

NEWS FROM PUTNAM

PUBLICITY CONTACT:

Kristen Bianco, Publicist

516-729-5278 / kbianco@penguinrandomhouse.com

UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE: How to Be Human in a Warming World

by

KIMBERLY NICHOLAS PhD

G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS

ON-SALE: MARCH 23, 2021

"The move from exploitation to regeneration is indeed critical if we are going to have a chance in the global warming fight—and since this decade is critical, this book comes at the right moment!"

—Bill McKibben, author *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?*

"This compelling book about climate change really packs a punch, because climate scientist Nicholas relentlessly brings things down to the personal level.... this is a realistic, accessible, and clarion call for change."

—*Booklist* (starred review)

"A beautiful book—wise, painful, transformative—about all that we might still save. Reading it forced me to dig deep within myself, to try to find answers to what I cared about most, what I believed."

—Jayson Greene, author of *Once More We Saw Stars*

After speaking to the international public for close to fifteen years about sustainability, climate scientist Kimberly Nicholas PhD realized that concerned people were getting the wrong message about the climate crisis. Yes, companies and governments are hugely responsible for the mess we're in. But individuals CAN effect real, significant, and lasting change to solve this problem. In her astonishing new book **UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE (on sale: March 23, 2021)**, Nicholas discusses how we can find purpose in a warming world, combining her scientific expertise and her lived, personal experience in a way that is fresh and deeply urgent. While Nicholas is a leading expert on climate science, her unique, conversational voice will appeal to a broad audience invested in the future of humankind--whether they're mothers, nature lovers, or simply people who have empathy.

In **UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE**, Dr. Nicholas reports that around 90% of the planet's total and finite carbon budget has been depleted, and in the past couple of decades, humankind has been using more carbon than ever before. She writes, "In the four decades since the first *Star Wars* movie was in theaters, humans have used up almost 60 percent of the carbon budget available for all time, for all of humanity. If we continue

burning fossil fuels at today's rate, before 2030, before my *Frozen*-loving fairy goddaughter graduates from high school, it will be entirely gone, depleted, overspent."

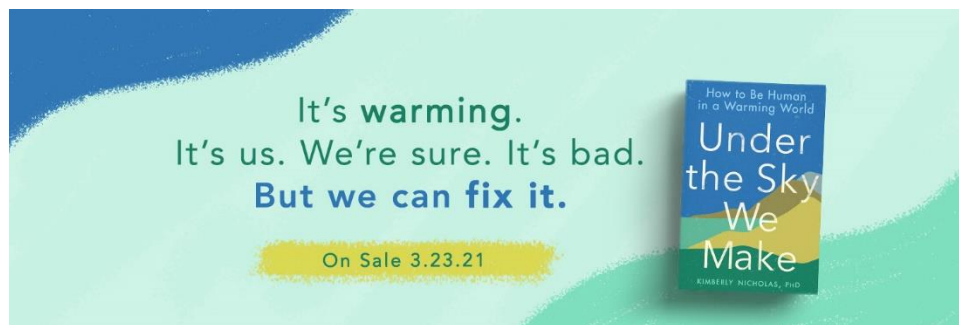
Dr. Nicholas approaches the urgent problem of the carbon footprint of the high emitters who are her readers with a Regeneration Mindset, rather than an Exploitation one, arguing that in order to reduce our carbon emissions and save ourselves from a climate apocalypse, we must create radical shifts in our daily life. Along with showcasing her rock-solid research which has been featured in outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Atlantic*, *USA Today*, *Buzzfeed* and many others, Nicholas also reveals the big changes she's made in her own life to combat this crisis, such as reducing her air travel and eliminating meat products from her diet- and the unexpected benefits and even romance that's resulted, as well as how individuals can effectively spark political, economic, and cultural change.

Born and raised on her family's vineyard in Sonoma, California, Dr. Kimberly Nicholas studied the effect of climate change on the California wine industry for her PhD in Environment and Resources at Stanford University. Since then, she has published over 50 articles on climate and sustainability in leading peer-reviewed journals. She has also been profiled in *Elle* and *The Guardian*, and gives appearances at around 50 lectures each year, such as the recent Climate Change Leadership summit. Currently, Dr. Nicholas is the Associate Professor of Sustainability Science at Lund, Sweden's highest-ranked university.

UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE offers a hopeful, clear-eyed, and somehow also hilarious guide to effecting real change, starting in our own lives. Saving ourselves from climate apocalypse will require radical shifts within each of us, to effect real change in our society and culture. But it can be done. It requires, Dr. Nicholas argues, belief in our own agency and value, alongside a deep understanding that no one will ever hand us power-- we're going to have to seize it for ourselves.

###

UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE • By Kimberly Nicholas PhD • G. P. Putnam's Sons
On Sale: March 23, 2021 • ISBN: 9780593328170 • Price \$18.00
www.penguinrandomhouse.com



Praise for UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE by Kimberly Nicholas PhD

“The move from exploitation to regeneration is indeed critical if we are going to have a chance in the global warming fight—and since this decade is critical, this book comes at the right moment!”

—**Bill McKibben, author *Falter: Has the Human Game Begun to Play Itself Out?***

“In these pages, Dr. Kimberly Nicholas takes us by the hand to explore our most important questions about the climate crisis: “What’s happening? What next?” And—most importantly—“how do I leverage my power to help make things better for everyone, for generations to come?” Educational and galvanizing, this book is part memoir, part exposé, part warm conversation with a friend – and it is a soul-stirring call to action.”

—**Dr. Lucy Kalanithi, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine, Stanford University, and widow of Paul Kalanithi, author of *When Breath Becomes Air***

“A beautiful book—wise, painful, transformative—about all that we might still save. Reading it forced me to dig deep within myself, to try to find answers to what I cared about most, what I believed.”

—**Jayson Greene, author of *Once More We Saw Stars***

“Lund University climate scientist Nicholas delivers a user-friendly survey of the current state of the knowledge on climate change...Readers looking to save the world—and humanity—should take an interest in this harm-reducing program.”

—***Kirkus Reviews***

“This compelling book about climate change really packs a punch, because climate scientist Nicholas relentlessly brings things down to the personal level....Libraries wondering if they really need another title on climate change should rest reassured; this is a realistic, accessible, and clarion call for change...Students will enjoy Nicholas's wry observations and appreciate her approachable insights as well as her ‘key take-aways’ from every chapter.”

—***Booklist (starred review)***

A Conversation with Kimberly Nicholas PhD about **UNDER THE SKY WE MAKE**

1. Tell us a bit about your background as a scientist, and why you decided to study climate change.

I grew up with a love of nature: running around in the hills above Sonoma, California, catching tadpoles in my parents' backyard; exploring tidepools at the beach; and hiking in the Sierra Nevada mountains. I also loved the creativity and problem-solving of science, and the way it engaged my curiosity: providing answers to explain some patterns, while always leading to new questions. I started off interested in studying remote wild places, because I loved hiking there. But eventually I realized that it didn't make sense to study nature as separate from people, because humans were touching every last corner of the Earth through the changes we're making to the land, oceans, and climate. Over the course of my career, studying climate change has gone from describing changes and predicting impacts, to witnessing them unfolding in real time, and sounding the alarm about the climate emergency we're in now.

2. Could you explain the difference between Regeneration and Exploitation mindsets, and why this shift is important in reducing climate pollution?

I argue we need get to the root cause of problems, rather than addressing their symptoms. We won't solve climate breakdown, or the other systemic problems we face today, using the same mindset that created the problems in the first place.

I see the fundamental cause of the climate crisis as what I call the Exploitation Mindset: the mistaken belief that some people are superior to others, and that people in general are superior to nature. I argue we need to shift to the Regeneration Mindset, which recognizes the value of all people, and that nature and people must *both* thrive.

This mindset shift is important to reducing climate pollution. First and foremost, it doesn't make sense to rely on dirty and dangerous energy sources like coal and oil; we have to leave fossil fuels in the ground. It also gets us thinking about climate as not only a technical issue; it's also an issue of people having agency to help create the world they want, and of recognizing the rights of nature alongside people. I believe we must follow the principles of respecting people and nature, reducing harm at its source, and increasing resilience to move from today's system (that harms people and nature) to a truly sustainable one.

3. What changes can a person interested in reducing their carbon emissions make in their own lives? And what changes have you implemented yourself?

Ten percent of the world population emits about *half* of household carbon pollution. The members of this group have an annual income of \$38,000 a year, and up. Higher income earners tend to produce even more extreme emissions. Reducing carbon overconsumption from individuals with excessive emissions is essential to stabilizing the climate fast.

I used to be in this high-polluting group myself. The changes I've made are in line with our research, which showed that the highest-impact personal climate actions to reduce pollution fast are to live car-

free, flight-free, and meat-free. I've been car-free since I moved from California to Sweden in 2010, and I've cut my flying over 90% since 2012. I don't eat meat, and I eat a mostly plant-based diet. The animal products I do consume are well below the limits of the Harvard-recommended Planetary Health Plate: no more than one ounce of cheese per day, or two eggs and two servings of fish per week.

4. Climate and ecological breakdown are causing us to lose many of the things we love. How have you experienced and dealt with that grief and hardship?

For me, the first step was naming and acknowledging the ways in which the beloved California of my childhood has changed. The big abalone shells I grew up collecting on my favorite beach in Mendocino County aren't there any more, due to overfishing, pollution, and mass mortalities along the food web in warmer oceans. The taste of the Pinot noir I studied in grad school is moving from ethereal strawberry towards jammy plum. In my new home, I climbed the tallest peak in Sweden in 2019, but didn't make it the last few meters to the very top because I didn't have crampons. Now the glacier at the peak has melted enough that it's no longer the tallest mountain in Sweden. That's how fast our environment is changing!

There are many people facing more extreme suffering and loss from climate and ecological breakdown than I am. But acknowledging how these crises have affected me personally, the things I love and cherish that are part of my identity and experience, is really important to motivate me to fight for what's left.

5. What are the five stages of radical climate acceptance, and how can readers navigate these stages?

Based on a combination of my own experience and a synthesis of psychological research, I identify five stages of feelings around facing the uncomfortable truths of the climate crisis: Ignorance, Avoidance, Doom, All the Feels, and Purpose. My goal in describing these stages is to help my readers recognize their reactions, and therefore help them go from feeling helpless and overwhelmed, to feeling empowered and part of a community. By radical climate acceptance, I don't mean we should all give up! Rather, we have to view reality as it is, and focus on changing what we can (and coming to terms with what we can't). One of my main points is that each of us can actually do SO much more than we might think! This work can be really hard, but we can't get stuck in hopelessness. Instead we must support each other and draw energy from focusing on what matters most to each of us.

6. In your book, you talk about having "climate privilege." Could you talk a little bit about that that means?

There's so much about climate change that is unfair. A few people globally have both caused the most climate pollution and benefitted the most from fossil fuel development. As someone from two rich countries (I was born and raised in the US, and have made my home in Sweden for the last 11 years), I'm definitely in that group myself.

By acknowledging climate privilege, I mean that, as a high emitter, I had to take responsibility for reducing my own emissions, as well as for working with others to push for system change, because both are needed to stabilize the climate fast. For me this realization was a fundamental lightbulb moment. It's not only other people or abstract systems that have to change; I can start some of the change myself.

Accepting responsibility for what I can change doesn't let titans of industry and politicians off the hook, by the way. There are certainly oil execs and legislators with much more power and responsibility than I have, including plenty who have neglected their duty or even created deliberate misinformation campaigns. As I write in the book, to do what's necessary to stabilize the climate fast, citizens need to work together to take away the social license to burn fossil fuels, and to reinvent what's politically possible. But I'm still accountable for doing what I can to prevent climate breakdown now, starting with where I am.

7. In the book, you explain that air travel is an intense source of climate pollution. How has this knowledge affected your lifestyle?

Flying is a clear example of the extreme inequalities driving the climate crisis. Most people on Earth, and even most people in countries like the US and the UK, don't fly. Meanwhile, the 1 percent of the population who are frequent flyers, taking many flights per year, cause half of the climate pollution from flying. Flying makes up the majority of the huge carbon footprint of high-income individuals.

All emissions need to go to zero to stabilize the climate, and unfortunately, flying is one of the sectors that's not ready to do its fair share to reduce emissions. So we have to curb frequent flying to stabilize the climate.

I'm a recovering frequent flyer. My expired gold card is now in a museum exhibit from the future, looking back on bizarre artifacts of the fossil age! In 2012 I flew to a climate conference where more clear evidence of the urgency of reducing emissions was presented. Finally the cognitive dissonance of my own frequent flying really hit me; I felt like I was at a conference of doctors telling our patients to stop smoking, while puffing on cigarettes. I was inspired to stop flying within the continent of Europe, where I live. I've cut my flying emissions over 90 percent, and I am down to at most one flight a year to see family back in North America. The next step will be to reduce my flying even further; my husband and I have a goal to sail across the Atlantic (post pandemic of course).

8. You call yourself a "turkey heiress" – could you explain your family's legacy in the agriculture industry, and how your background influenced your interest studying the harm today's system of industrial agriculture?

My grandpa George bred a turkey called the Nicholas Broad Breasted White, which is the world's main Thanksgiving turkey. It's an animal that's been engineered for fast, high production, raised in unhappy conditions, where it turns resources into waste. The bird's breast is so unnaturally large that the male and female birds don't fit together to reproduce naturally, and have to be artificially inseminated! In these ways, it represents the dominant food system today, where we vastly overproduce animal products in ways that create enormous climate, air, and water pollution, and cause human health problems as well as animal suffering. We have to redesign our food systems, so they produce healthy food for people while working with rather than against nature.

9. What is the significance behind the title of your book?

The fate of humanity depends so much on what we collectively do in the next decade, which is our window to stabilize the climate in time to avoid catastrophic climate change, and set nature on a path to recovery. Because humans have become a force of nature at the scale of the whole planet, we're setting the conditions for life on Earth through how we affect the climate. Some of the carbon pollution we

emit in our lifetimes lasts for more than ten thousand years -- about twice as long as Stonehenge has been around. I wanted to convey the responsibility and opportunity this critical moment places on us to be good ancestors, which will be recorded as our legacy in the sky we make.

10. What do you hope readers take away from this book?

I hope my book serves as a one-stop shop to help take readers from feeling overwhelmed and freaked out to empowered and clear on how they personally can be part of the solution to stop climate breakdown. I wanted to boil down the evidence to point to the most effective and high-impact ways to spend your limited time and energy, and to tell a human story by linking facts, feelings, and action. I do get really specific on what the evidence says to focus on and what not to worry about, from daily lifestyle choices to how to change systems of economics, culture, and power. But my goal was to illustrate a way of thinking and provide a set of principles you can apply to your own life.