

As we move firmly into climate conference season, I wanted to highlight the key takeaways from two that I'll be attending with my colleague Garrett Lenahan (among other UCLA colleagues). The first was the [Climate Reality Leadership Training in Los Angeles](#), which focused on training folks of a diverse array of professions to become informed and effective climate action advocates. As a result, the training itself sacrificed depth for breadth when providing a broad overview of climate science, law, and advocacy methods. Despite this drawback, the training effectively provided an overview of effective climate change advocacy techniques, resources, and inspiration from successful climate advocates.

The training was organized and conducted by the [Climate Reality Project](#) (CRP), an organization founded by former [Vice President and Nobel Laureate Al Gore](#). Gore brought on a diverse array of climate leaders, ranging from climate scientists, firefighters, politicians, grassroots organizers, lawyers, and film directors. Mornings and afternoons typically included panels that everyone could attend. In between panels, attendees were separated to attend smaller "sessions" in which we were taught skills in communication, storytelling, and grassroots advocacy. Many of these panels and sessions focused on climate science and law, emphasizing the opportunities in climate solutions in relation to the climate crisis.

The sessions were less hands-on than was probably needed to effectively prepare attendees to become effective climate action advocates. Most interpersonal activities involved asking attendees to discuss our thoughts to partners for five minutes or some other short amount of time. Further, many of the prompts were open-ended ("spend the next five minutes to write down 4 significant life events that led to you becoming a climate activist"). The purpose of every session was to provide broad strokes overview of potential advocacy techniques, and resources to access online when putting together your own climate change slideshow. This seemed a necessary casualty given the short time scale and breadth of knowledge they attempted to provide.

Despite sacrificing depth, the Climate Reality Project arms future "Climate Leaders" with many resources for future use. Each attendee is given online access to Al Gore's entire climate change slideshow presentation, along with Gore's notes on the overall narrative, and how to curate the presentation to different audiences. Further, we were all integrated with the Climate Reality Leader network, which includes mentors within the conference, partners to encourage continued climate activism, as well as larger geographically-based chapters through which other Climate Leaders conduct much of their grassroots work. New Climate Leaders are encouraged to use their newfound skills, information, and inspiration to complete 10 "[Acts of Leadership](#)." These can include presenting the slideshow to their own social and professional circles, attend climate marches, and lobbying local elected officials,

among many others.

Notably absent from the panels or sessions was any discussion of climate adaptation. All discussion on solving the climate crisis focused exclusively on mitigation measures, specifically emphasizing decreasing greenhouse gas emissions from our energy sector, buildings, and transportation. Speakers did not even differentiate between mitigation and adaptation measures; rather, all measures were discussed as “climate action.” The decision seemed deliberate. During one panel focusing on California wildfires, which would naturally elicit discussion on forest management and housing development measures that could alleviate the increased chances of wildfires caused by climate change, panelists and Gore focused on wildfires being the reason to advocate for decreased greenhouse gas emissions. There were one or two brief mentions of adaptation measures as a possibility, but it was never differentiated from other types of climate change measures. The main narrative that CRP pursued through this panel was the immense local impact of climate change, and that the main avenue for which to advocate involved decreasing our GHG emissions on a systemic scale.

That being said, the organization of the training itself set an example in climate sustainability. All food provided was entirely vegetarian and locally sourced, helping minimize its carbon footprint. Additionally, all registered attendees were required to note down the methods of transportation they used to get to the conference, and pledged to offset all carbon emissions caused by folks flying and driving to the conference. There was an unfortunate lack of emphasis on the myriad public transit options available to the LA Convention Center where the conference was held. They instead provided details on best parking options around the area. Organizational oversights like these aside, I hope more conferences and trainings similar to these take a page out of CRP’s book in emphasizing carbon sustainability and creating carbon offsets.

Finally, I was impressed by the Training’s emphasis on political participation playing a key role in climate action. Gore succinctly described the relationship of both: if we want to solve the climate crisis, we have to first solve this country’s “democracy crisis”. This not only meant voting during upcoming midterm elections, but also regularly demanding current elected officials to promote and vote for ambitious climate change laws. I would respectfully add that climate advocates should demand current and future elected officials to reform voter access laws, and prevent gerrymandering. Anything that suppresses the vote also suppresses effective climate change lawmaking.

After this Training, I became further inspired to do more climate change-focused grassroots advocacy in my social circles along with my professional ones. This week, Garrett and I

(among other UCLA colleagues) will be Delegates at the [Global Climate Action Summit](#) in San Francisco, California. If the Climate Reality Leadership Training reinvigorated my passion for climate action, I can only imagine what forward momentum for climate action this conference will provide. Stay tuned for my recap and reflections on rubbing elbows with climate leaders at this Summit.