

Testimony of Katelyn McCormick to the  
Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming

Good Morning. My name is Katelyn McCormick and I am a student at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. First, I would like to thank you for this amazing opportunity. Not many people that are willing to stand up for what they believe in have the ability to speak out for those beliefs; I am fortunate enough to be able to share my experiences here today. I am here now for justness because lately, I have seen many unjust things. In early October I had the privilege to visit a town in West Virginia with many other students. We visited one of the many areas of Appalachia where the destructive practice of Mountain Top Removal Coal Mining is taking over and rapidly deteriorating an entire region. Standing at the top of Kayford Mountain I looked down at what was once lush forests, a home for many creatures, a playground for people, what was once a majestic mountaintop, and I felt a knot form in my stomach. I overheard someone from our group relate seeing this barren mountain to seeing a person's broken bone exposed and I then understood the sickness I was feeling. This was not something any of us were meant to see. My heart was heavy and I was overwhelmed. However, this sadness was nothing compared to what I would feel when a little girl, who's elementary school is 300 feet away from a coal processing plant and directly below a dam containing tons of coal slurry, would look up at me and say, "all us kids are getting sick but they won't build us a new school"; it was nothing compared to what I felt when I listened to families tell me they suffer chronic illnesses because every breath they take is tainted by pollution; but even worse, it was nothing to how I felt when I saw the red,

polluted water that runs from the tap. How is anyone supposed to live without clean water? Who could let this happen? An entire region is being disregarded because the rest of our nation is dependent on coal. This is not only environmentally unjust, this is socially unjust. We all have a right to turn on that light switch, but we have a right to use these everyday commodities without worrying that by doing so we are putting someone else's life in peril. As Americans it is our civic responsibility to respect our people and our land. It is our civic responsibility to take care of our nation. But, as human beings it is our moral responsibility to be just and fair. Standing here today, I feel like a child telling her father that someone has been unfair and asking him to make it better, I shouldn't have to tell anyone that our actions are unfair, as a nation we should have always been striving for fairness, righting our wrongs; instead we are creating more problems, and more injustices.

It is apparent that I am not the only person who feels this way. There is a movement happening. Youth everywhere are recognizing our world's energy crisis and we are stepping up to fix it. Students across the United States have been working on sustainable initiatives for their campus. Campus Climate Challenge has united 300 universities to work on 100% clean energy policies and progress towards sustainable alternatives. Frustrated that our government won't recognize the crisis we are facing, as youth we are stepping up to make positive change where we can, starting with sustainable campuses and moving on from there.

This weekend has been monumental. 5,000 students have traveled to D.C to work towards a just energy future. We are all here for the same reasons, with the same goal in mind and for the first time we have been able to unite, learn, teach, share resources, and

construct numerous methods to initiate and implement sustainability on campuses, in communities, and across the nation. Powershift is giving thousands of students the knowledge and resources necessary to implement these changes and continue to empower other students.

This coming January, 1,000 universities will simultaneously educate hundreds of thousands of students on solutions to global warming during the first ever Focus the Nation event. This event will be the biggest national teach-in in U.S. history. Educating and developing thousands of young leaders, Focus the Nation will be a critical event to kick off 2008. Unique to this event, Focus the Nation will connect faculty and students to build a better future, bridging the generational gap to work for positive societal change has not been done since the 60's. Something big is happening. Our generation has realized the challenge ahead and we are stepping up to the plate. The movement is here, it is now, and the youth won't back down until our voice is acknowledged and action is taken.

Someone once asked me why I care. I care because this is my future. This is the future of my children, the future of our home, our health, our happiness. I care because if I don't, who will? This is why we all care; we will not sit by and watch as the place we love, the place we call home, is driven into the ground. Today, I am asking you to recognize what is happening; this movement is big and it will not dissipate. We don't want to be dependent on un-renewable resources; we don't want to oppress any more communities and regions. We have made our voices clear and we are continuously striving to become louder than ever, it's time our government take action. Thank you.

