

An Inconvenient Sequel: Truth to Power (2017)

Rated PG. Running time: 1 hour 34 min.

Our content ratings (1-10): Violence 2; Language 1; Sex/Nudity 0.

Our star rating (1-5): 4

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

Genesis 1:26

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.

Deuteronomy 30:19

Over a decade ago Davis Guggenheim directed Al Gore's elaborate ecological slide show which made climate change and global warming mainstream concerns. Before that many people saw environmentalists as eccentric tree huggers akin to street corner prophets brandishing "The End is Near" signs. Passing the reins to directors Bonni Cohen and Jon Shenk, Guggenheim serves as an executive producer for this sequel. Whereas the first film was tasked with explaining the myriad details

leading scientists to conclude that the planet is in great danger because of climate change, and thus the audience should be concerned, the sequel updates the science in the first section of the film, but spends more time on the politics of climate change, with the ex-vice president as a major actor on and off stage.

Before showing us Gore's visit to Greenland where 11 years of melting ice can be vividly seen, we hear a stream of right wing critics decrying Gore and his first film. Some had charged him with exaggeration when he predicted that downtown Manhattan will face flooding. Later we see shots of Hurricane Sandy flooding streets and water pouring like small Niagaras over the edges of the recess of the 911 Memorial site. Gore walks in the flooded area of a Miami Beach street where the mayor is explaining that they are raising the pavement level, while admitting that as the polar ice continues to melt, this is but a temporary solution.

The former Vice President travels the world—Philippines and India and Paris—on behalf of the cause. Starting with 50 trainees in the States a number of years ago, he now addresses mixed-nation audiences of 400 to 500 who are being trained to go out and become advocates for combatting global warming. At the global conference on climate change in Paris in 2015 he becomes the catalyst for India agreeing to use more solar power rather than just coal-fueled power stations when he gets on the phone and uses his clout to convince the CEO of a major solar power company to offer India a deal they cannot afford to turn down

We of course see Donald Trump denying climate change, and are told that the big energy and coal companies and other upholders of the status quo have bought the climate deniers and politicians presently in power. Gore confesses it “would be lying” if he did not admit that he sometimes felt low due to slow progress on dealing with greenhouses gases. “In order to fix the climate crisis, we have to fix the democracy

crisis," he proclaims to an enthusiastic audience. Thus, Gore remains optimistic, declaring that if the Federal government will not lead in changing over to renewable energy sources, then states, cities, and the 159 countries remaining in the Climate Accord are committed to change. He celebrates the news that Chili's use of solar power is growing exponentially each year so that it is on track to become a nation relying totally on renewable energy for its needs.

Near the end of the film there is a sequence blending a bit of humor with his optimism. Gore visits Georgetown, Texas, where the Mayor, affirming with a smile that he is a conservative Republican, shakes the visiting Gore's hand and conducts him on a tour of the town that is moving toward using 100% renewable energy. The mayor is enthusiastic for the plan not because he is a dyed in the wool environmentalist, but because he sees the science and the math proving that renewable energy sources can now produce the cheapest electricity for his townsfolk.

At this date, I suspect that Gore and his film are preaching to the choir, though when the film comes to town, the choir members might coax their climate change skeptical friends with the offer of free popcorn if they will accompany them. For some the film will contain too much adulation of Gore: certainly, the sequence shot in his home with him showing off pictures and a letter written years ago by his young daughter concerning his running for the Presidency distracts from the subject. The film would have been better served by an analysis of the science of climate deniers. What are the reasons they persist? Are all of them supported by grants from Big Oil, as some environmentalists claim?

I hope religious leaders, with their understanding that humanity are stewards of the earth, will be gathering people together to see and discuss the film when it comes to a theater nearby. I attended an advanced screening, not at an art house this time, but at a large multiscreen theater. This

bodes well for a film that deserves as much exposure as possible.

This review with a set of questions will be in the Aug. 2017 issue of VP.