



Larry Gibson and Judy Bonds at Appalachia Rising march to the White House.

Activists*

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Activism is not fun. The pay is bad (usually zero or less). It's hard work to get any attention. Hard-core activists (not dilettantes like Bill McKibben and me) put a lot on the line, even their lives. The commitment and bravery of indigenous people is inspiring. The hardest thing about activism is that it often seems to have little effect, if any.

[The Race to Save the World](#), a film by Joe Gantz, will be released on Earth Day, April 22. The link is to a 9-minute trailer. The film realistically captures characters who take real risks and the impacts on their loved ones and on themselves. Implicitly it raises questions about the best way to achieve environmental goals. It's not like 1970 when the public could see pollution in the air and in the water – activists could bring 20,000,000 people into the streets for the first Earth Day.

My first acquaintance with activists was at Coal River Mountain, a protest against mountaintop removal led by Larry Gibson and Judy Bonds. Surely, we have solved that horrific assault on the environment by now, right? Nope. Vernon Haltom of [Coal River Mountain Watch](#) tells me that it's still happening and leases for such mining are still being obtained. Can somebody please let Joe Biden, John Kerry and Gina McCarthy know about it? Judy Bonds and Larry Gibson are no longer with us, having died young, as is all too common in Appalachia.

We need activists. Gantz' film spurs us to think about how to be more effective. I will give my opinions in the last chapter of *Sophie's Planet* (Chapter 50: Fighting on All Fronts). You can be the heroine riding on the back of a wild thing to fight the evil alliance of government and exploiters, but the battles will be fought on engineering drawing boards, in the courts, and at the ballot box. You don't need to lie down before a train or get arrested to make a difference. The challenge is great because of the role of money in our government (and in environmental organizations). Realistic definition of the problems is an essential step toward solution. We can still make our democracies work, but it's hard work – it will require a lot of people.

*For simplicity, we will merge our 'temperature update' and 'communications' email lists before our next mailing. We will send one temperature update and one or two other communications per month. There will be an obvious unsubscribe button in case you do not wish to be on the combined list.