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Invited guests weigh in on Al Gore's Climate Reality Project - September 16, 2011

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Former US Vice President and global warming ambassador Al Gore wrapped up his [24 hours of reality](#) in New York this evening. The final presentation, much like the 23 that preceded it, sought to reinforce the link between extreme weather and global warming in order to make the case that greenhouse gases are not a distant and amorphous threat to our grandchildren but a clear and present danger to pretty much everybody on the planet.

The question we at *Nature* and many others are asking is whether the event will have an impact. What was the goal? To convert hard-core skeptics or inform viewers who have honest doubts and are simply seeking good information upon which to base an opinion? Did Gore overstate the certainty of the science? Although it's true that scientists are [increasingly talking about extreme weather](#) in the context of climate, that does not mean that all extreme weather can be attributed to climate (as noted [here](#)) nor that all scientists are on board with the idea.



In the end, the question is what happens now that these 24 hours of reality are over. Al Gore has said he is hoping for a "new era of activism," but opinions vary sharply on whether this particular event advanced that cause. We invited reviewers from around the world to watch the presentations and share their thoughts. Here are their responses:

Barry W. Brook, director of climate science, Environment Institute, University of Adelaide, Australia

Overall, I don't think this initiative will do much good. For one thing, Al Gore is now as much a hindrance as a help on climate change advocacy, as he's been characterized (probably unfairly) as a highly partisan figure, and so immediately gets about half of all folks offside. Second, there has been a campaign to paint him ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Mike Shanahan, press officer, International Institute for Environment and Development, London

I actually avoided the Goreathon, and I guess that says something in itself. I think it was a bad idea to ask people to let his project take over their Twitter / Facebook accounts for the day. I'm sure people are more likely to listen to their ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Bob Ward, Policy and Communications Director, Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, London School of Economics and Political Science

Al Gore and the other participants in the Climate Reality project deserve huge credit for attempting to raise public awareness about the risks posed by climate change. It is very clear that explaining the link between climate change and trends in the frequency, intensity and distribution of extreme weather help the public to understand more clearly the potential impacts of rising atmospheric levels of greenhouse gases. One could complain ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Candis Callison assistant professor, Graduate School of Journalism, University of British Columbia, Vancouver

It's not clear to me what work the Climate Reality Project is doing, nor who it's directed at. Al Gore has done a great job of 'galvanizing the faithful,' (i.e. those who already care about climate change) so if it's about that, and if the Twitter feed is any indication, then it seems to be succeeding wildly. There is merit in that. Just look at the way ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Julian Landgrave, doctoral student, National Autonomous University, Mexico City

It is less than a year before the presidential elections, and Mexico is facing major problems raging from security, economics, education and health. The reality is that the project didn't get enough media coverage and that the majority of the population ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Judith Curry, chair, School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta

If the intent of Al Gore's telethon is to garner broad support for climate and energy policies such as proposed by the UNFCCC (e.g. the Kyoto protocol), I anticipate that this effort will backfire and energize the opposition to such policies. As a scientist I find the mantra "remove the doubt, reveal the deniers" to be objectionable ... [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Hans von Storch & Werner Krauss, Helmholtz Centre for Materials and Coastal Research in Geesthacht, Germany

We want to present three observations on the basis of our selected viewing of Al Gore's Climate Reality Project. First, we address the political and scientific legitimization of the message; second, we criticize the form of representation, and finally we discuss the dilemma of the global - local nexus. [\[click here for complete response\]](#)

Posted by Jeff Tollefson on September 16, 2011

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