

# The Visible Hand of Gaia: Man Made Disaster- Man Made Monopoly

If you wish to sell me that our current economy is "overseen by the invisible hand of (god disguised as) the market," then I insist these hurricanes and fires are a wake up scream from Gaia.

Amidst our current season of immense and contrasted environmental chaos "price gouging" has become an especially common accusation against corporations capitalizing on the most vulnerable, directly in harms way. If you look closely these climate-exacerbated disasters are also raising deep questions about intrinsic flaws in systems we use to organize society today.

A Santa Rosa resident fleeing the largest fire in CA, posted alongside gas prices set at 4.60/ gal, "Dear Shell Corporation, thanks so much for price gouging all of us as we try to evacuate from the fires...really great that you've chosen to profit from this disaster...must feel good inside..."

Nationally one mother's story went viral post Hurricane Irma when she announced Delta Airlines increased ticket costs from Florida to Phoenix to an astronomical \$3200 overnight on people trying to flee. Delta and other airlines responded in the face of customer backlash and potential liability, and they eventually lowered their rates to pre-disaster levels.

This denial of basic resource access post hurricane Jose in Puerto Rico could be called government price gouging or GENOCIDE. Why is there not a mass evacuation of the uninhabitable US island colony and immediate impeachment of trump based on his inaction? Rep. Louis Gutierrez states, "We have the most powerful military in the world, why are we not putting people in a safe place? It has been three weeks, compared to Katrina we had 60k people, hundreds of airplanes, cars, trucks, buses, to get people out of harms way and we stayed here for years, and still today to rebuild. Why give them a 5 million dollar loan instead of a grant?"

While society is so quick to cast blame on price gougers, few seem to notice that these cases are endemic of the entire systems incongruity with basic humanity. Exploitation, short turn gains, maximizing profits of the needy, are some instruments in the tragic opera of capitalism, the illusion of scarcity the beat and its chorus the theory of supply and demand.

How is healthcare for profit acceptable, but not hurricane airplane evacuation? Education and information for profit is acceptable, but not fire or flood evacuation? We've got prisons for profit, weapons and war for profit, and politicians for profit. We've got kidneys on black markets, womb rentals, children, sex and body parts for profit. We've got slavery, entertainment, news, even air for profit, basic survival for profit, power for profit, death, water, science, food for profit, we even have profit for profit. Where is the line? Who has the right to distinguish disasters and those worthy of enduring them and not? We all must grapple



with the gray areas of price gouging as it relates to capitalism, in addition to all the chaos it causes.

Since Governor Jerry Brown declared a state of emergency due to fire raging in my community on the coast of Northern CA and beyond, our states compassionate Penal Code 396 takes effect. PC 396 insists businesses do not "price gouge" during "natural disasters." Meaning that businesses may not take "unfair advantage," of people fleeing disaster as declared by a state or local official, defined as raising their prices more than 10% on life saving items 30 days after a declaration, such as; hotels, gas, water, food, etc. The penalty in CA is 10k fine and/or no more than one year in prison and you can call (800) 952-5225, to report these incidents. Making more than 10% more than capitalism normally allows for is apparently our line in CA. Nationally the line ranges, in TX if you price gouge someone 65 or older you can get a fine of up to \$250k.

What about corporation caused disasters such as the current largest fires in CA history raging as we speak is different than the socioeconomic disasters we see on many street corners globally? There are climate change refugees, economic and gentrification refugees, substance abuse refugees, sexual preference refugees, victims fleeing violence, war and the like all over the streets across the globe. What about the tsunamis of sexual violence women are fleeing, only to be met with sexual violence in ICE detention facilities? That isn't worth a 250k or 10k fine??? The contrast between how people treat white Americans pre and post disaster, to the poor, minority and women in my own community and those around the world, is quite revealing. I can't help but notice how those who are causing the disasters are profiting most off of them. The fires and hurricanes perpetrators are unsustainable energy conglomerates like PG&E (whose power lines fell), military, chemical, fracking, coal, oil, beef/dairy/veal, and other industries and global corporations.

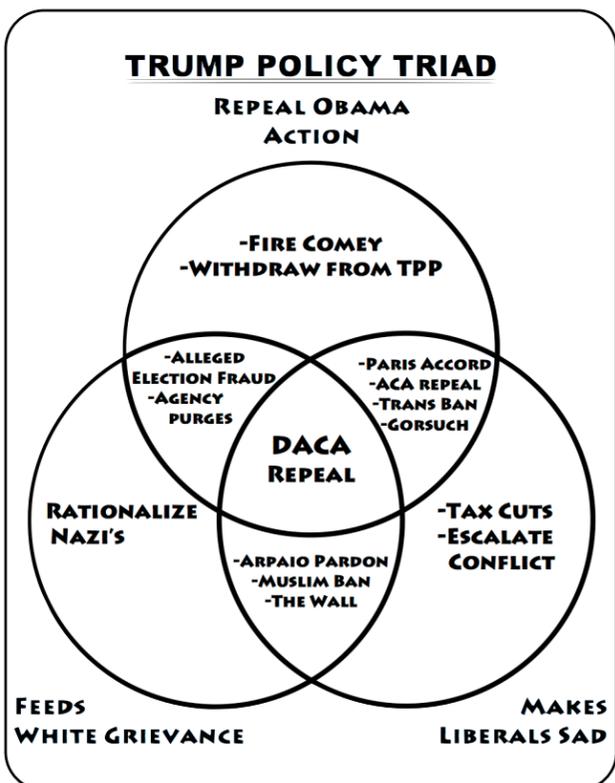
The reality of gouging is NOT new, the inhumanity on this extreme level is happening every second of everyday because it is the very basis of the current economic construct. Price gouging is just

business doing what business does best, taking advantage, appeasing shareholders regardless of the human and environmental cost. And what has your devote service to corporations done for you? This current system rewards the most ruthless, rapey, misinformed, vile, violent people and practices with unlimited power, and sometimes even grants the thrown of president of the "free world."

If trump isn't an indicator to you, well we indeed have reached a tipping point as a species, and in doing so threatening the survival of all other species. Not only are all measures of human wellbeing in a state of decline and/or chaos, we are amidst the 6<sup>th</sup> great extinction according to many experts. Why choose to continue to use a system that does nothing to promote thriving let alone survival of any life form? "Price gouging" is a topic that must not end in the aftermath of this season of manmade disasters, but instead illuminate a broader discussion around how to reorganize our economy to be survival-enhancing and humane, while addressing systemic racism, sexism and classism and the devastation it clearly causes. Compare government response to New Orleans, Florida and Puerto Rico hurricanes, for a look at the systemic inequity. We use a hierarchical system, which inherently places the individual above, depriving the majority, but our finite world is clearly demanding we cooperate.

What if the solution for climate change is the solution for racial, sexual and class inequality? Isn't hierarchy at the root of all these undesirable conditions in addition to capitalism caused climate change and other forms of environmental degradation? Author Naomi Klein states, "There are natural connections to be made between climate change and the BLM, because when African delegates were marching through the halls of the convention center what they were saying was "BLM," and what the politicians were saying was, "no they don't." Klein continues to explain that any economist would agree lowering the emissions to the necessary level of 8-10 % a year is "incompatible with capitalism" in regards to it's short term economic growth model, and states,

"It's not too late to prevent catastrophic warming... if we decided as a society this was an emergency and acted like it. It takes a generation to say NO, this may have been the way things have worked but we cannot accept it anymore. If we want to prevent everything changing to our physical world we basically have to change everything about our political and economic system. That would be terrible news if that political and economic and political system was working on any front but turns out it is not working on pretty much any front so that's why I am arguing climate change could be the catalyst to change what we need to change anyway." - SHAKTI



## Sessions Parrots Right Wing DACA Lies.

In a speech replete with familiar anti-immigrant lies Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced the Trump administration's decision to rescind Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), an Obama-era immigration policy that protects around 800,000 undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children from immediate deportation while allowing them to work legally. Breitbart's White House correspondent Charlie Spierling tweeted that Sessions was "Going full Breitbart." DACA was labeled a "unilateral executive amnesty," a phrase routinely referred to by Breitbart. An amnesty however is an irreversible pardon, not a form of permanent legalization.

The speech also claimed that DACA was "unconstitutional." Again, over 100 law professors wrote a memo explaining that "The U.S. Supreme Court has made clear that decisions to initiate or terminate enforcement proceedings fall squarely within the authority of the Executive" and there are historical precedents for such actions.

The speech blamed DACA for the surge in arrivals of undocumented Central American children in 2014,. In responding to lawsuits against DACA, different judges have debunked the claim that the program acts as a magnet for illegal immigration, noting that the claim is "speculation." Additionally, DACA only applies to immigrants who "have continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007, up to the present time," meaning new arrivals do not qualify for the temporary status.

The speech further accused DACA recipients of taking American jobs. If immigrants really "took" jobs away from large numbers of native-born workers, especially during economic hard times, then one would expect to find high unemployment rates in those parts of the country with large numbers of immigrants—especially immigrants who have come to the United States recently and, presumably, are more willing to work for lower wages and under worse conditions than either long-term immigrants or native-born workers. there is no statistically significant relationship between the unemployment rate and the presence of recent immigrants who arrived in 2000 or later.