Where is My Flying Car Symposium

**Science Fiction Apocalypse Could Become Reality**

**Without Scientist Intervention**

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Americans have descended upon the National Mall in Washington, D.C. for civil rights and war protests, and even to see the Beach Boys. Scientists should do the same to save the environment, according to award-winning science fiction writer Kim Stanley Robinson.

“We need millions of scientists on the Mall trying to teach everyone how the earth will burn up,” Robinson said at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in Chicago this past February. He compared Americans’ hesitation to prevent climate change to sitting in a hotel when the fire alarm is going off. Scientific bodies and societies that make reports, like the AAAS, need to share their concrete evidence that the earth is being destroyed, he said.

“It is not just my opinion, it’s reality that we have to deal with,” Robinson said. Science is evidence-based and all of science is part of one cohesive understanding. It is the scientists’ job to impart that understanding to Americans, he said. Robinson said that science has proved that we may make the planet uninhabitable, creating a mass extinction.

The latest report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a Nobel Prize-winning United Nations group assembled to assess the science and risks of climate change, said, “The world is ill-prepared to manage the risks from a changing climate.” The potential results of overlooking climate change do not exempt anyone, Robinson said. The report noted, “If warming proceeds along the high end of the possible range of outcomes, climate change may overwhelm even the most well-prepared and wealthy nations.”

Robinson has written about a possible future if people fail to save the environment. In his award-winning *Mars Trilogy*, a group of humans make great social and scientific advances upon fleeing to Mars because of ecological disaster and overpopulation on Earth. The common themes in his books comment on current issues that, in his opinion, Americans are failing to deal with. Robinson portrays scientists as heroes, discusses alternative lifestyles that are ecologically sustainable, and explores alternatives to modern capitalism.

Our current political ideology will wipe us out, Robinson said at the AAAS meeting. Energy companies have a legal responsibility to make use of their assets and are usually subsidized. Robinson said that the United States has 2,500 gigatons of fossil fuel left to be sold, amounting to a worth of $160 trillion. In a recent report, [Exxon Mobil](http://corporate.exxonmobil.com/en/environment/climate-change/managing-climate-change-risks/carbon-asset-risk) said that the “world’s climate change policies are ‘highly unlikely’ to stop us from selling fossil fuels far into the future.” Citing a study by the Earth Institute. Robinson warned that if we burned all of the possible fossil fuels, we will cook our atmosphere enough that the Earth’s average temperature will rise to 95 degrees Fahrenheit.

He believes that America needs laws that make ecological, not economic sense. The government is a legal regime that can be changed, Robinson said. We should not burn ourselves up because of the way our financial system works now, he explained. He compared the problem to the prisoners’ dilemma: “We can’t afford to do the right thing because no one else is doing the right thing, so why should we do it?”

 Americans have a “monocausotaxolphilia” problem, a search for one explanation that can explain everything, he said. There is no one answer to reform the impact of the economic market on the environment, but it is up to the scientific community to repair the worst parts. Robinson explained that there will always be opposition from industry and anti-science organizations seeking to undermine the public’s trust in science. However, he challenged, scientists cannot just populate advisory boards anymore.