

## **PS 136 Climate Change or How to Defeat Medusa: A Conversation with Kathleen Dean Moore**

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:00:00] People will say to me, “I don't believe the facts of climate change. I don't think climate change is real.” And I direct them to the scientists at Exxon and the scientists at Shell who knew back in the 70s and in the early 80s exactly what was going to happen. They had modelers there who had all the power of the very best scientists and they learned that they would destroy the life sustaining systems of the earth. Then they sat down in the boardroom and they said, “OK, well what is our plan going to be given that? What is our plan?” And the plan was to invest. What is it John? Is it three billion dollars in a campaign to confuse people about the facts of climate change; to deceive them, to make them think this wasn't going to happen. Now, I think that's a crime against their stockholders, absolutely, but it is also a sin against creation.

**John Shuck:** [00:00:48] Kathleen Dean Moore is the author of [\*Great Tide Rising: Finding Clarity and Moral Courage to Confront Climate Change\*](#). It is time for Progressive Spirit. Stay with us.

**John Shuck:** [00:01:01] You're listening to the podcast version of Progressive Spirit. If you enjoy the show please go to iTunes, Stitcher, Google Play, Podomatic, Tune In or whatever podcast app you use to listen and give Progressive Spirit 5 stars, Won't you? Contact me through [Progressive Spirit dot net](#) with your thoughts and ideas about the show and be sure to share this podcast on your social media. Follow on Facebook and Twitter. The Web site again is Progressive Spirit dot net.

**John Shuck:** [00:01:35] For the Pacifica Radio Network and P R X, the Public Radio Exchange, and from the studios of KBOO in Portland, Oregon, this is Progressive Spirit. Progressive Spirit dot net. I'm John Shuck. I recorded this interview in my church office at [Southminster Presbyterian Church](#) in Beaverton, Oregon. My guest, Kathleen Dean Moore, spoke at the worship service on September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and stayed for an interview for Progressive Spirit. You can hear her address to the church at the church's Web site [southmin dot o r g](#). Find the sermon titled, “[Bearing Witness.](#)” Kathleen Dean Moore is a fighter. She's the fighting philosopher. She's fighting for our grandchildren. And for all of us.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:02:23] When you ask people, “Do you think that climate change is going to harm you.?” The answer is generally, “Not so much.” If you ask them if it's going to harm the future the answer is, “Absolutely.” But the mistake is, and I think the mistake is partly on the part the scientists, that this is coming way faster than anybody could have imagined. And let me ask you, too, if it happens to you, is that any worse than if it happens to your grandchildren? I mean don't you love them more than you love yourself?

**John Shuck:** [00:02:50] My guest is Kathleen Dean Moore. She is a writer and moral philosopher and environmental thought leader. She's devoted to an unrelenting defense of the future against those who would pillage and wreck the planet. Kathleen holds a Ph. D. from the University of Colorado, and for many years she taught critical thinking and environmental ethics as distinguished professor of philosophy at Oregon State University. We're going to talk about the book that she wrote in 2016 among other things. That book is *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. Welcome, Kathleen, to Progressive Spirit.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:03:31] Thank you, John, it's good to be here.

**John Shuck:** [00:03:34] Tell me about your role as a philosopher and this work, *Great Tide Rising* and perhaps your larger work. How does a philosopher make the difference or help us make the difference?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:03:52] One of the major jobs that we're going to have to do as we reinvent the world is be clear about the legacy of the Enlightenment that has allowed us to think of ourselves as independent of one another and independent of the world. We're going to have to be clear that we're right on the verge of a paradigm shift where we will, I think, suddenly probably start listening to what all the religions of the world and the ecologists and indigenous people are telling us, which is that we are members of a beautiful, interdependent, interconnected world that includes all the species and the material substrate of the planet and that there is no way, as Rachel Carson said, that we can destroy the planet without destroying ourselves.

**John Shuck:** [00:04:44] We really have to understand that that has been a philosophical school of thought, I guess, that is over ridden much of western culture, isn't it? That is that human beings are at the apex, and that the environment is something that's outside of us and that there's something different between the human being and the environment.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:05:02] Yes. The capitalists really needed the philosophers to come through for them to help people think in ways that are utterly ridiculous, that we are independent of the earth, that we are not creatures born to care, that we are not good at making communities, that competition is the best most productive way for us to interact. All these things that we have been told are suddenly becoming clearly not the case.

**John Shuck:** [00:05:28] So this book -- *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. Tell me about this book. What motivated you to write this one and why this one at this time?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:05:40] We got a lot of tides rising around us, don't we John? We've got the sea level rise which is coming fast and furious. The same time, we have the rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We have the rising corruption levels of unbelievable corruption in the federal government where the regulatory agencies are pretty much now controlled by the fossil fuel industry. But we also have a rising tide of concern about the environment. A rising tide of outrage about what is being done to our future and the future of our children, and a rising moral affirmation that we have to do better than this, that we are called to make sure that we leave a beautiful and life sustaining world to our grandchildren.

**John Shuck:** [00:06:28] You know I'm a grandfather since you mentioned grandchildren. I just became a grandfather two years ago. Tomorrow, my granddaughter, Pippa, is going to be two and I've thought of this elsewhere. I've thought of this with my great nephew, but now is the first time I can actually think with my own granddaughter. When she's my age what will the world be like? Fifty-five years from now, in 2073, what will the world be like then? And that really brings the personal level to it. You have a passage in your book about you connecting with your grandson with starfish. Would you mind reading some of that?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:07:07] No, I would be pleased to. It's from the preface of *Great Tide Rising* and it's called "At Low Tide, Watching the World Go Away." We're wading in rubber boots at the rim of the sea, my grandson and I. It's a silver day in Alaska. Shining, shivering seas and clouds so low you feel you could bump your head. My grandson leans over to poke a graying starfish. This one is soft. That means it's sick. This child is three years old and already he knows the signs of Starfish Wasting Syndrome. He gives a sea star a last poke with his forefinger and stands to gaze around the cove. "His mom is around here someplace." he says, wrinkling his brow and not finding her. "He is sick. He needs a mom." I think that is undoubtedly true. Just last year this cove was full of sea stars. We saw them in every damp crevice, heaps of them. This year we come across only three or two stars, here and there, splayed on the shingle. These that remain are wasting away, too, a hideous process. Lesions form. The tissues around them decay so the sea star flattens and falls

apart. An arm may crawl away. But soon it, too, turns to mush. Around our boots, torn arms and the wispy scraps of wasted sea stars flowed on the incoming tide. It's a catastrophe among many on a planet growing sour and hot and I am afraid for this small child. If only there were a mom around here who could shelter the young lives and comfort us all. But what would such a mother do? I can't think of anything worse for any parents than to feel helpless as pieces of their child's world break off and quietly go away. A statement of scientific consensus led by Stanford scientists has badly shaken me: "Unless all nations take immediate action, by the time today's children are middle-aged, the life support systems of the Earth will be irretrievably damaged." I am holding the hand of a small child in a yellow raincoat in orange bib overalls. His little boots have long ago filled with water. His hair is damp and smells of salt and I am staring at my boots and thinking of what it could possibly mean to this child to live on a planet whose life supporting mechanisms are fraying and flying apart.

**John Shuck:** [00:09:30] Let's turn to the dry parts of statistics, here, where we are with this. You mentioned the scientists and that passage from Stanford. What is the statistic that that keeps you awake at night?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:09:46] Oh, you know, I'm not a statistician. I'm not a scientist. I'm a philosopher. And the statement that keeps me awake at night, that wakes me actually in the morning, is from [Gus Speth](#) who is the dean of the College of Forestry at Yale and he said, "The only thing we have to do, the only thing we have to do, to make sure that we leave a ruined planet for our grandchildren, is to continue doing exactly what we are doing today." But, of course, John, we're not. We're accelerating it. We're making it worse. We're turning our government over and our regulatory agencies over to the fossil fuel industry. We are doubling down on destroying any regulations that might stop methane, that might stop fossil fuel spills. So, Gus Spaeth speaks to me right where I'm listening, which is what is this going to mean to the grandchildren.

**John Shuck:** [00:10:40] And we are talking about, I believe, I read in your book, that half of the species... between 1970 and now, and then, let's say now and 30 or 40 years from now. What is the amount of life look like? What's the change?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:10:58] If I remember correctly we have lost thirty nine percent of terrestrial wildlife. We have lost seventy-nine percent of freshwater wildlife. I think it's thirty-nine percent if I recall, of the birds of the air. The worst extinction numbers are thirty-eight percent in the developing countries where we richer countries have exported the sources of destruction and disarray. When you think about that, since 1970 we have lost so many of the species on this planet, it's pretty convincing that by the time my grandchild is looking through binoculars he'll have to tear out half the pages in his field guide. He won't need them anymore.

**John Shuck:** [00:11:51] Because those animals, that flora, and that fauna, won't be here anymore. in the guide. It's that simple.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:11:58] Not only those animals will be gone but all the possibility in their DNA, all the possibilities for change and growth and emergence of new possibilities, all that possibility also will be gone.

**John Shuck:** [00:12:11] And those are interconnected things, I mean, how can you even imagine losing half of life and how that is connected with other life? So it can't be possible except in kind of a cascading reaction.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:12:23] You know, [Daniel Quinn](#) says that we're like people who live in the top floor of a penthouse, a 100-story penthouse, and every day we send workers down to the

first floor to remove some bricks to bring up to our penthouse to make it more beautiful and fancier he says. We may be able to do that for a hundred years but for 101, 102? At some point, we will have introduced so many channels of emptiness into the foundation of our lives, that the whole edifice will collapse and our position at the top of the tower will not save us.

**John Shuck:** [00:12:55] If you're just joining us on Progressive Spirit my guest is Kathleen Dean Moore. She is the author of *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. This came out in 2016. There's a lot of change that's happened in these last two years. I mean this isn't something that we're looking at, oh, in the year 2100, sea levels will rise X number. We're talking about changes that are happening right now and the decisions we make now. How important is this this time that we live in right now toward what we're facing in the future?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:13:30] The thing that makes that question a complicated question is that we are approaching and perhaps passing tipping points where they are points of no return, where feedback mechanisms and in a variety of loops that reinforce one another will put us in the position of never returning again to the conditions that supported life on the planet. So how quickly we approach that? I don't know. I've heard people say that the moment that there is no summer sea ice left in the Arctic is the moment when we will see social and economic collapse around the world. The prediction is that that will be soon. I've heard people say that we have maybe two years to turn this thing around. I've heard other people say we have 10. But the fact is that although none of us would have chosen to have this pivotal role in the history of the planet. Here we are. And it is our role and it is our planet and it is absolutely urgent that we move as quickly as we can to make the changes that might allow us to escape the worst effects of this.

**John Shuck:** [00:14:34] Let's talk for a second a little bit about this. There are people who know this very well and who are planning for this very well -- our military. I mean we just passed -- the Senate -- 93 to seven [passed] the new defense budget, six hundred seventy two billion dollars. I mean there is money for these kinds of catastrophes. The people at Exxon or whoever it might be -- the fossil fuel companies. There is what we might call criminal activity going on here in terms of what is known by people in high places and what's being prepared for. I don't want to sound paranoid but can you talk a little bit about that aspect -- of people in high places, the criminals in high places we might say?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:15:22] Yes. You know when it turns out to be true it isn't paranoia after all.

**John Shuck:** [00:15:25] That's right.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:15:28] People say to me, "I don't believe the facts of climate change. I don't think climate change is real." And I direct them to the scientists, to Exxon and the scientists at Shell, who knew back in the 70s and in the early 80s exactly what was going to happen. They had modelers there who have all the power of the very best scientists, and they learned that they would in 20 years destroy the life sustaining -- well more than 20 years -- but at some point, they would destroy the life sustaining systems of the earth. Then they sat down in the boardroom and they said, "Okay, well, what is our plan going to be given that? What is our plan?" And the plan was to invest, what is it John, is it three billion dollars in a campaign to confuse people about the facts of climate change? To deceive them, to make them think this wasn't going to happen. Now, I think that's a crime against their stockholders, absolutely. But it is also a sin against creation. We can go now to the most massive corruption that our country has ever seen which is the purchase of our Congress, the purchase of our president, by the fossil fuel industry. Other industries as well pharmaceuticals and so forth, but let's focus on fossil fuels. In a corruption scandal that has only prevented people from going to jail because of the Citizens United decision of The Supreme Court which makes that

presumably free speech. How that group of smart, presumably, people could confuse bribery and free speech is utterly beyond me. And now we have the criminality of so-called President Trump's efforts to destroy any progress we might have made in curbing greenhouse gases. It's astonishing that it's happening all around us and people aren't in the streets saying, "Your criminal activities are destroying the future of the planet and you're criminally harming our children."

**John Shuck:** [00:17:31] Obama may have been better but he didn't have a long-term solution or of the urgency. I mean it's bigger than both of those presidents. There's something huge that is controlling us and controlling the narrative and the media is a part of that. The media serves the corporate interests and the fossil fuel companies themselves.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:17:54] Right. So, we have been utterly failed by the corporate-controlled media. We've been failed by the federal government. We've been failed by corporations who could have found their better selves. And so, what does a democracy presumably do in a situation like that? You go to the conscience of the streets. And this is the reading I get from history is that when the United States has turned on a dime, when they have done the right thing, suddenly; it has been because of people who took a strong moral stand. So, we're looking now to churches, families, civic organizations, local government, maybe state government. There will be no sudden moral awakening on the part of the federal government. We're looking to these traditional sources of change, where people join hands, start singing and walk out of a church into the streets and stay there until change happens.

**John Shuck:** [00:18:53] Now, you also write, I want to read a quote here. You've "learned from experience: it's hard to talk about climate change. People don't want to hear it. They turn away in guilt, in exasperation, in hopelessness, in fear, in despair for their children, in reluctance to make any changes in their lives, in embarrassment to see me acting like a kook. Who knows? But for everyone who turns away, there's another who is relieved to finally be able to talk about what she's been holding in her heart, a secret that can finally be told. "Yes, I too, am worried about climate change. What shall we do?" Can you talk a little -- I'm speaking with Kathleen Dean Moore author of *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change* -- talk about the difficulty of talking about climate change?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:19:33] I will. You know I live this difficulty every day. The [Yale Center for Climate Communications](#) has been studying how often people actually speak about climate change. And among those who care, or are concerned, or deeply concerned about the climate, 64 percent don't say the words "climate change" in any given week. So, we have this hidden secret sorrow. We have this submerged outrage and a sense of dread happening all across the country. It's very difficult to understand, very difficult. In some ways, I think that it's just too dreadful to bear. And people say, "Oh, don't talk about that. It makes me so sad." I get that response often. I think of Medusa. Do you remember Medusa who was so ugly, this Greek woman goddess whose hair was full of snakes? When you looked at her you would turn to stone. And it seems to me that's what's happened to us now that we are facing a calamity that is so hideous that when we look at it straight on we're turned to stone. All around us, turned to stone. And I'm aware that what broke her power was the young man Theseus, who had a pair of winged sandals, and a magic sword, and a reflective shield. And what he did was hold the shield up to Medusa. and looking into her reflection but not looking at her, he cut off her head. Well, what is our reflective shield? What capacities do we have for looking at the truth indirectly, for looking at its representation, that doesn't change it, but that makes it so that we can open our hearts to that truth without being broken. And it seems to me that there are many. One of them is the arts. Music can carry those messages into people's hearts. Visual arts can carry them in. I think worship can carry them in, speaking to you, Reverend Shuck. I think that we have to find ways. Writing, creative writing, novels, can create these truth-telling moments. We have to find a way to speak in a way that we can be heard. To call to action in

a way that is not terrifying. So, part of the work I do, a large part of the work I do, is calling to other writers and asking them to stop writing novels about the end of civilization and start writing novels that imagine it's redemption. It's very hard to imagine the next world, very easy to imagine the destruction of this. But that's the work that we're called to -- this great, great work of imagining a better way.

**John Shuck:** [00:22:22] Yes. And you mentioned something that's very important there. I do read folks who have a vision, I think of [James Howard Kunstler](#), with the Long Emergency, and the folks who were talking about Peak Oil from about 10 years ago. It hasn't happened, yet. On the source end of our fossil fuels you've got that problem, and then on the output end, of course, we have climate change and environmental issues. But either case, fossil fuel dependence is just overwhelming and it's our big deal. So, we write books and we think of how bad it's going to be. But on the other hand, you've got people thinking how hopeful -- well technology -- something's going to happen, something magical. What I hear you talking about is -- what is it? Is it a hopeful realism? Is it activist realism? How do you describe this way of looking to our present and our future, that is neither despair nor Pollyanna -- "I want to ignore it and hope."

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:23:29] Yes. I think you've raised a really interesting point. We have on the one hand, people who are very hopeful and for whatever reasons they can find, think that everything is going to be all right. These are often people who are deeply invested monetarily in the future and in technologies. Technology will save us. "We are smart. I don't have to do anything because everything's gonna be okay." So that's one source of moral abdication, but the other source is on the other side, and that's despair, where people think, "You know, no matter what I do everything is going to be destroyed. We've already reached the tipping points and we are falling fast towards the destruction of life on Earth. Nothing I can do, and so there's nothing I ought to do," which is another kind of moral abdication. So, despair or hope. Either way I don't have to do anything. But that's a false dichotomy because between this area of hope on the one hand and despair on the other, is this broad area where we act out of moral integrity. Moral integrity. Wholeness. This matching between what we believe is right and what we do, regardless of the consequences, regardless of whether we can save the world. Maybe we can't. We'll do what we think is right. We'll live simply because we don't believe in taking more than our fair share. We'll act reverently towards the earth because we believe it is sacred. We will find a way in our lives to do what we think is right and not be deterred by the possibility that it might not make any difference at all.

**John Shuck:** [00:25:06] This is Progressive Spirit. [Progressivespirit.net](#). I'm John Shuck. I'm speaking with Kathleen Dean Moore. She's the author of *Great Tide Rising: Finding Clarity and Moral Courage to Confront Climate Change*. More to come. Stay with us.

**John Shuck:** [00:25:30] Progressive Spirit is produced every week. It couldn't happen without the financial support of my congregation, Southminster Presbyterian Church in Beaverton, Oregon. Southminster's web site is [www.southmin.org](#). Progressive Spirit is produced in the studios of KBOO in Portland Oregon for the Pacifica Radio Network and PRX, the Public Radio Exchange, as well as podcast. Show KBOO some love, won't you? [KBOO.fm](#) and click "donate."

**John Shuck:** [00:25:59] Kathleen Deane Moore is speaking with me about *Great Tide Rising: Finding Clarity and Moral Courage to Confront Climate Change*. This Progressive Spirit [www.progressivespirit.net](#). I'm John Shuck.

**John Shuck:** [00:26:16] Also with that integrity is of being able to say what we feel is true and act on that truth, regardless of what our friends might think. And that's a hard thing because we have evolved to be, you know, to be together in community. But finding communities, that we're not in

this alone, that we need to not think about ourselves as just what can I do as an individual. Can you talk a little bit about that, too, about the collective work?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:26:49] People often ask me with despair in their voice, “What can one person do?” And my answer is, “Stop being one person!” Talk to your neighbors. Talk to your friends. Get online and find what organizations are doing the work that you care most deeply about and then join up with them. It's lonely to do this work alone. It's a futility to do this work alone. But when people come together there is a joy and a power in that, that we are all yearning for. So I think that the best advice to someone who says, “You know, what are you gonna do? I don't have a clue?” is to say, ask yourself: “What are my gifts? What are you good at?” Ask yourself, “What do you care about the most?” And then find your group that's going to help you put your gifts to work to defend what you love too much to lose.

**John Shuck:** [00:27:39] Yes, and find one's moral compass. What's the important thing I keep saying to myself is, “[What will be here for] my granddaughter [when she is] my age?” I mean, I keep having to go back to that, to let her be my moral compass of what life's for. Of all of the messages that I get from wherever, television, or education, that I'm supposed to go out and be this robot and pass these tests and get these student debt loans, and then go off and get some career. Those are purposes, I suppose, but they aren't purposes that are going to help us. Talk about that from a philosophical point of view. Because your book is really about moral courage. How do we help continue to define and keep our own moral compass towards north?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:28:24] Philosophers have a big debate as to whether our moral decisions are based on rational principle. The work of the mind, or whether they're based on the moral emotions, things like fear, love, hope, despair and that's a silly argument isn't it? Because of course, they're based on both, and we have principles that we believe in very much and we find that that climate change is an extraordinary injustice, that we are embarked on the greatest violation of human rights the world has ever seen. So, if we are going to find our work in our moral principles, the work of our heads, there is plenty of work to be done. I also like to look to my heart and I ask audiences, “What do you love too much to lose?” And in your service today, a beautiful point was where you asked people to call out the names of what they love, because love isn't just a kind of la di da. You know loving is a sacred trust. And if you love something, what you are doing is saying, “This is something of infinite value to me and I will pledge my life to its thriving, fiercely, faithfully, forever defending it, because I love it.” So either way, whether you are going to work on the principles that come to you from your mind, or whether you're going to consult the feelings of your heart, you have work to do in this world.

**John Shuck:** [00:29:49] And again, it goes back, “Is this really happening?” Oh, we might look around and say, “Okay, weather patterns change, but gosh, don't weather patterns change throughout history? It's harder to grasp, than for example, an enemy. It's a little harder to get the handle on it. How can we really be sure that this is all changing around us?”

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:30:11] No, it's true and you look out the window and it's a perfectly beautiful day. You don't hear birds calling like you used to but it's a perfectly beautiful day and life seems pretty good and you don't have a big arctic storm pounding away at your house. So, it's requiring a great exercise of the moral imagination. It's requiring us to learn what we can and to empathize, to feel the compassion and understand that this may look far away now, but it's coming around the corner, and the polling is very interesting on that. When you ask people, “Do you think that climate change is going to harm you? The answer is generally, “Not so much.” If you ask them if it's going to harm the future the answer is, “Absolutely.” But the mistake is partly on the part of the scientists. This is coming way faster than anybody could have imagined. And let me ask you, too, if it happens to you, is it any worse than if it happens to your grandchildren? I mean, don't

you love them more than you love yourself? So this question of pacing and this question of emergency, I think, is unrealistic.

**John Shuck:** [00:31:22] Trying to get a handle on why my denomination, the Presbyterian Church USA, refused for the third time to divest from fossil fuels. And it just happened in St. Louis and of all the arguments given, I think people were, "Well it's they're just too big to fail." You know, [for] the fossil fuel companies it's just too big to make that change. If we make that kind of change all kinds of other things might happen to us." Have you heard that kind of argument in regards to if we divest from fossil fuels that...it's like the banks, if we didn't, you know, just bail them out then chaos would ensue?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:32:02] Are you kidding? That argument came from the leaders of your church?

**John Shuck:** [00:32:07] Well they're talking about this. This is how things work out, and any drastic changes like that will make chaos for our economy.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:32:17] And what kind of chaos is going to occur when we have massive starvation and refugees coming from all around the world, fleeing starvation, fleeing thirst, fleeing the inundation of their homes? They want chaos? Climate chaos is on its way. And besides, what are they doing talking about, fear of the future chaos by making a change now? What kind of cowardice is that? And how can they then walk into their sanctuary, so-called, and tell people that God created this world and we are called to care for it? And that God created the children and we are entrusted with their sweet, sweet souls? How can you talk about justice in the pulpit and not recognize the incredible hypocrisy of a church investing in processes like economy that they know will destroy every single value that they have? I'm sorry. It's astonishing to me.

**John Shuck:** [00:33:20] You mentioned Thomas Berry. I think it was either earlier today, or off-line and I remember his book, *The Great Work*, in which he said this is what we consider progress. "We take the greatest amount of natural resources, process them through an industrial economy, a consumer economy, and then onto the waste heap. And this we consider progress." This has been our ethic of how to live life -- of what a good life is -- just put the stuff through as fast as we can get that stuff out of the ground.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:33:53] Sure. And when what we do is causing natural disasters that are killing people and hurting people. Well, that's part of the growth economy isn't it? There's money to be made in the in the reconstruction of those million-dollar homes along the coast. Yes, our great work is to turn away from those lies and to turn away from that hypocrisy and to find a way to live gratefully, joyously, for a very long time on the planet.

**John Shuck:** [00:34:23] You mentioned tipping points. You mentioned it negatively when the environmental and climate change can tip. But there are also tipping points that are positive. First of all there are the radicals, we end up calling conspiracy theorists and kooks...until they suddenly start to say things and people start to listen to them then there's another batch of people who have some kind of authority, and they begin to get it, and then to speak about it, but it doesn't take the whole population to make this change, does it? Can you talk a little bit about how positive change can happen in that way?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:34:58] Yes. We are reaching a lot of tipping points that will perhaps do some real significant change for the better. Scientists are so good, they know the numbers, they know the facts. They can measure so beautifully the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, and they can run their models that are going to predict sea ice. But the one thing that

they cannot predict is human behavior, and human behavior has a way of changing very quickly and very dramatically, and oftentimes in very positive ways that support justice and human thriving. So there are tipping points that we have already passed that are huge. We have already found that it's cheaper to heat our homes with solar power and renewable energy than it is with fossil fuels. We've found we've reached the tipping point where the medical costs of treating children with asthma and other things caused by fossil fuels are greater, those costs are greater than it would be to replace fossil fuels entirely with renewable resources. We've passed so many tipping points in terms of education. We've passed a tipping point in terms of public opinion. What is it now, 79 percent of people call themselves environmentalists? 64 percent are concerned or very concerned about climate change? So there are things all around that are very, very positive. I'm sitting down when I get home today to work an article I'm writing called "Ten Reasons Why I Don't Slit My Throat." And the point is not to be so dramatic, but the point is to say we know there are good reasons to keep on with this fight. We have the old deniers who said, "I don't believe climate change is happening," but far worse now are the new deniers who are saying, "Climate change is happening but there's nothing we can do." So we have to remind ourselves that there is something that we can do. That we are doing things and that there are many forces that are on our side. Injustice is fragile. And we can find its weak points.

**John Shuck:** [00:37:06] I'm speaking with Kathleen Dean Moore. She's the author of *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change*. We're talking about what is it going to take to communicate, to bear witness. In the Forward, someone mentioned that about you, what you were doing, bearing witness, and I love that because that's a great religious term that goes way back, of saying what I saw, what I heard, and being able to be clear about that and how that can be communicated. We talked a little bit about the arts. Is there is there more to be said about how we bear witness?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:37:49] Yes. Can I respond as a philosopher and a teacher of basic logic?

**John Shuck:** [00:37:53] Absolutely.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:37:53] And may I speak about Aristotle who taught us the argument that we use when we want to reach a conclusion about what we ought to do? He pointed out that an argument that reaches a conclusion that tells us what we ought to do is going to have to have two premises. The first one is empirical. This is the way the world is. This is the way the world will be if we continue on this path. It's often based in scientific research. Now scientists bless their hearts, thought that's all it took. And they did heroic things to try to give us all the information we would need to make the right decision. But information alone, facts alone, don't tell us what we ought to do, which is basically a moral decision. What you need for that is a moral affirmation about what is right and good what is worthy of us. So, the work that has to be done with a kind of enthusiasm and investment that is equal to the work that the scientists are doing, is to summon the moral discourse in the marketplace of ideas about what we value, what we don't value, what we have been conned into valuing, what is it important for us to preserve, what do we morally affirm as our obligation to the future. When you know the facts, when you know how the world is and how it will be if you take certain actions, and you know what the world ought to be, what a good worthy just world is, then you can reach a decision about what you want to do. So, I've been urging, travelling, trying to create this moral conversation about the moral urgency of climate action based on the affirmation of what is best in human nature and trying to say, "No our work isn't to preserve this way of life. Our work is to preserve the sustaining beautiful world from this way of life's destructive power."

**John Shuck:** [00:39:52] I also want to talk about what we're doing in terms of our planet of creation itself, in terms of the value of non-human creatures, more than human creatures, are

winged friends and are many-legged friends and our finned friends. And what value they have in and of themselves? You talk a little bit about that in your book. How do we understand an ethic of the orca, or of the spotted owl, or whatever it might be that has value intrinsic to itself? We often think of, well whatever it does for humans. We think of resources or things like that, but there's really something important about life's value to its own self.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:40:35] Yes. the urging of life, the intensity of the urgency of life ongoing, which is part of the life of every creature, you know, we are taught that there are two kinds of values. On the one hand there's intrinsic value, which as you say, is the value of something in and of itself, I think of it in terms of what Robinson Jeffers, the poet, said, which is the beauty that will remain, the heart-breaking beauty that will remain when there is no heart to break for it. What is intrinsic value? How can we wrap our minds around it? It's the value that inheres in the lives on this planet, in the planet itself, that will be here after we're gone and were here before we arrived. So those are the intrinsic values and they're in contrast to, as you say, the instrumental values, the commodity values, the ecosystem services, the cultural values, the scenic values, the recreational values, all the kinds of things that these lovely creations can do for us as if we were the pinnacle of creation who deserves all the gifts that they could give.

**John Shuck:** [00:41:47] Kathleen Dean Moore. We just have a couple of minutes left. I'd like you to read another passage from your book and perhaps give us also a start for folks who might be listening to this program, to say, here's one thing to start your path now, or to go ahead on that path.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:42:07] So the great eco-philosopher, [Joanna Macy](#), says there's really three things we have to do. Number one: stop the harm. Number two: find a better way. And number three: reimagine who we are in relation to the natural world. So, when people ask me, "What should I do? You know what's my job description? How should I get started?" I point them towards those three jobs, and I say, "Okay, chart it out. Choose one." Ask yourself, "What are your gifts?" My Pottawattamie elder friend, [Robin Kimmerer](#), says the salmon has the gift of pink flesh so its work is to feed the people. The robin has a gift of a beautiful song so its work is to wake the sun. What gifts have you been given? What are you able to do? What experience, what life experience, what technological ability, what expertise, what money, what time, what hand skills do you have that you might put to this? And then the next question is, "What do you care about most? What do you care about so much that you would give your life for it?" And where those two things come together, that's where your work in the world is. There's so many people who say, "Yeah, but what am I gonna do? Get online." Google the organizations that are doing the work that you care about and then go to them and offer your gifts.

**John Shuck:** [00:43:43] Because there are many organizations and people who are engaged in this work. Everybody doesn't have to reinvent the wheel for the whole thing. Go ahead and read a passage for us, would you?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:43:54] I'll read the last thing in the book. Part of the afterword is called "Ring The Angelus." All those years, the Swainson Thrushes were the first to call in the mornings. Their song spiraled like mist from the swale to the pink sky. That's when I would take a cup of tea and walk into the meadow. There was music in the mornings all those years. In the overture to the day, each bird added his call until the morning was an ecstasy of music. Evenings were glorious too. Frogs sang and sang. They sang all evening and into the night. They sang while garter snakes, their stomachs extended with frogs, crawled finally under the fallen bark of the oaks and stretched their lengths against cold ground. I don't know how many frogs there were in the pond then. Thousands, tens of thousands, clumps of eggs like eyeballs in aspic. When the eggs hatch, there were tadpoles. I have seen the shallow edge of the pond black with wiggling tadpoles. There were that many, each with a song growing inside it. In the years when the frog choruses began to fade, scientists said it

was a fungus. When the bats stopped coming they said that was a fungus, too. When the goldfinches came in pairs, not flocks, we told each other the flocks must be feeding in a neighbor's field. No one could guess where the thrushes had gone. The fields were as empty as the perfect emptiness of a bell. The perfectly shaped absence ringing the Angelus, the evening song, the call to forgiveness at the end of the day. In the Spring, when our granddaughter was born, I brought her to the pond so she could feel the comfort I had known there for so many years. Killdeer wild in the mud by the shore, but even then not so many as before. By then the path had sunk into its warm weedy places, leaving an expanse of cracked earth. Ahead of the coming heat, butterflies fed in the mud between the cracks, unrolling their tongues to touch salty soil. I held my granddaughter in my arms and sang to her then an old lullaby that made her soften like wax in a flame, moulding her little body to my bones. She fell asleep in my arms, unafraid. I will tell you, I was so afraid. Poets warned us, writing of the heartbreaking beauty that will remain when there is no heart to break for it. But what if it's worse than that? What if it's the heartbroken children who remain in a world without beauty? How will they find solace in a world without wild music? How will they thrive without green hills edged with oaks? How will they forgive us for letting frog songs slip away? It isn't enough to love a child and wish her well. It isn't enough to open my heart to a bird-graced morning. Can I claim to love a morning if I don't protect what creates its beauty? Can I claim to love a child if I don't use all the power of my beating heart to preserve a world that nourishes children's joy? Loving is a sacred trust. To love is to affirm the absolute worth of what you love, and to pledge your life to its thriving, to protect it fiercely and faithfully for all time. Ring the Angelus for the salmon and the swallows. Ring the bells for frogs floating in bent reeds. Ring the bells for all of us who did not save the songs. Holy Mary, Mother of God, ring the bells for every sacred emptiness. Let them echo in the silence at the end of the day. Forgiveness is too much to ask. I would pray for only this: that a granddaughter would hear again the little lick of music, that grace note toward the end of a meadowlark song. Meadowlarks. There were meadowlarks. They sang like angels in the morning.

**John Shuck:** [00:47:50] Reading from *Great Tide Rising: Towards Clarity and Moral Courage in a Time of Planetary Change* is the author and my guest on Progressive Spirit Kathleen Dean Moore. Kathleen thank you so much for being with me today. For bearing witness your website is [Riverwalking.com](http://Riverwalking.com). Anything else...?

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:48:10] My other web site is [www.musicandclimateaction.com](http://www.musicandclimateaction.com) where people will find a clip from a performance about extinction using a collaboration between my spoken words and a concert pianist playing Rachmaninoff.

**John Shuck:** [00:48:30] And you have DVDs of that as well [\*A Call to Life: Variations on a Theme of Extinction\*](#). Thank you again for.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:48:37] You're welcome. Thank you, John, and thank you for your good work.

**John Shuck:** [00:48:40] Progressive Spirit is heard every week. On Progressive Spirit, you hear interviews with cutting edge scholars, authors, and activists who have something to say about social justice, human flourishing, and things that matter. Progressive Spirit is formatted for radio and is distributed every week through the Pacifica Radio Network and PRX, the public radio exchange. You can download Progressive Spirit for free on your favorite podcast app. The website is [Progressivespirit.net](http://Progressivespirit.net). Follow also on Facebook and Twitter. I'm going to close with a recording from the web site, [\*Climate Action: Music and the Spoken Word\*](#). This is Kathleen Dean Moore and Rachelle McCabe. This piece is called *Call to Life Part 2: Rage Against the Madness*. Their website is [www.musicandclimateaction.com](http://www.musicandclimateaction.com). I'm John Shuck. Be Well.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:49:32] It's madness. The trades we make. Unless something stops us,

we will keep on converting living creatures into dead commodities. We trade deep mossy forests for uselessly large homes. We trade wide-winged albatrosses for plastic six-pack rings. We trade a meadow, miraculous with butterflies, for an industrial park to manufacture My Little Ponies. Dear God, the madness! We trade a singing marsh for another Kmart parking lot. It's madness this consumption, this eating up. We trade rhinoceros horn for sexual potency. We trade bear spleens for sexual potency. We trade Tibetan Red Deer for potency. What is this overriding need? We trade fence rows and goose slews for yet more golf course grass seed. We trade spotted owls for typing paper and trade old oaks for turning lanes. What are we thinking? For corn to burn in our cars, we're happy to give up monarch butterflies. For one more fitness center, we blithely give up the spring chorus of frogs. For oil terminals, we give away the salmon. It's a frenzied mad auction of what is of ancient value, for what is cheap and desperately sad. It's a mad rush to the end of the world.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:51:29] But the most terrible trade is a transmogrification of plants and animals into human flesh. Daniel Quinn wrote, since 1970, that same 1970, the biomass of the human species has gained 50 million tons. It came from other members of the community of life. At the same time, the world is losing 150 species a day. We are turning one hundred and fifty species a day into human fat and gristle.

**Kathleen Dean Moore:** [00:52:06] And no one should assume that the human species can come out ahead in this trade. We are like people who live in a penthouse of a hundred story building, Daniel Quinn wrote. Every day we send workers down to remove blocks from the foundation so we can make our penthouse bigger, fancier. This might work for 100 days, but for hundreds of years? At some point we will have created so many channels of emptiness that the entire structure will collapse.