

Testimony of Nick Huey
Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis
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My name is Nick Huey. I'm a father of two, a husband, a BYU grad, an advertiser, a Republican, and a Mormon Christian. Thank you for your time, and for your concern on this issue. We may be from different parties, but our concern for the planet unites us.

When I went to BYU, I had a baby. Then I had another baby. It's kind of a Mormon hobby. But with each new child, my concern for their future grew. Living a "green" life wouldn't do squat on a planet of 7 billion people. So I started trying to figure out how to bridge the massive gap between the Far Left and the Far Right so we could start working together on climate change. I found an answer. It's called the Far Middle, a radical place where the Left and Right publicly respect and learn from each others' viewpoints.

In 2017, I wanted to prove the Far Middle could exist. They call the college rivalry between BYU and the Utes "the Holy War" with good reason. Like the Far Left and Far Right, we hate each other. What if we could use our heated rivalry to show Utah Democrats and Republicans you can get along when it comes to climate?

One week before our big rivalry football game, BYU students arrived at the Utes' campus with over 3,000 purple flowers to place on their car windshields. Why purple? Because the Utes' school color is red, and ours is blue. Purple is right in the middle. With each flower, we left a URL to a humor-filled video inviting the Utes to team up with us on climate, and we could go on hating each other everywhere else. The results were better than we could have imagined.

Not only did we get a barrage of student and professor emails from both schools wanting to team up. We were broadcast on the state's biggest news channels, garnering over 200,000 media impressions on our first day of operations. Pretty cool for a handful of students. But we weren't done. The night of the big football game, around 50 volunteers hiked the side of the Rocky Mountains to shine a purple Y the size of a football field inside the BYU stadium at halftime. Sustainability coordinators from the other major Universities began to reach out, wanting to sign their school up. We were featured in local talk shows and radio interviews. We got ultra-conservative Utah to start buzzing about climate change on every single news channel. Why? Because we approached it from the Far Middle. If we had approached it in an angry, partisan way, we would've been ignored. The radical part of this campaign wasn't that we were angry and yelling. It was that we weren't.

The Far Middle is a place of humility, reason, and respect. There, "you might have a point" is heard more often than "you listen to my point". A liberal atheist and a conservative Mormon Christian can sit down and have a real conversation about climate change, health care, guns, and gays, and leave with new ideas. In the Far Middle there's disagreement. But it's centered in the nuances of "how" to fix something, rather than if we should fix it at all. In the Far Middle, we treasure diversity of thought every bit as much as we treasure diversity of skin color, even when those thoughts conflict with our own.

If you want to move the needle on climate change, you can't be the hero who puts the bad guys in their place. The other side isn't full of bad guys. It's full of good people, who you would often love if you got to know.

We have a rapidly radicalizing Far Left and Right. We need a radical Far Middle. A collection of individuals that maintain Democratic or Republican affiliation, while recognizing the value in their Republican or Democratic counterparts. If there's one advertising tip I can give you to get attention for your cause, it's that when everyone zigs, you zag. Could you imagine the headlines today, if instead of passing a resolution to condemn someone's rhetoric, you introduced a resolution to apologize for your own as a gesture of goodwill? Or if a Republican in one state, sure of his or her reelection, went to rally for a Democrat in another, because they saw in them integrity and humanity? What would such simple, radical actions do to the dialogue in our country?

I imagine you would like to see more of your Republican colleagues here discussing the climate crisis. I would too. But for that to happen, someone has to publically let go of their pride first. Someone has to soften. It's no longer enough to reach across the aisle in private conversations with opposing senators. Now is the time for radical collaboration. To love big, and fear little. The American public will not only permit such leadership. They'll break into song. The Far Middle has been muted by two warring parties, but they are still America's majority, even if they're not yelling and waving pitchforks. Give them the message they've been feeling, but no one's been championing. Only then can the Far Middle become the strong and healthy force in Washington it once was.

I was asked to come share what I see as the way forward. Not right. Not left. Forward. Straight ahead. Right down the Middle.

The answer is to become radical Middle-ists. To embrace a humble, learning attitude, and to publically embrace America. ALL of America. Whether they drink your same Kool-aid or not.

I could give you a band-aid fix. I'm an advertiser. I could tell you about which words to use and which to avoid. I could ask you to stop spreading panic about the end of the world, and start spreading excitement about the futuristic potential of sustainable energy. But it won't fix the problem. I can't offer a band-aid when what's needed is open heart surgery. And that's where the problem lies. Not in the heartland of America. In the hearts of Americans.

Now if any of you want to take me up on Far Middle-ism and start fixing climate change and every other problem we face, I can help. My whole job is to come up with safe, sexy, beautiful actions that get people to fall in love with certain brands and ideas. We need smart, newsworthy gestures to make an about face. I offer my services to your brand image, free of charge, regardless of party, as long as you'll use it to heal the gap that has turned climate change into a political weapon.

Climate change is not the sickness. It's a symptom. If we can strip away partisan pride, the symptoms will go away faster than any of us could reasonably believe possible. So take courage, and act. Create the Far Middle, and climate change will take care of itself. Thank you.