



Eric Roston

Science Journalist and Climate Change Expert

TOPIC: Environment/Climate Change

SUBTOPICS: The Future; Global Policy and Economics; Life Science

BIG IDEAS:

Smashing Boxes

We break the world down into categories of thought – boxes of a sort – to make it more comprehensible. Yet too much of this specialization obscures the simple and lovely story of how science understands the world to work. Today, many of these categories, whether in our newspapers, congressional committees, or high school classes, are decades or centuries old, and no longer capture the acceleration of knowledge. We are continually inundated with stovepipe stories – Energy! Health! Climate! War!, their unifying tale left to decay in the background. Why not build an epic, singular narrative, starting from a universal common denominator and entwining science into our history, and history into current events? In presenting “Smashing Boxes,” Eric points out something easy to forget, given the daily parade of headlines: Far from being the “enemy” changing the climate, or the “hero” making airplanes, tennis rackets, and bullet-resistant vests stronger and lighter, “carbon” is the core structural element of all life and civilization. It might be the most important word that many people understand

the least. If we “follow the carbon” through the history of Earth and civilization, if we watch what it does, how it does it, and where it goes, carbon can unify what we think of as far-flung parts of our experience, and clarify modern humans’ emergence from life and the Earth system. “Smashing boxes” is a way to step back, take a deep breath, and rethink the way we think about opportunities and challenges in this young century.

BIOGRAPHY

Eric Roston is a science journalist in Washington, DC, and author of *THE CARBON AGE: How Life’s Core Element Has Become Civilization’s Greatest Threat*. He is also Senior Associate in the Washington, DC, office of The Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, of Duke University. He joined the Institute after a year-long term as a Visiting Scholar at the Washington energy and economics think tank, Resources for the Future.

Previously, Roston wrote for *TIME*, where he covered economics, politics and technology. He joined the magazine in 2000 as a business reporter in the New York bureau, covering stories such as the collapse of Enron, China’s emergence as a force in global trade, and how advanced computing technologies are reshaping the economy. An eyewitness to the collapse of the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001, Roston was a part of the reporting team that won a National Magazine Award for best single-issue coverage.

In September 2002, Roston became a part of *TIME*’s Washington bureau. He traveled with President George W. Bush and Senators John Kerry and John Edwards during

the 2004 election campaign, providing reporting to the magazine’s political team. He was also a frequent contributor to the magazine’s work on energy, technology environment, and health. In the spring of 2004, he became *Time.com*’s first blogger, writing a daily commentary on “the technology that will carry us through tomorrow – and the stuff that keeps us stuck in yesterday.”

Roston has been a guest on Comedy Central’s “The Colbert Report,” *CleanSkies.tv*, CNN, MSNBC, ABC, CBC, National Public Radio and many radio stations. Prior to *TIME*, he wrote for *LIFE* magazine and contributed to *Slate.com*, where he wrote the “Today’s Papers” column. Roston, who is fluent in Russian, holds an M.A. in Russian literature and linguistics, and a B.A. in modern European history, both from Columbia University.