

What We Can't Burn: Friendship and Friction in the Fight for Our Energy Future

Eve Driver

Tom Osborn

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Eve Driver and Tom Osborn's spirited, conversational book *What We Can't Burn* concerns how activism and entrepreneurship might interact in the struggle to mitigate the climate crisis.

Driver and Osborn met as Harvard classmates. They shared a passion for environmentalism and social justice but took different approaches to these issues. Kenyan Osborn cofounded GreenChar straight out of high school to promote clean-burning household cooking fuels and limit tree felling; Driver's perspective was that of a activist and future policy advisor who worked in the college's divestment movement, which met with success in 2021.

Driver and Osborn acknowledge their privileges related to race and class, as well as the challenges posed by cultural differences. For instance, when Driver first visited Kenya to volunteer with a gender violence prevention program, she stayed with members of Osborn's devout family, who panicked when they learned she was vegetarian.

The short chapters alternate between Driver's and Osborn's engaging perspectives. Their setup as an exchange of ideas and personal experiences resembles a Socratic dialogue, advancing toward harmony and modeling friendship rather than competition. They muse through the advantages and limitations of innovation and activism; they represent different foci, yet both of their perspectives are afforded respect. And although "measuring impact remains tricky," Driver and Osborn express hope that responsible funding and conscientious action can go hand in hand. The book's final section on resources lists reinvestment strategies, complementary nonprofits, and related literature.

What We Can't Burn is a practical activist's text that proposes a symbolic shift from duality to teamwork in the ongoing work of ensuring climate justice.

REBECCA FOSTER (September / October 2024)

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