



## Why Are You Optimistic?

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James Hansen

**W**hy are you optimistic, I have often been asked since I wrote [Young People's Burden](#), which describes the steep climate and energy hill that we are leaving for young people to climb.

Two weeks ago I [noted](#) the Students Government Leaders' Statement on Carbon Dividends, a bipartisan statement by 350+college student government presidents from all 50 states. Scroll down their [Statement](#) to see the impressive future leaders, who support carbon fee & dividend, the essential underlying policy needed to phase out fossil fuel emissions as rapidly as possible.

The essential adjunct to fossil fuel phaseout is a realistic alternative for abundant affordable clean energy, which is needed to provide a good standard of living for all people. Six years ago I was at a United Nations meeting in Paris on sustainable development organized by Jeff Sachs.

There were teams from each of many individual nations examining potential pathways to reach carbon-free emissions by mid-century. In most cases it seemed that the pathway needed to include a role for advanced generation nuclear power – otherwise the complement to intermittent renewable energies would be gas, which is little better than coal.

My concern about nuclear power has been the effect of backward-looking 1970s thinking that has poisoned public perception of nuclear power. Rational scientific arguments that modern nuclear power has the potential to be among the safest energies with the smallest environmental footprint seem to be inadequate to overcome the psychology of “nuclear fear” that has been promoted successfully by various groups and eagerly supported by the media.

Can young people overcome the obstacles that they are faced with? I was encouraged by the dedication of the young people in the sustainable development meeting. One of them was Jessica Lovering, pictured on the left above. She is one of thousands of bright young people coming out of our universities today. They are the basis for my optimism.

Look at [this site](#) and click on individual photos to see what some of these people are about. They are smart, educated, idealistic, determined to make our world a better, fairer place for all people. Read about their [progressive policy agenda](#). Today, 11 August, at 5 PM East Coast U.S. time they will launch their Good Energy Collective with an open conversation. Please consider participating! [Register here](#).

You can sign up for our (Climate Science, Awareness and Solutions) monthly global temperature updates [here](#).

You can sign up for my other Communications [here](#).

I opened a Twitter account @DrJamesEHansen, (<https://twitter.com/drjamesehansen>), but I am focusing mainly on finishing *Sophie's Planet*.