

## Katrina: the real story

By **Lois A. Levin**/ Special To The Tab

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Katrina starts with "K". It's not even Labor Day and the weather service is halfway through the alphabet in naming hurricanes. A major US city is uninhabitable, inundated by the sea, with no infrastructure. Other communities along the Gulf Coast are in ruins.

For now, everyone is focused on rescue, evacuation, damage, looters, and the terrible human toll. As with the tsunami last year, poor people have remained vulnerable, while most affluent people had moved to higher ground.

No one should be surprised - horrified, but not surprised. It has long been predicted that a powerful storm would sooner or later overwhelm the city of New Orleans, which has kept the sea at bay by a massive system of levees - until now.

The deeper story? For years, a local Pulitzer prize-winning journalist, Ross Gelbspan, has been telling anyone who will listen that the emperor has no clothes. "Katrina's real name," he wrote in an Aug. 30 Boston Globe Op-ed, is "global warming." No matter how much money lobbyists spend to confuse us about the issue, the truth is that "to allow the climate to stabilize humanity must cut its use of coal and oil by 70 percent".

To protect the fossil fuel industries, our federal government is committed to a collision course with reality. Meanwhile, this unprecedented threat to humanity is being addressed with regional and local government initiatives, by non-governmental organizations, and even by some large corporations mindful that a rising tide will swamp their operations and their profits, and not just the people who live in coastal areas (like most of us).

We need to change the way we think. "The Environment" is not just another interesting subject; it is about our future as a species.

Newton has a large and respected community of environmental activists, including the modestly-named Green Decade Coalition, which has been working on energy issues for over a decade. We need more concerned citizens to join and support local environmental organizations, to help strengthen good programs and create new ones. We are all part of the problem. It's time for all of us to become part of the solution to the greatest global dilemma humanity has ever faced.

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