

## Stay Cool: Why Dark Comedy Matters in the Fight Against Climate Change

**Aaron Sachs**

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Aaron Sachs's *Stay Cool* proposes a lighthearted means of tackling the serious subject of climate change.

Declaring that the sanctimonious tones of environmentalists have a demotivating impact, this book muses on how humor might be more effective. It meditates on the role of morale in social movements, noting places where oppressed people turned despondency into determination and defiance, shifting their perspectives toward humor and hope amid despair. Indeed, truths cloaked in humor can penetrate the toughest armor, it says, as with Jonathan Swift's satirical 1729 essay *A Modest Proposal*, which argued that people should end hunger and poverty in Ireland by eating children.

Sachs shows how humor operated against challenges including the Black Death, slavery, and war, helping people to cope in difficult times. The book reviews instances of dark humor fostering resilience in Native American, Black, and Jewish communities, too: Holocaust survivors, it says, used gallows humor to create a sense of solidarity in concentration camps and to persevere through endless horrors. Sachs also notes that dark comedy pulled him through after the deaths of his parents.

Alongside these excellent examples of humor being used to solve problems and spark creative solutions, Sachs demonstrates how climate activists have already prompted change via essays, cartoons, videos, plays, memes, and parody songs, changing the ways that people think and shift their behavior. He uses the example of a stunt by an activist who announced a fictitious policy change by a university; it forced the school to divest from the fossil fuel industry. The book also highlights budding programs at the University of Colorado and Yale that use similar creative communication techniques.

*Stay Cool* encourages a fresh, creative approach to addressing one of the biggest challenges of the time—climate change.

WENDY HINMAN (March / April 2023)

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