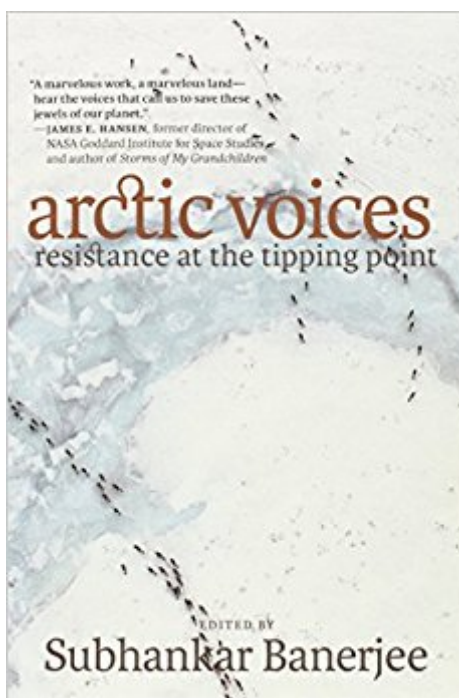


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Arctic Voices: Resistance At The Tipping Point



Synopsis

"One of the great strengths of *Arctic Voices* is that it shows how Alaska and the Arctic are tied to the places where most of us live. In this impassioned book, Banerjee shows a situation so serious that it has created a movement, where 'voices of resistance' are gathering, are getting louder and louder.' May his heartfelt efforts magnify them. The climate changes that are coming have hit soon and hard in the Arctic, and their consequences may be starkest there." — Ian Frazier, *The New York Review of Books*

A pristine environment of ecological richness and biodiversity. Home to generations of indigenous people for thousands of years. The location of vast quantities of oil, natural gas and coal. Largely uninhabited and long at the margins of global affairs, in the last decade Arctic Alaska has quickly become the most contested land in recent US history. World-renowned photographer, writer, and activist Subhankar Banerjee brings together first-person narratives from more than thirty prominent activists, writers, and researchers who address issues of climate change, resource war, and human rights with stunning urgency and groundbreaking research. From Gwich'in activist Sarah James's impassioned appeal, "We Are the Ones Who Have Everything to Lose," during the UN Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009 to an original piece by acclaimed historian Dan O'Neill about his recent trips to the Yukon Flats fish camps, *Arctic Voices* is a window into a remarkable region. Other contributors include Seth Kantner, Velma Wallis, Nick Jans, Debbie Miller, Andri Snaer Magnason, George Schaller, George Archibald, Cindy Shogan, and Peter Matthiessen.

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"The Earth and her beings have been speaking. But we failed to listen.Â Arctic VoicesÂ compels us to listen. We will stay deaf at our peril."â "Vandana Shiva, founder of Navdanya and author ofÂ Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development"A marvelous work, a marvelous landâ "hear the voices that call us to save these jewels of our planet."â "James E. Hansen, director of NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and author ofÂ Storms of My Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity"One of theÂ great strengths ofÂ Arctic VoicesÂ is thatÂ it shows how Alaska and the Arctic areÂ tied to the places where most of us live.Â InÂ this impassioned book, Banerjee showsÂ a situation so serious that it has createdÂ a movement, where 'voices of resistanceÂ are gathering, are getting louderÂ and louder.' May his heartfelt effortsÂ magnify them."â "Ian Frazier,Â The New York Review of Booksâ œPart of our failure to recognise the dangers at stake is that the Arctic still tends to be perceived as a big barren desert of ice, apolitical and disconnected from our political concerns, up for grabs. The bookÂ Arctic Voices: Resistance at the Tipping PointÂ offers an encyclopedic approach to reframe such understandings.â •â "Manuela Picq,Â Al JazeeraÂ â œTheir reverence for, and connection to, the earthâ "its animals, water, mountains and landâ "is beautifully described inÂ Arctic Voices, and each essay is as much a prayer as a call to activism.â •â "Eleanor J. Bader,Â TruthoutÂ Â Â Â "Just in time, then, comes Banerjee's latest volume,Â Arctic Voices, a wakeup call from 39 artists, writers, biologists, Alaska Natives and activists [...] the eyewitness accounts and reports in Arctic Voices question the wisdom of relying on fossil fuel fixes, urging restraint in our approach to the nation's last great wilderness area."â "Michael Engelhard,Â High Country News"Right from the beginning Iâ™m emotionally connected with this book [...]"â "The Environmental Blog

Over the past decadeÂ SUBHANKAR BANERJEEÂ has been a leading international voice on issues of arctic conservation, indigenous human rights, resource development, and climate change. In 2003 he publishedÂ Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a photo book of his fourteen-month long journey in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Through a Lannan Foundation grant, 10,000 copies of the book were donated to libraries and policy makers across the country. He was recently Directorâ™s Visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, Distinguished Visiting Professor at Fordham University in New York. He has received a Distinguished Alumnus Award from New Mexico State University and a Cultural Freedom Award from Lannan Foundation. Banerjee lives in New York City.

As indicated by the title, this book is a collection of different stories by various authors describing history of the Arctic from hundreds of years ago to the present. The beginning of this book is so depressing that you may want to just give up. The indigenous people of the Arctic have been treated badly in the past and now they have to try and live through global warming and oil exploration. The facts aren't always nice, but they are the facts. As the book progresses it lightens up a little so you can keep on to the end. It's well worth it, for you get a real feeling of the Arctic.

Great selection of stories providing a crucial insight into the struggles of wildlife and people in the arctic, while also bringing to light why everyone around the world should start asking questions about the current oil industry activities and the consequent repercussions.

The topic of the book is important, but the stories are very basic, really almost all are not stories at all but accounts, reports or testimonies, many not written for this book, prefaced by long introductions very boring about when the author met someone or the date he asked someone to write something or what photos he took and when. Very repetitive too, it seems to me there are much more places people or animals they lost the opportunity to inspire. Here again and again about the same topic, how they have fought or how they will fight big oil when in reality they never see a fight, only complains or talking, words without taking any risk, if that means to fight to them it is no surprise they are getting nowhere. Only two stars because I like the Arctic and environment

Arctic Voices: Resistance at the Tipping Point is a wake-up call to the dire threats facing the Arctic due to the exploitation of the area's natural resources. As the world-renowned environmentalist, Subhankar Banerjee, states in his introduction to this lengthy tome: "Through [the over 30] stories, in this volume we talk about big animals, big migrations, big hunting, big land, big rivers, big ocean, and big sky; and also about the big coal, big oil, big warming, big spills, big pollution, big legislations, and big lawsuits. And we talk about small things, too." It comes as no surprise that Banerjee, who specifically became a US citizen so that he could have a legitimate say regarding conservation issues in the US, has focused this volume largely on Arctic Alaska, although the developing problems and risks described have bearing on the whole of the Arctic, as, indeed, they have on the rest of the world. Other areas in the Arctic that are specifically covered are the Nunavut, Northwest and Yukon Territories in the Canadian Arctic, as well as Siberia, Greenland, Svalbard, and Iceland. The text is supplemented by two full-color photo inserts, containing drawings as well as photos, as well as seventy-five

black-and-white photographs, portraying the beauty of this magnificent landscape that was left untarnished by humankind for so many centuries prior to the depredations brought by modern exploitative practices, which are also pictured here. *Arctic Voices: Resistance at the Tipping Point*, therefore, reflects, in all its sombreness, the seriousness of the situation on a global scale, with all its potentially devastating impact relating to both pollution and climate change. But yet there is joy in this work, too, as the native inhabitants of these lands recount their experiences at firsthand of living harmoniously with the wildlife that peopled these vast expanses of ice long before any human set foot there. Telling the story of both the people and the organisations that are set on protecting this natural wilderness from commercial greed, *Arctic Voices* exhibits the strength that lies at the core of humankind when the major motivation of our behavior is not mere lust for power and avariciousness. Indeed, it is the wish of Banerjee that the power of the voices that fill this volume should not only resonate across the miles of physical space involved, but also across the intellectual caverns that so often exist at corporate level. If strength lies in numbers, the wide-ranging nature of the multiplicity of contributors to the volume should be capable of arousing a global consciousness and awareness that there is still sufficient energy and will to activate the policymakers and the governments involved (and who among us is not) to contribute to the sustainable evolution of this planet, before nature itself rebels, and the very continued existence of mankind itself is threatened. The spirit of this work is exemplary in its brave commitment to maintaining the rightful balance on this Earth of ours—let us all learn, and be moved, by it.

While I am writing these words, Shell is preparing to drill for oil in the Chukchi and Beaufort Seas near the coast of Arctic Alaska. Gazprom has an offshore oil rig already in place in the Pechora Sea. Few days ago, Norwegian oil and gas company Statoil announced that they plan to drill on a large scale in the Barents Sea from next year on. All of this is done despite the known fact that even if we only burn the already discovered oil reserves, the aim of limiting global warming to 2 degrees Celsius can never be reached; that it simply is not possible to recover oil from a spill in the harsh weather conditions of the Arctic; and that both ecosystems and people in the far North are under immense pressure already now: Climate change is proceeding twice as fast there as elsewhere. This summer, Arctic sea ice was at a record low, causing troubles not only for animals such as polar bears and seals, but also for traditional hunters, who depend very much on the ice. Less sea ice, thawing permafrost soils and more extreme weather also mean increased erosion, which - together with rising sea levels - threatens many coastal communities in the Arctic. *Arctic Voices*, edited by Indian-born American writer, photographer and activist Subhankar Banerjee, is therefore an urgently

needed book. The more than 30 different contributions and a large number of (partly coloured) photographs impressively clarify what is happening in the Arctic at the moment. These texts, written by scientists, anthropologists, writers, members of indigenous communities, and activists, limit themselves however not to lamenting the described disquieting developments. They also demonstrate that resistance exists, and that it, despite many throwbacks, often can be successful. While most of the contributions were written specifically for Arctic Voices, some are extracts from other books, such as Marla Cone's *Silent Snow: The Slow Poisoning of the Arctic* (2005). It addresses the paradoxical fact that people and mammals such as polar bears and whales in the Arctic, despite living far removed from most sources of chemical pollution, suffer the world's highest contamination through mercury, PCBs, and pesticides such as DDT. Arctic Voices is thus not least a plea for environmental justice: It is not the inhabitants of the Arctic who are responsible for global warming and pollution, but they are among those who suffer the greatest losses. The volume represents a broad scope of different voices, and definitely manages to inspire both further reading and action. One disadvantage is, however, that most contributions only deal with Arctic Alaska, although the described problematic developments are common in the entire Arctic. There is one article on Iceland, and another one on Siberia, but what about Greenland, Norway, and Canada? Despite this unnecessary self-restriction, Arctic Voices can be highly recommended for everyone interested in nature, culture, and resistance in the far North.

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