



THE CLIMATE
STORY LAB

REPORT OUT

September 2019

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WELCOME

The U.S. in 2019 faced continued rollbacks on environmental protections, such as rules aimed at reducing coal plant pollution and clean water protections. The Sunrise Movement was gaining real momentum building support for the Green New Deal. And Greta Thunberg was getting ready to sail across the Atlantic to the U.S.

Doc Society, big believers in the powerful role story plays in shaping culture, seized the moment and joined forces with co-collaborators [Exposure Labs](#) and the wonderful folks at the Hartley Media Initiative at Auburn Seminary, Bloomberg Philanthropies, EarthX, Fledgling Fund, The JPB Foundation, The Kendeda Fund, Sundance Institute and our supporters David and Linda Cornfield, to host a landmark event in New York City: [The Climate Story Lab](#). The goal was to catalyze the most urgent and compelling media projects being made in The United States (U.S.) right now toward big impact.

The 5-day convening focused on 12 projects but also explored broader questions about this particular moment in the climate crisis in the U.S. To get a flavour of the lab have a [look at this short film](#). While this report goes further, summarizing key insights and take-aways from the Lab and aims to resource media makers, climate activists, amplifiers, and allies with tools, inspiration, and lessons to support story-based climate action in your own corner of the planet.

In the spirit of the racial justice and accountability lens that the Lab centered around, we open this report with the indigenous land acknowledgment that was offered by Jade Begay, Indigenous Rights and Climate Justice Activist, and Creative Director at NDN Collective. On the first day of the convening in Manhattan, New York, Jade recalled the indigenous Lenape word “Manahatta,” which means “island of many hills”. She invited participants to imagine Manhattan as it was before colonisation, probably a lot like Yellowstone Park.

And she reminded us: “We need to de-centre the human” in our understanding of the planet. With this, we kicked off a week of discussions, deep diving into the *big questions* that we must wrestle with as storytellers at this moment.

This report, as the Lab itself, draws upon the collective wisdom in the room that day (their names are all at the end), as well as the great work being done in this space by other cultural organisers who are acknowledged throughout. We definitely didn’t come up with all the answers, but we think that much of our analysis and cross-examination offers a good jumping off point for further action moving forward.



TOP TEN TAKE AWAYS

1. **Now is the moment to reassess how the climate crisis has been communicated so far.**
A majority of the population are with us, time to move on with how we engage them, work out what to stop doing and what to start doing.
2. **Stories beat Statistics every day of the week and twice on Sunday.** Climate communications have been too technocratic, too fact based and adopted language from scientists and policy makers. Let's lead with stories of people the audience can recognise and language that includes them and their concerns.
3. **We have tended towards a mono-culture of storytellers, stories and forms.**
Too many climate stories are told from the perspective of men, of the middle class, of white citizens and assume that white, male experts are the best trusted messengers. No wonder there are many people who do not feel this conversation is for them.
4. **We need a biodiversity of stories and storytellers as diverse as the ecosystems we seek to save.** No more silver bullets, we need to unleash a wave of stories, made by different communities, aimed at different audiences, made in different ways.
5. **We need to put Climate Justice at the heart of our storytelling.** So that we don't try to address the climate crisis by telling stories that deepen existing inequalities and injustices. It's not right and it won't work.
6. **The means matters as much as the ends. Climate Just storytelling must be thoughtful about the process of production.** It cannot be another extractive industry. We should challenge usual models of production and co-create in new ways.
7. **We need to be more imaginative. Utopian visioning can lead us towards a climate safe future.**
Visions of hell are all very well but Martin Luther King had a dream not a nightmare. The role of artists and storytellers is to imagine better ways for society to operate.
8. **We need to deploy a broader emotional range beyond fear and hope.** Inducing fear can get attention but is disabling for many. Fear balanced with Hope is still a very limited and predictable way to tell stories. Time for the full range of human emotions including joy and laughter.
9. **Different personalities are going to be affected by climate storytelling differently.** Even people who look the same can be very diverse and may be engaged by different kinds of stories.
10. **We need to be radical in reaching across the aisles, ready to listen, slow to judge and use stories to unite.** Our societal divisions threaten our ability to come together over climate in time. We need to unite people of all faiths and none, all political convictions, rural and urban.

SECTION 1: TAKING THE TEMPERATURE



But first... **Listen** — The dusky gopher frog (*Lithobates sevosus*) is an endangered species that numbers some 100 individuals, most of which only live around a single pond in Mississippi.

SECTION SUMMARY

Let's face it, the climate crisis is the biggest threat humanity has ever faced and we need our strongest and most effective storytelling and engagement strategies. But until now, climate storytelling's impact has been limited. That needs to change.

Why? Because the opposition has caught on to the power of film and other culture-based strategies. They are using them to push their own narrative. That needs to stop.

But let's be clear: the consensus is on our side. We need to work harder, smarter, and together.
We can do this!

WHY THE STORYTELLING URGENCY?

CRISIS, WHAT CRISIS?

If you are reading this guide, you are probably already feeling some urgency around the combined issues and human impacts of the climate crisis and ecosystem collapse. We are not going to spend time here outlining the seriousness of the issue because that has been done very well elsewhere.

DOING YOUR HEAD IN?

Many people who have been paying close attention to this issue are now dealing with mental health issues as a result. It's scary. And we recommend that you take the emotional effects of living through a time of climate crisis seriously. As storytellers, it's our job to not look away, but we also need appropriate levels of self-care not to burn out or break down in the face of the challenges. And we need to consider how best to communicate these stories effectively.

THE URGENCY IN OUR WORK

The particular urgency for storytellers is this: to date some very fine films, art exhibitions, photographic projects, social media campaigns, VR projects and more have sought to awaken and engage publics so that we can prepare, re-configure our lives and vote for people who will reconfigure society.

But climate communication has often been bloodless and technocratic. And we have not yet been able to reach enough people. It is time for some self-examination about why that is and how to improve our focus and approach. As Naomi Klein says, "This Changes Everything".

And for those of us who care about impact, it really is our job. We need new stories and we need them now. This is the time for storytellers to unite divided publics behind the reality of our challenges and the potential transformational power of solutions.

"There is no evidence that evidence alone changes anyone's mind."

—

Monica Allen
Children's Investment Fund Foundation



WHAT ARE THE POLITICAL CHALLENGES?

A TIME OF POPULISM

The challenge of the moment: climate storytelling in a time of populism. We have the challenge of being in a moment that is not only post-truth but also post-shame. It's no longer enough for media to reveal wrongdoing and assume that perpetrators and authorities can be shamed into action. Rather, we are in a culture war. Those of us who are working to build a future where every one of us can thrive in a healthy and just world are being pushed back by climate deniers and xenophobic, antidemocratic forces.

"I've studied documentarians extensively to come up with my own in-house style. I'm a student of Michael Moore's films, of Eisenstein, Riefenstahl. Leave the politics aside, you have to learn from those past masters on how they were trying to communicate their ideas."

—
Steve Bannon, Populist Strategist



In other words, we are not the only ones developing cultural strategies. That's because powerful storytelling works.

Blackfish by Gabriela Cowperthwaite is an example of a film that [inspired audiences](#) to mobilize around holding SeaWorld accountable for its treatment of captive killer whales. It led to public outcry and an investigation. Eventually SeaWorld ended its breeding program. *Virunga* by Orlando von Einsiedel successfully [mobilized audiences](#) to defend the Democratic Republic of Congo's protected Virunga National Park from illicit oil exploration. The company in question eventually pulled out.

The Climate Advocacy Lab reminds us of a few other examples:

- Two research projects on “**An Inconvenient Truth**” found the film had an impact on both people's intentions and subsequent behaviors, increasing: **knowledge of and concern about global warming**, intended **willingness to reduce greenhouse gases** (Nolan, 2010) and **purchases of voluntary carbon offsets** in areas within a 10-mile radius of a film screening (Jacobsen, 2011), though the effect may fade with time.
- The documentary “**Gasland**” contributed to an **increase in online searches and social media conversations** about fracking and heightened mass media coverage. Local screenings of the documentary also **contributed to anti-fracking mobilizations**, which, in turn, affected the passage of local fracking moratoria in the Marcellus Shale states. (Vasi et al., 2015)
- “**Before the Flood**” brought **new people into the climate change conversation on Twitter**, accounting for nearly 5% of all conversations around the time of the release. 75% of those tweets were from users who had not tweeted about climate change in the previous 12 weeks. (Alto Analytics)

Note: a few of these links are only accessible to members of the Climate Advocacy Lab. If interested in joining, email info@climateadvocacylab.org to request membership.

There is great power in storytelling and media. In this moment of crisis, we urgently need stories that shift the narrative back in our direction. These two quotes lead the way:

“Beware of the stories you read or tell; subtly, at night, beneath the waters of consciousness, they are altering your world.”

—
Ben Okri, Author



“We brought down apartheid with the stories we told, the songs we sung, the plays we staged. They controlled the means of violence, but we won the cultural struggle.”

—
Kumi Naidoo, activist



We need all hands on deck. This means ensuring EVERYONE sees themselves reflected in the movement and in movement storytelling. It means that we’re telling and sharing these stories meaningfully and with accountability. And it means we need a plethora of stories and strategies. There’s no one way to do it. But we do know we need each other.

Given the success of cultural strategies, it’s perhaps no surprise that the storytelling community faces organized opposition.

ORGANIZED OPPOSITION TO FILMMAKING

The reality is that environmental filmmakers and other climate storytellers face many risks, both legal and physical, in the face of a well-organized and well-funded opposition. This is true almost everywhere. The U.S. is a particularly litigious country where independent filmmakers like Joe Berlinger (*Crude* 2009), for example, have found themselves in court over their films.

In countries like Brazil and India, where forest defenders have been murdered in recent years, filmmakers have even more at stake. In these places, the safety of filmmakers and participants can be a significant factor. But we should be aware that risk is not contained to high risk locations we need to take the proper precautions.

Doc Society’s [Safe + Secure guide](#) is a recent addition to resources available to help media teams identify and address risks. It walks film teams through a series of questions (100 in fact) to help identify both our vulnerabilities as a group and the skills, training or support we’ll need to compensate for them. It also offers tips and directs readers to resources to help strengthen safety and security. From digital and legal security to planning for high risk situation, this tool has us covered.

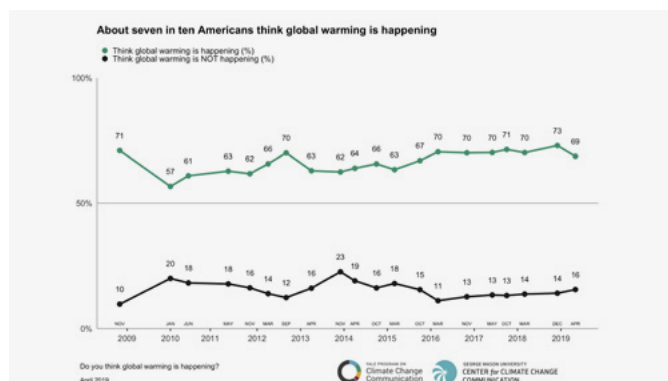


WHAT IS THE STATE OF U.S. OPINION TODAY ON CLIMATE AND HOW IT IS CHANGING?

US PUBLIC OPINION IS ON OUR SIDE

The Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (YPCCC) has been examining the trends in the U.S. and offers up-to-date studies and analysis. Lynsy Smithson-Stanley, the Director of Partnerships Program, shares her latest (April 2018 to August 2019) research. The good news is U.S. public opinion is changing rapidly and it's largely on our side.

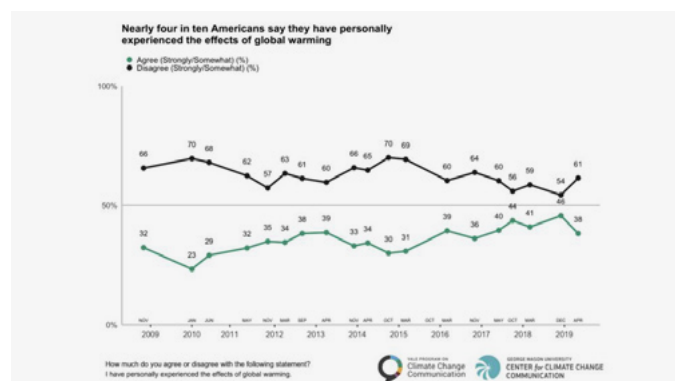
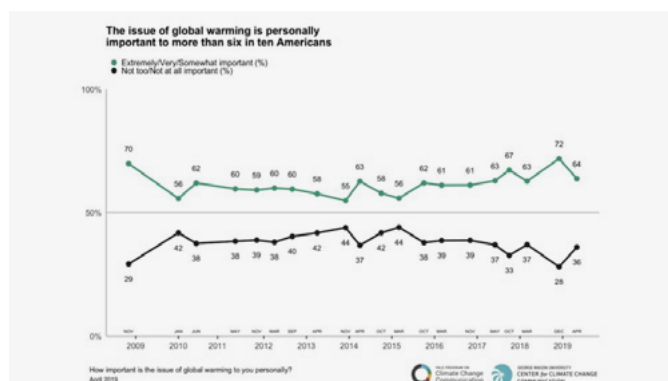
69% think it's happening



Research conducted by the YPCCC and partners, released in April 2019, found that nearly seven in 10 (69%) voters are worried about climate change, including more than a third (35%) who are very worried.

The issue is also personal for people.

64% say it is personally important



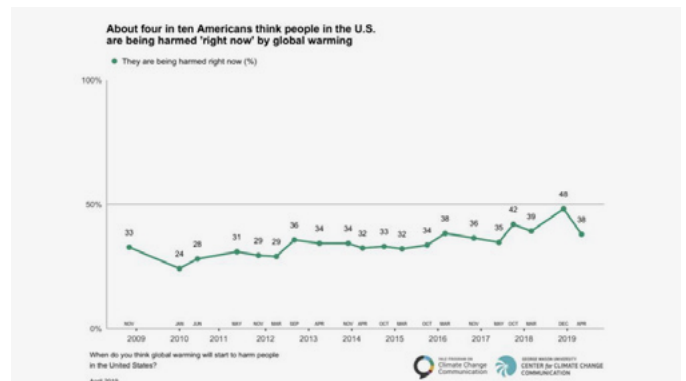
Nearly 4 in 10 personally experience the effects of global warming

This matters because it's difficult to engage people to advocate for what does not affect them personally. We spent a lot of time after the Cap and Trade failure making climate change more urgent, local and personal; this statistic indicates all of our efforts have moved the needle.

Voters who participated in more recent [research](#) (April 2019) said climate change is impacting U.S. agriculture (73%), extreme weather events in the U.S. (72%), the health of Americans (61%), the U.S. economy (59%), and their own family's health (50%).

So it's not surprising that many have been feeling the urgency.

**38% believe
people in the U.S.
are being harmed
right now**

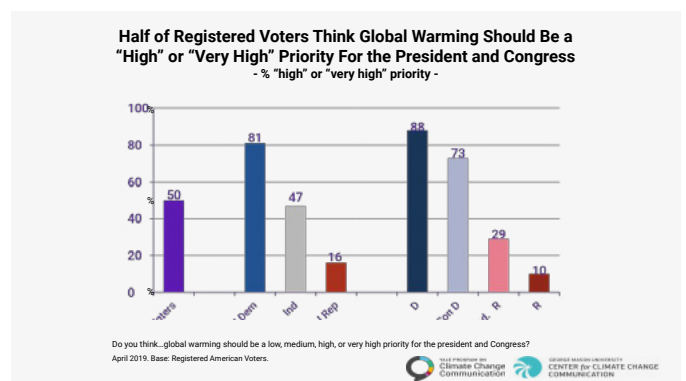
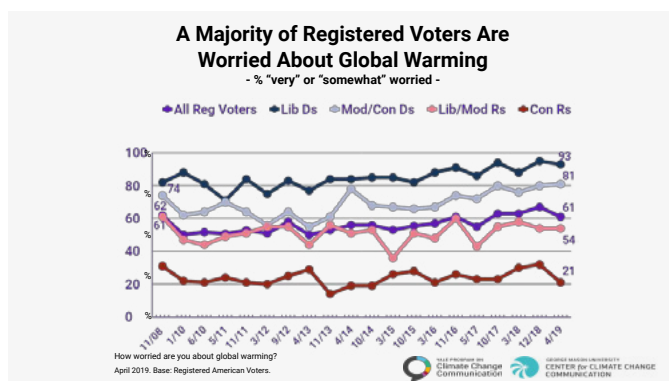


**Is this issue viewed
through the lens of
partisanship? Yes.**

**Should that deflate us?
No.**

Slides from April 2019 Research

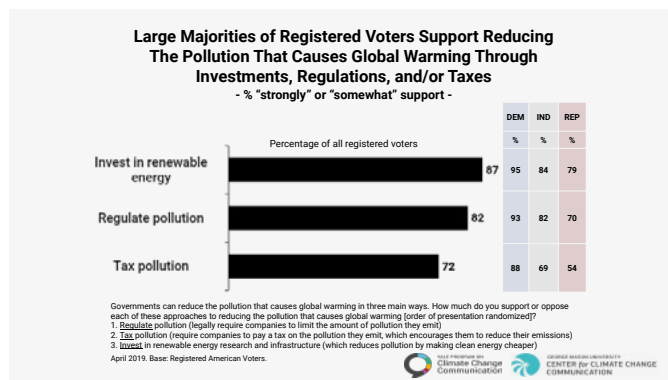
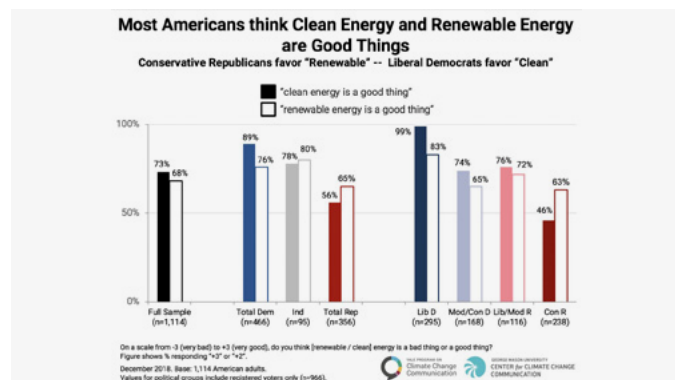
The data are clear: the No. 1 predictor of your level of concern about climate change is political ideology. Still, it's important to remember that deniers comprise a very small (fewer than 1 in 10) part of the population, and a majority of registered voters are worried and believe it should be a priority.



Slides from April 2019 Research

Looking toward the 2020 Presidential elections, voters participating in an April 2019 [study](#) overall were more likely to back candidates who support specific policies to address climate change. Seven in 10 American voters supported government action to address climate change, including more than four in 10 (42%) who strongly support it.

A majority of Republicans and Democrats describe clean or renewable energy as good things and support solutions. But it's up to us as communicators to explain and situation those solutions in line with existing values. And we all know those values can differ depending on where you are on the political spectrum.



Slides from December 2018 Research

“On Capitol Hill, where I hang out everyday, even Republicans are backing away from climate denial and admitting that ‘something is going on’.”

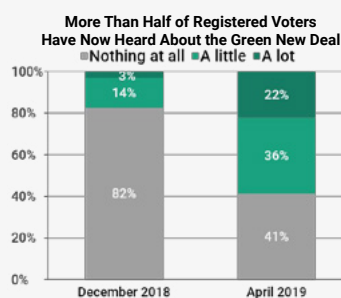
— Andres Jimenez, Citizens Climate Lobby

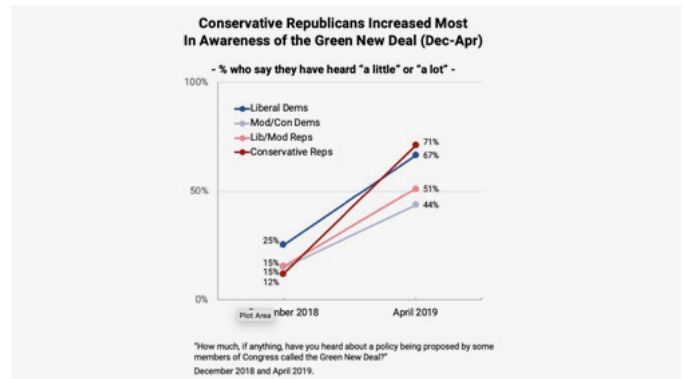
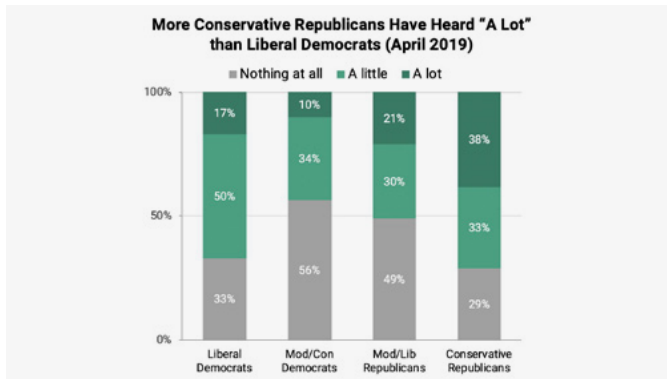


And it's important to be aware of how language, symbols and messengers can trigger values-based assessments — even when concepts have broad, bipartisan support.

We see an example of that in the Green New Deal.

GND: A Lesson in Polarization

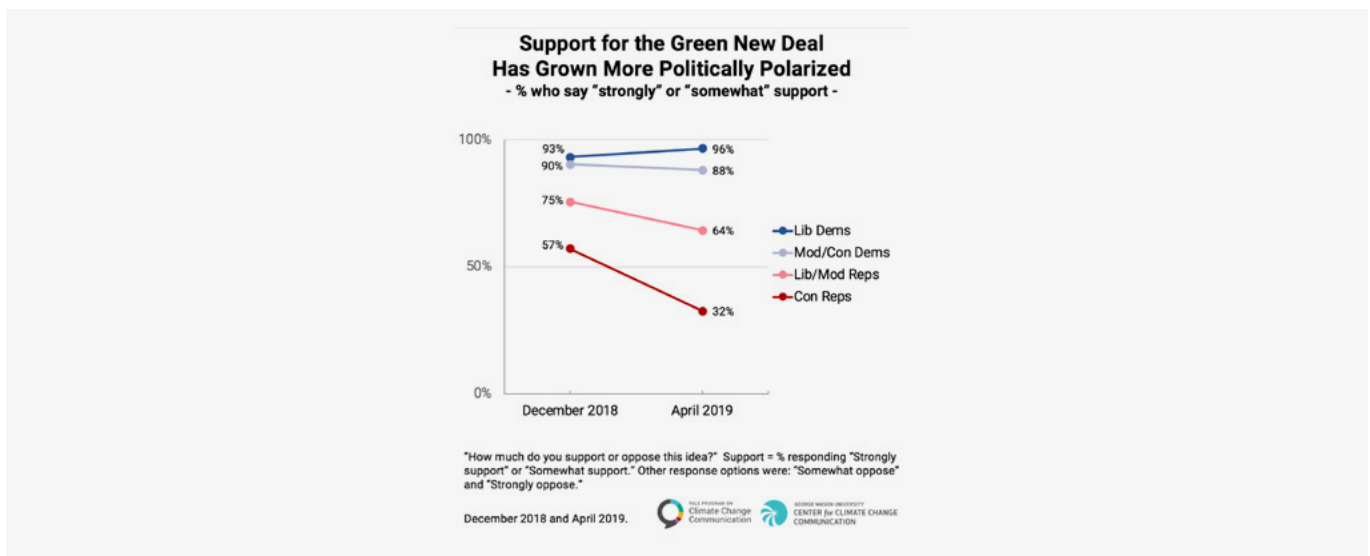




Slides from December 2018 and April 2019 Research

When we did a survey in Dec. 2018, more than eight in ten respondents said they'd never heard of the Green New Deal. When we described its features, however, 81% of respondents — including 64% of Republicans — said they supported it.

But when we compare Dec. 2018 with April 2019, we see that Republicans, especially the more conservative ones, had heard considerably more about the Green New Deal — and their support dipped as a result.



This illustrates how situating ideas — even widely supported ones such as clean energy — among other values-laden language such as universal health care and jobs guarantee can trigger partisan opinions. By linking the Green New Deal to language and ideas that were antithetical to conservative values, conservative media and politicians stigmatized and intentionally sowed dissent where it didn't exist before.

"The problem with climate change being associated with any group's identity is that it makes it nearly impossible for an outsider to influence the opinion of members of the group. The association of global warming with the left influences climate apathy."

—
Leo Barasi, *"The Climate Majority: Action and Apathy in An Age of Populism"*



“Movements seldom win by overpowering the opposition; they win by shifting the support out from under them.”

—
Beautiful Trouble: A Toolbox for Revolution

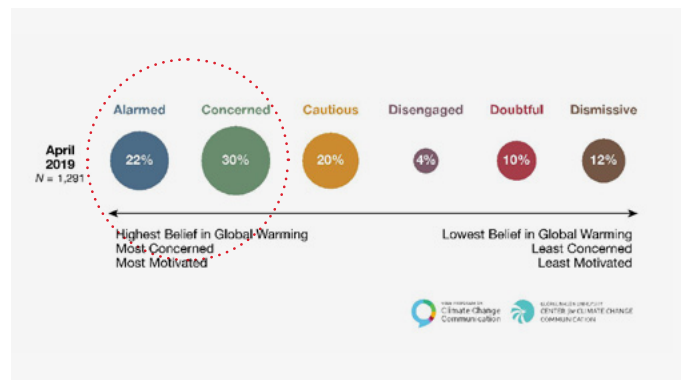


BUILDING UPON THIS MOMENTUM

Lynsy Smithson-Stanley also invites us to consider the different ways people relate to the climate crisis and offers strategies that storytellers and impact teams might consider to help people navigate through them.

She lays out six segments that capture Americans' beliefs, concerns and appetite for climate action, ranging from those with the highest to the lowest belief in global warming.

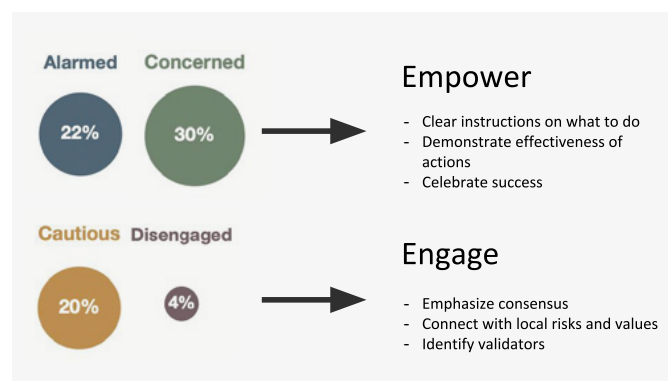
Six Americas of Global Warming



Slides from April 2019 Research

She suggests that first, we should ignore those who fall into the dismissive or denial categories. They are relatively entrenched and should only be approached by people and organizations who already share their values and have social influence.

She says for all the other groups, it's helpful to focus on what kind of information and actions we want to encourage:



Slides from April 2019 Research

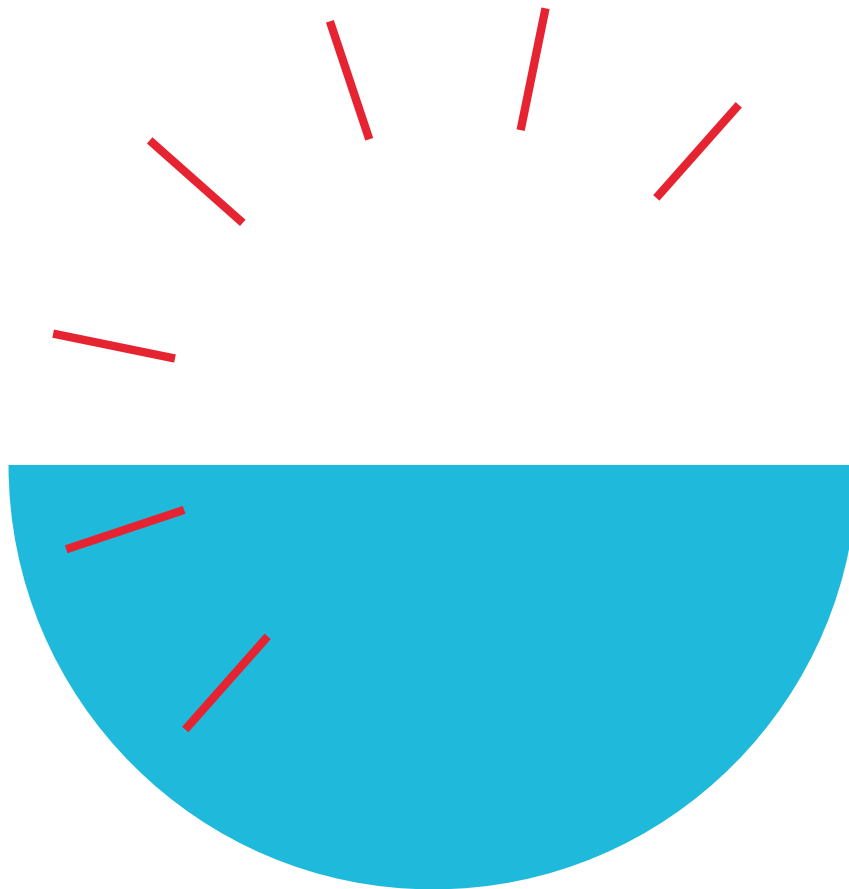
For the 52% who are Alarmed or Concerned, we need to suggest clear ways to get involved and highlight the promise of those actions and solutions in improving our communities and lives.

And for the 24% who are Cautious or Disengaged, we need to pull them in closer through validation of what they are seeing locally and reminding them of the scientific consensus on global warming (that more than 97 percent of scientists agree that climate change is real)

But in case you missed it, here's a key takeaway: 52% of the electorate are already alarmed or concerned and another 24% cautious or disengaged but not altogether dismissive or doubtful. **We need to focus on them.**

To learn more about this research, visit: climatecommunication.yale.edu

You can also sign up for the YPCCC email list by texting YALE to 444999. Or sign up right [here](#).



WHAT IS CLIMATE JUSTICE AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO CLIMATE STORYTELLING?

CENTERING CLIMATE JUSTICE

Almost every single social problem we have today is impacted by the climate crisis. That's because everyone faces the effects of extreme weather, water shortages, the rise of wildfires either directly or indirectly. However, not all of us contributed to the crisis equally and not all of us will be impacted equally or in the same ways. And that's what that Climate Justice is all about.

"Climate justice compels us to understand the challenges faced by those people and communities most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Often the people on the front lines of climate change have contributed least to the causes of the climate crisis. This is an injustice".

—
Mary Robinson



Being attentive to the differential impacts of the climate crisis allows us to understand the various ways people are made most vulnerable by it. It allows us to understand who has the most at stake and therefore who can be the fiercest defenders. But that's only possible when as a movement we are paying attention to these lived realities.

Sarra Tekola, PhD Student, School of Sustainability at Arizona State University and climate activist is one of many voices reminding us of this right now. She warns that there are those who say that because we only have 12 years to turn things around, we don't have the time to address the systemic injustices that are at the heart of the climate crisis. But she urges us to reject that argument. The fact is: we don't have time NOT to address them.

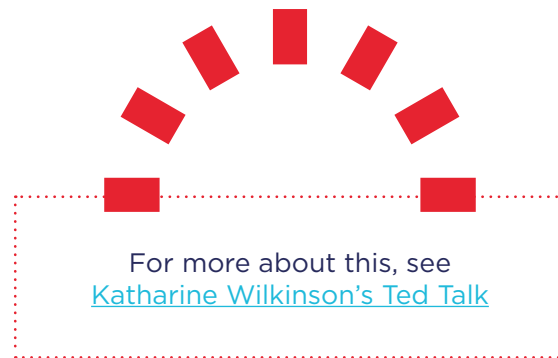


Hear more from Sarra Tekola on the
[Mothers of Invention podcast](#)

CENTERING WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women and girls are a strong example of people who are differentially impacted by the climate crisis. Women are often responsible for finding or preparing food, water, and fuel, which become much more difficult in the face of extreme weather, droughts, and floods. The climate crisis also has a greater impact on the poor, 70% of whom around the world are women.

And it is often overlooked that women's issues, such as educating girls and extending family planning, could make a huge contribution to carbon reduction- because giving women agency over their lives leads to smaller, healthier families. [The Drawdown](#) calculates that added together - they are the single biggest factor.



Women also work differently politically. They are more bipartisan, are likely to feel climate risks more acutely, and factor community needs into proposed solutions. In other words, they are better at "bottom up" as well as "top down" approaches.



Women's leadership now is vital to paving the way to a climate-just future. And examining climate change through a gender lens opens up opportunities for more compassionate, female-centric solutions. This is what led to the creation of the [Mothers of Invention](#) podcast, which features extraordinary women who are driving climate innovation.

WOMEN'S CONNECTED LEADERSHIP DECLARATION ON CLIMATE JUSTICE

The Climate Story Lab was proud to partner with the Women's Connected Leadership Declaration on Climate Justice to host the launch of the Declaration, which was spearheaded by the co-host of the Mothers of Invention podcast and former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson. She was joined by Pat Mitchell, Sundance board member and curator for TEDWomen, Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, an indigenous leader from Chad, and Katharine Wilkinson from Project Drawdown.



Left to Right, Hindou Ibrahim, Pat Mitchell, Mary Robinson, Sara Tekola, Katharine Wilkinson, Ronda Carnegie, Mary Heglar and Jess Search

During the live announcement, this phenomenal group actively pledged to support women to lead on climate justice and invited women around the world to join them. This is the declaration:

The climate movement cannot succeed without an urgent upsurge in women's leadership across the Global South and the Global North. Women and girls are already boldly leading on climate justice, addressing the climate crisis in ways that heal, rather than deepen, systemic injustices. Yet, these voices are often under-represented and efforts inadequately supported.

Now is the moment to recognize the wisdom and leadership of women and girls.

Now is the moment to grow in number and build power. We invite all of our sisters to rise and to lead on climate justice, and for those with relative power and privilege to make space for and support others.

To change everything, we need everyone.



While climate change is a priority for many women, it's still not something women are necessarily actively talking about or engaged with. But that is changing and this declaration is an invitation for women to step forward.

“This declaration makes a critical call. No matter their field or expertise, women and girls can lead on climate justice, and that leadership is so deeply needed.”

—
Mary Robinson



“We need global recognition and support for women’s leadership on this issue, and to forge connections across geographies and genders.”

—
Musimbi Kanyoro, President and CEO
of Global Fund for Women



And women are stepping forward. Katharine Wilkinson, who attended the Climate Story Lab, spearheads [Project Drawdown](#), a resource identifying the world’s 100 most viable climate solutions. Taken together, ‘educating girls’ and ‘family planning’ become the single greatest solution for addressing climate change that we have.

The [#WomenLeadClimate](#) pledge already has over a thousand supporters. You too can sign [and share the pledge here](#).

SECTION 2: STORIES PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE



Listen: the tricolored bat. Its sound is out of adults' auditory range, but many 13 year old girls can hear it, reminding us that young people have superpowers to lead the way.



SECTION SUMMARY

In reviewing the kinds of climate stories and storytellers that have taken up most cultural space in the U.S. to date, it became clear that in storytelling, as in nature, our problem has been a **tendency to monoculture**.

“We need stories as diverse as the bio-diverse ecosystem we’re trying to save.”

— Michael Premo



Climate stories have tended to be made by white men, with other white men as protagonists and people of colour as subjects. It is time to change that.

- We need to understand this crisis from varied points of view, especially from those who are most vulnerable or impacted.
- We also need to engage audiences that have been excluded until now.
- We do this by ensuring the stories we tell reflect these realities.
- We do this by using varied story forms and mediums because not all communities engage with media and stories in the same ways.
- We do this by exploring a range of emotions, not just repeating fear narratives with hopeful endings.
- And finally, we do this through utopian visioning, which we need now more than dystopian warnings.

WHAT CLIMATE NARRATIVES HAVE WE ALREADY HEARD? ARE THEY STILL HELPFUL?

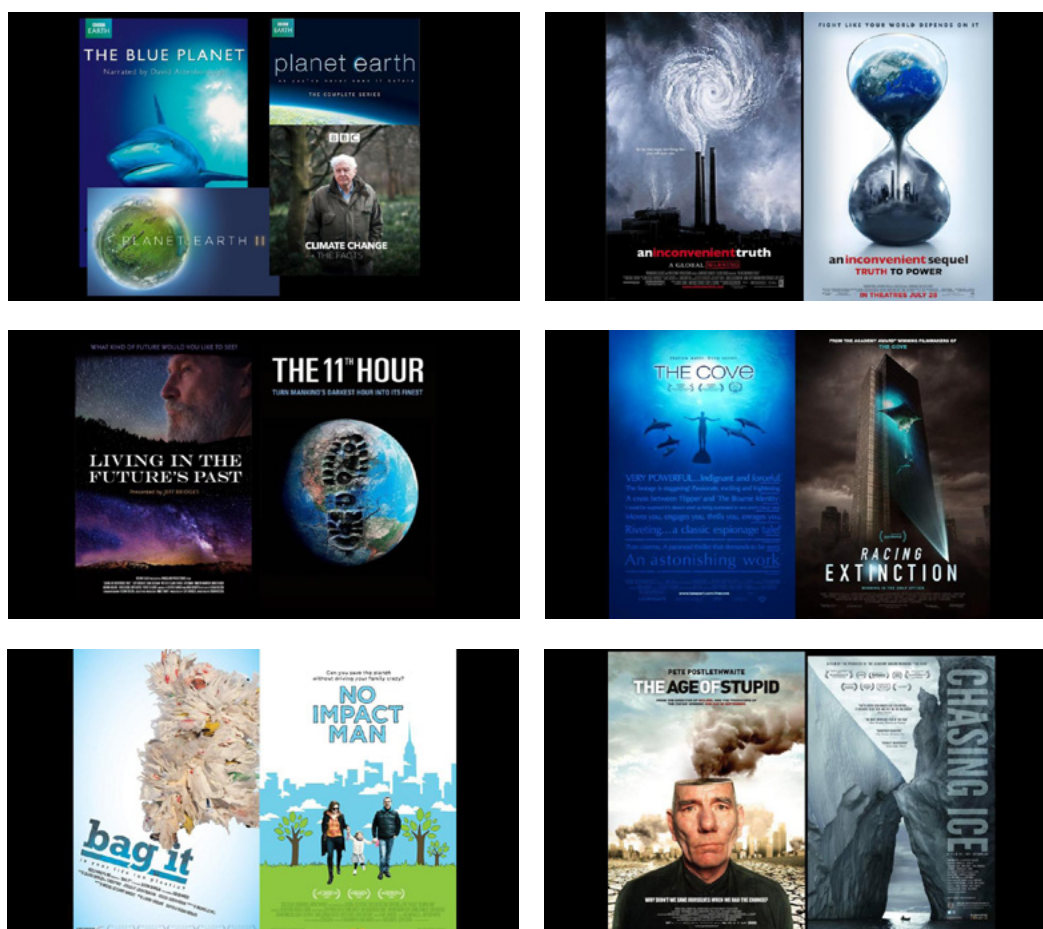
Many of the best and most impactful films about the climate crisis to date have been made from relatively narrow perspectives and genres. Too often climate films are made by and feature white men. Some of these films have moved the dial with large audiences, but there has been precious little to invite others into this space.

The Climate Advocacy Lab recently highlighted a paper that addressed this very issue:

“Concern about climate change and environmental issues is often stereotyped as the domain of affluent whites. A recent nationally representative survey experiment confirms that many diverse segments of the American public hold this stereotype and underestimate environmental concerns of nonwhite and low-income Americans, even as these populations are generally both more concerned about and vulnerable to environmental harms. Showing respondents images of racially diverse environmental organizations reduced the perceived “concern” gap between whites and nonwhites and elevated the connection between minority and environmentalist identities for nonwhite respondents. These results suggest that, while cultural stereotypes may stand in the way of public engagement on environmental issues, these barriers can be diminished with corrective information.”

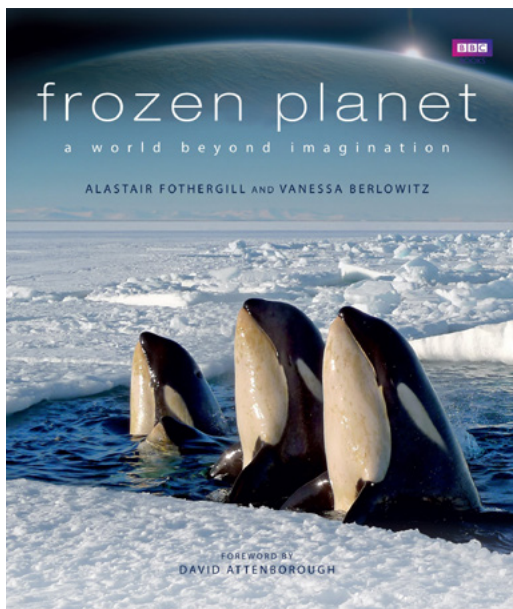
To read more, check out the publication: Adam R. Pearson, Jonathon P. Schuldt, Rainer Romero-Canyas, Matthew T. Ballew, Dylan Larson-Konar. PNAS. 10/30/18

So while many communities have been organizing around the impacts of the climate crisis for decades, the mainstream “climate change” conversation has too often remained the preserve of middle class, white, male, Democrat voices.



We love some of these films. And it's time for a much broader perspective.

By the way, we don't mean polar bears... Nature documentaries have proliferated but they often under-emphasise the level of threat to the natural environment they celebrate and exclude the human consequences of ecosystem destruction.



WHICH STORYTELLERS ARE MISSING?

In the U.S., stories have not sufficiently centered enough communities—not as creators, subjects or intended audiences—to achieve the kind of inclusive climate majority needed to move the issue forward. This is one of the ways racism functions in the U.S. today.

This extract from Martin Luther King's writings is a reminder to white liberals: even if we consider ourselves allies of people of colour, we may still be part of the problem if we are not open to listening and examining how racism affects our modes of thinking and acting.

"Over the last few years many Negroes have felt that their most troublesome adversary was not the obvious bigot of the Ku Klux Klan, but the white liberal.

Most whites in America in 1967, including many persons of goodwill, proceed from a premise that equality is a loose expression for improvement. White America is not even psychologically organized to close the gap—essentially it seeks only to make it less painful and less obvious but in most respects to retain it. Most of the abrasions between Negroes and white liberals arise from this fact

The white liberal must escalate his support for racial justice rather than de-escalate it.... The need for commitment is greater today than ever"

—
Martin Luther King
Where Do We Go from Here - Chaos or Community?



While we don't have all the answers, we do know it's critical to **develop stories and authorship from a variety of perspectives**, including:

- Indigenous peoples
- People of colour
- Women
- Conservatives
- People of faith
- Youth
- People in impoverished communities

As we've been noting, from Standing Rock to Hurricane Katrina, we see that people of color, low-income communities, and migrants are hit first and hardest by the climate crisis. Their stories are raw and powerful.

We also note there are many communities who are often overlooked but important audiences for our outreach and engagement efforts, including:

- **Doctors**
- **Rural** community members
- **Farmers**
- **Fossil fuel workers**
- **Military service-people**

Through more inclusive, improved and accountable representation, we ensure our movement reflects the diversity of people and experiences needed to tackle the structural inequalities that underpin our climate crisis.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Climate Woke is a short-form episodic series hosted by Layel Camargo, a self-proclaimed “vegan, zero waste, transgender, indigenous artist with migrant parents.” Together with their producing partner Jesús Iñiguez, they intend to use satire, comedy, and critical hope to amplify the realities of those facing the brunt of the climate crisis, and offer collective solutions for a more sustainable future. The vision for their short-form series is to spur more climate conversation among POC and undocumented communities who are most impacted by climate change, shifting culture so it is part of their vernacular. They want to center their storytelling on frontline communities, many of whom have never had the chance to tell their stories, while also finding a way to bring comedy to these tough issues.



PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Think 100%: The Coolest Show on Climate Change is a content and media platform from the Hip Hop Caucus. It features a short-form series co hosted by Antonique Smith and Rev. Lennox Yearwood Jr. that seeks to make climate action cool and a top priority for Millennials and Gen Z audiences of color heading into the 2020 election.

[More please!](#)

RECOMMENDED READING FOR WHITE ALLIES

Climate Change Ain't the First Existential Threat. People of color know about building movements, about courage, about survival:

by Mary Heglar

medium.com/s/story/sorry-yall-but-climate-change-ain-t-the-first-existential-threat-b3c999267aa0

White Fragility: podcast from Robin DiAngelo, a white progressive woman with insights to guide other white progressive on how to be less defensive and challenge themselves to listen better and generally do better in their collaborations with people of colour.

soundcloud.com/sydney-ideas/white-fragility

WHICH STORIES ARE MISSING?

“Good vs. evil story is not useful. It is ordinary people who use the fuel and electricity fossil fuel companies provide. The difficulty in applying any of these storylines is that, to most people, climate change isn’t self-evidently the consequence of an immoral act.”

—
Leo Barasi, *“The Climate Majority: Action and Apathy in An Age of Populism”*

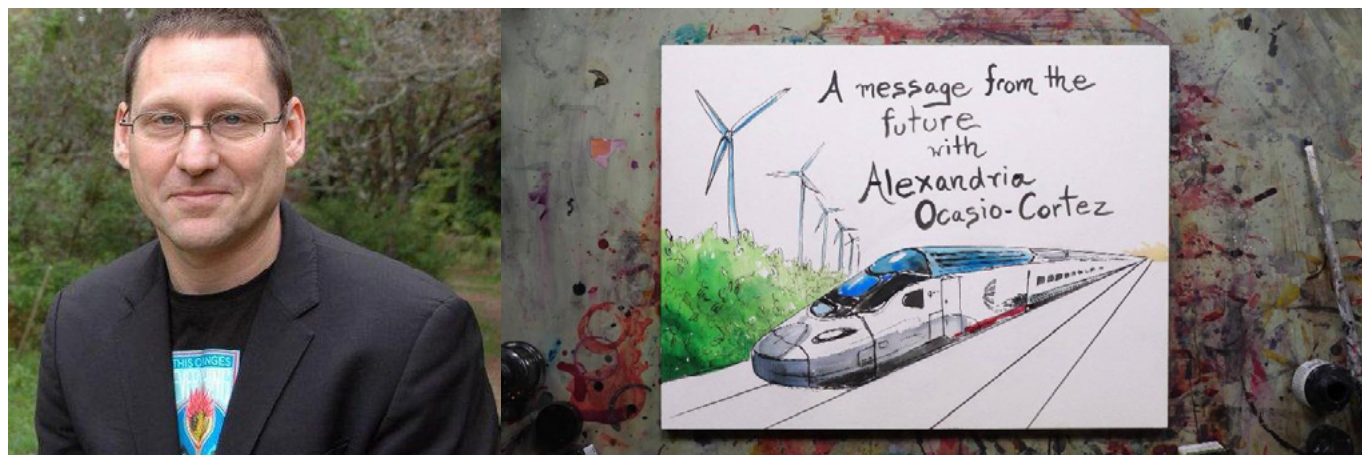


Do the following common plot lines look familiar to you?

SEVEN BASIC PLOTS

- overcoming the monster
 - rags to riches
 - the quest
- voyage and return
 - Comedy
 - Tragedy
 - rebirth

Of course, many of our favorite stories fall into one of these categories. But there’s room for more. For example, we could use stories that portend a better future. That’s exactly the kind of story we can expect from Avi Lewis, one of the makers behind the viral video [A Message From the Future With Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez](#) (and before that *This Changes Everything*).



Avi stresses the crucial role of utopian storytelling in this time. And he calls for more media that gives “credible hope” because that’s what will mobilise people.

This idea runs parallel with indigenous prophecy and black futurism. It is visioning like this that makes things seem not only possible but inevitable. In fact, utopian imagination could be the antidote to populism we have been searching for.

Alex O’Keefe from the Sunrise Movement responded to this idea: *“Utopian visioning is the left’s version of the right’s conspiracy theories...distributive storytelling that moves on deep desires instead of paranoia”. Quite so.*

Distributive storytelling that moves on deep desires instead of paranoia, he reminds us, is what this looks like.

The key takeaway here is not to overstate the problem at the expense of solutions. We need to tell the truth, of course, but let’s also make audiences laugh. Let’s inspire them. Let’s show a vision of the future that can get us motivated now.

This brings us to our next question...

WHICH EMOTIONS ARE MISSING?

Can we tell stories beyond the hope/fear axis?

Discussion Question 3

Climate storytelling often veers towards one extreme, leaning into either hope or fear as a way to spur action. However, climate stories can elicit a host of other emotions, too. So why limit ourselves?

Mary Heglar put this beautifully in [*The Greatest of All These is Love*](#):



“There’s many different schools of thought about how we should feel about climate change. For decades, the dominant narrative has been that we should feel guilt. Then, there’s the dual narrative that calls for hope. Others have called for fear, or panic. I myself am on the record calling for anger.

But, I don’t always feel angry, to tell the truth. In fact, sometimes I’m hopeful, sometimes I’m scared. Sometimes I’m overwhelmed, and sometimes I’m downright stubborn. (My mama would tell you that’s pretty much all the time.)

That’s because none of those emotions really get to the heart of what I truly feel. None of them are big enough. If I’m honest with myself, what I truly feel is...love.”

—

Mary Heglar



Perhaps it's time to harness new emotions.

“Should we tell stories that evoke hope or scare the shit out of people?”

—
Kate Marvel



In fact, some climate campaigners are actively leaning away from fear and also guilt. A longtime staffer with [Greenpeace](#), Stefan Flothmann, launched [Mindworks](#) as an internal start-up within Greenpeace to explore applying cognitive science to create more effective campaigns. Their findings suggest “campaigners should always provide assistance so that audiences resolve those negative feelings, and never communicate timelines that indicate a moment when it might be too late to take action.” To learn more about their work and recommendations, check out this article: <https://mobilisationlab.org/stories/mindworks-greenpeace-uses-psychology-for-better-climate-campaigns/>

[Kate Marvel](#) is a climate scientist and Associate Research Scientist at NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia Engineering’s Department of Applied Physics and Mathematics. She has also been exploring the tension between using hope and fear in climate storytelling, and what the science can tell us about it.

“People often ask me, does the science support hope or fear narratives? The answer is yes.”

She reminds us that science can offer hope because we do understand the reason that our planet is dangerously warming; it is not a terrifying mystery. But a look at the fossil record of the Pliocene epoch, a time of global cooling, hints at just how frightening our future could be – with sea levels possibly rising 75 feet higher than today. So in the face of this:

“We need courage, not hope. Courage is the resolve to do well without the assurance of a happy ending.”

And she asks: “Do I only get two emotions? I feel awe, I feel wonder, I feel fear, I feel gratitude.” Perhaps it’s time our stories reflected this reality.

I've learned from Archbishop Desmond Tutu to be a 'prisoner of hope'. That means the glass may not be half full, but there's something in the glass that you work on. Hope brings energy.

Mary Robinson

I would like people to be scared of what is possible because I'm scared. And because I am motivated by fear, I also hope they will be motivated.

David Wallace-Wells

ARE WE USING EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE?

Language matters. The words we choose can deepen or reinforce existing structural inequalities... or they can reveal them.

The words we choose can also prevent us from reaching audiences we wish to reach... or they can be a bridge.

Climate crisis language is often technocratic – based around terminology that has sprung from UN or scientific papers. This kind of language often requires fluency in the issue to be understandable. In other words, by using language like this, we might be building a wall between our message and our audiences.

“Avoid scientific/political jargon. There is nothing in it to tell me what, specifically, these changes would mean for me, my family or the places I know. Yet technical terms about climate change are used in mainstream discussions as if they are widely understood. This reliance on abstract concepts like average global temperature change and annual sea-level rise — described with small numbers — may have contributed to the problem of many people misunderstanding the likely consequences of climate change”.

—
Leo Barasi, *“The Climate Majority: Action and Apathy in An Age of Populism”*



It's also important to consider whether or not it's a good idea to foster competition with our language. Is inspiring collaboration a better way forward?

“I don't need you to be greener than Oscar the Grouch to be a member of the environmental movement”

—
Mary Heglar, climate justice essayist



In other words, climate crisis language needs to start inviting people in, rather than shutting them out.

And finally, does our language galvanize people or shut them down?

Frank Luntz, a Republican political strategist and global warming skeptic used focus group results to determine that the term ‘climate change’ is less frightening to the general public than ‘global warming’. He therefore advised the right to use that term instead as a way to dampen efforts to address the climate crisis.

Luntz later told an ad-hoc Senate Democratic climate panel in August 2019 “I was wrong in 2001” and he expressed regret for slowing climate awareness and federal action.

Below is a photo of a talk at TED that he gave in March 2018 that has not yet been released. In it he urges progressives working on the issue to use language that is more human and inclusive. He suggests that the word Sustainability is both technocratic and a defence of the status quo, whereas Healthier is a promise of a better future.



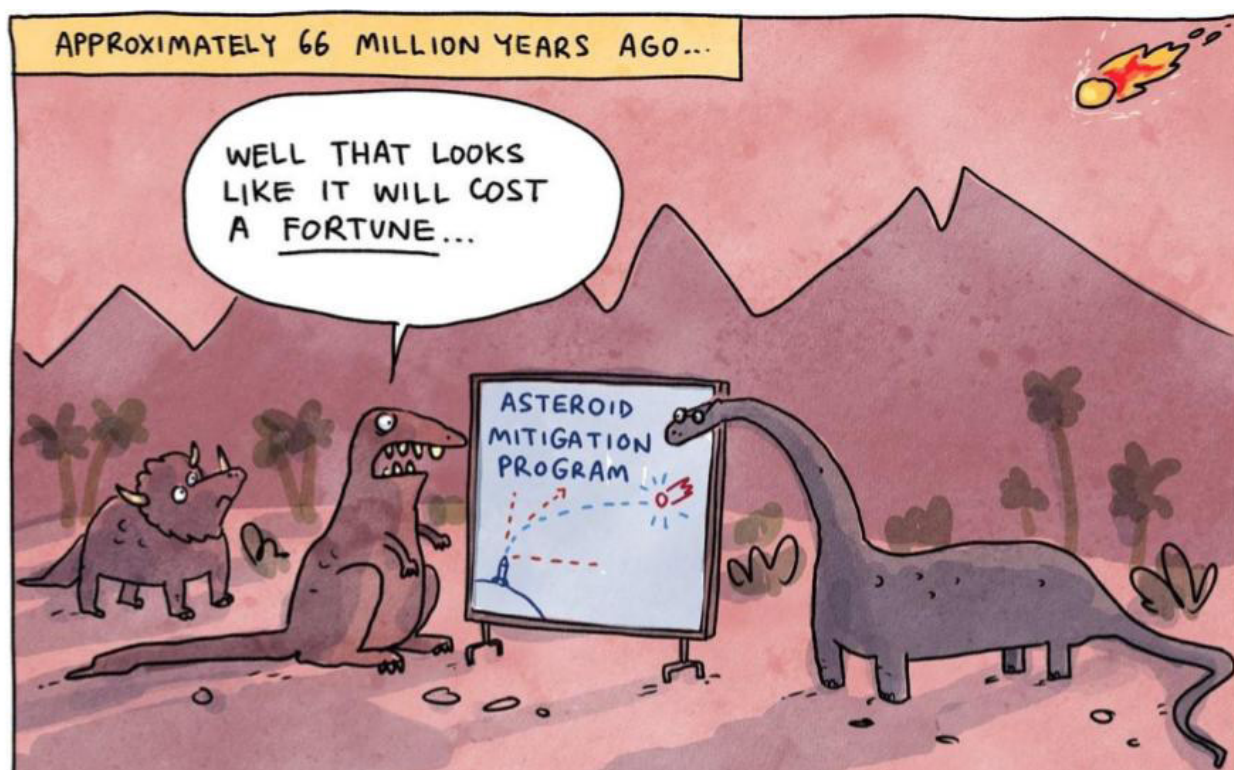
Old language is being questioned.

In June 2019 The Guardian newspaper in the UK announced 5 major language changes they are making across their reporting. In each case their editor Kath Viner explains why this change is being advanced.

1. **Use “climate emergency,” “crisis” or “breakdown” instead of “climate change”**
“Huge-scale and immediate action is needed to slash emissions but they are still going up – that’s an emergency or crisis. Extreme weather is increasing and climate patterns established for millennia are changing – hence breakdown”.
2. **Use “global heating” instead of “global warming”**
“Global heating is more scientifically accurate ... Greenhouse gases form an atmospheric blanket that stops the sun’s heat escaping back to space”.
3. **Use “wildlife” instead of “biodiversity”**
“Biodiversity is not a common or well understood term, and is a bit clinical when you are talking about all the creatures that share our planet”.
4. **Use “fish populations” instead of “fish stocks”**
“This change emphasises that fish do not exist solely to be harvested by humans – they play a vital role in the natural health of the oceans”.
5. **Use “climate science denier” or “climate denier” instead of “climate sceptic”**
“Very few experts are, in good faith, truly sceptical of climate science, or of the necessity for strong climate action. Those arguing against it are denying the overwhelming evidence that the climate crisis exists”.

CAN WE STOP BEING SO SERIOUS?

CLIMATE CHANGE IS SERIOUS, BUT OUR STORIES DON'T HAVE TO BE

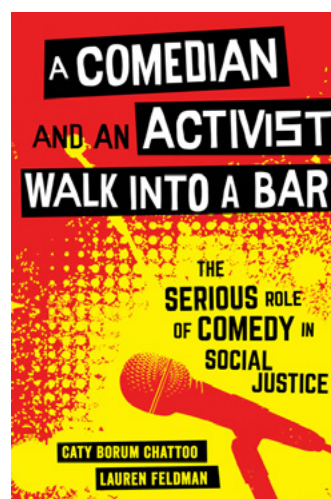


“Comedy is a source of imagining a world that is a little bit better and fun and also a source of social critique.”

—
Caty Borum Chattoo



Caty Borum Chattoo at [Center for Media & Social Impact](#) is the founder of a research and creative initiative, *The Laughter Effect*, which looks at the use of comedy as a tool for change — and the author of the forthcoming book, *A Comedian and An Activist Walk Into a Bar: The Serious Role of Comedy in Social Justice* (co-author Lauren Feldman, published by University of California Press in 2020).



Her research has found that comedy can help overcome partisan resistance around climate and can mobilize a base that is exhausted by the doom and gloom messages. In other words, comedy is an untapped genre for reaching audiences that don't seek out environmental content. She offered a few thoughts on why this is the case:

- Comedy offers an entry point into taboo topics
- Hope and optimism are motivating emotions
- Comedy offers a gateway to serious information over time
- Comedy's "sleeping effect", it can make issue messaging more memorable
- Comedy is persuasive through its entertainment value

"Evolving from Ancient Greece to early roots in American vaudeville at the turn of the 20th century — which birthed and shaped most contemporary forms of comedy available in the entertainment marketplace, including stand-up and sketch — comedy itself has not changed its basic traits and rules of engagement. Comedy is a form of deviant expression — a new way of looking at a topic. To even laugh at a joke in the first place, comedians present and bend a reality. The incongruence of life as it is, compared to the surprising distortion or truth of life as it exists in a joke construction, is why we laugh. And, as it turns out, when we chuckle, we may consider new possibilities, we might feel more comfortable talking about tricky topics with others, and we create a little community with fellow travelers, even for a moment."

Considering these principles, it's not a leap to imagine how and why believers in social justice and change might have a few things in common with comedians. Advocating for social justice actively challenges a status quo — a dominant hierarchy of influence and power — in order to level the playing field. At its most basic, social justice believes in the right and ability for all people — regardless of the circumstances of birth, or socioeconomic status, or race or ethnicity, or gender or sexual orientation, or physical ability — to pursue the opportunity to live healthy, successful lives. Social justice requires and demands that we engage and empathize and connect — and often, that we see differently."

Under Borum Chattoo's leadership, the Center for Media & Social Impact has launched several initiatives designed to bring together comedy and social justice including the Center's *Comedy ThinkTank* initiative which pairs comedy writers and social justice organizations to co-create new original comedy together in a writer's room experience.

For the Climate Story Lab in New York, a collective of climate comedians came together for first-ever Comedy ThinkTank for climate. Featuring incredible writers whose work includes Upright Citizens Brigade, Broad City, The Tonight Show, Fusion, The Onion, College Humor, Funny or Die, The Colbert Report, 30 Rock, and the new climate change comedy show "[An Inconvenient Talk Show](#)."

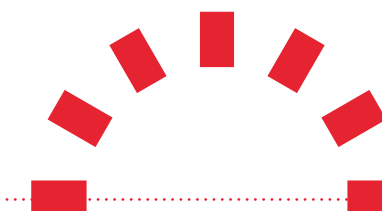
The group came up with concepts like a 'Make-A-Wish' program for endangered species ("Coral reef's only wish before it kicks the bucket is to see Ariana Grande live.") and a firefighter calendar shoot that keeps getting interrupted by actual forest fires.



But the crowd favorite was *“What Happened Last Night?”*, a feature film pitch of what happens when a group of friends inadvertently fix climate change during a rowdy bachelorette party. They wake up the next morning and must retrace their steps to figure out HOW? It’s the *The Hangover* meets *Girls Trip*.

“Climate change is hilarious!.... We want to sneak attack our audience into caring about climate change”

—
Bethany Hall
CMSI’s Comedian in Residence

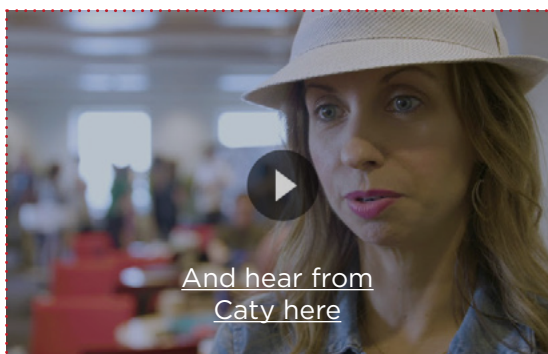


To learn more about Caty’s
upcoming research, have a look
at this interview:

www.franknews.us/interviews/197/the-unlikely-combination-of-comedy-and-civics

Check out this article:

<https://thelaughtereffect.com/will-comedians-save-the-day-f02b75718a5>



CASE STUDY: MOTHERS OF INVENTION

The previously mentioned podcast [Mothers of Invention](#) is a storytelling series seeking to bridge the women's movement and the climate movement. The hosts, former President of Ireland Mary Robinson and comedian Maeve Higgins, aim to offer a spark to the many people who care about climate but aren't actively talking about it, by making it accessible, approachable, and funny. In the words of the remarkable Bonnie Raitt, "Let's give 'em something to talk about."



Mary was reluctant at first to be partnered with a comedian, fearing it would trivialise the content. But she is now convinced it's the secret of the podcast's success.

As the series completes its 14th episode, it has already had 440,000+ downloads and user-submitted fan art is surfacing online.

CAN OUR STORY FORMS BE AS DIVERSE AS WE ARE?

“VR is a portal to place, it’s a portal to intimacy, it’s a portal to connection.”

—
Liz Miller, *Swampscapes*



In this fragmented and attention-scarce media landscape, we must explore beyond traditional media to engage more Americans on climate action more effectively. We do this by reaching people where they are, or by transporting them somewhere else entirely. Some of the most innovative media makers today are breaking out of the mold and exploring a range of media , including:

- Virtual Reality
- Augmented Reality
- Podcasts
- Webseries
- Speculative Journalism

[Extinction Rebellion](#) (XR), as an example, is using art and performance to advance the climate movement. They are converting all kinds of people, from [fashion labels](#) to [suburban grandmothers](#) to become unlikely and effective protesters, ready and willing to be arrested for the first time in their lives. This has started a new ‘summer uprising’ in five UK cities. They have also spawned affinity groups in many sectors not usually associated with climate protesting including lawyers, school teachers, even law enforcement.

INDEPENDENT

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Culture > Art > News

‘Banksy’ Extinction Rebellion artwork appears at protest site at London’s Marble Arch

Although not yet confirmed to have been created by the famed street artist, the piece appeared overnight at the police-sanctioned protest area

Clarisse Loughrey | @clarisselou | Friday 26 April 2019 08:39 |

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FROM THIS MOMENT
DESPAIR ENDS
AND TACTICS BEGIN

We are also intrigued by this piece on the merits of Speculative Journalism wherein journalists—realizing the limits of reporting on facts alone—are playing with creative ways to present the data. High Country News took the projections of the *Fourth National Climate Assessment*, “interviewed scientists, pored over studies – then imagined what the West would look like 50 years from the release of the report.”



But it's not just about what we do, but also about broadening *how* we think about the work:

“We need to put all other issues in context. Climate change is the context. It’s what the word actually means.”

—
Mary Heglar



“We don’t need to make more climate films - we need to put more climate in our films.”

—
Jess Search
DocSociety



Yes!

It’s also about how we think about *where* the work goes.

To help us imagine the possibilities, acclaimed artist and director Lynette Wallworth recounted how the juxtaposition of her multi-sensory projects [Collisions](#) and [Awavena](#) at conferences such as the World Economic Forum served to disarm influential executives into caring about the climate crisis.

DEEP DIVE THE PRACTICE OF ARTIST LYNETTE WALLWORTH

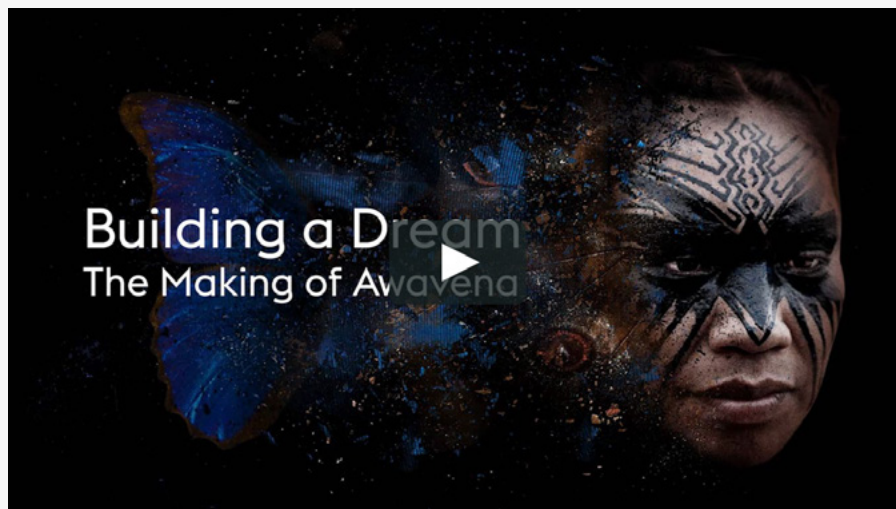
***"We must never forget the mystical element of our work.
There's an alchemy to what we do."***

—
Lynette Wallworth



From resourcing the Martu people with tools of resistance to creating empathy for the fragility of coral reefs, Lynette Wallworth brings us into her dreamlike world of immersive and participatory storytelling and reminds us of the power of art and storytelling to educate and inspire.

Her projects show us what's possible. They encourage us to think big about our potential for impact. And they urge us to remember to always prioritize accountability to the people whose stories we've been entrusted with.



[Awavena](#) shares the story of Hushahu, the first woman shaman of the Yawanawa of the Amazon. It is a Mixed Reality (XR) project, a collaboration between her and the community. The invitation to collaborate came from the Chief of the Yawanawa who saw real promise in the technology:

"These glasses act like medicine, they carry you without your body to a place you have never been, colors and sounds are intensified, you meet the elders, you are given a message and then you return."


—
Tashka, Chief of the Yawanawa





Collisions is a virtual reality project that features Nyarri Morgan, an indigenous elder of the Martu tribe in the remote Western Australian desert. It tells the story of his first encounter with Western civilization in the 1950's, when he witnessed a nuclear test. Lynette took the project to Davos in 2016. From there she was invited to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty meetings at the UN in Vienna, and on to the UN General Assembly meeting in New York ahead of a vote to adopt a new resolution to ban nuclear weapons. In settings such as these her team were invited to carry their headsets into rooms where world leaders were discussing the nuclear safety of the planet. They would view the VR experience before continuing their conversations. In these spaces she witnessed first hand the deep impact this story was having.

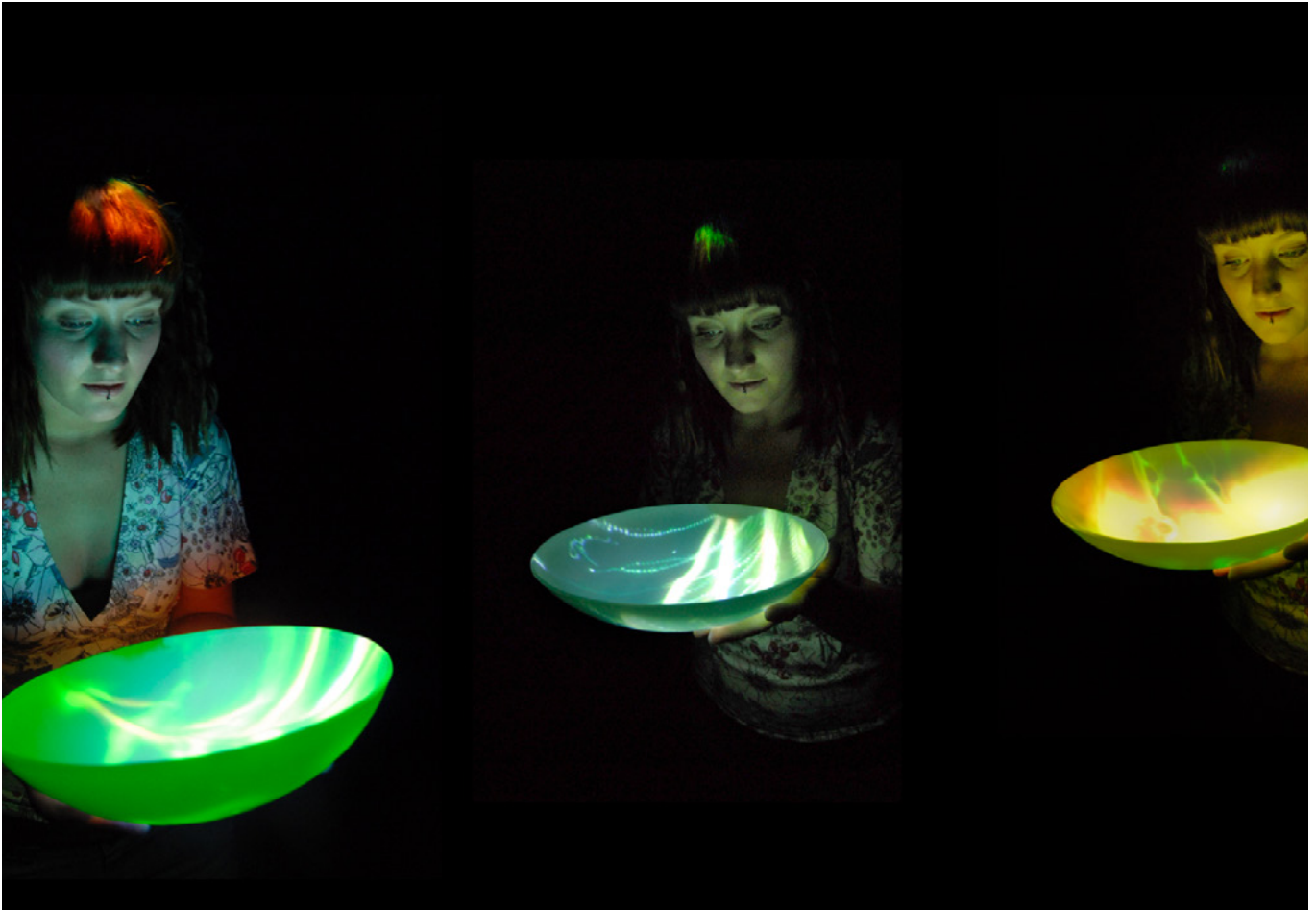
She has nearly two decades of knowledge to understand the importance of due diligence to ensure the protection of rights of her collaborators like Nyarri. For example, for every project she embarks upon, she signs a contract to protect the intellectual and cultural property of her collaborators. She and Producer Nicole Newnham also ensure, beyond cultural protections, that they share all rights and proceeds equitably. And she works closely with the community to ensure decisions are made together.



To learn more about this project,
[read the Impact Field Guide section 5.3](#)



The [Evolution of Fearlessness](#) was an evocative, touch-responsive installation. Wallworth filmed portraits of eleven women residing in Australia, but originating from countries such as Afghanistan, Sudan, Iraq, and El Salvador, who had survived wars, concentration camps, or extreme acts of violence. She described how the work defied visitors' expectations about what they thought they would be led to feel, and set off a surprising and powerful exploration of emotions.

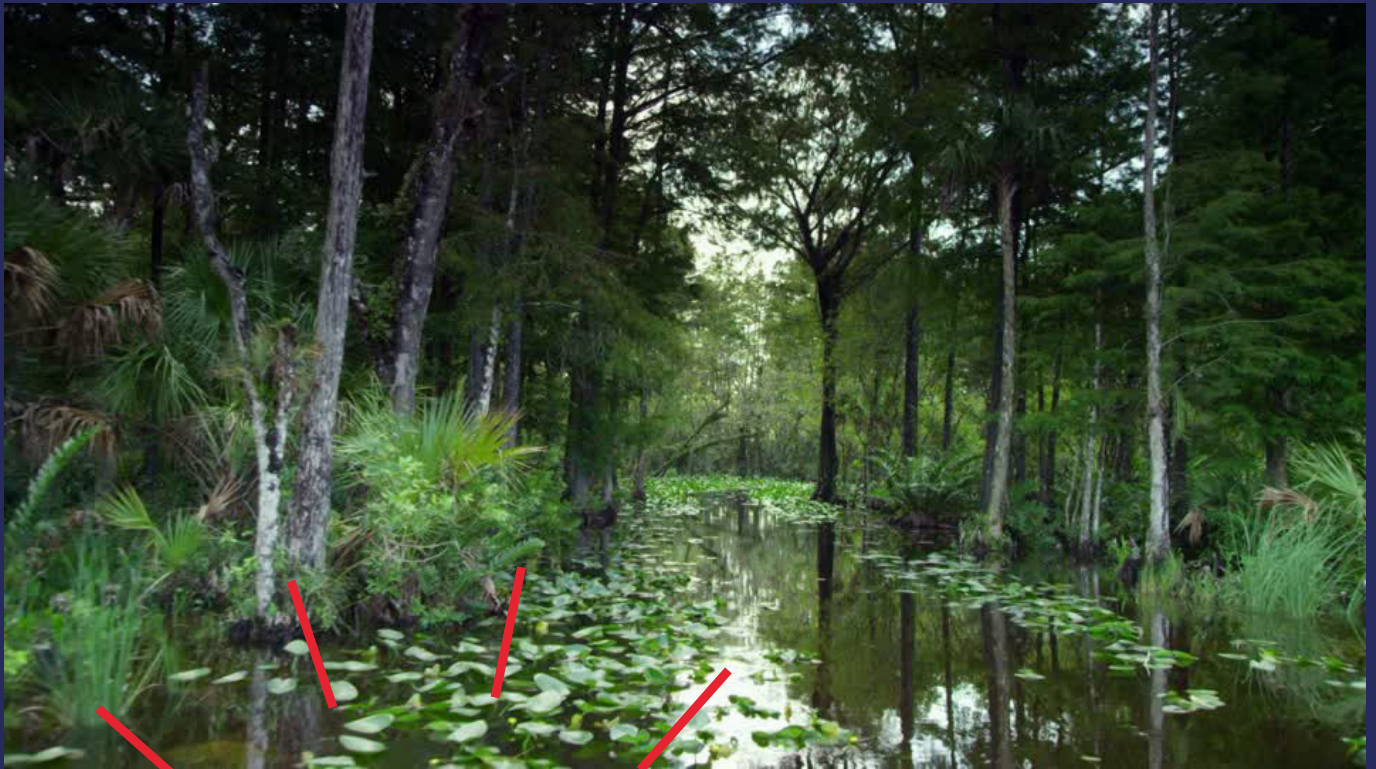


In [Hold: Vessel 1 and 2](#) people were invited to enter a dark space and hold a glass bowl under beams of light falling from the ceiling that projected imagery of coral reefs and were reminded that the future of this fragile life form was in their hands. She noted how visitors would wait until a new participant entered the room before passing the bowl along, rather than setting it down unattended. In other words, the project helped to foster a sense of shared responsibility for a fragile ecosystem.

Over the course of Lynette's career, she has learned to trust in the power of her work. She reflected on moments earlier in her career when she felt despondent after showing a work to audiences that largely felt the way she did about the themes she was exploring. She wondered at the point of creating works that attract audiences who already think the same way. It was only after being invited to bring her world to World Economic Forum events such as Davos and seeing, for example, the head of a trillion dollar oil company react to her Coral piece with, "We need to do something about this issue," that she understood the need to find a new audience, not those whose views were already in line with the themes of her work, but the opposite. She now situates her work precisely in those realms where the themes she is working on are in debate and she trusts in the power of art to add to that debate, to change minds and to help shift the entrenched thinking.

***"The journey of the heart, of connection, of emotion, and of feeling.
Those people are more unprepared for that than the rest of us."***

SECTION 3: FOCUS ON KEY OVERLOOKED AUDIENCES



Listen: Everglade Swamp

SECTION SUMMARY

At this first Lab, we spent time thinking about how we can best engage with communities that may not be receiving as much climate information as others. And we thought about where higher barriers to communication may exist.

No groups should feel left out of this movement. So our stories, media , and engagement should reflect the realities of the audiences that have traditionally been overlooked. This leads to broader, more dynamic understandings, conversations, and solutions.

Below we take a deep dive into a few key audiences who we could be engaging more effectively.

COMMUNITIES OF FAITH

BUILD BRIDGES TO FAITH GROUPS WITHOUT TREATING THEM AS ONE MONOLITHIC AUDIENCE

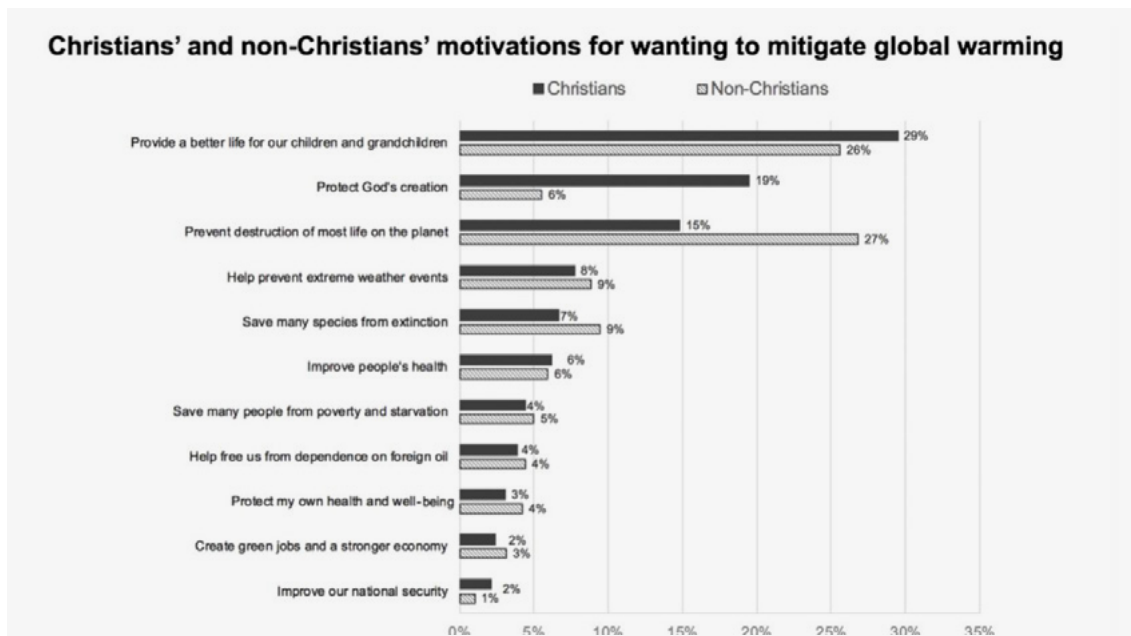
“Whether it’s climate change, whether it’s the coming apocalypse, it doesn’t matter. People are suffering and we’re called to serve them, to love them.”

—
Kyle Meyaard Schaap, YECA



Christian climate activist Anna Jane Joyner and Kyle Meyaard Schaap from [Young Evangelicals for Climate Action](#) encourage us to think about how best to engage faith communities. They remind us that religion has gifted us some of the greatest stories of our time. And there is room for new stories that change how people of faith think about their relationship to the environment.

In fact, research shows Christians and non-Christians are comparably motivated to mitigate global warming in order to provide a better life for our children and grandchildren. But Christians are more likely to be motivated to protect God’s creation, while non-Christians are more likely to prioritize preventing the destruction of most life on the planet. Have a look at the results for yourself:

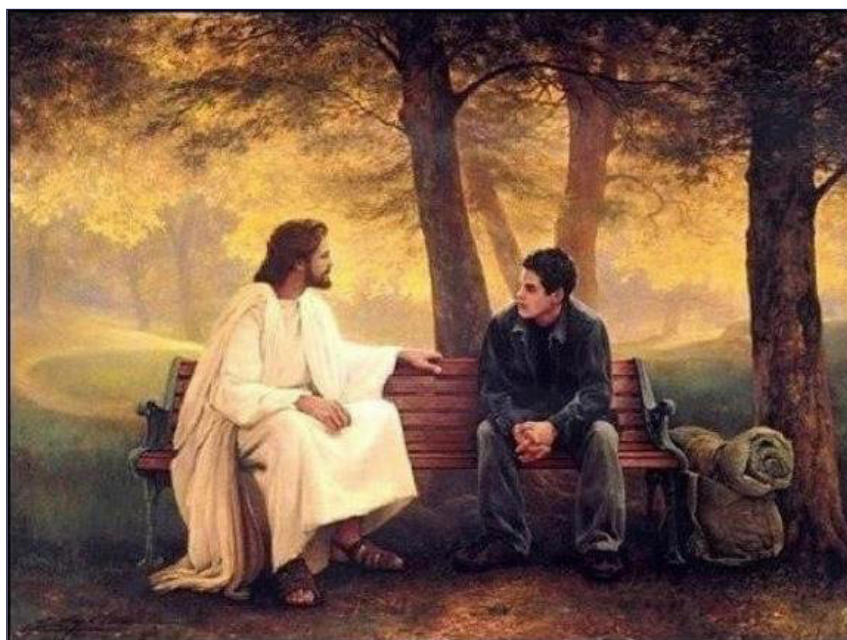


And many faith communities are leading the way. For example:

The World Council of Churches has had climate change as an official program focus since before there was an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The Islamic Declaration on Climate Change was a pan-Islamic case for climate policies made in advance of the Paris Conference of the Parties in 2015.

And even though indigenous peoples around the world have really different cultural and religious inheritances, they forge alliances based on traditions of Earth's sacredness, from Lakota ceremonies at Standing Rock in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline to Pachamama (Mother Earth) politics in South America.



*"No, I'm not talking about Twitter.
I literally want you to follow me"*

Anna Jane Joyner, a climate activist and daughter of an evangelical minister in Alabama, reminds us that faith communities are not monolithic. Nor an impenetrable audience either.

An article in Knowable Magazine notes that whereas "white evangelicals in the United States are more likely to be climate sceptics than people of other religious affiliations" it's also true that "non-white evangelicals in the U.S., and evangelicals in other countries, have a much lower correlation between their religious affiliation and climate scepticism." **In other words: "religious beliefs and political context feed back on one another."**



So we must remember this also means there is no monolithic approach to engaging faith communities.

While stories like the Rapture still loom large for some evangelical groups, younger generations may be more open to integrating ideas of faith and science into their belief systems. Other groups may be more open to an invitation to care for our neighbors who are experiencing the dangerous consequences of the climate crisis. The right approach will likely vary, depending on which faith, denomination, region, and age or other differences are at play.



As with any community, we must remember to forge relationships characterized by trust and accountability. That starts with recognizing that many faith communities are deeply grounded in multi-year, even lifelong “campaigns” to serve their communities in varied ways. So learning about these efforts is an important starting point.

It also means understanding how faith communities already use or program art and media and adapting to that.

Finally, it means understanding that the relationships fostered in faith communities are profound, exploring a person’s most core beliefs, wrestling with one’s innermost emotions and deepest fears. Faith-based relationships are often cultivated over the long-term, so an approach wherein media teams jump in and jump out may not work.

We share these set of questions from artist and activist Mackie Alston:

- What is your wildest dream for your film with communities of faith?
- Name one particularly exciting opportunity for your film with people of faith.
- Get specific. Who do you mean by communities of faith?
- Name one obstacle you foresee with you or your film to working with communities of faith.
- Think about moving from transactional to relational partnerships.

CONSERVATIVES AND RURAL COMMUNITIES

FIND COMMON GROUND THROUGH NARRATIVES THAT DEPOLITICIZE CLIMATE CHANGE

“How do we bridge those cultural gaps that prevent us from talking with one another?”

—
Lynette Wallworth, Artist & Director



The state of politics in the U.S. has had the unfortunate consequence of making some perceive concern for the climate or the environment as a liberal cause, despite the fact that this hasn't traditionally been a partisan debate. According to the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication (CCC), [the data shows](#) that the majority of Americans, 65%, fall somewhere in the middle, holding complex and nuanced perspectives on the environment. In other words, the story is not so black and white as it may seem.

In fact, the CCC found there are nine different types of Americans. (You can find out more about them here: www.apnorc.org/PDFs/Global%20Warming/12-2015%20Segmentation%20Report_D10_DTP%20Formatted_v2b-1b.pdf)

And although rural communities are made up of people who care deeply about the land, whose social networks are intimately tied to it, and who are already seeing the negative consequences of the climate crisis, the climate movement has nonetheless had only marginal success engaging with rural people.

“Rural communities face particular geographic and demographic obstacles in responding to and preparing for climate change risks. In particular, physical isolation, limited economic diversity, and higher poverty rates, combined with an aging population, increase the vulnerability of rural communities. Systems of fundamental importance to rural populations are already stressed by remoteness and limited access.”

—
From the [National Climate Assessment](#)

Special interests and lobbyists then take advantage of the state of affairs to deepen divides in ways that benefit the industry.

The fossil fuel industry, for example, has a history of denying climate change as human-caused – they used the phrase “the science isn't conclusive” to seed doubt. But they now all admit humans are causing climate change. However the damage was done, the well was poisoned re: public opinion. But it doesn't have to be this way.

And sometimes, we need to partner with the people we've been fighting. That's something Peter Byck of Arizona State University's School of Sustainability and the Cronkite School of Journalism has been thinking about. He explains that the fossil fuel industry has the largest carbon risk – and therefore the highest motivation to draw down atmospheric CO₂. At the same time, our soils are dangerously devoid of carbon, the building block for all soil life.

“We’ve been working with the fossil fuels folks, showing them that nature is the best way for them to drawdown carbon, to slow down the climate crisis, if they truly want to help. And farmers are their best hope for getting all the carbon in the air, where its wreaking havoc, down into the ground, where it is sorely needed.”

—
Peter Byck



Peter explains that through efforts like these, the farmers will be incentivized by fossil fuel funding (companies buying carbon storage from the farmers) to draw down enormous amounts of carbon and store it in their soils. This will regenerate not only the soils but the farmers’ incomes, their lives, and their rural communities, as well as cleaning up the water that flows to our cities.

So... there is an opportunity to deepen engagement with conservative and rural communities.

Research conducted by the [CCC supports this](#). It found that while Democrats are more likely than Republicans to favor policies intended to curb greenhouse gas emissions in the United States, such as funding research for clean energy and regulating carbon dioxide emissions, these policies nonetheless each enjoy at least 50 percent support from both parties.

YOUTH & SCHOOLS

CULTIVATE YOUTH (AND THEIR PARENTS) BY FOSTERING A SENSE OF CURIOSITY AND AGENCY

Young people in the U.S. are already concerned about the climate crisis. A [Gallup poll](#) found that 70% of young people (18-24 years old) surveyed were concerned compared to 62% of adults (35 to 54) and 56% of older adults (55+). And as is evident from the activities of the Sunrise Movement, Our Children's Movement, and Zero Hour, young people are engaged.

[This short film from Dazed](#) offers a useful glimpse into the global youth climate movement: its fearless work, how youth are staying connected, and their/our mutual love of cats.



Sunrise Movement activist Alex O'Keefe reflected on growing up in the South in a home that was repeatedly flooded by hurricanes. Every time it rained, a leaky hole in his family's ceiling got bigger and bigger. He felt like his mom wanted him to just ignore the hole. For him, the same thing is happening with the climate movement: "Kids see the hole in the entire system ... everyone wants to tell us that it's not going to fall apart." So, he argues, we urgently need to give kids confidence to address that hole.

"Youth are too young to be disillusioned. They need leadership opportunities, and to learn the history of successful organizing movements."

— Alex O'Keefe, Sunrise Movement





After suffering asthma flare-ups during the Paradise wildfires, 14-year-old Alexandria Villasenor relocated to New York, where she began conducting school strikes in front of the UN every week with Fridays for the Future. She's going on 32 weeks! Now she's launched [Earth Uprising](#), an initiative to get more youth involved in climate action and create an Allies Network to bring more parents into the mix. As her mother Kristen Hogue said:

"When your child is out there protesting, the first person they're asking to act is you."

In fact, there is research showing just how powerful youth voices can be.

Kyle Meyaard Schaap from the Young Evangelicals for Climate Action shared [a study in Nature Magazine](#) suggesting that children are the most effective messengers to activate adults on climate issues. One of the reasons, the report explains, is that they tend not to hold the entrenched political ideologies of their parents. Parents also happen to care about what their kids think. Case in point? Kyle was ultimately the one who convinced his parents to care.



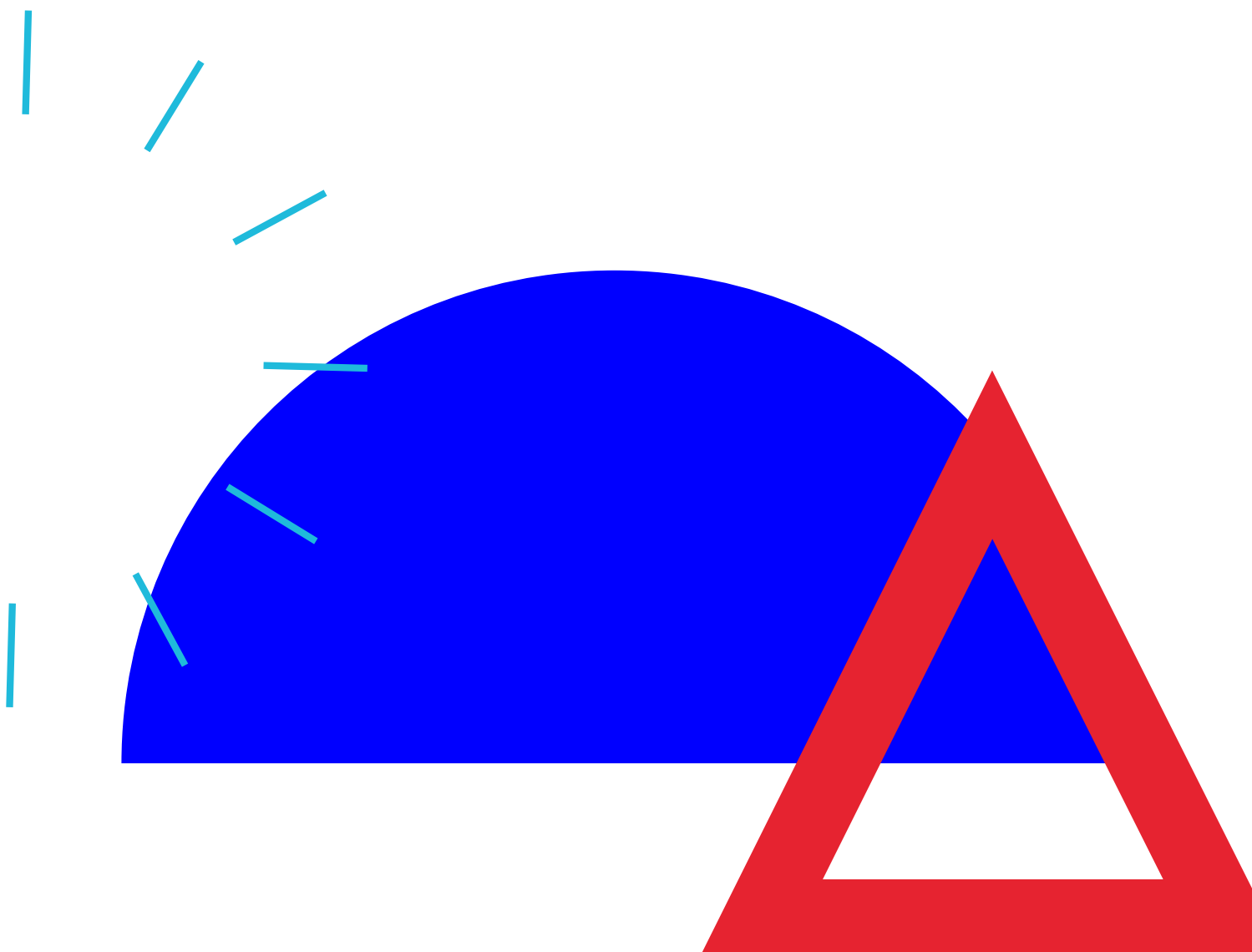
"Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg became famous this spring for launching a student movement to compel adults to take action on climate change. Instead of going to school, Greta has been spending her Fridays in front of the Swedish parliament with a sign reading: 'School Strike for Climate.' Students in more than 70 countries have since followed her lead. **But before she started trying to convince the world to take action, Thunberg worked on her parents. She showered them with facts and showed them documentaries. 'After a while, they started listening to what I actually said,' Thunberg told the Guardian newspaper. 'That's when I realized I could make a difference.'**

And because they tend not to be politically entrenched, research from [the Yale Program on Climate Change Communication](#) research also shows the partisan gap among millennials is smaller. **young people's leadership is essential!**

That said, let's also remember the psychological toll the climate crisis is taking on youth. [\[www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/climate-change-poses-mental-health-risks-children-and-teens\]](https://www.sciencenewsforstudents.org/article/climate-change-poses-mental-health-risks-children-and-teens)



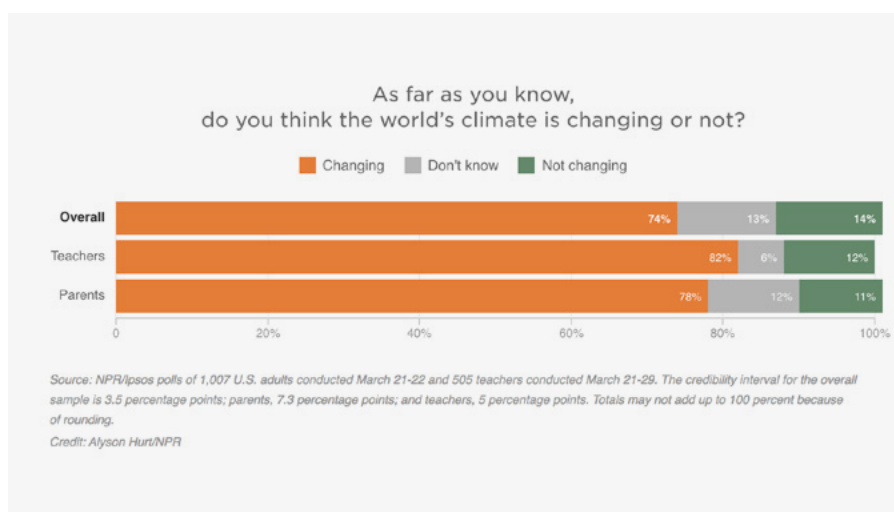
So young people need confidence that there's a movement large enough to tackle this crisis, as Alex put it. In other words, they have to know they are not on their own and that we have their back. Young people need to know the movement will support their initiatives. Young people also need leadership opportunities. And young people need to learn the history of successful organizing movements.



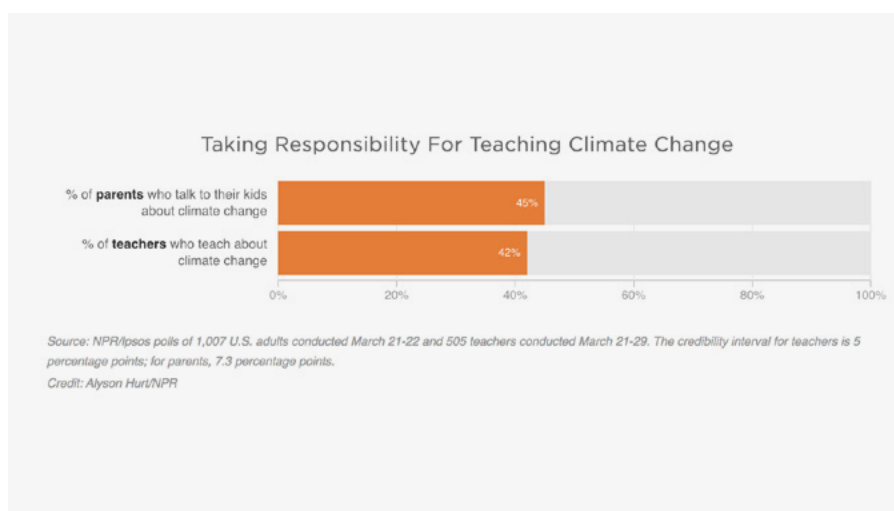
WORKING IN / OUTSIDE OF SCHOOLS

Fran Sterling from [Blueshift Education](#) highlighted the gap between students' desire to learn about climate and the lack of consensus among educational leaders, teachers, and parents about where it can be incorporated across the curriculum and even whether it should be taught in schools. She also noted that there is a deficit of effective educational tools and professional development for connecting climate education and communication to disciplines beyond science.

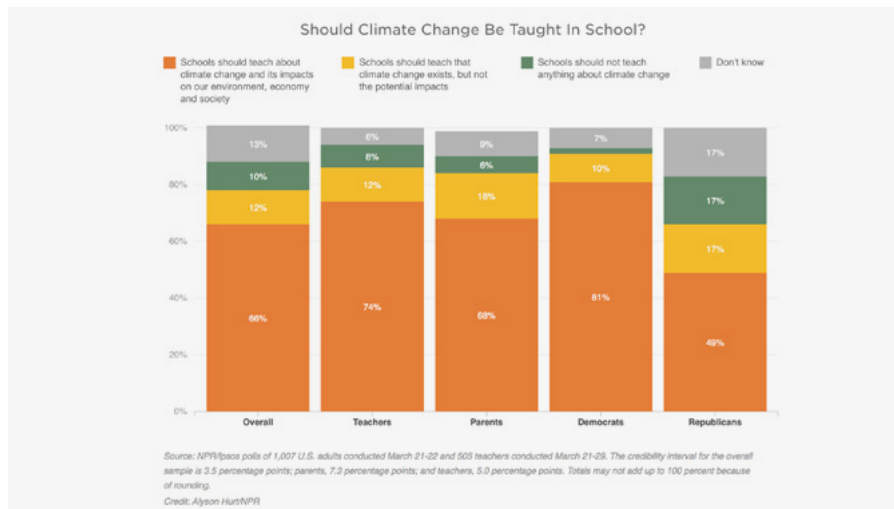
[Research by NPR/Ipsos](#) showed that the majority of people polled believe the climate is changing:



Despite this, less than half of parents or teachers polled talk to children about the climate crisis.

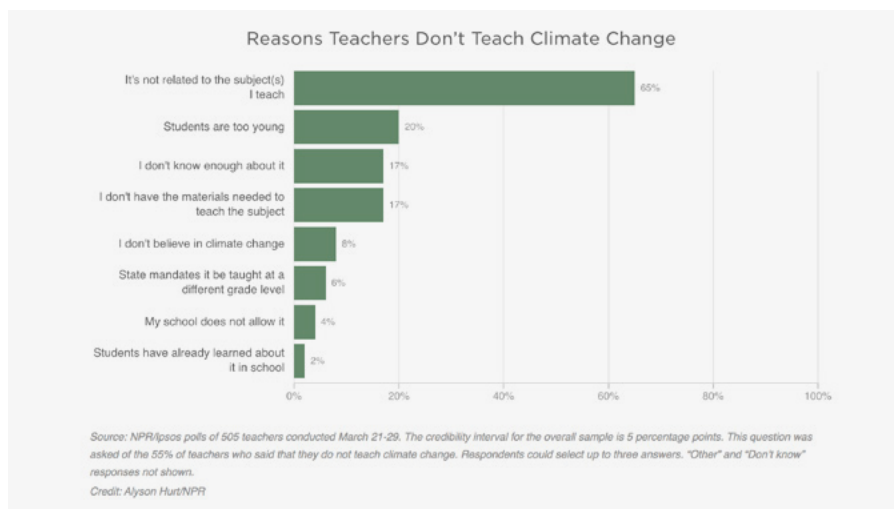


And even though most teachers do not currently teach about climate crisis across disciplines, most parents wish they would. This finding crosses political divides.

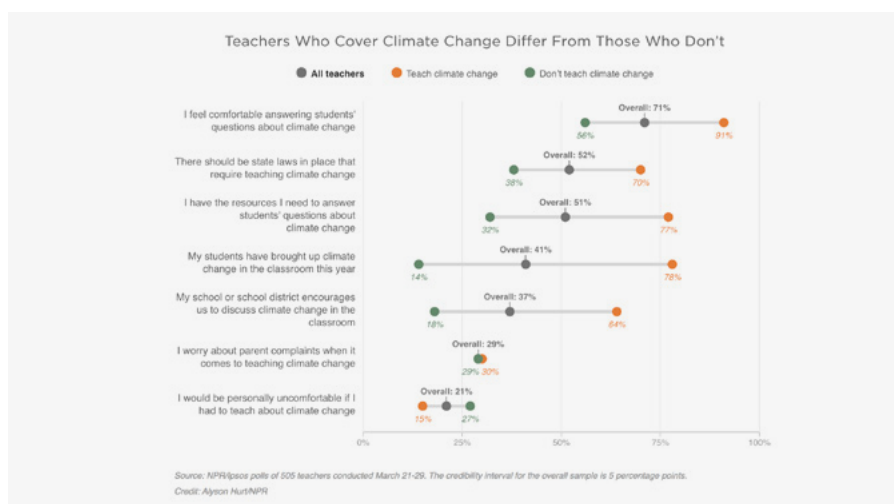


So there is an opportunity gap here. Fran emphasized the role that storytelling can play, offering a powerful tool for educators to pique young people's natural curiosity and inform them about the world around them.

The main reason teachers don't teach about climate is that they don't see it as related to the subjects they teach. But as we all know, it's related to every subject. So it's up to us to make the connection.



In addition, almost a third of the teachers polled said they worry about parents' complaints.



According to Fran, the lesson here is that there is real opportunity to use documentary film and media to strengthen climate education efforts. Creating a human connection to places and people around the world is one of the more effective methods of lifting awareness, deepening empathy, and empowering youth to repair and restore their environment and planet. These human and place connections are also a touchstone and reference point for educators and advocates working towards strengthening and supporting the political will for climate justice and essential policy changes.

Barrier 1 - Local Control: [New Mexico](#), [West Virginia](#), and [Idaho](#) have all faced controversies over the past two years on how they've revised their science standards on the topic of climate change. Arizona released in 2018 [a new draft that eliminates some pieces related to climate change](#).

Barrier 2 - Climate Confusion: Fewer than half of the teachers report any formal instruction in climate science in college yet $\frac{2}{3}$ of these teachers would welcome focused pd on climate change. (Science, 2016)

SOLUTION: Offer opportunity to create a national network of climate narratives to provide ongoing and connected professional development opportunities for all teachers.

One immediate and creative opportunity is to create a pipeline of professional development opportunities using storytelling as a way for all educators to connect and incorporate climate education and climate justice across all disciplines.

Imagine schools where students and educators prioritize and are as fluent in climate literacy as they are with other literacies? How can storytelling and storytellers be at the center of this model?

For climate storytellers and the communities that support them, education is often one of the priority audiences to reach. The challenge ahead is to ensure that the stories live within a network of educational assets that reflect, leverage, and are aligned with the power of the message and its educational potential.

Educational Assets may Include:

- Full curriculum or individual lessons
- Guides - Discussion, Engagement, Professional Development
- Toolkits - instructional materials to do xyz...
- Platforms - full integration of ed content w/ other goals
- You are guiding the learning, deciding on priorities, strengthening partnerships, vetting the content

To learn more about climate education efforts like this, contact:



www.blueshifteducation.com | fran@blueshifteducation.com

CASE STUDY: INVENTING TOMORROW

“People think, ‘I see someone my age doing this, I can do it, too.’ That’s something that really inspires action. People are like, ‘Oh, I could have done this yesterday.’”

—
Sahithi Pingali



Laura Nix began directing her award-winning feature documentary *Inventing Tomorrow* with the question: How can we use film to get issues into the room that people don’t want to think or talk about? Laura chose to follow four teams at the International Science and Engineering Fair. The members included Sahithi Pingali, who lived near a toxic lake in Bangalore, India, and was developing a citizen science water-testing kit and app.



Laura and her team premiered the film at Sundance in 2018. In July 2019 it was broadcast on POV to an estimated audience of 2.5 million, and it has screened at over 70 film festivals, as well as to over 1,000 teachers at the National Science Teachers Association conference in St. Louis. Laura’s team received a grant enabling them to allow any classroom in the U.S. and Canada to screen the film for free. They are fundraising to keep it up.

Now they are leaning into this work to maximize their impact with teachers. This involves: 1) distributing an educational toolkit with lesson plans to the network of teachers they are building, 2) leading a teaching webinar, 3) supporting a citizen science challenge led by Sahithi, 4) STEM mentorship networks, and 5) science town halls.

“Children have the power to tell the moral story best.”

—
Kyle Meyaard Schaap

So remember: when focusing on overlooked audiences from those rooted in faith traditions to those overlooked because of politics or geography, or age, there are a few key ideas to keep in mind.

Good storytellers often have a unique capacity to connect people across differences, especially **when these stories tap into shared values**. You might have a look at this research from the [Opportunity Agenda](#), which recommends using shared values as a starting point in our communications as a way of bridging divides.

We are further ahead **when our stories are about specific problems or solutions**, rather than big concepts like “climate change.” For example: making sure our children and elders can breathe clean air, or that local water is safe to drink, or asking for help protecting farmland from wildfires.

Our movement is also stronger when the **stories we craft are created with input from or in collaboration with the communities we hope to reach**. That’s because our stories will be as diverse as we are and will reflect all the ways we come to and care about the issue.

Having an intended audience in mind from the start of the storytelling process can help 1) avoid political landmines, ensuring we are contributing stories to the climate movement that are effective in reaching new, critical audiences. It can help us 2) consider the ways these audiences consume media to begin with. And it can help us 3) ensure the messengers we work with are trusted by the communities we care about.

Mediamakers don’t need to be accountable to ALL audiences. In fact, many audiences will hate the film and that’s just fine. But most storytellers have experienced deep anxiety about releasing a work to the public and that’s often connected to how the *authenticating audience* will respond. In other words, our responsibility as storytellers can be focused on an identifiable audience who will know if the film has missed the truth in some way, acted irresponsibly, or replicated old and dangerous tropes. To address this, *Love Free or Die* filmmaker Macky Alston recommends an exercise:

“...name one actual living human being who, if that person (and others like them) were affected by your film in the way you would like, you’d die happy. As you craft your film, check in with a handful of folks that fit that profile during the process. Consider them significant members of your impact team and then, when you hit your mark once your film is out and you sense that the change you intended is happening through your film, thank them for the partnership that helped you change the world.”

Try it. Your efforts will likely be better off!

MICRO-TARGETING BY PERSONALITY INSTEAD OF DEMOGRAPHICS?

Do different demographics react differently to Hope / Fear messaging?

Discussion Question 1

The success of microtargeting in recent political battles, and the Yale Program on Climate Change Communications (CCC) research that identified 9 different types of Americans (rather than the left-right binary) when it comes to the climate, suggests that we might consider breaking audiences down into smaller and smaller groups as we think about climate storytelling.

DIFFERENT DEMOGRAPHICS



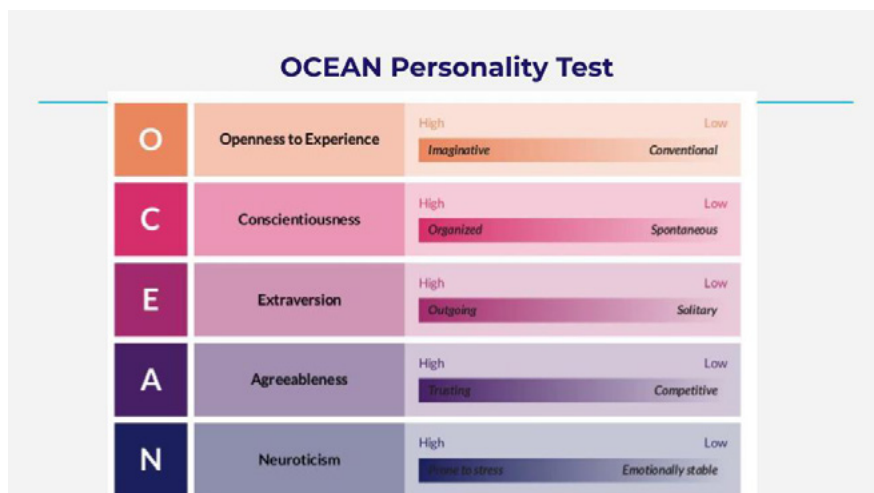
- The “white male effect” (WME) refers to the observed tendency of white males to be less concerned with all manner of risk than are women and minorities.

The CCC research established, for example, that conservative white men are the most unbothered by risks of all kinds including climate risks. Conversely, both women and men of colour across the U.S. report much higher levels of concern. In fact, women of colour top the charts for their climate awareness.

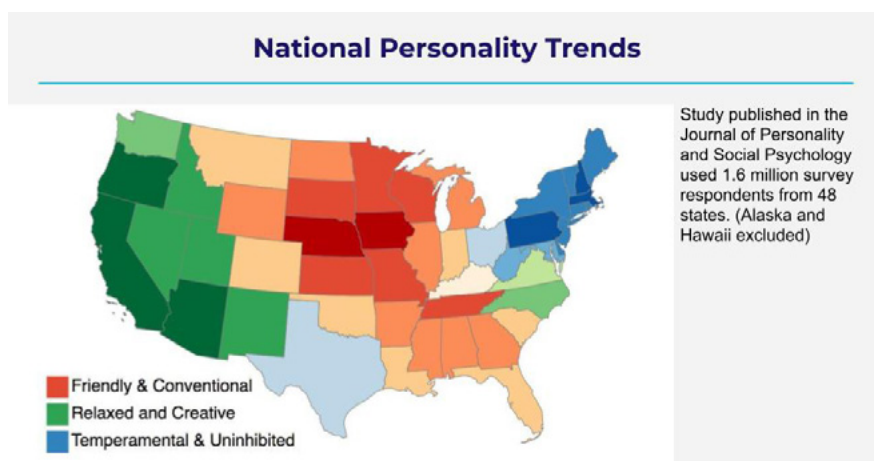
These developments lead us to some important questions about how to be most effective in climate storytelling:

- Does real/perceived proximity to the negative consequences of the climate crisis shift the kinds of stories an audience needs in order to get more active and engaged in the issue?
- Should we be thinking about audience segmentation by personality rather than demographics?
- How do we know when a certain emotional chord in a story will work and when it won't?

Cambridge Analytica whistleblower Chris Wylie has spoken extensively about targeting audiences using the Big 5 Personality Traits: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism (OCEAN). These categories were developed using Facebook data.



It has been well established that personality traits on this scale are not evenly distributed across the U.S. Either because of nature or nurture, they cluster -as can be seen on these maps.



According to the scale, the East Coast is more neurotic and the West coast is more Open. The center, on the other hand, is more agreeable.

Personality or psychology-based campaigning is an emerging model.

For Ali Abbas, a campaigner with Greenpeace India, which held a workshop with the Mindworks program mentioned earlier in this report, “considering psychology has forced him to rethink the traditional confrontational model that the office had been using to engage audiences for years, which often relied on shock and a dramatic element.” He noted:

“We have been doing certain things very repetitively, which was not making an impact impression on the audience or volunteers.” So they are now trying to provide more inspirational messages and engage their audiences/networks in deeper conversations.

The challenge with this, they note, is that each campaign and message has to be tailored. Thus it doesn't necessarily lend itself to easy replication or reproduction. [To read more about the model: <https://mobilisationlab.org/stories/mindworks-greenpeace-uses-psychology-for-better-climate-campaigns/>]

Might Fear narratives quite literally work better in some parts of the country than others, and on some individuals than others, regardless of their politics, jobs, or gender? Might stories that hit other emotional notes work better for other types of individuals?

We may not have definitive answers, but these questions are well worth exploring.

DIFFERENT PERSONALITIES



- Personality tests: I love them, but are they real?
- Micro-targeting: only for the bad guys?

IS LOCAL THE NEW GLOBAL?

WE NEED LOCAL STORIES AND LOCAL IMPACT AS WELL AS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

“People who are apathetic about climate change will only begin to pay attention to the problem if they see what extreme warming would mean for the people and places they care most about. They also need to see that it is not too late to avoid disaster.”

—
Leo Barasi *“The Climate Majority: Action and Apathy in An Age of Populism”*



When dealing with a problem as massive and all-encompassing as the climate crisis, it can be easy to try and meet it with stories that are equally all-encompassing, ambitious, and global. There is of course a place for these kinds of stories. But sometimes it's the stories that hit closer to home that are most effective.

In other words, stories that meet people where they are and reflect our lived experiences are powerful stories.

“First, we need to challenge the argument that climate change will overwhelmingly be a problem only for people in other countries. To get more swings to pay attention in the first place, climate change should instead be described in terms of its impact on the life they know. The swings, who don't reject climate science but still don't think much about climate change, generally have no clear understanding of how it is likely to affect them, their family and their community.”

—
Leo Barasi, *“The Climate Majority: Action and Apathy in An Age of Populism”*



“How do we build bridges for people to come together and have difficult conversations about what we want our future to look like? One of the most powerful things we have seen is using film as a tool to organize.”

—
Jeff Orlowski, Exposure Labs



CONNECT STORIES TO LOCAL SOLUTIONS FOR MEANINGFUL, SCALABLE CHANGE

Similarly, it can be easy to think about media impact and engagement campaigns on a global or national scale. However, using storytelling locally—whether it’s a screening and in-person discussion or a broadcast, VR experience, or podcast that connects to solutions in a listener’s neighborhood or town—can also drive lasting change. It’s a strategy that should not be overlooked by privileging the big, national efforts only. And the local can also be scaled elsewhere.

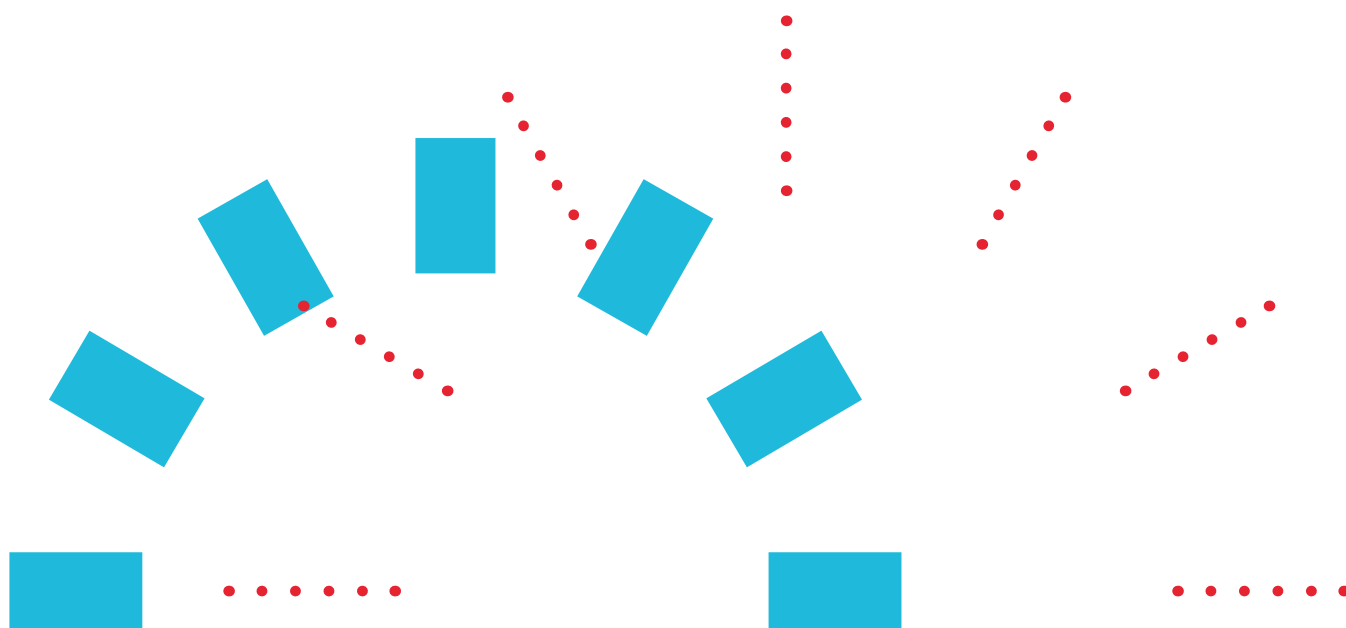
CASE STUDY: CHASING CORAL

Jeff Orlowski, founder of Exposure Labs and director of *Chasing Coral*, shared how the film was the centerpiece of a partnership with Conservation Voters of South Carolina (CVSC) that aimed to elevate the need for clean energy with new audiences in the state. [The Dear South Carolina tour](#) saturated 9 counties with screenings, creating a visible groundswell of support that influenced the passage of the Energy Freedom Act in May 2019. You can read more about the campaign’s local deep dives in the Chasing Coral case study, located at the back of the Impact Field Guide: impactguide.org.

CASE STUDY: WATER WARRIORS

Michael Premo’s short film *Water Warriors* was also a lesson in local engagement and impact. The film was the centerpiece of a transmedia project that included showings of the film, discussions and presentations from community organisations, a touring multimedia exhibit with photos, and regular FaceTime tours of the exhibit in order to connect communities in real time. The impact campaign used many strategic distribution pathways, including film festivals and in-flight entertainment. However, he notes that what proved most impactful was embedding the film as a direct action training tool with indigenous communities who were campaigning to block Transmountain Expansion into their territories. This was a project that community members were ultimately able to successfully shut down. You can learn more about the campaign’s local engagement by reading the case study in Chapter 5.7 of the Impact Field Guide: <https://impactguide.org/making-and-moving-shorts/case-studies/>.

Water Warriors will be premiering on POV in fall 2019.



WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT MEDIA IMPACT? FROM THE CLIMATE ADVOCACY LAB

Lessons from the field (and theater)

- **SATURATE SCREENINGS IN KEY STATES AND DISTRICTS.**

Exposure Labs used *“Chasing Coral”* as a way to facilitate conversation around and **build support for climate and clean energy policies in South Carolina**. And it worked! A targeted state legislator changed his position on the **state’s cap on net metering**, after hearing from dozens of energized, mobilized constituents. Next stop: Georgia!

- **POWERFUL LOCAL IMPACT STORIES + AUTHENTIC LOCAL VOICES (CAN) = VIRAL VIEWERSHIP!**

The Idaho Nature Conservancy leveraged insights from social science around how to communicate on climate with conservatives to create a **5-part video series**. One video on impacts to the steelhead fishery generated over 13,000 views through organic sharing.

- **SCREENING FILMS FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERS AMPLIFIES IMPACT.**

Participant Media used the release of *“Merchants of Doubt”* to train journalists across the country on why **“false balance”** on climate change is damaging and dangerous. And screenings of *“An Inconvenient Sequel”* for key venture capital and corporate leaders in partnership with CERES generated conversations about the urgency and importance of private investment in renewable energy projects.

- **SHOW SOLUTIONS TO FILL THE “HOPE GAP.”**

The Redford Center’s film *“Happening”* has partnered with national advocacy organizations like Citizens Climate Lobby and Interfaith Power and Light to show that renewables are not just the *future* of energy, but the energy of *here and now*. Next up, a partnership with the Kansas Climate + Energy Project to **build support for progressive solar and distributed generation policies** in the state.

- **EVALUATE YOUR IMPACT WITH AUDIENCE SURVEYS.**

Simple tear-off survey sheets allowed **Working Films** to better understand who was attending the screenings of their films (e.g. whether they were actually reaching new audiences) and measure their impact on public understanding of complex issues, like **coal ash**.

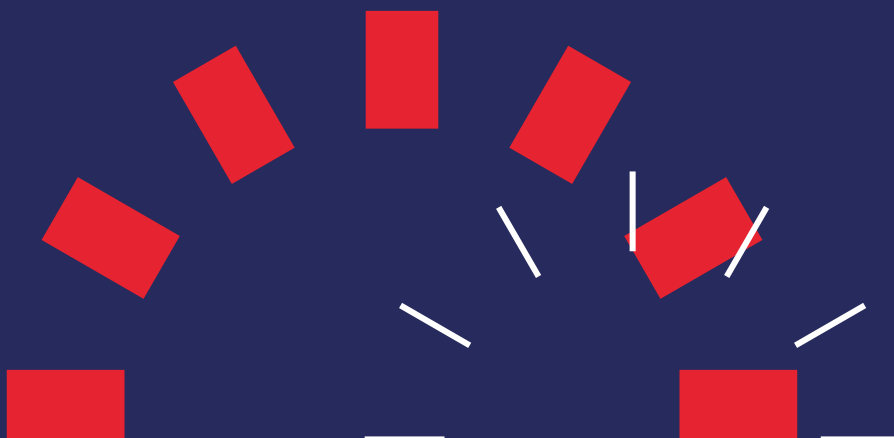
SECTION 4.

JUST

STORYTELLING



First **Listen**: to a tour of Montana's four major ecosystems including birdsong on the spring prairie, gurgling geysers in Yellowstone National Park, the solitary call of the wolf and finally the roar of the mighty Yellowstone River at the point where it drops 308 feet at the lower falls.



HOW DO WE ENSURE NON-EXTRACTIVE MEDIA PRACTICES?

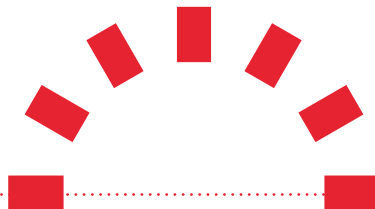
If we want a just and healthy world where every one of us can thrive, we have to build it in a just and healthy way. The process is as important as the project. Rather, without a just process you may not end up with an effective project.

Accountable, non-extractive mediamaking models are those that reflect, nourish, and strengthen the individuals and communities whose stories they represent.

These models foster more accountable relationships between media makers and participant-protagonists. This means media makers do not parachute in or invade communities to get the story. Instead, care and concern for the emotional, physical, and spiritual wellbeing of the participant-protagonists, impacted communities, and audiences are a priority.

These models encourage media makers and their teams to dismantle systems of oppression rather than uphold them in the way we make media. This means they deal explicitly with structural inequality within the making and participation in media activities, from the costs and barriers to entry to compensation and accessibility.

These models also build pathways so that impacted communities can tell their own stories, too, on their own terms. They recognize that not all communities are impacted by the issues in the same ways and they are attentive to the implications of this in the storytelling and outreach.



FURTHER READING:

We recommend three sections of the Impact Field Guide:

—

“Filmmaking as Emancipatory Practice in the Impact Field Guide

<https://impactguide.org/planning/filmmaking-as-emancipatory-practice/>

Sustainable and Equitable?

<https://impactguide.org/impact-in-action/sustainable-and-equitable/>

Consider Your Subjects, which addresses trauma-informed care in filmmaking:

<https://impactguide.org/impact-in-action/consider-your-subjects/>

—

We also recommend the **Story Shift** guidelines developed by Working Films:

<https://www.workingfilms.org/projects/storyshift/>

TIME FOR CO-CREATION WITHIN COMMUNITIES?



Co-creation is concerned with accountable and just practice. Katerina Cizek offers insights from the [COLLECTIVE WISDOM](#) report developed at the Co-Creation Studio at MIT Open Doc Lab.

“Co-creation offers alternatives to a single-author vision, and involves a constellation of media production methods, frameworks, and feedback systems. In co-creation, projects emerge from a process, and evolve from within communities and with people, rather than for or about them. Co-creation also spans across and beyond disciplines and organizations, and can also involve non-human or beyond human systems. The concept of co-creation reframes the ethics of who creates, how, and why. Our research shows that co-creation interprets the world, and seeks to change it, through a lens of equity and justice”.

The study synthesizes a few best practices and practical lessons from the field. Co-creation:

- **Begins with deep listening**, fostering dialogue and learning rather than coming in with preset agendas.
- Involves **identifying common principles** and negotiating terms and benefit agreements on individual, organizational, and community levels. These terms are determined beforehand to ensure equity and inclusion, by clearly spelling out decision-making, ownership, and governance issues.
Involves **balancing the project’s process with the outcomes**, rather than pre-defining relationships and processes solely by the deliverables.
- **Fosters diverse, alternative forms of narrative structures.** Co-creators can shed linear, conventional formats, and embrace non-linear, open-ended, ongoing, multi-vocal and circular, spiral narrative forms.
- **Centers healing, safety, and sustainability** by employing trauma-informed practices. Co-created media projects are deeply connected to the well-being (and transformation) of the participants and community rather than repeating and reproducing trauma for the benefit of audiences or end-users. As such, ritual often replaces performance in co-creative practices.
- Both **allows for, and demands, appropriate forms of leadership, language, and technology.**
- **Provides community access** to technological and media digital literacy as core to many co-creative projects.
- Demands **alternative models of funding, evaluation, and impact.**
- Involves always being **iterative, circling back** (rather than ploughing ahead).

Kat’s write-up about presenting the Co-creation findings, can be found here:

<https://cocreationstudio.mit.edu/collective-wisdom-at-the-first-ever-climate-story-lab/>

CONVENE A CLIMATE STORY LAB OF YOUR OWN?

All of the lessons and insights covered in the sections above were a part of, or emerged out of, the Climate Story Lab in July 2019. Over the course of the week, we heard from researchers, storytellers, mediamakers, funders, and more. We drew on the lessons shared to collectively workshop each of twelve media projects that focused on the climate crisis, all aiming to be released within the next year. We each committed ourselves to care for these projects and recognized our own stakes in their success. And we worked hard to ensure every single one of them left that space stronger, better equipped, and more confident and able to have a real and lasting impact.

The depth, compassion, and power of the conversations we had with one another is a testament to what's possible when we come together, roll up our sleeves, and commit to loving practice for a shared future that EVERYONE can thrive in.

But one convening is not enough. We want to encourage replication of the Climate Story Lab model for every corner of the planet.

With that in mind, we would like to share our resources with anyone who wants to hold their own Climate Story Lab - either a local, regional or national event and we are working on a tool kit for climate conversations to share with you all.

In the meantime you'd be more than welcome to work off this report out to inspire content and debate. Of course it ain't what you do its the way that you do it and here we offer our top line thoughts about what made our event humm along and what outcomes you might likely get from yours.

WE THINK THESE ARE CORE INGREDIENTS IN THE RECIPE:

- **Start by acknowledging the real grief** in the room, welcome it in the space and remind everyone to be broad-shouldered and supportive.
- **Honor the power of story** and offer examples of the powerful ways stories have already made change in the world.
- **Remind participants that we need new stories**, visionary stories that give credible hope.
- **Always center climate justice** in the conversation
- **Ensure the people in the room reflect the broad movement** we wish to build, prioritizing the realities of those who are already most impacted by the climate crisis.
- **Create a space where everyone feels welcome.** What this looks like will depend on who is in the room. But we recommend the following as a starting point:
 - Give people the opportunity to introduce themselves so everyone knows who is in the room (keep it brief and based on personality, not their CV)
 - Don't assume, ask what pronouns people prefer to use
 - Pay your respects, this may mean an indigenous land acknowledgement or ancestors that allowed you to gather in this way
 - Structure in a way that makes it easy for people to interact, even if they are the less verbal type
 - Encourage curiosity over judgement when strong opinions emerge
- Invite/**curate a list of cross-sector allies** to attend so that the space joins storytellers, mediamakers, and artists alongside researchers, writers, funders, strategists, advocacy partners, communications staff and others.
- **Make sure everyone in the room can actively support** the projects through the work they do and/or the experiences they can bring to bear to inform and deepen one another's projects.

- **Call people in to foster a loving, honest, and challenging space** where everyone is invited to be their best selves.
- **Enforce an active-engagement rule.** Ask everyone to shut those laptops and every presenter deserves undivided attention.
- **Foster a collaborative and non-competitive space** part of rising to the challenge of the climate crisis, is challenging the competitive mindset that current systems of grant making or content commissioning encourage. Let's be self conscious in challenging that. (For more on this, read this piece by the Narrative Initiative on creating a collaborative space: <https://narrativeinitiative.org/blog/three-lessons-for-creating-powerful-collaborative-gatherings/>)
- **Bring nature into the conversations** (Each day we listened to a sound from nature: the [dusky gopher frog](#) now an endangered species with only 100 pairs left, primarily at one site in Mississippi and the call of the tricolored bat, out of adults' auditory range but many 13 year old girls can hear them.)
- Offer opportunities throughout the lab to **create a community of learners** - this can include moments of silent reflection as well as exchanging ideas and having fun together.

Whereas this Lab held up to 90 people each day of the week, these do not necessarily need to be so big to also be effective. Doc Society has experimented with smaller groups in similar models with great success. We encourage you to work within your own capacity.

LAB HIGHLIGHT: ENGAGING ACTIVITIES

Fran Sterling of BlueShift modeled powerful facilitation during the Climate Story Lab to illustrate the power of, well... educational resources that support effective facilitation. Here's how she did it:

She asked people to reconnect with their inner student by asking us to remember our favorite teacher. We spent a few moments in small groups, sharing a bit about how formative that teacher was for us. These short conversations reminded us of how powerful the teacher - student relationship can be. [Alternative prompts: Share about a time when you first connected with nature. OR Share about a film that you really connected with.]

From this place she led us into a conversation centered around sharing best practices for how to use film in classrooms. She suggested, for example, offering cut-down versions of a film to make it accessible in multiple contexts.

Because the group was already so comfortable with one another by the time she led the session, she felt good diving right in. But in contexts where this is not yet the case, she suggests having participants do a bit of individual writing before they chat.

For those who are interested in this: [Doc Academy](#) is an initiative led by Blueshift and Doc Society to offer curricula designed around short clips from a growing library of documentary films.

SUGGESTED PARTICIPANTS TO BRING ALONGSIDE MEDIAMAKERS AND ARTISTS:

- Climate scientists
- Local, national and international agencies (United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF) working to organise around climate
- Digital and communications teams
- Journalists
- Economists
- Political strategists
- Advocacy orgs ([Climate Advocacy Lab](#), [Citizens' Climate Lobby](#))
- Grassroots organizers (Sunrise Movement);
- Researchers & Academics
- Funders and philanthropy
- Impact producers and impact strategists

OUTCOMES YOU CAN EXPECT:

- **Magic happens!** Really.
- **We loved up these projects** with tons of deep insights about the stories themselves, about how they might land in different communities, about creative distribution strategies and other ways to reach new audiences or deepen impact, and key opportunities were highlighted.
- **We made connections** between individuals and groups, collaborations were sparked between the projects and teams themselves, resources were offered and shared, expertise was offered within and after the Lab.
- **A renewed focus and energy was born** of the solidarity and generosity generated by individuals in the space.

We encourage you to take a look at our resources and reach out with questions about how you can lead a Climate Story Lab of your own. Trust us: it's worth it.

THANK YOU TO ALL OUR PARTNERS

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FURTHER RESOURCES:

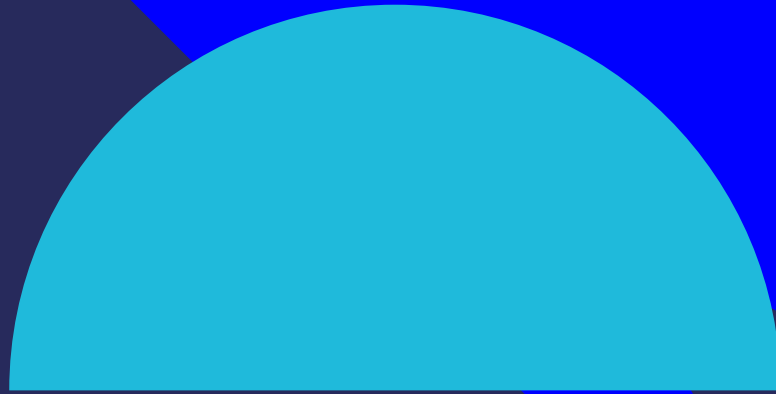
- Climate / natural resources film impact case studies available now on the [Impact Field Guide](#) including:
 - *Blackfish*
 - *Bag it*
 - *Chasing Ice*
 - *Gasland*
 - *The End of the Line*
 - *Trouble the Water*
 - *Unearthed*
 - *Virunga*
 - *An Inconvenient Truth*
 - *Deep Down*
 - *Everything's Cool*
 - *Food Inc*
 - *No Impact Man*
- Liz Georges from The Nature Conservancy shared [Let's Talk Climate](#), a new ebook from TNC that helps people have more connected climate conversations
- StoryShift
- Doc Society's [Safe + Secure](#) guide to help media teams identify and address risks.
- Yale's CCC research
- Climate Advocacy Lab
- Project Drawdown
- Mindworks Part 1 and Mindworks Part 2
- Caty Borum Chattoo from the [Center for Media & Social Impact](#) 's forthcoming book *The Laughter Effect*
- [Doc Academy](#), an initiative led by Blueshift and Doc Society to offer curricula designed around short clips from a growing library of documentary films
- Working Film's [Just Recovery initiative](#)
- \$500 M [Beyond Carbon campaign](#) for which they are actively looking for ways to integrate the work of the filmmakers and storytellers
- Fundraising resources: [Media Impact Funders](#), [IDA](#), and [Foundation Center](#)
- [Recommended Reading List](#)

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