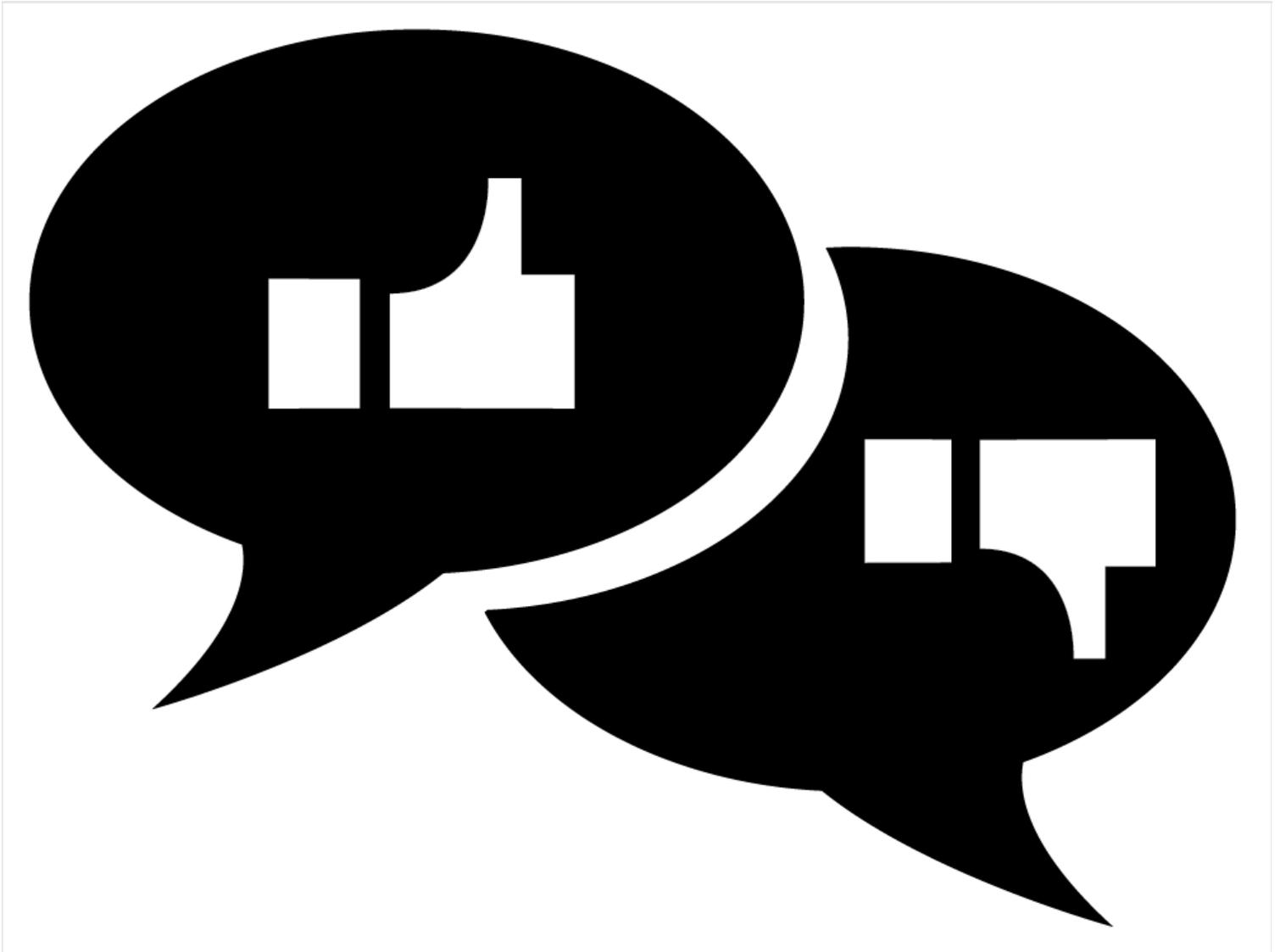


The moral imperative of divestment



Roderick O’Dorisio, the Financial Director of the DU Clarion, recently wrote an article calling the fossil fuel divestment movement “laughable” and “ineffective.” While we appreciate O’Dorisio taking the time to call attention to this issue, we were disappointed by the article’s biased and fallacious arguments, and wanted to provide the student body with a more honest and comprehensive understanding of divestment and the role it must play in combating climate change.

History has shown divestment to be a catalyst for political and social transformation. According to the Harvard University Institute of Politics, divestment played an integral role in the collapse of Apartheid in the 1980s, and has the same potential to combat climate change around the world today. This is an understanding shared by Nelson

Mandela, who credited American divestment as a key component to South Africa's liberation.

Despite agreeing that action must be taken in order to mitigate the effects of climate change, O'Dorisio argues that divesting from fossil fuels will not make a difference because it will not significantly impact the stock values of fossil fuel companies. Instead, O'Dorisio calls for increased investments in the fossil fuel industry in order to have a greater share, and therefore greater influence in these companies. While this perspective is financially accurate, it fails to understand the fundamental purpose of divestment. In contrast, Mandela and the Harvard Institute of Politics have both demonstrated that the power of divestment lies not in financial deprivation but rather in moral clarification. Universities have the societal clout to clarify morality and, through divestment, can challenge the ethical standing of the fossil fuel industry. Simply put, divestment rests on the understanding that it is immoral to destroy the climate, and it is immoral to profit from the destruction. While divestment may not significantly affect stock prices, it does cut their social license as institutions.

Thus, the divestment movement seeks to fight climate change at the source by targeting the fossil fuel industry. Currently, the fossil fuel industry has already laid claim to carbon reserves five-times the quantity that nearly every country in the world has publicly agreed is safe to burn, a scientific and political consensus reached at the 2009 Copenhagen Accord. Left unhindered, this industry will squeeze every last penny out of their 'assets' at the tremendous and irrevocable cost of the Earth's future. Climate change poses the most significant threat to our planet in the history of our species, and we have a moral and ethical obligation to future generations to fight this threat.

If DU truly hopes to live up to its vision of being a "Great private university dedicated to the public good," it must begin to act like one. Using the University's endowment to fund the destruction of our planet is blatantly contradictory to this vision. It is with this understanding that DivestDU, 1,000 students represented through petition signatures, and the unanimous support of DU's Undergraduate Student Government calls on our institution to act in the best interest of the current and future generations and divest

from fossil fuels.

If you have any questions about the movement, please reach out to DivestDU on Facebook at Divest University of Denver. DivestDU is a constantly growing and evolving movement, and is always looking for additional support and feedback from the student body.