behind the lectern who voiced strong doubts about the White House’s ill-considered decision to go after Saddam Hussein who had nothing to do with September 11. The media did an instant double take. They asked, “Who is this new Al and why didn’t he talk like that during the last election?”

He continued giving speeches that criticized the Bush administration—its frontal assault on civil liberties, penchant for secrecy, institutionalized dishonesty, lack of accountability, endorsement of state-sanctioned torture, and the Iraq War. He astonished listeners with searing eloquence and astute insights. His confidence to let it rip and speak his mind grew with each talk. Freed from the choke-chain grip of consultants and advisers, the liberated Gore could openly express his outrage over a broken political system hijacked by democracy-

destroying zealots from the Republican party. With the exception of Fox News and its right-wing echo chamber, people now wanted to hear from the man whom many had written off as a political has-been.

His reemergence on the partisan battlefield, however, appeared tentative and awkward during the 2004 presidential primaries. Call it lousy timing or just more bad luck, because one month after he endorsed former Vermont governor Howard Dean came the Iowa scream. But this was a minor speed bump on Gore's road to career rehab. By the time he gave an address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, a reinvigorated Gore stood tall as he cracked wise to the cheering crowd, "You win some, you lose some—and then there's that little-known third category."

It's impossible to avoid the fleeting indulgence of speculation. What if Florida had swung the other way and Gore became our forty-third president? The United States wouldn't be stuck in a military quagmire in Iraq, which Gore calls "the single worst strategic mistake in the history of this country." The Constitution wouldn't be force-fed into an Oval Office paper shredder. The judicial system wouldn't be stocked like a conservative trout farm. Dick Cheney wouldn't be running his own shadow government. Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo wouldn't be permanent stains on our country's conscience. No illegal domestic spying. No huge tax cuts benefiting the super wealthy. Instead of a gargantuan budget deficit, there'd probably still be a surplus. Our public lands wouldn't be held hostage to oil, gas, mining, and timber interests. The nation would be greener, cleaner, healthier, safer and more optimistic about its future.

The White House deception that pushed the country into war with Iraq, says Gore, is similar to the disinformation campaign that has undermined the scientific community's long-standing warning about a hotter planet. "In both cases the policies are badly mistaken," he stated on *CNN Larry King Live*, "and in both cases the evidence is available, overwhelming evidence to convince any reasonable person ahead of time that we should have done the opposite of what we did." With Iraq, fiction about WMD was disseminated as fact through propaganda and fear. A submissive media went along with the White House's unsubstantiated claim that "we don't want the next smoking gun to be a mushroom cloud." But with climate change, the information flow was reversed. To spread doubt and curtail debate, scientific facts were dismissed as hooey by the Bush administration and its big business supporters. Political considerations took precedence over hard science.

If anything, Gore is an extremely rational person. He knows what it will take to move millions of minds to accept the looming specter of global warming. Because attitudes and lifestyle habits are resistant to change, he's dedicated himself full-throttle to altering public opinion about climate change. There's a touching, almost poignant scene towards the end of *An Inconvenient Truth* when Gore quietly says, "The only way I know to do it is city by city, person by person, family by family." Fortunately, the climate's Cassandra now has help. The non-profit and non-partisan Alliance for Climate Protection—Gore is its chairman—plans to educate the public through widespread media exposure and grassroots education. Proceeds from the book, movie, and Live Earth event went to the Alliance. Current TV will air specially made commercials and promotions. Synergy indeed rocks Gore's world.

INTRODUCTION

Since Gore likes speaking in metaphors, let's use one here to describe his mission: he's a twenty-first century Atlas holding aloft the sky on his broad shoulders. He threw down the global-warming gauntlet during his acceptance speech at the 2007 Academy Awards: "My fellow Americans, people all over the world, we need to solve the climate crisis. It's not a political issue, it's a moral issue." To simply do nothing will create a cascading effect of irreversible harm: longer heat waves, massive ice shelves splintering off Greenland and Antarctica, rising sea levels, coastal flooding, increased malaria, stronger hurricanes and monsoons, and poverty-inducing drought that will sweep barren wide swaths of Africa. It's goodbye planet and hello apocalypse.

This book opens a window to Al Gore—his thinking, his motivations, his beliefs, his politics, his passions. This compilation contains excerpts from his speeches, debates, interviews, and books. Here is Al Gore in his own words—erudite, visionary, analytical, heartfelt, and witty. Though the starting point is climate crisis, you will find quotes and passages covering a broad range of topics: Iraq War, the Bush White House, media, technology, the 2000 presidential election, the current state of politics, and the future and challenge of democracy in America.

BILL KATOVSKY
Northern California
August 2007

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CLIMATE IN CRISIS



“Antarctica is the frontier of the ecological crisis. [It] plays a far more significant role than any other part of the Earth in the global climate system. For one thing, the cold waters surrounding the continent absorb more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than all the rain forests. Antarctica is the single most powerful engine driving the world’s weather, redistributing its massive coldness through the winds of the air and the currents of the sea. As greenhouse gases trap more heat in the Earth’s atmosphere and temperatures climbs, they are expected to climb fastest of all here in Antarctica.”

—Al Gore’s “Unbearable Whiteness,”
The New Republic, December 2, 1988

“Nuclear war is an apocalyptic subject, and so is global environmental destruction. [We must sound the alarm] loudly and clearly of imminent and grave danger.”

—speech at The National Academy of Sciences, as quoted
in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, August 5, 1990

“I’ve been trying to tell this story for a long time, and I feel as if I have failed to get the message across.”

—from opening sequence of *An Inconvenient Truth*

“Many scientists are now uncharacteristically scared. For the first time, we can see in the numbers that the rate of increase in global warming is accelerating.”

—*Rolling Stone*, June 12–28, 2007

“I feel like the country singer who spends 30 years on the road to become an overnight sensation. And I’ve seen public interest [on global warming] wax and wane before—but this time does feel different.”

—*Time*, May 16, 2007

“The planet has a fever. If your baby has a fever, you go to the doctor. If the doctor says you need to intervene here, you don’t say, ‘Well, I read a science fiction novel that told me it’s not a problem.’ If the crib’s on fire, you don’t speculate that the baby is flame retardant. You take action.”

—testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Energy & Environment, March 21, 2007

“Our home—Earth—is in danger. What is at risk of being destroyed is not the planet itself, but the conditions that have made it hospitable for human beings. Without realizing the consequences of our actions, we have begun to put so much carbon dioxide into the thin shell of air surrounding our world that we have literally changed the heat balance between Earth and the Sun. If we don’t stop doing this pretty quickly, the average temperature will increase to levels humans have never known and put an end to the favorable climate balance on which our civilization depends.”

—Al Gore’s op-ed “Moving Beyond Kyoto,”
New York Times, July 1, 2007

“This is not a political issue. This is a moral issue. It affects the survival of human civilization. It is not a question of left vs. right; it is a question of right vs. wrong. Put simply, it is wrong to destroy the habitability of our planet and ruin the prospects of every generation that follows ours.”

—speech at New York University School of Law,
September 18, 2006

“We are facing a global climate crisis. It is deepening. We are entering a period of consequences.”

“You look at that river gently flowing by. You notice the leaves rustling with the wind. You hear the birds.”

—from *An Inconvenient Truth*

“Kevin Wall, the executive producer of these Live Earth concerts, saw [*An Inconvenient Truth*] and he and his wife were moved by it and he contacted me and mutual friends introduced us and we got to know each other really well. He is the only one who can pull off these Live Earth concerts on all seven continents. I’ve had the opportunity to contact a lot of the greatest performers in the world and ask them if they would do this and—and they all are doing it—150 of the very best performers in the entire world. All of the performers, by the way, are performing for free. It’s the launch of a three-year campaign to get the message about the climate crisis and the solutions to the climate crisis to every person on earth so that we can move across this political tipping point, beyond which everybody in every country puts pressure on their leaders and every party to make this a top priority and solve the climate crisis.”

—*CNN Larry King Live*, July 5, 2007