



Youth Rising Above Climate Anxiety

24 stories of youth
climate awareness
& resilience



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Understanding Climate Anxiety and Building Practical Coping Strategies for Young People in Europe

A youth-informed guide featuring **real experiences and age-appropriate resilience tools**, developed to support young individuals and educators across Europe.

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story overview

	page
01 The ocean taught me <i>By Diwigdi Valiente</i>	5
02 Love will win revolutions <i>By Vhon Michael</i>	6
03 I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders <i>By Nadia Rauf</i>	8
04 Young people don't want to do anything <i>By Roberta Bonacossa</i>	10
05 Doing things that people think are impossible <i>By Emma Langmoen</i>	11
06 I used to be a very active environmental activist <i>By Nina Kavčič</i>	12
07 Hope comes from the people I meet who care <i>By Nika Kos</i>	13
08 Discovering that such realities exist filled me with relief and hope <i>By Dijana Čataković</i>	14
09 For crying out loud, why won't they act? <i>By Katja Miklavčič</i>	15
10 I could smell the damp earth <i>By Darren Earley</i>	16
11 Lessons on individual action planted seeds of anxiety <i>By Isla Gartlan</i>	17

story overview

	page
12 I could not shake the fatalism <i>By James Cooney</i>	20
13 We have learned to keep going, even with the fear <i>By Tadhg Guihen</i>	22
14 Caring for literally everything feels important <i>By Djinda Gueye</i>	23
15 The magic of soil <i>By Alvar Elias Ekhougen Larsen</i>	25
16 Muddy with optimism <i>By Joseph Anthony Julca Mendoza</i>	26
17 Leaning into the potential of human revolution <i>By Chloé Bernardino</i>	27
18 Art, for me, is a tool to create narratives that spark compassion <i>By Erica Lotus</i>	28
19 Conversing with the Dead <i>By La'eeqa Martin</i>	29
20 For the Forest, the Land, and Our People: Patamuan Talino <i>By Jhonatan Yuditya Pratama</i>	30
21 They're not coming to save us <i>By Calum Macintyre</i>	33
22 My Climate Story <i>By Victória Miguel Rampazzo</i>	35



A story about mobilising to help the ocean

Diwigdi is a manager of coral conservation projects and co-founder of Bodhi Hostels. Throughout their career, Diwigdi has been dedicated to researching and addressing critical issues such as climate change, conservation, and tourism. He has played a pivotal role in shaping national policies and laws for environmental protection in Panama.

The ocean taught me

by Diwigdi Valiente, 34 yr, Panama (@dawigdi)

My earliest memories of the ocean date back to my childhood in the indigenous region, Guna Yala. The sea was an essential part of daily life. I remember the feel of sand under my feet and the sound of the waves crashing on the shore. I explored coral reefs and marvelled at the diversity of marine life, many colourful fish. One day, I saw a seven-foot hammerhead arrive in the small fishing canoe, a moment that left an impression on me, strengthening my connection to the ocean and its beauty.

The ocean taught me the importance of patience and respect for nature. I saw how, if we give it time and do not intervene in harmful ways, the ocean has an amazing ability to regenerate itself. But the ocean needs support to be able to do so.

When the president announced that he vetoed the law banning plastic bans in Panama, I created a campaign and designed a communication strategy around it. I was in charge of virilizing what the president proposed on WhatsApp. Then signatures began to arrive in hundreds, becoming thousands. Various non-governmental organisations joined together, and we presented the signatures

to the president and the National Assembly. In this way, it was possible to pass after almost 4 months.

My indigenous heritage reveres and respects nature as an extension of ourselves. In the Guna worldview, the ocean is our grandmother, our source of life and ancestral wisdom.

My non-binary identity is also rooted in the indigenous worldview, where gender diversity is recognized and valued as an intrinsic part of our existence. In our worldview, gender is understood fluidly and holistically, and non-binary identities are seen as a natural manifestation of human diversity. This perspective is based on respect for the connection between all living things and recognizes that each person has their own unique path in life, beyond the binary restrictions imposed by Western society. For me, being non-binary is an authentic expression of my being and my Indigenous heritage, celebrating the uniqueness of each individual and encouraging inclusion and mutual respect within our community and beyond.

Love will win revolutions

by Vhon Michael, 21 yr, Philippines
(@vhonmichael)

In elementary

In elementary, I remember playing in the rain with my siblings and friends. Even when there were storms, we would play chase, swim through puddles, and run to the beach to wash off and swim. Storms were friends somehow. It made my childhood more adventurous. Living in a community between the seas and mountains, I knew I had some bond with nature I'll have forever.

When I was 10 years old:

Supertyphoon Haiyan struck. I didn't know why they wouldn't let us play in the storm. My cousins and extended family were in my house, and we could hear how strong the wind was outside. No one dared to go outside, not even the adults. By afternoon, we could hear roofs flying and the first story of our house had water coming in. Electricity was already out by then. By night, the rain was still slamming against the walls and windows of our house, but the wind calmed down. By the time we walked out of the house the next morning, houses in my community were damaged. Some big trees knocked down. The streets were brown. No service, no electricity, no news. By the next few days, one of my distant grandfathers had to travel to the other towns to see the damage. It was so much worse than what we've experienced. Lifeless bodies floating

everywhere, death reeking through the car. Barely any houses left, some just the foundations. Ships on land. Cities look like ruins. Hopelessness lingering in the air. We spent the next 6 months or longer relying on American aid: packed corned beef that you just reheat in warm water. Military biscuit. Rationed drinking water. Christmas was never the same.

When I was 11 years old:

I was coming home after I had just won a regional Science and Art competition about protecting and saving the environment, I had hopes Christmas would be better that year. But only days before New Year, another typhoon hits. Having no electricity would have been fine. However, the continuous rain caused a massive landslide in my city that affected over 16,975 households in several communities including mine.

When I was 11 years old:

Days before Christmas, a tropical depression caused massive rains in my region causing us a power outage. By then, all of us were wondering whether we were just sinners and whether we deserved what was happening to us. Maybe we had this coming. Maybe as Manaragat ('people of the sea'), we didn't love nature enough.



A story about building community on the front line of climate change

Vhon is a climate, environmental and equality activist working on climate justice. He has led a number of student organisations and worked on educating youth, especially student leaders, to mobilize and build each other to create a better world for everyone.

Vhon is the founder of Zero Hour Philippines and a vocal youth leader in the global climate movement.

When I was 13 years old:

I was in my sophomore year, and I just learned about climate change. I was curious and was eager to learn. I read and read and read and read. I was elected as Vice President of the General Science Club. I was also in the Youth for Environment in Schools. By the end of the school year, I was collaborating with my peers and exploring what climate change was.

When I was 14 years old:

I had organised and spoken about climate change in my school in events and was getting more of my schoolmates involved in learning about it. I was invited to attend a Climate Reality training during the summer and celebrate Earth Day with my fellow student leaders and environmentalists nationwide. We can still turn this back and do things right. Despite the challenges we've faced in recent years, there was still hope.

When I was 15 years old:

Despite the horrors of the past years and the manifestations of longer sunny days, hotter temperatures, and the rarity of rains, I was visiting communities around my city as part of my personal advocacy of exploring the environment and educating about climate change. I was mobilising my officers to focus more on environmental projects. I was getting to know several national youth-led environmental organisations.

When I was 16 years old:

I've made friends in some parts of the Philippines and in some parts of the world who are also taking action. I am not alone. I founded Zero Hour Philippines and launched it by protesting outside the Leyte Provincial Capitol Building. We can fight. When May came, my island was hit by a storm leaving the Eastern part under floodwaters for weeks. I felt helpless. Friends in the climate movement helped organise fundraising that we were able to donate to a local organisation that distributed relief packs to locals. In June, I formally trained with Climate Reality. The first day broke me seeing a picture of my city on Al Gore's presentation being hit by humongous waves. By the end of the training, I knew that the movement was large and on different fronts. Hope burns, and it burns brightly. From the end of July to the end of November, the Philippines was hit by over 7 strong typhoons, one of which was a supertyphoon that left communities and cities under floodwaters reaching over a metre deep. When Ulysses hit the same path the other typhoons had struck, leaving people no room to recover and rebuild or even prepare, I barely slept for days sending free loads for people to be able to text for help,

posting on my personal account and on Zero Hour Philippines, getting more people's attention, and messaging international news to cover what was happening - because there was barely anything on the news. From Supertyphoon Rolly, to Typhoon Siony, to Typhoon Ulysses which happened all in less than two weeks, there was barely any media coverage, while my people were dying. I was dying of anger, guilt, extreme sadness, hopelessness, and helplessness.

When I was 17 years old:

I'm addressing the world at the Global Grassroots Leaders Climate Summit telling my story and the stories of my people, our demands, and our hopes. I'm Getting mocked, questioned, and threatened for being a kid speaking his truth to power. For being brown. For being queer. In front of the world. Calling out leaders how badly they were doing protecting the rights of the people, especially children, to a safe, just, and liveable planet.

When I was 18 years old:

I'm collaborating with the UN and other organisations to highlight the impacts of marine plastic pollution in South-East Asia especially the Philippines and how it worsens climate anxiety for me and for many others, and how it worsens my communities' situation. By then, I have made a lot of friends worldwide who share the same passion and advocacy as I do and who I have been able to talk to whenever things got bad and I felt hopeless in the movement and the work that I do. Some days I felt hopeless, tired, and anxious, and some days I was reminded of the community and family I have made in the movement, the work we did, and how far we've come.

When I was 21 years old:

Writing this knowing that even how long it takes, we'll still be here hoping that day will come. Knowing that we are not alone in this fight. There are more of us out there. Knowing that we are empowered and inspired by our love. For the people. For the planet. We know our love will win anything. Some time, someday, we'll all be living on a just, sustainable, and liveable planet. 'Love will win revolutions,' Mitzi Tan, Philippines

I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders

by **Nadia Rauf**,
21 yr, Warwickshire
@Nadia.rauf



A story about juggling climate activism and life

Nadja is a climate organizer. She received the WWF's Young Hero Award for her work in climate activism and was named one of 'GreenPeace's Top 30 Under 30 Climate Activists of Colour'

When I was 4 years old:

My father told me there was bad flooding in Pakistan where he grew up. Young, worried and scared, I asked if 'floods would hurt us in England.' He did not answer but gave me a hug. I was too young to understand why ...

When I was 7 years old:

I remember seeing the TV screen flooded with media of the devastating 2010 earthquake in Haiti. I couldn't understand why this was happening to people? What was causing it? I felt sick... I was terrified. What was going on? How could I help?

When I was 12 years old:

Having started secondary school, the curriculum finally began to explain what was happening in the world. However, I was frustrated. Such a major issue was only brushed over in geography lessons. I became curious but I was too shy to ask the right questions... and when I did, I was not given the right answers. So here begun my life's journey trying to find the correct ones... even though I didn't know it at the time.

When I was 14 years old:

This year I joined the Environmental Society at school. Together, we sold ocean bracelets made from recycled plastic, created chairs made from old plastic bottles and began to raise awareness of the ongoing crisis. I felt hopeful about the difference a small group of people could make when they came together.

When I was 15 years old:

Following Greta Thunberg's example, I along with a handful of other youths began to organise the Youth Climate Strikes in Manchester. Trying to balance GCSE work alongside proved difficult, but with resilience, hard work (a few tears and restless nights) we managed to grow our climate strikes from 30 people to over 4000 attendees, After speaking in front of 4000 people, a very daunting task at 15, I had a young girl say to me "When I'm older, I want to help the world just like you are." It was this moment, where I knew that I wanted to carry on what I was doing. I knew we were making a difference. I was ecstatic.

When I was 16 years old: :

Juggling my studies, extracurriculars and climate strikes to continue organising proved harder than anything I had ever done before. I was exhausted. I felt like the weight of the world was on the shoulders of myself and the other people I worked with

I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders

When I was 17 years old:

I was elated to be awarded WWF's Young Hero Award for my work in climate activism and one of 'GreenPeace's Top 30 Under 30 Climate Activists of Colour' Awards. I was also elected as the Head Environmental Officer; the leader of the very same society that I began my journey in. To be able to continue to inspire young people made all the stress worth it but the challenge of how I was going to turn this passion into a career remained.

Mid pandemic, our group continued to work on advertising via social media when we were unable to host climate strikes. But we were all suffering from extreme burnout, the pressure of A-levels and a lack of engagement leading us to 'disband'. This was incredibly disappointing, but we all knew that this would not be the end of our climate activism journeys.

When I was 18 years old:

I anxiously applied to the University of Warwick to study Global Sustainable Development and Business Studies however my true ambition was to go to the University of Cambridge to study Land Economy. I was utterly heartbroken to receive my rejection from Cambridge University.

When I was 19 years old:

Everything happens for a reason...I began my journey pursuing my degree at Warwick and I was elated to be there. Learning in depth about the Climate Crisis, the disproportionate impact it could have on Lesser Economically Developed Countries, the gender gaps and more, started to provide me with the knowledge I needed to make a difference.

When I was 20 years old:

'You would have been good at Cambridge, but you will shine in Warwick'... I was elected Vice President of Warwick's Global Sustainable Development Society. Working hard with the rest of the committee, we grew membership, created Careers Panels, academic workshops, CV training and allowed likeminded interest individuals to meet and develop their passions, socially, professionally and academically. I felt warm seeing the difference we made in a year.

When I was 21 years old:

Now I am in my final year of university; hopeful but anxious about what the future holds for the world. Thankfully, with hard work, more research, action and projects such as this one, elders and youths alike are becoming increasingly aware and knowledgeable about the crisis, and are continuing to be inspired to make a change. Only time will tell what the future has to hold... but either way I will continue the fight for the planet.



A story about being moved into action by anger, helplessness and anxiety

Roberta is co-founder and president of Change For Planet, an association of young people for the environment. She has participated as a delegate and observer in the United Nations Climate Conference, and organised events and festivals for young people on environmental and social issues.

Young people don't want to do anything

by Roberta Bonacossa, 30 yr, Italy

@robertabonacossa

The title of this story is a phrase that I have heard many times, on social media, from adults, from other young people. A bit like saying that nothing can change.

Why is this sentence related to climate change?

For me it all started with the young people. I was young too. Around the age of 24 I was writing my thesis on the interconnections between climate and human rights, navigating the difficulties experienced by developing countries, the destruction of natural disasters, and the projections of the coming decades.

The feelings that moved me were those of anger, often helplessness and anxiety. I felt alone and far from being able to do anything. Meanwhile, that vision of young people who were not active resonated in some part of my unconscious mind, but it remained there, without taking shape.

One day, thanks to social networks, I saw a girl who wanted to organise a conference dedicated to young people and the climate. I thought: let's do it!

And 6 months later I found myself with 180 boys and girls from all over Italy to talk about the environment. A wave of energy, passion and motivation that changed my view of the world and perhaps of life.

I chose to start from this phrase because we still hear it today. In many senses from political manipulation that wants to paint the new generations as do-nothings and from many young people who feel blocked in the face of an uncertain future. Well, what I can say is that, that single moment, that single event, that single conversation led me to become president and co-founder of Change For Planet, an association dedicated to youth empowerment for the climate. Often all of us don't feel like doing something. But starting, even when we are afraid, is the first step to generating change.

**To become an activist.
To turn my passion into a job**

Doing things that people think are impossible

by **Emma Katinka Langmoen**,
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A story about creating ripples of change as a circus artist sailing the world

Emma is a circus artist and environmentalist. She is touring the world by sail from 2024 to 2027 with Acting for Climate, an organisation performing arts for a sustainable future.

As an artist in Acting for Climate, I combine my profession as a circus artist with my passion for the planet. Sometimes, the climate crisis feels overwhelming, and the lack of political action makes me angry. I put all this energy, frustration and drive into creating art, and creating change.

With Acting for Climate, we are performing for thousands every year. Through art, we aim to inspire people to take action for a sustainable future. Art has the power to engage people emotionally. And if art can help people imagine a different reality - then we can also make it happen.

As a circus artist, my everyday life consists of doing things that people think are impossible. It is all about overcoming my fears, collaborating, finding new ways and not giving up. I therefore also have hope in the climate and nature crisis. I know that we as humans can be amazingly creative, resilient and overcome big obstacles. Right now, I am sailing around the world with the

Currents project, a worldwide sailing tour for a regenerative future. Sailing all around the world, we share our performance and collaborate with locals. With Currents, I'm stepping out of my comfort zone to find new solutions; physical, mental and cultural; and I hope to inspire other people to bravely rethink their way of living. I use my voice in the climate crisis, both as an artist, and as an activist. This is how I can contribute, with my skills and what gives me energy. It makes me feel empowered. And it gives me community; and purpose; and hope.

And hopefully, it can also encourage you to remember that all our actions matter, and that they can create ripple effects of change, reaching far into the world.



A story about falling down the deep spiral of climate anxiety

I used to be a very active environmental activist

by youth worker **Nina Kavčič, 25 yr, Slovenia**

Since I was a little child, I was always getting lost in nature and have always been deeply connected to it. As I was growing up, I started noticing that there was less and less diversity in flora and fauna. A lot of 'my spots' have turned into a house or some other kind of construction. Nature has started to disappear in front of my eyes. But I did not know what exactly was happening. Until I saw my first documentary about the climate crisis in high school.

I became conscious and passionate about protecting nature. I used to be a very active environmental activist. Even though my studies were not directly connected to the climate crisis, I made sure that every single project I did was somehow connected to raising awareness about the climate crisis we are facing. The name of my diploma thesis was Media Representation about the environmental movement Extinction Rebellion. But during the process of writing it, I fell down the deep spiral of climate anxiety because to be frank, given how we are(not) handling the crisis our future is quite grim.

No matter how much I was fighting to preserve nature, I could not see any change happening. Not even the smallest change in behaviour, my classmates were still buying single-use plastic bottles, were not recycling, supporting fast fashion etc. In general, I started to feel hopeless. That is also why I have become ignorant and passive about action nowadays. I have realised that I can try to live my best life and be the change I hoped to see in others.

You can be a good example and just hope people will follow your actions, but you cannot force a change on them if they are not prepared to change.

Hope comes from the people I meet who care

by by Nika Kos, 25 yr, Žiri Slovenia

I live in a small village, surrounded by green meadows and trees, with a beautiful view of the lower-lying areas. Since childhood, I have loved nature. I remember how, even in elementary school, I couldn't understand how some people could just throw trash into nature. Many times, while walking across the bridge I took to school, I would notice litter that people had discarded into the river. Honestly, I still don't understand it today. When I see this, I feel disappointment, confusion, sadness, and anger.

Because of my interest in travel, I decided to enrol in a high school for tourism. There, I became even more aware of how people harm nature. Mass tourism, discarded food, food and water consumption, the fashion industry, plastic pollution, air travel, and all the waste—all of this is destroying our planet.

I think it was in high school that I felt the most fear, anxiety, despair, and danger about global changes, as I felt that people weren't taking these issues seriously enough and weren't trying to change their habits.

My passion for protecting nature then led me to study environmental protection. However, alongside this study, I experienced even more of these emotions – fear, anger, and frustration – as I became acquainted with even more problems and understood them better. I saw how complex these issues are.

Nevertheless, I also found hope, as I realised that there are solutions and that we can make things better. Hope also comes from the people I meet (more and more every day) who care, and together we are changing the world.



A story about love for nature and hope for a world filled with love

A story about finding hope and discovering the ecovillage movement in the times of climate anxiety

Dijana is a junior expert in nature conservation at CIPRA Slovenija



Discovering that such realities exist filled me with relief and hope

by Dijana Čataković,
29 yr, Slovenia

I grew up in a small town surrounded by forests, where I felt deeply connected to nature from a young age. In my youth, when balancing school and sport obligations was challenging, the woods became my sanctuary. A place to calm my mind, and escape the pressure of daily life. I soon realised that nature plays a vital role in healing and soothing our nervous systems.

In high school, learning about climate change and its impact on communities, I became interested in climate justice, and, as I discovered the role that regulations play in protecting the environment, I decided to study law. My commitment to environmental protection grew stronger after travelling and witnessing the effects of climate change in faraway countries. Heatwaves, sea-level rise and floods became common in many places.

In response, I decided to reduce my impact by changing my habits. This meant avoiding flying, using public transport, becoming vegan, cutting down on unnecessary purchases and choosing a career that wouldn't harm the environment. Despite all this, I still felt hopeless, anxious. And I was not alone. Many of my friends shared similar feelings. Some even wondered if bringing a new life into a dying planet could be considered selfish.

Then, I discovered the ecovillage movement. A movement of individuals who choose to live in intentional communities following natural rhythms and social sustainability principles. Ecovillages strive to have the least possible impact on the environment by making intentional design and behavioural choices. In these communities, often organised in cooperatives, people grow organic food while regenerating the land, and houses are made from long-lasting natural materials. Discovering that such realities exist around the world filled me with relief and hope for us and future generations, motivating me to create similar communities in Slovenia and live in one myself.

For crying out loud, why won't they act?

by Katja Miklavčič, 29 yr, Slovenia

The moment she placed the pile of freshly washed laundry on the desk - which doubled as her writing table - the opening theme of the evening news thundered from her computer. The clock on the screen read 6:58 p.m.

'It had been two years since the devastating fire, yet the desperate residents still have no idea what fate awaits their homes', echoed the anchor's voice throughout the small room - no, really, the entire apartment.

She gave a thorough shake to a freshly laundered T-shirt, its scent of new fabric softener filling the air, and neatly hung it over the drying rack. The news reported, that so long after the disaster, some were still in serious distress. Looking at the tidily hung T-shirt brought her a small, fleeting sense of relief.

'Last year was the hottest on record. Scientists warn that the consequences of global warming will only become more severe,' the anchor continued.

She took a deep breath, seized the next T-shirt, equally fragrant, gave it a strong shake - forcefully, firmly - and exhaled loudly, muttering a silent curse at the thought of what awaited humanity. Her gaze drifted out the window to the street, where her neighbour was dutifully sorting waste. Compost in one

bin, plastic in another, as if it were a matter of life and death as if recycling alone would save us all.

The anchor spoke on, *'The country is falling far behind in its renewable energy targets. We've requested an explanation from the ministry, but are still waiting for answers.'*

This time she cursed aloud.

'World leaders would soon be meeting at COP. Once again, ambitious goals or commitments are not to be expected' the anchor said, unwavering.

The freshly laundered pants she held in her hands, ready to be placed on the drying rack, didn't make it there. She glanced at the screen, staring at it as the anchor's mouth continued to move, articulating each word clearly, though she couldn't hear them. Her arms dropped, and the pants slipped to the floor. Her heart began to race, and she tried to keep her hands pressed against her sides, but to no avail - they shook too much, her fingers tapping gently against her thighs. Her breaths grew shallow, and the first tears of frustration and despair trickled down her cheeks. The clock of life ticked on, in sync with her fingers tapping against her legs, her thoughts screaming. Why don't the authorities act? For crying out loud, why won't they act?



A story about how
climate change news
impact your body
and mind

Katja is a communication
officer at PIC—Legal center for
the Protection of Human
Rights and the Environment.



A story about the challenges of a young farmer in times of climate changes

I could smell the damp earth

by Darren Earley, 27 yr, Ireland

I have lived my life bracing for impact. Growing up in Arigna, Co. Roscommon, I've always had to be prepared for the unexpected. As a young farmer, I've seen the effects of climate change firsthand. The summers have become wetter, and the winters colder. The fields that once thrived now struggle under the weight of extreme weather. This reality has shaped my involvement in the climate movement.

I grew up not fully understanding what climate change was, not realising that we were on the frontlines of this crisis. The first time I truly felt its impact was during a particularly wet summer. The fields were waterlogged, making it nearly impossible to harvest crops or provide adequate feed for the livestock. It was a wake-up call that this was not just a distant problem but one that was here, affecting my livelihood and my community.

The constant rain soaked everything, and the air was heavy with moisture. I could smell the damp earth and the musty scent of wet hay. The usual sounds of farm life were muffled by the relentless downpour,

creating a sense of isolation. The cold seeped into my bones, making the usually vibrant landscape feel bleak and unwelcoming.

This experience filled me with a mix of frustration and determination. Frustration at the challenges that climate change brought to farming, but also a strong determination to find solutions. I felt a deep sense of responsibility to protect the land that had provided for my family for generations.

As a young farmer, I am deeply worried about the future of farming. The number of young farmers is declining, and I fear for the sustainability of traditional farming practices. I care deeply about protecting our environment, not only for the sake of tourism but also to ensure that climate change legislation does not prevent farmers from making a living through traditional forms of farming. In my role as a teacher, I believe we have a societal duty to educate people on the importance of protecting the beautiful countryside we live in.

These experiences have taught me the importance of resilience and adaptability. I have learned that small changes in our daily practices can make a significant difference. By embracing sustainable farming techniques and educating others, I hope to contribute to a more sustainable future. I reflect on the need for balance – protecting our environment while also supporting the livelihoods of farmers.

I have gained valuable knowledge about sustainable agriculture and the importance of biodiversity. I have also learned about the psychological impacts of climate change, such as climate anxiety, and the importance of community support in addressing these challenges. My dual roles as a farmer and a teacher allow me to share this knowledge with both my community and my students.

I hope for a future where communities come together to combat climate change and support one another. I envision a world where sustainable practices are the norm, and where we live in harmony with nature. My inspiration comes from the resilience of my community and the potential for positive change through collective action. I dream of a future where young farmers are supported and valued, and where our beautiful countryside is preserved for generations to come.

Poem: “Fields of Resilience”

In Arigna’s heart, where green hills rise, The summers
now bring stormy skies. The fields once lush, now
soaked and bare, A farmer’s burden, hard to bear.

The rain, it falls with heavy hand, Transforming earth
to sodden land. The scent of damp, the chill of air, A
silent struggle, everywhere.

Yet in this mire, a spark of hope, A farmer’s will, the
strength to cope. With every drop, a lesson learned,
In every storm, resilience earned.

The young grow scarce, the old remain, To till the soil,
endure the rain. But in our hearts, a fire burns bright,
To fight for fields, to stand and fight.

In classrooms, I share nature’s tale, Of verdant lands
and winds that wail. To teach the young, to make
them see, The beauty of our land, so free.

We balance laws with nature’s plea, To farm with
care, sustainably. For tourism, for future’s sake, A
stand we must, together, make.

I dream of days where sun and rain, In harmony, will
ease the strain. Where farmers young, and old alike,
Will thrive beneath the sky so bright.

With knowledge shared and hope in sight, Together,
we can win this fight. For Arigna’s fields, for all we
hold dear, A future bright, a world sincere.

Lessons on individual action planted seeds of anxiety

by Isla Gartlan, Ireland

Over the past year, my climate anxiety has heightened, stirred by both personal experiences and a broader awareness of global environmental crises. This year, I would describe my climate anxiety level as steadily increasing, as it seems to be getting worse and I feel I still do not know how I can help to make an impact as an individual. If I had to sum up my main emotion, it would be concern. Concern not just for the planet itself, the future generations who will face the worsening consequences of our actions if we do not all make big changes now.

When I was younger, climate change felt more distant, as I suppose I wasn't fully aware of its potential outcomes. Growing up in County Leitrim, most of my early thoughts on the environment were shaped by what I learned in school. One memory that stands out is participating in the Green School Initiative, a programme designed to encourage schools and students to adopt more environmentally friendly habits. Every year, we'd take part in various activities like litter picking and being mindful of turning off lights when they weren't needed. Simple tasks for children, but ones that aimed to instil good habits for the future. I do remember some joy from this as our school earned a lot of green flags. We got to hold a

ceremony to raise the flags and I remember feeling pride in what we had accomplished. However, I remember that even these simple actions instilled a certain level of anxiety in my younger self. We were often reminded not to leave the tap running while brushing our teeth, and I became almost hyper-aware of the idea of wasting water or doing something that could harm the environment. Even back then, it was clear to me that we were responsible for protecting the planet, but that responsibility sometimes felt overwhelming. I became anxious, worrying that small actions like wasting water might be contributing to larger environmental issues.

Since then, I've always tried to make conscious choices to minimise my impact on the environment, but even now, the fear lingers those individual actions might not be enough. These childhood lessons taught me to be mindful, but they also planted seeds of anxiety—an early awareness that our actions, no matter how small, are connected to something much larger. Looking back, I realise that those early experiences were my first steps toward understanding climate change, even if I didn't fully understand the severity of it at the time.



A story reflecting on climate anxiety and experiences of climate change around the world

Isla works as a social inclusion officer. Working with individuals who come from different backgrounds has opened her eyes to how much climate change has impacted their lives as well as her own.

Lessons on individual action planted seeds of anxiety

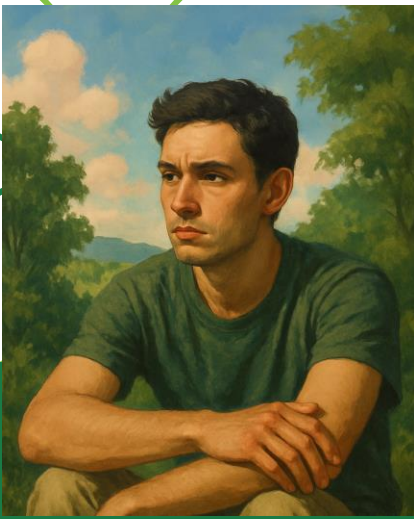
All those feelings of anxiety and fear I have around climate change are constantly coming and going in small thoughts, however, with the tornado that swept through Leitrim village recently all those fears surfaced again but bigger as an adult. Firstly, tornadoes are not common in Ireland, and then to see one so close to home was shocking. I remember the day it hit and I couldn't believe something so scary and damaging could happen here. It was a moment where the penny dropped for me as the impact of climate change. This wasn't happening halfway across the world, easy to disassociate from, no it was happening in my home county and too people who I personally knew.

Working as a Social Inclusion Officer has given me the privilege of connecting with people from diverse backgrounds, many of whom have been directly impacted by climate change. I've spoken with individuals from regions where extreme weather events—such as floods and droughts—have displaced entire communities. Hearing their stories brings a human face to the statistics, and it's heart-breaking. In these conversations, I've often found myself thinking about the people I work with, wondering how climate change has reshaped their lives and what it means for their future.

Climate in Ireland, too, is changing. Older generations, like my Granny always talk about how winters were once harsher, but more predictable. Now, every year winter seems to be coming later and later and season seems unpredictable, with heavy rainfall and storms becoming more frequent, leading to local flooding. These conversations add to my growing sense of dread because it makes me realise that the environment, I grew up in is changing before my eyes.

In reflecting on the changes I've witnessed, both locally and globally, I feel a profound sense of responsibility. It's clear that climate change is no longer something we can ignore or put off as a problem for future generations to solve. It's happening now, and I feel like each of us has a role to play, whether through advocacy, lifestyle changes, or simply staying informed. However, alongside this responsibility, there is also a feeling of helplessness. The greatness of the climate crisis is overwhelming, and at times, it's difficult not to feel powerless against forces that seem too large to control.

As I continue my work and look toward the future, I am trying to hold onto hope. Hope that we can make meaningful changes and that humanity will come together to combat this crisis. At the same time, I remain deeply concerned, knowing that we must act quickly and decisively if we want to preserve the world for future generations.



A story about the emotional impacts of climate change and society's responses

I could not shake the fatalism

by James Cooney, 32 yr, Ireland

When I was 7 years old:

My awareness of climate change and environmental issues goes back to my youngest years. The issues of climate change and environmental damage were ever-present in print and television and while I enjoyed learning about Irish wildlife and flora in primary school, I was wary that the coming millennium would see the warnings concerning the environment eventually take on material form.

When I was 10 years old:

The levy on disposable plastic bags was something of a key moment in regards to the presence of environmental policies in my everyday life. Despite the initial flurry of public discourse, plastic bags rapidly became a rare sight, with the loss being mostly unlamented by those around me - I was glad to see plastic bags disappear as a form of litter.

When I was 14 years old:

As part of our Geography studies, we were shown some of Al Gore's 'An Inconvenient Truth.' Despite the alarming prospects for the climate presented therein, one of my takeaways from this was my surprise and

relief on learning that the ongoing issue of ozone pollution had more or less been brought to heel, thanks to the regulation of aerosols. Addressing environmental problems did seem possible after all.

When I was 18 years old:

The severe winter of 2010 came as a particular shock for me, given the relatively mild winter snow I was familiar with. The sheer length of the freeze was particularly disorientating and I had my first real sense that the pattern of weather as I knew it was seriously off-kilter.

When I was 19 years old:

2011 saw the end of Fianna Fail's tenure in government, and that of their unlikely coalition partners, the Green Party. While Fianna Fail took the brunt of the backlash, the Greens were also cast into the political wilderness, as a result of their being tied to the millstone of their coalition partners. This marked a serious blow for environmentalism as a political force in Ireland. I was not surprised in the least and I was resigned to that being the case for the immediate future.

I could not shake the fatalism

When I was 26 years old:

The 'Beast from the East' of 2018 was discomfiting for me in both a figurative sense and a very literal sense – my student digs were especially chilly in comparison to home. The weather seemed to be see-sawing from the extremes of unexpectedly hot summers (2006, 2013 and 2016 were especially memorable for me, given the threat of drought) to that of bitter winters. The infamous Lidl incident with the excavator was particularly mortifying, in terms of the public response to the strains imposed by the weather.

When I was 27 years old:

I was surprised by the climate strikes of 2019, as it seemed Generation Z were willing to take concrete steps towards addressing climate change, as opposed to the apathy or hostility towards environmentalism by older generations. Encouraging as this was, I could not shake the fatalism I had concerning the prospects of halting the damage to the climate and environment before irreparable harm was done.

When I was 28 years old:

The COVID pandemic was the most significant disruption of the norms of everyday life in my own memory. I experienced a mixture of unease and an odd sort of tranquillity amidst the sudden quietness on the roads around us and the absence of planes crossing overhead from Knock Airport. I also took some satisfaction as my family took the opportunity to clear away litter from the roadside beside us.

When I was 30 years old:

Following their surprising success in the 2019 local elections, the Greens returned to government as part of a hastily assembled coalition in 2020. I was suspicious of a repeat of the Green's previous experiences in government and the strained relations between the coalition and Irish agricultural community seemed to point to another reversal of fortunes for Irish environmentalism as a political force.

When I was 32 years old:

The back-to-back impacts of Hurricane Milton and the floods in Spain compounded my ongoing pessimism. Aside from the sheer severity of the events, the botched handling of the destruction in the aftermath by the authorities brought up both memories of the likes of Hurricane Katrina and cynicism regarding the probability of similar lacklustre emergency responses in the future.

We have learned to keep going, even with the fear

by Tadhg Guihen,
27 yr, Ireland



A story about flood and climate anxiety

Tadhg grew up living on a small farm with cattle and sheep. He enjoys being outdoors, spending time with animals and playing sports. Through his work, he has become more aware of the importance of climate change

When I was 0-7 years old:

When I was little, the farm felt like a world of its own. I grew up on a small sheep farm in Arigna, Co. Roscommon, where the hills rolled gently and everything felt steady. I loved running around with the lambs, listening to the sound of the wind across the fields. Life felt simple, and the weather-well, it was just part of the world. It rained, the sun shone, and the sheep grazed. But I remember my parents talking quietly about how the rain came harder some years and how the land didn't dry as fast. I didn't think much of it at the time; it just seemed normal.

When I was 8-11 years old:

By the time I was ten, things started to change. The summers were getting hotter and the winters colder. I remember our sheep struggling to find enough grass as the floods came faster and heavier, with winters leaving parts of the farm underwater for days. Grass couldn't grow as landslides followed the rain. My dad kept saying, "It never used to be like this." I didn't fully understand what he meant, but I started feeling uneasy. We couldn't do anything about it.

When I was 12-15 years old:

At around 14, the climate anxiety really started to set in. We learned about climate change in school, and suddenly all the changes on the farm made sense. The heavy rains, the long dry spells—it wasn't just bad luck, it was happening everywhere. I'd watch the sheep huddle together when the weather was bad—wet and cold—and I couldn't help but feel this tightness in my chest, wondering if our way of life was disappearing. I started worrying about things I never used to think of.

When I was 16-19 years old:

By the time I was 18, I could see how much climate change was affecting the farm and our area as a whole. The lambing seasons became more unpredictable, and we lost more sheep than before due to harsh winters and erratic weather. I remember watching my dad staring out at the soaked fields after yet another flood, a deflated look in his eyes. That's when it hit me how serious this was. I started thinking about the future - not just for me, but for the farm. Would it still be here in 10 or 20 years?

When I was 20-23 years old:

At 21, I couldn't shake the feeling of helplessness. I tried learning more about sustainable farming practices and how to manage the land better, but it always felt like we were fighting an uphill battle. The heavy rains never seemed to go away. I began having moments where I'd stop and look at the sheep and the land, wondering if it was all slipping through our fingers. The anxiety affected me more, and sleepless nights followed, worrying about the future of farming in our area.

When I was 24-27 years old:

Now, at 27, I've come to terms with it in a way. The anxiety is always there, like a constant hum in the back of my mind. The weather is still unpredictable, and the farm still struggles. Some years are better, others worse. But my community and I have learned to keep going, even with the fear. The farm has been in my family for generations, and it's hard to imagine walking away. But sometimes, I wonder if we're fighting a battle we can't win. I love this place, but sometimes I question if love is enough to save it. Climate change is here, and it's affecting everything - our sheep, our land, and our future.



A story about the importance of connecting with nature in times of crisis

Djinda is an ecofeminist and advocate for animal welfare, working as an independent consultant dedicated to sustainable development and women's empowerment. Passionate about supporting women in agricultural value chains, she leads projects that promote sustainable agricultural practices and community impact.

Caring for literally everything feels important

by Djinda Gueye, 30 yr, Senegal
@djin.da

I was thinking back on my first memories engaging with the environment around me. We have a family home on a small island, named Gorée, off the coast of Senegal. When I was younger, we would come back here every summer. Usually, we would arrive at night. In the lights of the boats, we would see flying fish jumping along the side of the boat. It was magical.

Back then, there was an order of things that was aligned with the climate. We don't really have winter here, but the temperature does cool down and the water gets colder. We would wait for the time that we could go into the water. Around April, there would be a lot of jelly fish in the water confirming the arrival of the summer period. Following the jelly fish, there would be a time with a lot of algae because it was a bit warmer, and then came the rainy season. After the first rain, it was okay for us to go into the water. I don't know if this is ancestral knowledge, Indigenous knowledge or community myths, but it just made sense; like after the first rain the sea is cleansed, and that's when we can go in.

Now, the cycle is either not being followed by people, or it is not as it used to be. The rain often arrives much earlier than it used to, overlapping with the algae season. The coast around the island is eroding and falling into the water. I still go back to the island regularly, but we notice that there is way less fish. There are no more flying fish. I feel a sadness to see the island slowly degrading. Overfishing and water pollution in Senegal are a big issue because a lot of people's livelihoods depend on it. Large scale fishing boats are allowed to come and use big nets to get a lot of fish, and nets are being left under water ruining ecosystems. This contributes to a crisis causing people to migrate, often dying on the way. Worldwide, what is very dear to me is forests, and how deforestation is affecting animals and the soil that we rely on to live and grow our food. These are things that, to me, should be more logical for people to care about and prioritize.

Caring for literally everything feels important

Caring for literally everything feels important. I feel very overwhelmed by these emotions. Sometimes, I feel like I need to make up for other people who are not doing anything about it. I'm now transitioning from being a vegetarian to veganism, because I just feel so much empathy for animals. I also feel so paralyzed in terms of what we consume. When I need to buy something, I overthink it so much because I want to make the most sustainable choice. You uncover all this complexity, and for me, the anxiety I experience is the anxiety of making choices.

In the morning, I might wake up, check my phone and see some sad news about animal advocacy. I think it is really helpful to take moments to walk in nature, be in the water, to disconnect from technology, also to be fuelled a bit: to remember how nice nature is, how we need it to survive, and how important it is that we keep it.

I love the water. For me it is a very meditative space. I enjoy having my ears under water and the quietness that comes with that. Floating. It is a place where I feel at peace. When I have a lot of thoughts on my mind, it helps to be submerged in water. When you look around at what is happening under water, you realise that your life is such a small piece of this world. I look at the fishes and imagine what their lives are like. The water is a place to disconnect from the busy world. You can't bring your phone, so it's really nice.

My mom has been very sick the last year and one thing that we did together was take walks in the forest, hug trees and things like that. It has been a sad year, but it is the best memories that I have, because we would also talk and enjoy the environment. It was calm – those little moments where you can take time for yourself where you don't need to do something, to be productive, you can just slow down and take a break from the business of life. Being in nature helps ground you and see what is important.

The magic of soil

by Alvar Elias Ekhougen Larsen, 29 yr, Norway

[@alvarelias](https://www.instagram.com/alvarelias)

Together, we wanted to address the fact that the construction industry accounts for 37 percent of global CO2 emissions. Could a simple but surprising material be part of the solution? The earth beneath our feet. Katarina already had experience with the material, and since we knew that soil and clay were used in many parts of the world, we asked ourselves: Can this be used in Norway today? We were met with scepticism but decided to investigate further.

There are pioneers building with soil and clay in Norway, and at the beginning of our master's project, we contacted several of them. Many were happy that people were again beginning to view soil as a serious and modern building material. They emphasised that soil is a material you need to work with physically to understand. In recent years, I've often thought about something a traditional mason told us: In the past, people dug in the soil a lot and knew how different types of soil could be used. Some soil types were suitable for plants, others for building. Soil is the very foundation for all life on our planet, which makes sense when we call our planet "mother earth."

The magic of soil as a building material is that it's circular in nature. Soil is a completely natural material that doesn't harm the environment in any way, and it can be reused infinitely. For example, you can tear down a rammed earth wall and rebuild it elsewhere without the material losing its qualities. Soil can easily be

returned to nature. Building with soil, clay, and other natural materials also has a social dimension. The work feels deeply human, and it's easy to understand how the material works. Most of us have played with soil and sand as children, and many intuitively understand how moist soil can be shaped and used for building. Through the workshops we facilitated, we got closer to this primal and instinctive way of working with the material. In the workshops, we've been able to include people and create a social building method where everyone can contribute, regardless of age or background. There's something liberating about this process. The workshops have become a learning platform about this building material, but also an informal discussion forum for how we need to change the way we build.

To see how soil and clay can be used in future buildings, we've looked abroad. In European countries like France, Germany, and Belgium, they have come far in systematising the use of these sustainable materials. This is beginning to happen in Norway too, and we are optimistic. The construction industry is one of the biggest climate offenders today, so it's important to advance this work. We must dare to think differently about how we build. Using an old and sustainable building material and interpreting it in a modern way could become an important part of the solution.



A story about reviving an old and sustainable building practice

Alvar studied alongside Katarina Kierulf at the Bergen School of Architecture. Since graduating, Alvar and Katarina have continued to hold workshops both in Norway and abroad where they experiment with soil and clay as building materials. They work with clay in roles as architects, craftspeople, consultants, and teachers. Alvar and Katarina are involved in the Norwegian Soil and Straw House Association.



A story about showing up for affected communities when disaster hit

Joseph is a marine biologist, science communicator and environmentalist from South America, working with Sustainable Ocean Alliance, an organisation mobilising young people and solutions to restore the health of the ocean. Joseph is involved in the global climate movement and local community support.

Muddy with optimism

by **Joseph Anthony Julca Mendoza,**
30 yr, Spain
@joeejm

I have had to live with natural phenomena such as earthquakes and tsunamis since I was little, so I was also prepared for them at school. I could then say that I was prepared and knew what to do in these situations, but the truth is that when faced with the action and force of nature we are never prepared.

In university I learned a lot more about natural disasters and the reason why they would intensify and happen more frequently: climate change. I grew up learning about climate change and observing its effects on the ocean and different parts of the world, so I decided to get involved in the international climate movement and activism, to do something about it.

But I never imagined that climate change would show me one of its most terrible sides just a few kilometres from home, at the most unexpected moment.

Exactly three weeks before writing this story, major floods caused by intense rains produced by a meteorological phenomenon called DANA (Isolated Depression at High Levels) in the south and east of Spain. The rains devastated entire towns, mainly here in Valencia, leaving thousands of people trapped and claiming the lives of many

others. Immediately upon seeing everything that had happened, I went to the aid of those people and animals affected by this natural disaster. I did not hesitate, like many of my friends and citizens.

The reality of the disaster turned out to be quite harsh and made me feel a mixture of negative sensations and emotions. I felt anger, because it was a situation that could have been avoided, and sadness, because of the devastating circumstances in which those affected found themselves. However, I was also invaded by positive sensations and emotions such as optimism and joy, seeing that like me, there were thousands of people who had left everything aside to devote themselves to helping those affected in whatever way necessary.

And it is for reasons like these that I continue working to enact change and confront the climate crisis. I know that I am not alone. I know that there are many other people who are doing similar things as I do or helping in thousands of other ways. These actions, combined with the positive sensations and emotions, are what urge me to continue fighting day by day.

Leaning into the potential of human revolution

by **Chloé Bernardino, 24 yr, France**
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Climate anxiety is a normal reaction from your body telling you there is something unsafe about the environment you're evolving in. Your body is sending you a message that needs to be listened to. How you react to it is where your power lies.

As a human being, I like to first locate the feeling in my body, breathe and remind myself that I'm just human and I don't need to have figured it out right now. To be honest, it all started with stars exploding and crashing, creating the atoms we are made of today. We're just stardust. I embrace it and come back to the feeling coming up, to embrace it as well. We came on Earth to live life and do our part, not to be perfect and save anything. I can build safety in this : the more I lean into who I am, the more I can be aligned and be an example of the values I care about, like the Earth community's well-being, open mindedness, curiosity and courage.

This is what led me to organise intergenerational dialogue days, between citizen collectives and young volunteers on taking action where you live, and corporate experts in sustainability and young europeans volunteers on sharing ideas and visions. The main goal was to meet each other, and come back to what I think is the root cause of the crises: we don't care because we don't know each other.

Active listening, sharing from one's own perspective, and judgement suspension are key to dialogue. It really matters to me as it allows me to feel connected and empathetic, and realise the beauty of the complexity of human contradictions, while leaning into the potential of human revolution. I truly believe we need to trust again human capacity to heal ourselves and around us. At the end of the day, what matters to me is that I came closer to myself and the values I commit to embody. There are no failure success criterias, but a consistency in showing up, even in the smallest way possible. One breath after the other, I'm alive and I'm here, I can trust the process.



A story about the importance of dialog, values and trust in climate action

Chloé is managing the youth program at Mouvement Colibris, a French citizen movement. She is also a Earth Charter Young Leader, ReGeneration Activist, and Co-founder of garden of futures. Chloé wants to review, deconstruct and unlearn harmful ways of relating to others while building new ways of relating to our environment and to all beings, together and with care.



A story about engaging in climate action through art and storytelling

Erica co-founded Lotus Earth Creative, an initiative to connect global artists in raising awareness and support for environmental conservation. While still in its foundational stages, the project is based on the belief that every voice matters, also the earth's.

Art, for me, is a tool to create narratives that spark compassion

by Erica Lotus, Japanese American based in the UK

@ericalotus @lotusearthcreative

Growing up in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, surrounded by forests and wildlife, I developed a deep connection to the Earth. My earliest memory of climate awareness was learning about the devastating effects of pine beetle infestations, which caused forests to deteriorate under warming climates. This realisation awakened an understanding that the ecosystems I cherished were deeply intertwined with human activity and vulnerability, inspiring my desire to create a better world.

This appreciation for the natural world, enriched by my Japanese heritage and the Buddhist concept of esho funi-the oneness of life and environment-has shaped my creative purpose. As someone who identifies with the East and Southeast Asian (ESEA) and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities, I have experienced being overshadowed in spaces that prioritise dominant narratives. These experiences fuel my passion to amplify

underrepresented voices, including ESEA and AAPI communities, through my art and storytelling.

My mission-to empower creativity, amplify voices, and advocate for environmentalism-drives Lotus Earth Creative. By blending art and fundraising, we aim to inspire empathy and empower individuals to see their role in the collective journey of climate action.

Art, for me, is a tool to create narratives that spark compassion and understanding rather than fear or negativity. One of my artworks, *The Oneness of Life and Its Environment* (2023), embodies this vision. It celebrates the interconnectedness of all life and the transformative potential of our actions. By emphasising the healing power of our choices, I hope to inspire proactive energy and hope in addressing climate challenges. Through my work, I aim to bridge divides, inspire dialogue, and foster meaningful climate action and compassionate change.

Conversing with the dead

by La'eeqa Martin, 24 yr, South Africa

*"Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice."*

Robert Frost was known to draw inspiration from nature, and his poem Fire and Ice is no exception; painting a picture of juxtaposing elements - hot and cold, erratic versus methodical - to describe the destruction of the planet.

At 11 years old, my mind could only conjure up images of raging wildfires or mega-tsunamis, and seeing as how I could not swim, I told Frost, *"I opt for fire as my choice of demise."* Years later, as my country suffered from both droughts and floods, I came to understand that the choice was never mine to make.

Upon first glance, it seems like Rob agreed with my helplessness, as he said,

*"From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if it had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great And would suffice."*

His words, however, unearthed emotions that my body was not

prepared to feel. Now, at 24, as I watch waves crash upon beds of sand, I wonder about the names of my shackled ancestors who docked on this land. As I take two buses and a car to travel from the city centre to my home, I remind myself that my bloodline has travelled further and I persist. When I stare at my framed degree as I enter through my front door and acknowledge its rarity in my community, I swallow back rageful tears.

Generations of greed and hate have made my people vulnerable; I am not surprised that Frost predicted it would lead to Earth's defeat. Standing at the edge of The End, I still dream in shades of ocean blue and sunset red. My breathing still settles each time I stare up at thick tree canopies and home will always sound like the screech of a Hadeda. So, before I drift off to sleep, I whisper to Robert Frost in the dark, *"If we change the systems that control us, ridding the core of man's greed and hate, and replacing it with equity and empathy, could we survive?"*

I'm met with silence. He seems to have left the answer to that in our hands.



A story about helplessness, rage, justice and dreams, in conversation with a poet, in times of droughts and floods

La'eeqa is a youth and sustainable development advocate, passionate about community development and striving for social impact and equity in all her endeavours. Her interest areas include African development, sustainable communities and youth leadership.



A story about carrying on an intergenerational struggle for justice and planetary health

Jhonatan is a passionate Advocate for Healthcare, Nature Conservation, and Community Empowerment. He is the driving force behind the Patamuan Talino Foundation and serves as the leader of the Dayak youth, where his focus is on preserving indigenous culture and delivering essential services to the community.

For the Forest, the Land, & Our People: Patamuan Talino

by **Jhonatan Yuditya Pratama,**
25 yr, Indonesia
@jhonatanyuditya_pratama

In the heart of the Borneo island – our Dayak community, we live by a simple yet profound truth: "The forest is our father, the land is our mother, and the river is our blood." These words are not just a saying - they are a way of life, a bond with nature that has shaped who we are for generations. But this connection is being severed. My earliest memories are of a forest alive with the calls of hornbills and the gentle hum of the river. Yet, even as a child, I saw the changes creeping in. The forest, once our protector, was falling to the roar of chainsaws. The river, once clear and full of life, grew murky with pollution. The land that held our stories was being carved away, leaving scars where there once was life. In 2018, I joined others in creating Patamuan Talino - a name that means "The Meeting of Humanity." It represents a collective space where we come together as a community to imagine a brighter future, to dream of hope, and to fight for our rights. Through this effort, we blend the wisdom of our elders with the strength of our youth, standing united in our determination to protect what's left and restore what we can. Our work is rooted in action and connection. We

organize workshops to teach sustainable practices, bring community members together to plant trees, and speak out against policies that harm our land. We've created spaces for young people to learn about their heritage, to hear the stories of the forest, and to understand why this fight matters. It's not just about survival - it's about holding onto who we are. My inspiration comes from my father. He was a quiet hero, traveling tirelessly to provide medical care to those in need, even during the choking smoke of forest fires. He passed away in July last year, just days after returning from his last visit to a remote village. His compassion and unwavering service taught me that hope isn't just about wishing for change - it's about creating it. As I look to the future, I hold onto the dream that our forest will once again be alive with the calls of hornbills, that our rivers will run clear, and that our children will grow up with the same connection to the land that shaped me. Through Patamuan Talino, we are weaving a path forward together - a meeting of humanity, grounded in hope and action.

For the Forest, the Land, & Our People: Patamuan Talino

When I was 3 years old:

I was born in 1999, into a world where the forest, the land, and the river were everything to us. They were not just things we lived with; they were part of our identity. My first memories are of the sounds of the jungle - the rustling leaves, the chirping birds, and the flow of the river. Even then, I felt something deep inside me: this place was sacred. But, even as a child, I noticed that something was wrong. The forest that had always been there, the place we called home, was starting to disappear. I didn't fully understand it, but I could feel it. The anxiety came in waves - an unspoken fear that something precious was being lost forever.

When I was 8 years old:

By the time I was eight, the signs of destruction were undeniable. I watched as the palm oil plantations spread across the land, replacing our forests. The land that had been a source of life for generations was now being sold off, piece by piece. I didn't know why this was happening, but it hurt. I started to feel a deep sense of injustice - a growing anger in my heart. Why weren't people doing something? Why weren't we being heard? I didn't have the words to express my frustration, but I felt it in every part of my being. At twelve, the world around me seemed to be changing faster than I could keep up. I saw entire forests being cut down, rivers drying up, and wildlife disappearing. My father, a pillar of our community, would always tell me, "The forest is our father, the land is our mother, and the river is our blood." Those words stuck with me, even as I felt the weight of what was happening. I could see the pain in my father's eyes every time he spoke about the destruction of our land. I could feel it, too - anxiety, helplessness, sadness. It was as if the land was grieving, and so was I.

When I was 16 years old:

By sixteen, I had become more aware of the climate crisis and how it was affecting our people. The anxiety I felt was no longer just about what was happening to the land - it was also about what it meant for us. Our community, our culture, and our future were all tied to the forest. And watching it slip away felt like I was losing a part of myself. But my father was a man of action. He didn't just talk about the injustice; he did something about it. His work as a general practitioner - a healer, especially during the forest fires, inspired me to take action too. I realised then that we could not just sit and wait for someone else to fix things. We had to stand up for what was ours, for what we believed in.

When I was 18 years old:

I founded Patamuan Talino. The name Patamuan Talino means The Meeting of Humanity - a place where people come together to make a difference. It wasn't just about protecting the land; it was about giving the youth a platform to stand up, to speak out, and to fight for the future. It was my way of honouring my father's legacy - a legacy of service and standing up for the community. The founding of Patamuan Talino felt like the beginning of something bigger than myself. It was a way for me to channel my frustration, my anxiety, and my grief into action.

For the Forest, the Land, & Our People: Patamuan Talino

When I was 23 years old:

The loss I felt wasn't just the loss of the land, but the loss of my father. In July 2023, he passed away, just three days after visiting our community. He had spent his life helping others, even in the most challenging of times. He was always there, always steady, always fighting for justice. Losing him felt like the ground beneath me was gone. I thought about all the years he spent working to protect our people and the land, and I felt the weight of the responsibility he had passed on to me. It was as if his passing was the final push I needed to continue his fight - our fight - for the land and the people.

When I was 25 years old:

Now, at twenty-five, the anxiety that once consumed me is no longer a source of fear; it is a call to action. My father's death changed something in me. It made me realise that the fight we're in is bigger than all of us, and we cannot afford to give up. I lead Patamuan Talino not just because it's my passion, but because it's my duty. I do it for the forests, the rivers, the land, and the future of our people. But most of all, I do it for my father. His spirit lives on in everything we do. He showed me that we cannot let our hearts break without doing something about it. We must act. And through Patamuan Talino, I am not just continuing his work - I am building something new, something that will carry his legacy forward.

The loss of my father, combined with the grief I felt for the land, only fuels my determination to make sure we are heard. I see his lessons in everything I do - his commitment to the community, his unwavering belief that we must protect what is ours. The fight continues, not just for the forest, but for our people, for the land, for the future. My father's passing was the hardest thing I've ever faced, but it has also been my greatest motivation. The journey is long, but we will keep moving forward, step by step, carrying the torch he left behind.

They're not coming to save us

by Calum Macintyre, 30 yr,
Scotland/Norway
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It came to a breaking point in 2021 during the UN climate conference (COP26) in Glasgow. I did a bunch of talks around Norway for Protect Our Winters. I talked about how climate change would impact the winter season. I remember in the talk I had this line which was saying that if we go over two degrees of warming, then a billion people will face extreme heat stress. Then I was going on to say that the policies of COP26 were leading us to 2.7 degrees of warming. By the time I got to the last talk, I found it pretty hard to say that out loud in front of people.

And then my call to action was just like "write a letter to the bank to ask them to stop investing in fossil fuels." I think it was at that moment where I felt like surely I have to do more than this. That was when I started to try to understand the role that civil disobedience and civil resistance could play in the climate movement.

Civil disobedience is breaking the established norms in society to raise awareness and highlight something. Often for stuff we're doing, that involves breaking the law because it's a way to get attention and make people think.

In the summer, I was part of an action where we went through the fence at Gardermoen (the airport in Oslo) and sat down close to the runway. That's an extremely nerve-wracking thing to do. But it's just a way to make people think, especially people close to you. A lot of my friends, it really makes them think, because they start to wonder why you're willing to do that stuff.

When I first started getting involved in campaigns which use civil disobedience, it was really stressful and scary and weird to do it. But it's a bit like anything where if you do it a few times, it becomes kind of normal. So, for me now, going to court is just a part of the job. I have a court case coming up - I know how to prepare for it.



A story about mobilising civil disobedience as a tool for political change

Calum is a snowboarder active in the outdoor community. He is passionate about nature and climate action. Calum is working with the Norwegian organisation Folk mot fossilmakta (People against fossil power) to engage more people in climate action.

They're not coming to save us

However, it's important to say that I'm a white guy from the UK, so civil disobedience is a lot easier for me to choose as a tool for action than many other people. Especially in Norway, where the fines are so high for doing civil disobedience. At the same time, I do think that we in global north countries have a massive responsibility to face up to the fact that we're not being thrown in jail for twenty years for protesting like they are in other countries.

During COP28 in 2023, I was in London joining a group listening to Louise Harris perform a song called "We Tried". It was very powerful to be sitting in a small group of people outside the Prime Minister's house, listening to this song. Using music and culture to highlight issues in society is so powerful. You don't get the same feeling from anything else.

The song feels like a cry for help - it's almost like you get the sense that she's given up hope because it's speaking about things in the past tense, that we tried to do something. I think of that song as a song from the future - if we don't do anything, people will look back on us as a failing generation.

In the UK, climate activists have faced so much repression from the police. To be faced with loads of police running in and arresting us just for sitting there listening to this song - it made me really understand what a threat the authorities and our leaders feel the climate movement is. I'm like "holy shit, this stuff is serious." They wouldn't be putting in that much effort if they weren't a bit scared about people using civil disobedience as a tool for political change. It makes me quite inspired to do more.

A few years ago, all of our leaders wanted their picture taken with Greta Thunberg and you got the sense that things were perhaps changing. Now I really don't have that feeling at all. I feel like they're actively avoiding talking about anything to do with the climate.

It's clear to me that they're not going to fix things - they're not coming to save us. They're politicians and it's really up to regular people to step up and take action.



A personal reflection on hope, anxiety and courage in the face of worsening climate crisis

Victória is a young Brazilian climate justice advocate who emphasizes the importance of intersectionality in addressing environmental and social inequalities. She actively leads initiatives across various organizations in Brazil and Portugal, including EmpoderaClima, Youth Climate Leaders, and Engajamundo. Since 2021, she has served as a Youth Leader in the UN Women's Feminist Action for Climate Justice (FACJ) Action Coalition.

My Climate Story

by **Victória Miguel**
Rampazzo, 28 yr, Brazil
@vickrampazzo

As we say in Brazil, I am in the “flower age” (“na flor da idade”, in Portuguese), which means an age that shows a lot of opportunities, things to discover, people to know, places to be experienced. I really feel grateful to have this privileged moment of “the flower age”. But I know that we have a lot of different realities of “being young” around the countries, highlighting those who are facing environmental injustices. And, worst of all, I know that the planet that I met will not be the same for the future generations. In those reflexive moments, I feel thinking about my niece's future.

I have been immersed in environmental issues even before the beginning of my Bachelors' degree in Environmental Management in 2015, but it got more intense in 2020, where I got into the youth and climate movements, aiming and looking for positive changes around me. I need to say that to be part of the positive


change and transformation needs a lot of COURAGE, and need to be inspired every single day, to keep strong positions and keep your faith in your internal compass. I see this in climate activism in Brazil, one of dangerous lands for environmental defenders.

I've been questioned “Why do you keep working in the climate?” or “Why do you keep using your free time to dedicate to the climate movement? ”.. “Why.” “Why.” Why? Why not? I have a thousand reasons in my mind and purposes to say why I keep doing what I do. I would like to return the question back to those who do not understand. We have too much to do and change on this planet and society, and I suffer thinking that I will never be enough to change everything alone. Of course, that it is a part of the system, and we need everybody mobilizing for it. And it is so hard.

My Climate Story

I've been anxious about seeing climate disasters on TV and social media. I feel very small even trying to do my best and involving myself to mobilize climate action through my work, volunteers, academia and in my personal life. Sustainability is surrounding my thoughts everyday. I feel that every week, the climate crisis is affecting my daily life more and more, and those who are around me. The other week I breathed in

pollution from the burned forests in the North of Portugal where I am currently living, and weeks after, I worked from home and had in-person meetings cancelled because of a storm. Months ago, I was dedicating my master thesis for those who suffered with floods in the South of Brazil, hoping that my research can be a little step for more inclusive adaptations on cities, especially for women and girls.



Every week I need to check if my friends and family are “ok” and “safe”, because I saw on TV an extreme weather event affecting their cities. I feel that soon, the climate crisis will take more and more from me. I hope that I can keep my courage to fight back, and I know that I am not alone.



Fatima Elzahra Ismail was thirteen when climate change stopped being something abstract and became something she felt. It reached her through a youth theatre project rather than a science class. Standing on a stage, putting words and movement to what a warming world means for people, she came to understand that the crisis is not only about carbon. It is about who carries the heaviest cost, and how rarely those people are in the room when the decisions get made.

Creativity carries her through the hard parts

Fatima Elzahra Ismail – 19, Sudanese-Irish youth climate justice advocate

That realisation set the direction for everything since. Sudanese and Irish, Fatima has always lived between places, and climate change does the same. It crosses every border and lands hardest on the communities that did least to cause it. Her work has been about pulling those two worlds closer together, building connections between young people in Africa and in Europe so that climate justice becomes something they shape together rather than something done to them.

Over the years that has meant rooms she never imagined entering. She has helped deliver the EU Youth Conference alongside successive EU Presidencies, represented Ireland at the European Economic and Social Committee, facilitated with UNICEF, and worked as a peer researcher at University College Dublin. As President of the Women's Forum of the Young Voices of Africa she leads

initiatives that give young African women the space to lead, and she also serves on a board subcommittee of spunout, sits in the EU Youth Dialogue Core Group at the National Youth Council of Ireland, and is a Senior Ambassador for The Shona Project.

Fatima is open about the fact that caring this much carries a cost. There are days when the scale of the problem and the slowness of change weigh heavily, something she has spoken about publicly in conversations about mental health, gender and climate. What carries her through is creativity and community. The same instinct that began on a stage is still how she makes sense of difficult things, and the people she works alongside remind her that she does not hold any of it on her own.

Creativity carries her through the hard parts

Her message to other young people is that they do not have to choose between feeling the weight of the climate crisis and doing something about it. The feeling is part of the reason to act. The task is to find the form that fits, whether a stage, a science, a policy paper or an honest conversation, and to find the people who will stand in it with them. Fatima is currently studying Sociology and Politics of Science at University

College London, with a particular interest in ocean-based climate solutions.

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Climate Youth Delegate Ireland – Instagram – https://www.instagram.com/climateyouthdelegate_ie/

National Youth Council of Ireland – Climate Youth Delegate Programme –

<https://www.youth.ie/programmes/projects-initiatives/climate-youth-delegate-programme/>



Seán Dillon an engineer, with a degree in Environmental Science and Engineering degree at Trinity College Dublin. People sometimes assume that means he sees climate change as a set of numbers, but for him the truth is closer to the opposite. The numbers are what used to keep him awake. Reading about droughts, floods and the millions of people who still have no safe water, it is easy to feel small and useless.

He turned worry into something he could build

Seán Dillon – 22, Environmental engineer and Climate Youth Delegate

What changed things for Seán was the realisation that worry needs somewhere to go, and for him that place is building. If he is anxious about water, he can work on water. He joined a research team developing a cleaner, nanobubble-assisted way to treat domestic wastewater, and works as a research assistant on how groundwater systems and nature-based solutions can buffer drought and extreme hydrological events. The problem is enormous, but his piece of it is something he can pick up and work on each day.

That mindset has taken him to places he never expected. A semester in Norway studying civil and environmental engineering at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. A fellowship with the UNITECH International Society, including a project at Airbus repurposing

discarded aircraft electronics into ambient air-quality sensors, irrigation tools and crisis communication systems. Six months in Paris with Sanofi's eco-design and circular economy team, building environmental impact models for water purification across manufacturing sites in Europe and the Americas.

Through the Washington Ireland Program he interned in the United States House of Representatives on environmental policy, and at a youth policy week in the European Parliament he drafted a proposal on regenerative agriculture that won an overall youth majority in the hemicycle.

He turned worry into something he could build

The thread running through all of it is fairness, especially around water and sanitation. Clean water is not a luxury, and the people who go without it are almost never the ones who caused the crisis. Engineering, for Seán, is a way of taking that unfairness seriously without being paralysed by it.

Most recently he became one of Ireland's Climate Youth Delegates, a role established by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment with the National Youth Council of Ireland, carrying young people's perspectives into international climate negotiations under the UNFCCC.

Alongside his studies and policy work he is active in the Trinity College Dublin St Vincent de Paul Society, Ireland's largest student-led charity, where he has served as PRO and now co-leads the Street Outreach Programme. He still feels the worry, and does not expect it to disappear entirely, but he has learned to treat it as fuel rather than a wall. His advice to other young people is to find the smallest real thing they can do and start there. They will not fix the whole problem, and they are not supposed to, but action is the best answer he has found to fear.

Sources

This profile is drawn from the following publicly available material.

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