



The Regeneration

Paul Hawken

Environmentalist, entrepreneur, journalist and editor of the new book "Drawdown," Paul talks to us about the history of the climate movement and where we go from here.

Contents

The overarching theme of this issue is plastic pollution and its connection to climate change. However, because of the breadth of factors that contribute to climate change, we've included

pieces about environmental justice, palm oil, ocean plastic and environmental racism. We have also included some mindfulness techniques to move you forward.



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The Regeneration

PROJECT DRAWDOWN

Photo Edoardo Busti



In this section, we dive deep into "Drawdown"—the most comprehensive plan ever proposed to reverse global warming—with lead editor Paul Hawken and lead writer Katharine Wilkinson. "Drawdown" maps, measures, models and describes the 100 most substantive solutions to global warming.

Each solution is broken down by its history, how it works, the carbon reduction it provides, the relative cost and savings, and the path to adoption.

The goal of the research that informs "Drawdown" is to determine if we can reverse the buildup of atmospheric carbon within 30 years. We discuss the team's vision for what this book will accomplish and the role their new organization, Project Drawdown, will have on the global stage.



Photo Buck Butler

Katharine Wilkinson

Lead Writer of "Drawdown"

Katharine Wilkinson brings an interdisciplinary background to Project Drawdown that cuts across sustainability, strategy and thought leadership. Previously, Wilkinson was the director of strategy at the purpose consultancy BrightHouse. She has also taught at the University of Oxford and worked for the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Boston Consulting Group. Wilkinson sat down for a conversation about her work helping to bring Paul Hawken's vision to life, as she drives the project forward, forging partnerships around the world.

Q: I'm very interested in your background. You've been a director of strategy at BrightHouse. You taught at Oxford. You worked at NRDC. Would you describe your path to writing about climate change issues?

A: My bio can look a little schizophrenic, but it's all part of finding my way as a deeply interdisciplinary human.

When I was 16, I spent a semester at the Outdoor Academy in western North Carolina—in Pisgah Forest—which was the birthplace of my trajectory as an environmentalist, for lack of a better word. It was when I first got interested in the stories that we tell about ourselves and this planet that we live on. How do those stories shape the action that we take or don't take? In undergrad at the liberal arts college Sewanee—The University of the South, I did environmental studies but also majored in religion. Again, what are these big stories that we're telling? What are the big questions that we're grappling with as human beings?

After graduating, I spent a year working for NRDC on forest and land-use issues on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee. To be overly simplistic, I was working in megachurch, NASCAR, country music land. I had grown up in Atlanta, in the progressive bubble of John Lewis' congressional district. But going to school in the rural south and then the work for NRDC really left me frustrated. It left me struggling with the way in which the environmental movement speaks right past most of America, sitting as it does in New York and San Francisco for the most part. This experience was smack in the

middle of the second Bush administration, and I thought, there have to be other ways of shaping political will and public engagement on these issues. During that year at NRDC, the Evangelical Climate Initiative launched with a full-page ad in the New York Times that said, "Our commitment to Jesus Christ compels us to solve the global warming crisis." I'd been thinking about the intersection of these things—of religion and environmental advocacy—and yet this surprised me.

I ended up at Oxford for grad school on a Rhodes Scholarship. I used that opportunity to dive into understanding what was, at the time, a burgeoning evangelical climate movement. I was wrapping up my doctoral dissertation in 2009, when it looked like we had our best chance in a generation of passing federal climate legislation. It passed the House, and then couldn't get through the Senate. Then, the climate negotiations in Copenhagen dissolved. It was all really depressing. I didn't know how to spend my days in the doom and gloom of climate and stay sane.

Having known Ray Anderson and been inspired by the story of Interface, I thought there might be ways to get closer to the site of impact through sustainability in business. So, I veered into consulting at the Boston Consulting Group and then found my way to BrightHouse, a boutique consultancy focused on purpose. Five years of consulting convinced me that most change in large corporations is extremely slow. Those institutions are rarely vanguard change-makers. It wasn't a long-term fit for me.



"Then, the climate negotiations in Copenhagen dissolved. It was all really depressing. I didn't know how to spend my days in the doom and gloom of climate and stay sane."



Photo Kyle Calian



Photo Buck Butler

I had turned my doctoral research into a book that came out in 2012, "Between God & Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change." And I really wanted to get back into the climate space, into more thought leadership, more writing and speaking.

How did you meet Paul Hawken and get involved with "Drawdown"?

Paul and I met through a consulting project I was leading for Interface, when I was still at BrightHouse. My team was helping Interface to codify their purpose and values, their story. At the same time, they were thinking about their next mission beyond Mission Zero, to become a regenerative company. They're now calling that mission Climate Take Back. Paul has advised Interface for many years. We met through that project, stayed in touch, and one thing led to another. Ultimately he asked if I wanted to come work on writing the book, "Drawdown." And of course I said, yes!

Were you one of the group of editors that helped work on the research for the book?

Yes. We had over 60 research fellows who worked on literature reviews and modeling of the "Drawdown" solutions. I came on board to write the prose of the book, which also involved expanding on that research. Paul also wrote, and we edited one another's work. It was a wonderfully collaborative writing project.

I'd like to ask about your book, "Between God & Green," before diving into "Drawdown." I'm fascinated by the evangelical environmental movement

and the dichotomy between the Bible saying we have dominion over nature or are its stewards. I think that's the seminal question of that movement and want to hear what you think.

What you saw in the early 2000s was a bubbling up of interest in climate change among a core set of more moderate evangelical leaders, who managed to bring a bunch of folks on board, at least in name. That group became the Evangelical Climate Initiative. I wanted to understand: Where did this effort come from? How are its leaders making sense of this issue? How are they framing it? And to what degree is it resonating or not with the evangelical public?

What's really powerful is the way that creation care—which is the broader interest or movement of which this focus of climate is one part—takes two streams of theology and pulls them together. The first is a responsibility to care for creation or to be stewards or to "tend and keep the garden," as you see in Genesis. The other stream of theology is around care for the poor and the most vulnerable, "the least of these." Creation care leaders weave those two together quite intentionally and thoughtfully, which contrasts what a lot of the environmental movement has done historically.

As far as the dominion idea—the way that word gets used elsewhere in the Bible refers to thoughtful and generous rulership, such as what a good, responsible leader does. It is misunderstood when read as license to do with the Earth as you wish.

In a good federalist system, the good noble, so to speak.

Yes. During the research, I sat down and talked with focus groups in churches around the southeast. Generally, people said, "Yeah, absolutely, we think we're called to care for God's creation. Definitely we're called to be stewards." Some people said, "And so we should do something about climate change." Many others said that theology sits over here, and climate change and Al Gore are over there. There was often a gulf between the two and a resistance to applying that theology to an issue that reeked to folks of a broader, progressive agenda.

There's this idea that the Christian monotheistic God created this amazing Earth, so why would he create an Earth that would be so temperamental and fragile? How could humans be connected to climate change if we're just part of the picture, not the whole thing? As a systems thinker, that disconnect has always perplexed me a bit. We're a part of the larger whole. I'm sure you have thoughts about that.

There are certainly people who believe that it's hubris to think humans could have this kind of impact on the planet. That's a pretty straightforward perspective. I really wrestled with understanding something more implicit that I was hearing from people. "Yes, I think I should drive a car with better gas mileage. No, I don't think that has an impact on people's lives in Bangladesh. Yes, I agree that we shouldn't cut down trees. No I'm not responsible for the atmosphere." There was a deep localization of problems.

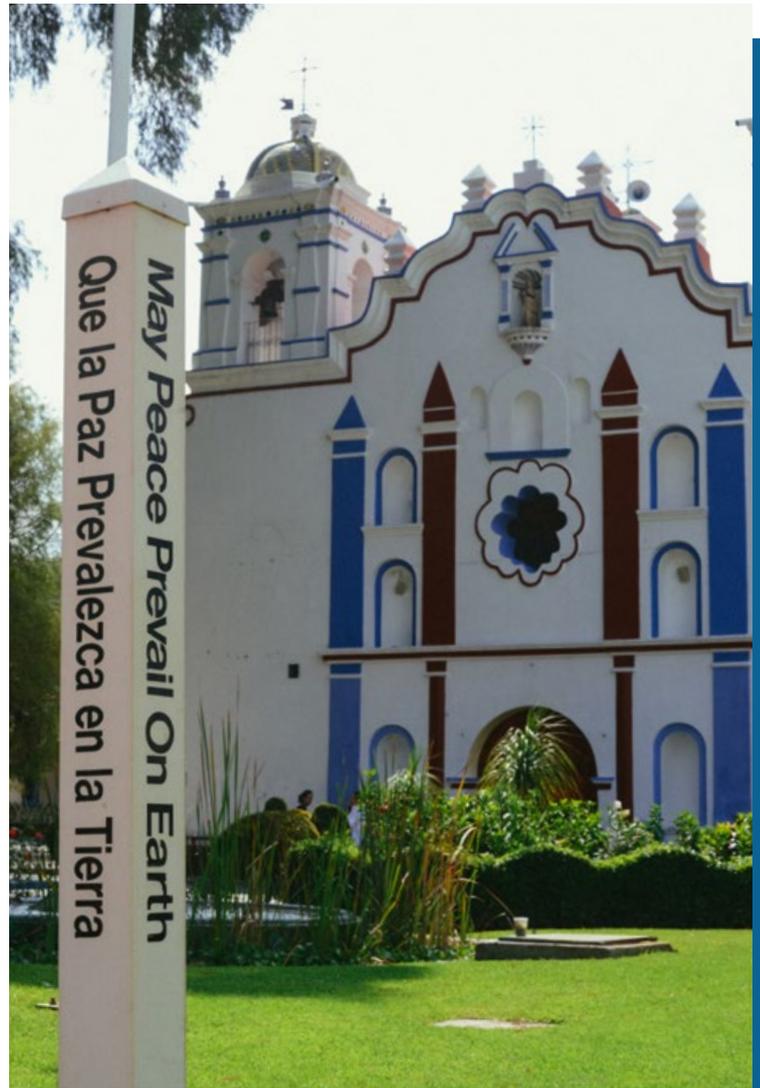


Photo Kyle Calian

"There was often a gulf between the two and a resistance to applying that theology to an issue that reeked to folks of a broader, progressive agenda."

I ended up reading some work that flipped a light switch for me. It was about evangelicals' perspectives on race and racism, typically seeing racism as an individualized issue. So, if I'm not actively being explicitly racist toward you, then there's not a problem. Of course, this ignores the larger, systemic racism we face as a nation right now. There's a resistance to more systemic, or more structural, ways of thinking about those issues.

The biggest factor I saw at work was political ideology. Even at that point, there was already such a partisan divide on climate. And I think that was the dominant factor for most folks. Religion or theology could only carry people so far.

I left the research at a really interesting and fraught moment for those leaders. They were grappling. Do we set climate change aside, given all this political baggage, and go headlong into seminaries and churches with creation care theology that will not rile people up? Or do we stay focused on this most important issue and stay focused on Washington? Leaders were divided, and the evangelical climate effort suffered the same kind of dip that the overall climate movement suffered in 2009 and 2010.

That was at the peak of the Heartland movement, with political opposition groups funded by big oil. Media coverage of the climate movement shot down for those four or five years.

Totally. It was back to these bigger questions about the movement. If the whole game is national policy and an international agreement, and those stall or collapse for the foreseeable future,

then what are you doing? What are you pushing for? I think much of the movement became a bit unmoored.

Precisely. Well, let's transition back into "Drawdown."

I'll say quickly that the connective tissue between the two is that I used the lens of discourse analysis for that research, for "Between God & Green." So, it was really about the question of, what are the stories that we're telling? How are we communicating this phenomenon of climate change and our relationship to it? Instead of sitting in the seat of an academic and analyzing that, it's been really interesting with "Drawdown" to be in the seat of shaping the story. It's been a cool shift.

I think that this book does a phenomenal job of really breaking down what we need to do and what the impact actually looks like. What does your work at Project Drawdown, now that the book has been released, look like on a day-to-day basis?

I really loved the writing phase—bringing these solutions and our message to life—but I also really love this phase of engagement and sharing and teaching. My work now involves a lot of talks, interviews, and conversations with folks who want to put "Drawdown" to work in curriculums or at the city level or within their organizations. In other words, catching the interest that's coming in, while also being a messenger for "Drawdown" going out, which has been really, really exciting. As a team, we're figuring out what the future of this living research project looks like, what the future of "Drawdown" as a

living communication project looks like. We're working on other communication mediums, thinking about subsequent publications—lots of good stuff.

Gotcha. So you're the senior writer, and there are all of these research fellows and other people within the organization. I imagine you guys are working on media partnerships and writing pieces for major outlets, but how localized is it? Is everyone all over the globe, or is there an HQ where you guys are thumbing away at stuff? Paint the picture.

The core team is very small—but I like to think mighty—which is Paul, Chad Frischmann who's our research director, and Crystal Chisel, who keeps everything running and humming (particularly on the research side). They're all in the Bay Area, in Sausalito. I'm in Atlanta, working from my treehouse-esque office.

Beyond the fulltime staff, we have a great senior research team who shaped and shepherded the modeling side of the work. There were 60-plus research fellows who touched it at some point or another, and they're all remote. They're on six continents, 22 countries. It's really a fantastic cross section of folks.

Layered onto that is a big community of advisors, who have been involved to varying degrees. There were some who really wanted to engage in reading draft content of the book, in giving feedback. Others wanted to be more engaged on the modeling side. So imagine a small core team and then this big and broadening coalition that's scattered all over the place.

And now, post-publication, do you feel like you're tapping into that network still? Or do you feel like you can be doing more work with them?

Absolutely, this is a collaborative, community effort, and it's blessed with many messengers, many champions. What you want is for all of those voices to be voices for Project Drawdown. That's happening—many voices bringing this work and rigorous vision of possibility to the world.

On a personal note, what do you hope results from the project?

The story that we have been telling one another about climate change in recent decades is worrisome. That is, it's bad. It's going to be really bad. We're heading toward a potentially unlivable planet, as a species that's not super well-equipped to change course. Please change your lightbulbs, recycle your Coke cans and cross your fingers for some silver-bullet solution. That's the gist of it.

In my own experience of working on climate—and stepping away from working on climate for a time—I know what that story can mean. It leaves people feeling overwhelmed, scared, guilty, sad, confused, paralyzed, depressed, cynical, hopeless. All these things that are super valid and not at all a good foundation for action, when what we need to be doing is digging in and taking action. Even folks who are really engaged in related issues say, “I don't want to touch climate change. Not because I think it's not happening or not important, but I have no idea what my foothold is in this space or how to not be subsumed and in doom and gloom.”

"We also need a clear and credible vision worth fighting for, beyond averting catastrophe."



The subtext of that climate story is that human beings are terrible, horrible, no good, very bad, greedy, lazy, incompetent, intransigent and all the rest. If that's what you believe about humanity, then why would you show up and do this work every day? When you come in through the lens of solutions, the other side of the story becomes really clear—which is that we are also creative and compassionate and collaborative and committed. And every now and again, we manage to be brilliant and gutsy.

For folks in the work of climate action, I think you have to hear and tell and own that story—both if you want to stay courageous and driven, but also if you want to invite other people in. I'm hopeful that this work reenergizes folks. I'm hopeful that it gives people who haven't participated in this work before a sense of ways they can contribute. I hope it's a counterpoint to the "I have a nightmare" speech that the climate movement is really good at giving—and reasonably so, if all you look at is the science of the bad stuff that could be coming our way. We also need a clear and credible vision worth fighting for, beyond averting catastrophe. I hope that "Drawdown" begins to articulate that vision, and that our work moving forward continues to expand on and clarify that vision. I think we're filling a big need in the climate movement and shifting how we talk about climate in the public square.

What are you working on at the moment, other than Project Drawdown?

I live in Atlanta, which is a bit of a teenager city that's writing its next chapter. What's fun about being here (and sometimes frustrating) is that that's happening, and you can be involved if you want to be. Everyone says that Atlanta would be a great city if only we had a waterfront. We actually have a river. It doesn't run through the heart of downtown, but there are 8 miles of river that form one boundary of the city limits. But you can't see it, and you can't get to it. It's an intensely industrial corridor that then gives way to forest and farmland. Yet the river is cleaner than it has been in decades, and maybe than it has been in a century.

I'm very involved with an organization called Chattahoochee NOW, which is trying to get the city to imagine and pursue the potential that we have with this riverfront. Basically, where rich white people live, north of the city, you have great access to the river. It's a National Recreation Area. But we've done some equity analysis that communities of color and communities that are lower income have almost no access to the river at all. So, how do we make the river reachable by all? What does the riverfront end up being like, end up looking like?

I think about that work as creating on-ramps to environmental concern. How do you pull people in gently, to becoming more engaged through the avenues of wonder and exploration, as opposed to "this is terrible"? It's really hard for folks to care about a river they never see. There are a lot of people who drive out of the city and go to the Chattahoochee farther north. But how

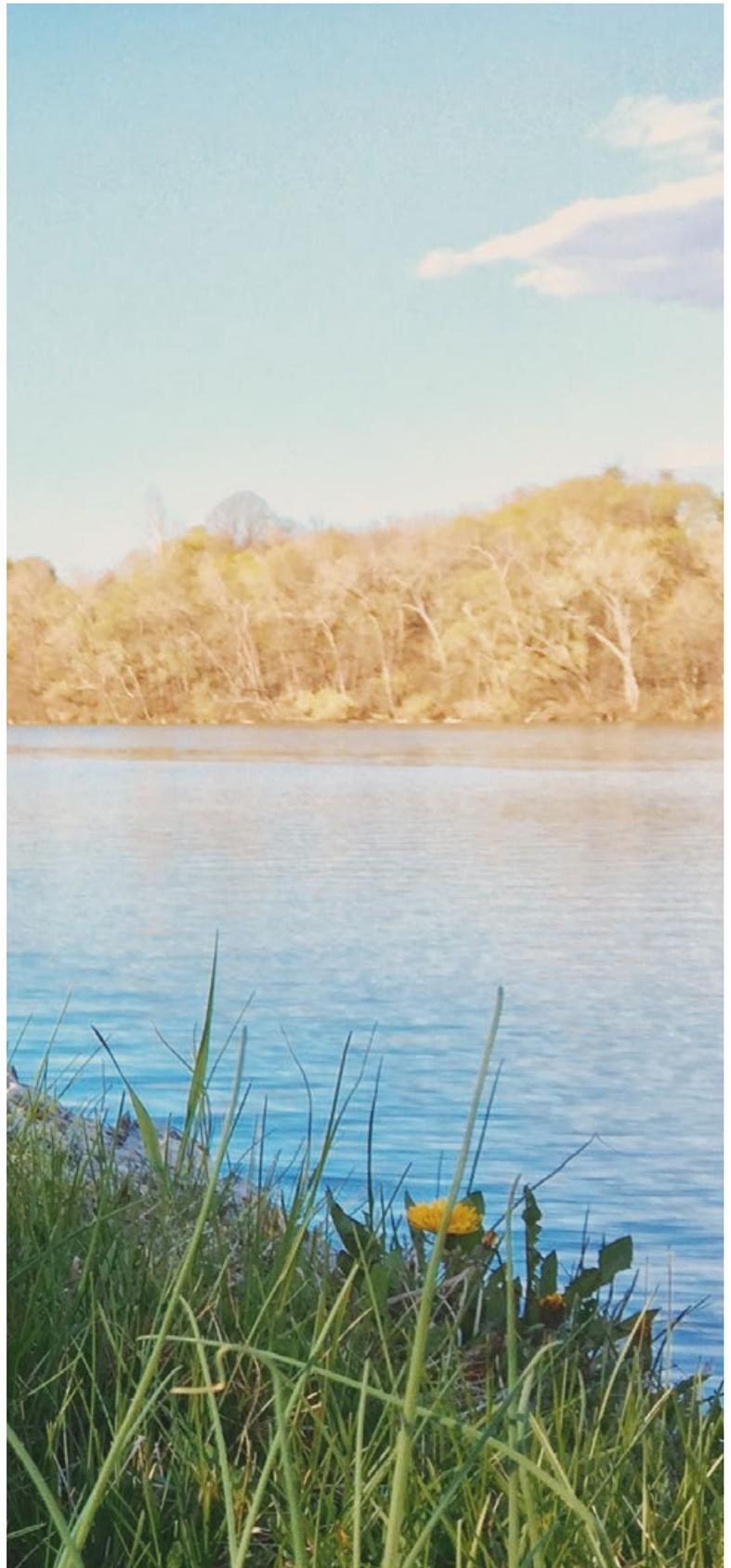


Photo Kyle Ryan

do you make it a part of our identity, right in the heart of Atlanta?

Who are your biggest influences?

I have many. One is Parker Palmer—a Quaker thought-leader and wise man who has written about so many things, from purpose to democracy to education. He started and ran a wonderful organization called the Center for Courage and Renewal. Parker talks about “the work before the work.” It’s the work of staying in what he calls the “tragic gap” between the reality of what is and the possibility of what could be or should be. It is easy to flip out of it—into cynicism or hopelessness on one side or into starry-eyed, gee-whiz optimism on the other. How do you stay grounded and sustain that ability to face the hard things and hold the vision and do the work? We can get so caught up in technologies and practices and policies that we forget about the human work that also has to be done to be effective.

The wonderful thing about being in this phase of Project Drawdown, of sharing the work and engaging with folks, is that I’m mostly so inspired by people who have been at this and are staying at it in ways that don’t always get lifted up and championed and have their stories sung. That perseverance is remarkable. I recently hung out with a group of primary school and high school students from all over the world, at an event called The International Schools Debate in the U.K. I was absolutely blown away by 9-year-olds who are so thoughtful about climate action and the Paris Agreement and taking down Scott Pruitt. None of these were American kids. The evolution of consciousness that’s happening is quite amazing.

And lastly, do you have a favorite thing that you bring with you everywhere you go, as a writer?

I take my dog, Arthur, everywhere that I can. I try not to leave home without a paper book. I think in my bag right now is Rebecca Solnit’s book on hope, which she wrote after the re-election of George Bush in 2004. I’m thinking a lot about this tragic gap/possibility/hope thing—what it all means, how we understand it. Climate is such a big field and it’s moving so fast. There’s a risk of thinking that you only have time to read about that, if you want to keep up. I try to keep the other inputs coming.

Katharine Wilkinson Ph.D., is senior writer at Project Drawdown, working to bring “Drawdown” to life and to the world and translating research into message. Find out more about Project Drawdown at drawdown.org.

