



Written by [Salena Zito](#) on June 14, 2023

Democrats Abandon the Blue-collar Worker in Favor of ‘Social Justice’ Warriors

CHESWICK, Pennsylvania — Up until two years ago, it would only take 12 hours for coal mined deep in a labyrinth operation 60 miles from here to go from that underground mine, through a high-tech cleaning procedure, and be loaded on a barge or rail car and brought to the Cheswick Generating Station, a coal-fired power plant, to light communities along the Allegheny River for generations.

That efficient process came to an end in September 2021 when owner GenOn Holdings announced the then-51-year-old facility, one that environmental groups had in their sights for years, decided to retire the plant. The company cited “unfavorable economic conditions, higher costs including those associated with environmental compliance, an inability to compete with other generation types, and evolving market rules that promote subsidized resources.”

In short, the company was driven out of business in part by the “climate justice” movement within the federal and state governments that made doing business unfair, expensive and impossible and, at the same time, made it very favorable for other energy resources they approve of — solar and wind — to get sweetheart subsidies.

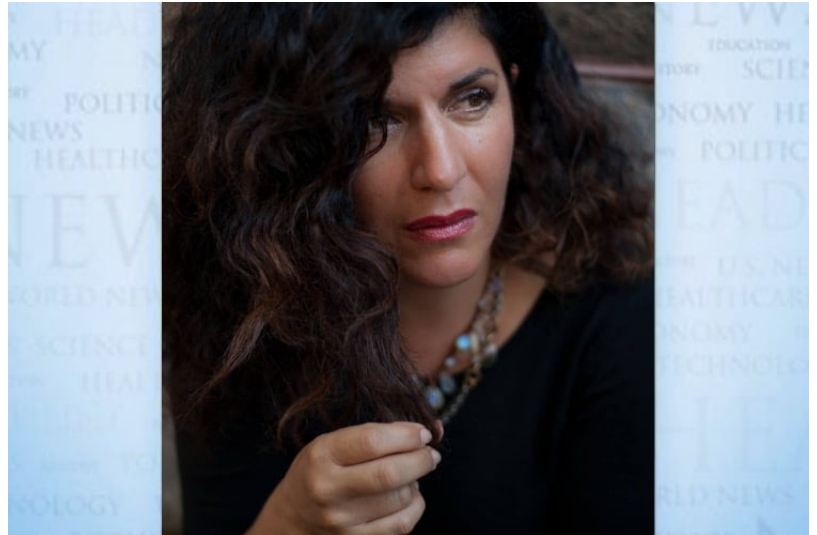
For the past two years, the facility and the two towers that defined this curve of the Allegheny River — one 750 feet tall, the other 552 feet tall, both standing like sentinels of the industry — remained standing. Then, they didn’t stand anymore: On Friday, their end of life became a reality when a controlled demolition brought them down.

Neighbors who have lived below them all of their lives, and the few who left town in search of greener pastures, all gathered, watching the towers’ undistinguished death in a heap of dust and dirt.

Some praised their demise and applauded the change. But those were few. Most people mourned the loss of jobs and how government callously picks winners and losers.

For over 50 years, this facility heated homes, small businesses, manufacturers, strip malls and churches in the surrounding area, and anyone who came up the Allegheny River, or drove past them along the Pennsylvania Turnpike, would remark that their towering presence rivaled in size and purpose any skyscrapers that graced Pittsburgh or Philadelphia.

Twenty years ago, there were 23 coal-fired power plants in Pennsylvania. Today, there are five. The economic impact of this demolition is not without casualties: This plant had 60 employees, to whom the



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company doled out nearly \$9 million every year in wages and benefits. That's a lot of money no longer going into the community, the tax base and the small businesses downstream of the plant.

The end of the line here came a few weeks after the Environmental Protection Agency proposed never-before-seen federal regulations for coal-fired power plants that, if made into law, would nearly eliminate the industry's ability to be sustainable.

More local coal-fired power plants have announced imminent closures: the Homer City power plant and Conemaugh Generating Station in Indiana County and the Keystone Power Plant in Armstrong County. Both blamed strangling environmental regulations, such as the one proposed by the EPA, along with cheaper natural gas.

Between 2010 and May 2019, 290 coal power plants, or 40% of the U.S. coal-generating capacity, closed permanently, while China was robustly constructing new coal-fired power plants.

In late 2022, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air said China is on track to build 43 coal-fired power plants and 18 blast furnaces powered by coal over the next few years to support the country's economic expansion — a coal boom that does not coincide with that country's pledge to go carbon neutral.

Twenty years ago, perhaps even less, Democrats running for office or in office would have been standing in the way of the implosion that happened here last week and chained themselves to the towers or used all of their muscle to halt this industry's demise. Back then, Democrats were the party of the working class, and no one symbolized that more than the boilermakers who worked here.

But that party has taken its muscle and protest signs and moved on to be the party of the multiple categories of supposed injustices as defined by the "social justice" movement. Hardworking, no-nonsense boilermakers have been replaced by SEIU social justice aggrieveds.

The day after the implosion of the towers, most of the hierarchy of the Democratic Party in this state was marching in the Pride parade in Pittsburgh. As far as I could see, none of them came to this spot to reassure the people who live, work and pray here that the officials have their back and would move mountains to make sure something would replace what they lost.

Salena Zito is a CNN political analyst and a staff reporter and columnist for the Washington Examiner. She reaches the Everyman and Everywoman through shoe-leather journalism, traveling from Main Street to the beltway and all places in between. To find out more about Salena and read her past columns, please visit the Creators Syndicate webpage at www.creators.com.

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