

## No More Empty Promises

By Nicole Nelson

*Nicole gave this address at the No More Empty Promises climate rally on March 19 at Worcester City Hall. The rally was organized by Sunrise Movement Worcester ([www.facebook.com/sunriseworcester](http://www.facebook.com/sunriseworcester)), a close partner of 350 Central Mass. Nicole is a member of 350CM and Sunrise, and a student at Clark University, Worcester.*

A bus carrying just one passenger hurries past Union Station  
So little time. So few buses.  
A bicyclist races to keep up with traffic.  
With no bike lane, he is a moving target  
The hurried bus clips his bike,  
Tossing the cyclist to the ground and his mask falls from his face  
A gust of wind carries the mask further into the city  
It scrapes the streets  
And flows past unhoused folks with hungry bellies  
It tumbles through graveyards and the smoke stacks of dirty corporations  
75 mph on a hurricane  
Until it settles on the last tree left in what was once a lush, enchanted green forest  
A curious crow picks it up  
Falls prisoner to the deadly white straps  
The crow wrestles with it 'til he is finally set free and the mask is taken by another gust of  
wind out to sea  
A hungry whale unable to find his next meal swallows the mask  
It travels in the empty belly of the whale  
Until it is washed up once more on land  
The ocean floods over and rips the mask from the decayed belly.  
As the flooding subsides, the soggy mask sticks to leftover wood of a devastated house to dry  
There it remains til cleanup  
It is tossed in a bin and taken to a landfill where it is swept up by one final gust of wind  
The mask is once again one with the forest  
And there it remains until it burns up in flames.

What we do here locally directly impacts these devastating scenes of climate destruction. We need good decision making close to home and renewable energy systems that are under our control. Sure, we as individuals can reduce our carbon footprints, and I'm sure many of us here are making the conscious effort to do so.

But it's about so much more than that. It's not fair to us individuals working hard to combat climate change in our personal lives that our governments are feeding us empty promises.

We are hungry for change. We are hungry for a climate revolution. And it sure as hell isn't fair to the innocent species displaced and starved for food as a result of our greed and negligence.

Dear city of Worcester, feed our hunger for well paying green jobs, clean energy, transportation, and affordable housing. Feed our hunger for a just and sustainable future. One where we stop losing biodiversity to this pandemic of human greed.

No more plans for future plans. The time is now. We cannot wait to act in the pressure of climate change at its worst. God, I can't even imagine things worse than they are. Mother Earth and her systems are already crumbling under the pressure of rising temperatures, extreme weather, rising sea levels, and overall devastation.

Let us not crumble under pressure, too.