I was encouraged by what I heard

By Geoffrey Heal

I've spent much of the last 25 years thinking and lobbying about climate change and trying to get it on the agenda. This town hall impressed me. While there were differences, all the candidates seemed well-informed about the issue and backed policies that make sense.

It was clear that Senator Amy Klobuchar had thought about the climate crisis from many angles. She seemed much more detail-oriented than Senator Kamala Harris. Less charismatic though. How do you trade off expertise against personality?

Less specific and less clear than Klobuchar was Joe Biden, though he was still well
experience in working with foreign leaders and the need for diplomacy – again, good point. He said he’d go to Brazil to talk with President Jair Bolsonaro right away.

Again, that makes sense.

world. Sanders was very emphatic about the priority of climate change and the need to preserve the planet. Although he was rather vague about where exactly his famous $16 trillion will come from, he did list some plausible sources. And he sees nuclear energy as expensive and risky, which is accurate. Sanders also suggested that his administration would compensate people who work in fossil fuels and lose their jobs by paying them incomes for five years. That seems fair and is also good politics.

Senator Elizabeth Warren was very coherent – as usual. She supports a carbon tax and moving away from nuclear and spoke of a need for carbon-based border adjustment taxes – no one else did.

Like Sanders, Warren was very aware of the need to provide for those who lose jobs in fossil fuels. Her suggestion was to employ them in infrastructure investment.

She wants to get to zero carbon in new buildings by 2028, in new cars by 2030 and power generation by 2035. This is probably just about feasible and the right way to tackle the problem. Warren also reacted well to a question about the impact of CO2 on the oceans. No one else spoke of the impact of climate on the oceans, but it’s a big issue.

Senator Cory Booker, who spoke last, came across as having thought about the issues more than most. His statement that if we want to get off carbon as early as 2030 then we have to continue using nuclear energy was potentially controversial to a Democratic audience, but is also probably true, so I give him high marks for this. He also seemed more aware than others of the climate-agriculture connection and the need to bring factory farming under control.

No doubt some policies would be more effective than others, but nevertheless having a town hall devoted to climate change makes the 2020 presidential elections more advanced than previous years.

Geoffrey Heal, the Donald C. Waite III Professor of Social Enterprise and a Chazen Senior Scholar at Columbia Business School, is the author of "Endangered Economies -- How the Neglect of Nature Threatens Our Prosperity."
Lyrics from the “Smokey and the Bandit” theme song ran through my head as 2020 Democratic candidates breathlessly laid out their climate change plans during the CNN town halls Wednesday night: “We’ve got a long way to go and a short time to get there.”

The plans are big and bold, unwavering and unsustainable. The Democrats' passion was unmistakable, but it was exhausting to hear the cavalcade of candidates race to the left in their efforts to save the world from their perceived existential threat of climate change. It’s too much.

Congressman Beto O'Rourke put the fear of God in his 8-year-old son, suggesting they could not live in El Paso in the future because it will "not sustain human life... unless something dramatically and fundamentally changes."

Sen. Bernie Sanders has the most expensive climate change plan with a $16 trillion price tag. Sanders emphasized the rush to take drastic steps, saying, "if we don't get our act
together and make massive changes away from fossil fuel to energy efficiency and sustainable energy within the next 11 years, the damage done to our country and the rest of the world will be irreparable."

Not surprisingly, Sen. Elizabeth Warren has a strategy to make this change. It’s a $3 trillion plan focusing on green manufacturing, research and development and cutting carbon emissions by 70% by 2035. She also took aim at the industries responsible for light bulbs, cheeseburgers, and plastic straws.

Sen. Kamala Harris said she would like to work across the aisle. But, if elected, she would take executive action to implement the Green New Deal if needed. She criticized President Trump’s roll-back of federal regulations -- a move that is popular with his base and one that will win him tremendous support in his re-election.

If elected, each candidate said on day one, they would re-enter the Paris Climate Accord, a sweeping multi-national climate agreement. Sen. Cory Booker referred to this as the “cost of entry” to run for president. Former Vice President Joe Biden went on to say re-entering the agreement includes holding the rest of the world accountable for their role in climate change. He actually has a good point there.

When it comes to energy resources, I am a firm believer in “all of the above,” not just above the ground. Yet many Democratic candidates re-affirmed their support to ban offshore drilling and fracking on federal lands. Given American’s vast resources, it makes no sense.

The overall progressive race to the left delivered quite a gift to the right.

The one Democrat who actually made sense on the climate change topic was Sen. Amy Klobuchar. She doesn’t over-promise, doesn’t over-dramatize, and doesn’t abandon heartland positions to satisfy climate change activists.

**Alice Stewart** is a CNN Political Commentator and former Communications Director for Ted Cruz for President.
Here’s a brief take on the top three Democratic candidates at tonight’s Town Hall on the Climate Crisis:

— Joe Biden and his team can take heart that he was a more effective and more energetic candidate tonight. There were a few bobbles along the way but overall, he was sturdier than in the debates. It would help if he would now slow down a bit, be less defensive, and warm up to his audience.

— Bernie Sanders was warmer than Biden and seemed more comfortable. But he didn’t have much energy on this occasion and--more to the point--he has yet to make a compelling argument about how he would pay for all his climate plans without blowing up the national debt. Warren says her plan will cost some $3 trillion; Sanders says his will be around $16 trillion. How can the country possibly afford that?

— Elizabeth Warren emerged once again as the strongest, most effective and compelling speaker. She also seems a happier warrior, relaxing into her role as her crowds grow. My bet is that her crowds are likely to grow again after tonight.

But one more point needs to be made: these candidates are still ducking and dodging on two issues that are crucial to holding climate warming to 2 degrees Celsius or less. One is
nuclear power. Many serious students of climate change think we won’t get there without investing in nuclear power and using fracking as a short-term bridge to renewables.

Hopefully, these Democratic candidates will step up to these questions soon.

David Gergen has been a White House adviser to four presidents and is a senior political analyst at CNN. A graduate of Harvard Law School, he is a professor of public service and founding director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School.

10:35 a.m. ET, September 5, 2019
Cory Booker proved he understands environmental issues on personal, political, and technical levels
By Jessika Trancik

There’s an impressive ease with which Senator Cory Booker talked about the environment. He switched from broad, insightful statements about climate being "the lens, through which we must do everything that we do," to the details of next-generation nuclear energy. It was clear that he has thought deeply about these topics, and he mixed in much-needed humor
as the end of the seven-hour event approached.

Discussing climate change effectively requires a combination of heart and wonkiness. Climate change is affecting people in very personal, emotionally challenging ways, costing homes and livelihoods. Yet it’s also about numbers and data. Wednesday night, Senator Booker proved he understands both. He connected with people’s personal experiences, while citing data and quantitative targets. He fittingly summed up his approach by saying: "in God we trust, but everybody else bring me data."

Four points stood out in Booker's climate plan:

1. Addressing climate change should go hand-in-hand with addressing environmental justice, agriculture, and other pressing societal-scale challenges. His integrative approach can be economically efficient and effective, and can build broad support among voters.

2. Our strength is as a research and development (R&D) intensive economy. Increasing clean technology R&D is essential for keeping our competitive edge. (I would add that market-expansion is also needed, to bridge lab development and early market growth, as seen in the cases of solar energy, batteries, electric vehicles and several other technologies.)

3. Freedom is a sacred value. Policy should open up more choices for people, not limit the options. This will happen with policies that drive technological innovation.

4. He cited Brené Brown in saying that "You can’t hate up close, so pull people in." Strong policy proposals are needed for helping communities and workers affected by climate change, and many candidates came forward with ideas. But conversations are also needed to understand differing perspectives and collectively design a transition that works for affected populations.

Booker gave the impression that he could have gone on much longer, and maybe he will get the chance to.

**Jessika Trancik** is an Associate Professor in Energy Systems at MIT’s Institute for Data, Systems, and Society.

**Elizabeth Warren makes the mistake Hillary Clinton did**
Sen. Elizabeth Warren embraced flawed policy priorities during the CNN town hall, rejecting nuclear energy and calling for expensive, job-killing carbon mandates and $3 trillion in new taxpayer spending. Her proposal to ban offshore oil drilling would hike gas prices and the cost of household goods, hurting middle-class families.

When asked how she would care for oil and gas jobs displaced by “green energy” policies, Warren glossed over this inconvenient truth: she sounded like Hillary Clinton boasting -- to her 2016 downfall -- about putting “a lot of coal miners and coal companies out of business."

Warren said she disagreed with Sen. Bernie Sanders’ proposal to seize energy utilities and place them in public ownership, however she admitted she wanted something even more drastic: “I think the way we get there is we just say (to fossil fuel companies), sorry guys, but by 2035 you’re done.”

Warren said the displaced workers in a place like Port Arthur, Texas -- the location of the country’s largest oil refinery -- would simply get new infrastructure jobs such as those “right on the water.” She breezed over details, like who would pay for those new jobs, whether they
are sustainable and how workers would be retrained.

The carbon mandates Warren embraced on Wednesday would hike monthly energy bills. This would hurt low-income families the most, given that they proportionately spend more on energy than wealthier families.

Carrie Sheffield is national editor for Accuracy in Media, a conservative media watchdog organization, and a visiting fellow at Independent Women's Forum.

11:38 p.m. ET, September 4, 2019

Yang dispelled myths. And he was funny too

By Van Jones

The CNN moderator threw some real curve balls at political novice Andrew Yang tonight: Are we all going to have to drive electric cars? Should Americans change their eating habits and eat less beef? What is he going to ask of the American people?

Perhaps to the surprise of many viewers, he handled them all like a pro. And he was funny,
Yang directly took on the myths fueled by Trump’s *caricature* of a green dystopian future where there are no more hamburgers, or cars, or personal freedom -- an attempt to make Americans fear the clean energy future. And he dispelled them in simple, engaging and even humorous terms.

No, the government is not going to take away your car. “This is not a country where you take someone’s clunker away from them. But you are going to offer to buy the clunker back and help them upgrade.” People will love driving electric cars, he suggested, saying, “It’s awesome[...] You feel like you’re driving the future.”

And yes, your burgers are safe too. Becoming a vegetarian helps lower your carbon footprint, but no one is going to force you to do it.

And although the looming climate catastrophe is an inherently gloomy topic, he brought cheer and a grounded optimism to the subject: “It’s not enough to do less of the bad. We need to do more of the good.”

He also talked about the need for solidarity: “This is an ‘us’ problem, not a ‘you’ problem” -- and we need to act accordingly.

In talking about clean water as a right: “You know what’s expensive? Poisoning your kids!”

He didn’t duck the gravity of the challenge -- even pointing out that America already has climate refugees, referring to a sinking town in Louisiana.

But the green economy is about building a better future for all -- and newcomer Yang conveyed that masterfully.

**Van Jones** is the host of the "The Van Jones Show" and a CNN political commentator. He is the co-founder of *Green For All*, a program of *Dream Corps*, and the CEO of the *REFORM Alliance*. 
People Who Retire Comfortably Avoid These Financial Advisor Mistakes

SmartAsset

[Photos] Prince William And Kate Middleton’s New Home Is Not What You’d Expect

Finance 101

These Bikes Were The Fastest In The World

Motorcycle Cruiser
Communities all across our country are experiencing the effects of climate change. You hear it in the many questions being asked in this Democratic Town Hall. People are asking about the disparity in the effects of climate change based on income, race, gender or abilities, about the vulnerability of coastal communities and sea level rise, about our fossil-fuel economy’s health effects, or citizens who have lost their homes to wildfire.

Some of these individuals are fortunate to live in communities looking to develop strategies to reduce the impact. Participants in the National Adaptation Forum share these ideas across geographies and there is a whole database of these efforts waiting to be replicated by any of us. We can all work in our own communities, but it is slow going and a patchwork of small-scale actions is insufficient and inefficient in protecting us from many of the effects...
of climate change.

Isolated local action also creates climate *haves* and *have nots* since unfortunately some of the individuals asking questions at the town hall do not live in communities that are taking these issues into account in their local planning and investments. The "big change" that Senator Elizabeth Warren called for -- change that works for everybody -- means creating government structures that enable all communities to do what the vanguard is already undertaking.

Mayor Pete Buttigieg noted that “our national government has failed” and that correcting it will be a “major national project.” We urgently need a national approach if we are going to help citizens -- from Louisiana’s Isle de Jean Charles to native Alaskan communities to Paradise, California -- who are climate refugees. For them, local solutions cannot sufficiently address their problems.

This is not to say that local action is unnecessary. It is the driver of innovation. Our local community examples will inform our national solutions. If you’re taking local action, please keep it up! If you’re not taking local action, see if you can get something started. As many candidates have said tonight, we need all hands on deck. And those hands need to be coordinated.

*Lara Hansen* is the *Chief Scientist, Executive Director and co-founder of the not-for-profit organization EcoAdapt, and co-author of Climate Savvy.*

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11:19 p.m. ET, September 4, 2019

**We may be at a major tipping point in our politics**

By David Gergen
The best thing about CNN's Town Hall on the Climate Crisis tonight is that this event is occurring at all. For too many years, our media and our political leaders have treated the dangers of climate change as a secondary concern. It was virtually ignored in the presidential debates of 2016, and when President Trump went to the G-7 summit recently, his team objected to a session about climate dangers, calling it a "niche issue."

It is especially good to see CNN return to its roots. Founder Ted Turner believed to his core that global warming was an existential threat to the planet and he wanted CNN to be on the cutting edge in enlightening the public about the dangers. He should be very proud tonight.

These conversations with the 10 Democratic candidates have also accomplished something else important: suddenly, the climate crisis has emerged as one of the highest priorities of the party heading into the election year, joining health care, immigration, guns and abortion. Perhaps even surpassing them.

We have never seen either party treat threats to the environment with such urgency. Having just returned from a glacier expedition in Greenland — and seeing firsthand how real the threats are — I can just say: this could be a major tipping point in our politics.

**David Gergen** has been a White House adviser to four presidents and is a senior political
At half time of CNN’s climate crisis town hall, we have heard numerous sweeping plans to confront climate change. All of the Democratic candidates appear to agree that the first step in this long journey is to re-enter the Paris Climate Accord. After that, their plans -- and priorities -- on addressing what many refer to as an “existential threat” to this country begin to differ.

Former Sec. Julian Castro highlighted an ambitious plan aiming to get the United States to
net-zero by 2045, meaning all coal-generated electricity will be phased out and replaced by zero-emission sources. And while Castro focused on taxing “corporate polluters,” he could not name one of the culprits when asked.

Businessman Andrew Yang supports ending subsidies for the fossil fuel industry. He wants everyone to love driving electric cars, as opposed to “gas guzzlers” and “clunkers.”

California Sen. Kamala Harris vowed to issue an executive order to implement the Green New Deal. She also supported bans on offshore drilling, fracking and plastic straws.

As usual, Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar was the most realistic about making promises that are simply not sustainable. She discussed "carbon pricing," a fee on the carbon content of fossil fuels, to ease the burden on the environmentally disadvantaged.

Former Vice President Joe Biden made the strongest case with regard to the Paris Climate Accord and the fact that we need to bring the rest of the world together in addressing an issue that knows no geographical bounds.

Interesting note -- each candidate has attacked President Donald Trump and his rolling back of federal government regulations. But that was a cornerstone of his campaign and will undoubtedly be a focus of his re-election pitch to voters.

Alice Stewart is a CNN political commentator and former Communications Director for Ted Cruz for President.
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