

**The Future of Manufactured Environmental Activism in the United States**  
Engaging People to Become Activists for a Biodiverse, Healthy, and Climate  
Secure Planet

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of Liberal Arts  
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Abstract:

Environmental activism is a well-defined pursuit, but it can also be intimidating. I know this from personal experience in environmental activism from 2016-2021. In this thesis, I will explore the potential of a new form of activism, one that is “manufactured” to increase public acceptance, interest, and support for a healthier environment. In this context, “manufactured” refers to the process of building something out of raw materials which, in the case of “manufactured environmental activism” is a good thing. With education, support, and guidance - with manufactured environmental activism - anyone who is passionate about the environment can make an impact. Anyone can gain the skills and knowledge and develop the network they need to turn their passion into something that has power. This thesis will provide evidence that manufactured environmental activism is already taking place and that this new approach is well positioned to be integrated by the modern climate movement. My work for a nonprofit organization helped to shape my current thinking about manufactured activism as a concept. I intend for this thesis to add to the developing conversation among activists and the public of how environmental activism is changing in the United States, especially as a result of climate change and Covid, and in the context of a recent switch in political leadership.

Keywords: Activism, Activist, Climate Change, Ecological Literacy, Environment, Environmental Activism, Environmental Activist, Healthy Environment, Intersectional Environmentalism, Multidimensional Activism, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Manufactured Activism, Science Literacy

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## **Foreword**

My father is from Toluca, Mexico, and came to the United States when he was sixteen. He finally gained his citizenship when I was about five years old. Since then, he has returned home each year. Each time he tells me about how much has changed. How disasters and pollution are destroying the place where he once lived, and his family still lives. Each time he brings me gifts that represent his childhood in Mexico. My favorite is the Güiro Frog.

For my father, the Güiro Frog is a reminder of the time when frogs were plentiful, a time before pollution and habitat destruction. A Güiro is a Latin American instrument that uses a rubbing stick and an object with notches to produce a rasping sound. A type of idiophone, the Güiro has origins in Africa and the Caribbean. In Mexico, this instrument has, over time, taken on the shape of a frog. Now they are a common trinket, even in the United States. The ones I have are old and beautiful; I treasure them greatly.

When I rub the stick along the spine of one of my Güiro frogs, it is easy to imagine a real frog in your hand. The sound depends on the size of the instrument. The tiny ones make a high-pitched chirp while the large ones let out a low noise that, to me, sounds almost ominous. During the summers of my childhood in Wisconsin, our yard used to be covered in frogs after rainstorms. I couldn't walk without almost stepping on one. At night, they were so loud it sounded like an army of them. But as the years went by, the rains brought fewer frogs. Then, one year, they were gone. Confused and worried, I took my Güiros of all sizes and lined them up on my porch. One by one, I rubbed the stick over each of their backs, thinking the wild frogs would hear the sound and come back. They never did.

Eventually, I accepted that there were no frogs at my house anymore. The Güiro frog has lost its life; I see it now as an outdated piece of art; a memorial of what used to be, of what is now gone from my father's hometown and from my childhood. Today, I understand what happened - and what continues to happen. The frogs disappeared because of climate change, a devastating loss happening in backyards around the world.

I hope for the day when I can play with my wooden frogs again and smile. I hope for the day when I will hear the real frogs again.

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*“...If there’s one lesson I think we as a country are repeating until we learn, it’s that community and collective good is our best shot through our greatest challenges- way more than discorded acts of “rugged individualism” and the bootstrap propaganda we’ve been spoon-fed since birth. Individualism is inadequate for planetary forces like climate change and global pandemics, no less societal ones like healthcare, economic inequity, and racism.*

*But WE, as a collective, can confront them.”*

- Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, ‘22

## **Introduction**

Environmental activism is a well-defined pursuit, but personal experience has taught me that it can also be an intimidating one. In this thesis, I will explore the potential of a new form of activism, one that is “manufactured” to increase public acceptance, interest, and support for a healthier environment. In this context, “manufactured” refers to the process of building something out of raw materials which, in the case of “manufactured environmental activism” is a good thing. (I recognize that the term may take on a negative connotation; please refer to my definitions.) With education, support, and guidance - with manufactured environmental activism - anyone who is passionate about the environment can make an impact. Those interested can gain the skills and knowledge and develop the network they need to turn their passion into something that has power.

I will provide evidence that manufactured environmental activism is not only already taking place, but also delve deeper into why this new approach is so well positioned to be integrated by the modern climate movement. In the first section, I will discuss the need for environmental activism in general, the essential attributes of a successful environmental activist, and where there is room for improvement. I will also include critiques by several scholars.

Second, I will profile activists and environmental defenders who use public outreach strategies that are essential to the success of manufactured environmental activism. These profiles were created through a review of public interviews and published articles. I will also analyze how other environmental activists work with popular media to influence public perception of environmental activism.

Third, I will examine how environmental activists respond to and are affected by U.S. environmental politics. This will be done through the discussion of recent events such as the Leaders of Climate Summit and COP26; both of which have had a large activist response.

Finally, I will discuss my experience as a World Wildlife Fund Panda Ambassador. My work for this organization helped to shape my current thinking about manufactured activism as a concept. I will also discuss opportunities provided by this new approach as well as potential problems and pitfalls, and future trends. I intend for this thesis to add to the developing conversation among activists and the public of how environmental activism is changing in the United States, especially as a result of climate change and Covid, and in the context of a recent switch in political leadership.

## **Keywords**

*This is to be used as a glossary of terms for the reader and includes a mixture of dictionary or other referenced definitions and my personal definitions. Note: OED refers to the Oxford English Dictionary*

### **Activism**

#### **OED Definition:**

The term “activism”, as used in philosophy beginning in 1907, is defined as “the theory or belief that truth is arrived at through action or active striving after the spiritual life (“activism, 2021).”

The term evolved in meaning over time to center around the individual.

### **Activist**

#### **OED Definition:**

The activist “advocates or engages in action, *spec.* that undertakes vigorous political or social campaigning (“activist” 2021)”.

### **Environment**

#### **OED Definition:**

“The area surrounding a place or thing; the environs, surroundings, or physical context. (“Environment” 2021)”

#### **My Definition:**

It is the world around us. It includes natural, public, and private spaces, each affected by climate, and biodiversity.

## **Environmental Activism**

### **OED Definition:**

“Activism with the aim of protecting the natural environment, esp. from the harmful effects of human activity (“Environmental Activism” 2021).”

## **Environmental Activist**

### **OED Definition:**

“A person who engages in environmental activism (“Environmental Activist” 2021).”

### **My Definition:**

In the 21st century there have been several iterations and labels for an individual who is an “environmental activist.” This is a person who seeks the betterment of the natural world in relation to people, landscapes, seascapes, and wildlife. They do this through aiding these causes with active participation, research, writing, and activating others to want to make change. There are also several categories of environmental activists, among them animal rights activists, climate change activists, and conservation activists.

## **Indigenous Knowledge (Traditional Ecological Knowledge)**

### **Definition from *Original Instructions: Original Teachings for a Sustainable Future*:**

“Indigenous Peoples have millennia-old Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) that are tribally and geographically specific. Within these knowledge systems or teaching bundles of Indigenous Knowledge is Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). This “TEK” or native science holds the memories, observations, stories, understandings, insights, and practices for how to follow the

natural laws of a particular place. TEK is often encoded in the stories and songs of the oral tradition and within particular rituals and daily practices (Nelson).”

## **Intersectional Environmentalism**

### **Definition by *Intersectional Environmentalist* founder Leah Thomas:**

The term originated from author Leah Thomas who made an Instagram post in June 2020, with a graphic that repeated “Environmentalists for Black Lives Matter.” Thomas then defined “Intersectional Environmentalism” in the caption, “...with the intention of bringing social justice to the forefront of conversations within environmentalist spaces. The pledge called on the global environmental community to take action + act in solidarity with oppressed + historically under-amplified communities (“*Intersectional Environmentalist*”).” This is inspired by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw with Intersectional feminism. (To be discussed later)

## **Manufactured**

### **OED Definition:**

“In extended use (chiefly *depreciative*): to produce (literary work) in a mechanical or formulaic way, with little or no creativity, imagination, or originality [,] to make up or bring (raw material, ingredients, etc.) into a form suitable for use; to work up *as* or convert *into* a specified product [,] to manage or contrive to make (a gesture, etc.); to perform (an act) or bring about (a situation, an occurrence, etc.) by artifice or contrivance[.] To invent (a fiction); to deliberately fabricate (a story, statement, etc.) (“manufacture 2021”).”

**My Definition:**

The above definitions include the process of producing something from raw materials. For this thesis, I include the human experience. In my definition, “manufactured” refers to taking the passion and potential of the individual (raw material) and transforming it into that individual's desired product. In this case, taking action to improve the environment. Because manufacturing is a process, the final result - the experience of the individual - will be shaped by the activist group they chose to join. The outcome (after the individual leaves the organization) will also be influenced by that experience in some ways.

**Manufactured Activism****My Definition:**

A form of activism that provides support for individuals from all backgrounds so they can become involved in advocating for a healthier environment, including the resources they need to be successful, either as part of a non-profit organization or other organized group, or on their own. The target audience are individuals who care about the environment and are seeking ways to become involved but do not know how to engage in environmental activism. The support provided includes educational resources, opportunities for collaboration, and specific training about activist strategies.

**Healthy Environment****My Definition:**

Given the impact of climate change, for me a “healthy environment” is one that includes widespread public access to climate change solutions including adaptation funds, climate rights

for refugees, rehabilitation of biodiversity, and sustainable resources. Combined, these solutions will lead to global climate and social justice.

### **Science Literacy**

#### **My Definition Based on a variety of sources:**

Science literacy is the ability to comprehend scientific information and make an informed decision or form an opinion based on this information. Someone who is science literate understands the scientific method which includes asking and answering questions about natural phenomena. This knowledge also allows an individual to explain the information they have gathered and prompt further inquiry. See (Anastasia and Stuart, Atalay, Caspar et al., Howell, Stewart, USGCRP, and Trombulak et al.).

### **Climate Literacy**

#### **NOAA Definition:**

“Climate literacy is an understanding of your influence on climate and climate’s influence on you and society. A climate-literate person understands the essential principles of Earth’s climate system, knows how to assess scientifically credible information about climate, communicates about climate and climate change in a meaningful way, and is able to make informed and responsible decisions with regard to actions that may affect climate (NOAA).”

## **Ecological Literacy**

### **My Definition Based on a variety of sources:**

Ecological literacy is the understanding of both natural environmental systems and human impacts on the environment. This includes the ability to gather information needed to understand how humans can live sustainably.

## PART 1

### The Need for Environmental Activism

#### *Essential Attributes of an Environmental Activist and Where There is Room for Improvement*

#### **Why Environmental Activism is Needed**

The need for environmental activism and advocacy is greater than ever. Based on my experience, effective environmental activism is the aim of protecting the natural environment, especially from the harmful effects of human activity. For example, pollution and the decline of biodiversity are issues that are becoming a greater threat. Any solution to combat these issues will benefit from increased public engagement and understanding of the environment.

The IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) just released their sixth report on August 9, 2021, that presents current and future climate change impacts. The first report, issued in 1990, stated that human caused climate change will become evident. Subsequent reports said the same but did not document the changes. The situation is different with the latest report. The impacts of climate change such as marine heat, droughts, and tropical cyclones have increased significantly.

The report states that the surface temperature of earth will continue to increase. This increase is based upon temperatures documented today compared to the global surface temperature baseline taken between 1850 to 1900. Global temperatures will increase or exceed 1.5° to 2° Celsius by 2040 if no significant reduction in carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas

emissions are made. Both the ocean and land carbon sinks will no longer be as effective in slowing carbon accumulation (IPCC).

The Paris Agreement, a treaty that consists of 191 parties around the world committed to mitigating climate change, has been in the news a lot lately because of the entry, exit, and re-entry of the United States over the last decade. A critical component of the agreement is the Nationally Determined Contributions. Beginning in 2015, a Nationally Determined Contribution is submitted by participating countries every five years:

NDCs [Nationally Determined Contributions] embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2) requires each Party to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs) that it intends to achieve. Parties shall pursue domestic mitigation measures, with the aim of achieving the objectives of such contributions. (“Nationally Determined Contributions ((NDCs).”)

The NDC’s were updated in 2021(See section 2). This global collaboration was the focus of the Earth Day Climate Summit and the Conference of the Parties (COP26).

In a report presented on September 16, 2021, the United Nations agencies in Climate Change reported that by July 30, 2021, 113 out of 191 parties submitted an updated NDC. If it were just those 113 parties, emissions are assumed to decrease by 12% by 2030. This would not meet the goal in keeping the global temperature increase below 1.5° degrees Celsius. Including all the 191 parties that have both new and old NDCs, emissions are expected to increase by 16% by 2030. If this remains true for the 191 parties, the average temperature will increase by 2.7° degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The United Nations Climate Change Executive Secretary is imploring for the rest of the parties to submit an updated NDC (unclimatechange).

An NDC is more unknown in relation to the Paris Agreement. But it remains the most crucial aspect of global climate change action.

Climate change will cause continuous negative impacts on humanity such as public health, food security, water supply, transportation, and energy. Food scarcity and water inaccessibility are already critically impacting communities in parts of the United States. The scarcity of resources will directly affect fishing and agriculture commercially as well as in many communities across the country. Climate change causes the seasons for agriculture to fluctuate and changes the amount of food produced. It also increases water temperature and with the additional human pollution; it is changing ocean water chemistry. Making oceans an unreliable resource (WWF).

Both forestry and water resource degradation are causing a negative impact on U.S national security, economy, and foreign policy as well. Local communities and developing countries are often unable to practice ecologically sustainable logging and fishing with this threat to their livelihood. Many solely depend on these resources for survival and economic sustainability. Illegal fishing causes U.S fishers across the country to lose over \$1 billion dollars a year in revenue. Illegal logging hastens deforestation by selling the timber much cheaper and cutting out the American forestry sector. The competition in both areas adds to the threat on global economic and food security. The wide range of effects will cause an increase in human and wildlife conflict over food, land, and habitat (WWF).

The U.S Global Change research program projects that climate change will exacerbate economic inequality and displacement of communities (USGCRP). Many individuals' have already seen a notable decline in quality of life due to environmental racism, "In a national context, environmental racism criticizes inequalities between urban and exurban areas after white

flight. Charges of environmental racism can also prompt usages of civil rights legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prosecute environmental crimes in the areas in which racialized people live” (Myers). Recognizing environmental injustice is of critical importance in the United States because air and water quality are degraded in so many parts of the country. Jeanette Armstrong, of the Indigenous Syilx Okanagan people and professor of Indigenous Studies, highlights the importance of recognizing the voices of people from communities with people of color:

From our point of view the minority voice is the most important voice to consider. The minority voice expresses the things that are going wrong...that we're being aggressive about or trying to overlook and sweep under the carpet or shove out the door... if you ignore this minority voice it will create conflict in your community and this conflict is going to create a breakdown that's going to endanger everyone. (Nelson 125)

These issues do not only emphasize the need for environmental activism, but also the need for a growing number of effective activist strategies that recognize the needs of various communities. In the past, environmental activists have made major contributions to climate change action. To inspire change for a healthy environment, activists share common tactics and behaviors.

## **Essential Attributes of an Environmental Activist**

The continuous need for environmental activism may call for a greater number of effective activist practices. To be successful, an activist must adapt to change and be willing to learn new approaches to their work. Success for the activist manifests itself in several ways. The goal doesn't always require making a huge impact with every action.

An effective environmental activist can develop a multidimensional approach to all issues related to their interests. They consider perspectives that hold social, cultural, and economic understanding. These perspectives can enhance communication skills, from being able to speak more assertively in day-to-day conversation, to engaging in conversations with people about their passions. Having these multidimensional viewpoints means that activists can make informed decisions when partaking in environmental action. Environmental activism is, at its center, also about the human experience. Effective environmental activism in the modern day realizes the complicated relationship between humans and nature.

Everyone in the United States has different beliefs about climate change and all are also vulnerable to environmental injustice. With the controversy and criticism that comes with working in this field, a successful environmental activist must be resilient, passionate about the cause, and have a desire to keep returning to advocate. A constant change of situation coupled with consistent involvement creates a background of experience that will inform the activist and aid them in diversifying their strategies. If it's called for, an activist can just as well go lobbying to meet policy makers, protest on the street, or create social media content. When they are met with opposition, they think of creative ways to communicate, and problem solve.

A 2013 study by Ezra M. Markowitz, Lewis R. Goldberg, Michael C. Ashton, and Kibeom Lee discuss the psychological commonalities between “pro-environmental individuals (PEI)”, research confirms some common traits that have been observed in people that partake in activist behavior. The study was taken from 778 people in a community of homeowners by mail. In the study of the individual's behavior, researchers found that PEI have traits of universalism and endorse “self-transcendent values”. They are more prosocial than people that aren't pro-environment. Pro-Environmental Individuals also tend to share a need to challenge the “socio-economic systems and inequalities... Some research also suggests that PEIs are more likely to be ideologically and politically liberal.” The similarities in personality support the idea of a necessary ideology to keep in environmental activism. The survey also highlights inherent beliefs the PEI has that lays the foundation for multidimensional environmental activism techniques.

It is important for an environmental activist to be open to working alongside peers or sharing their experiences. Collaboration leads to extensive networking and moral support, both integral things in the world of an activist. Group work also consists of listening and being aware of people within their own communities. Knowing how to collaborate will aid in listening and understanding how their specific community deals with climate change; and injustices that come with it. Along with all of this, they also will learn the needs of their community as an environmental activist.

For the environmental activist, a part of their resource “toolkit” can be a background in science literacy and Indigenous knowledge systems (also known as native science- see definitions). This will be important because many people in the general American public still do not know about basic climate science (see Hurley). Instead of imposing criticism for not having

the knowledge, developing foundational material on how to share information will create a stronger foundation for the conversations that have become necessary for environmental conservation. If the environmental activists feel comfortable sharing knowledge, they are then capable of working with and educating someone who does not share their same level of understanding.

### *Importance of Science and Ecological Literacy to Activism*

Science literacy, defined for this thesis, is the ability to comprehend scientific information and make an informed decision or form an opinion based on this information. Someone who is science literate understands the scientific method which includes asking and answering questions about natural phenomena. The scientific community has been working to reshape the term to address the need for a multidimensional, representational, and contemporary format. See (Anastasia and Stuart, Atalay, Caspar et al., Howell and Brossard, Stewart, USGCRP, and Trombulak et al.). Someone with science literacy also possesses the skills of reading, writing, and speaking about science. Recent findings show that about 90% of the U.S population is not science literate (Hurley).

Science literacy can improve with a multidimensional approach to education and strategies behind how to communicate these ideas. An educator must keep in mind that comprehension of science literacy involves interactions young people and adults have with their world daily. It is important for activists learning about or teaching science to see how others understand it through their personal history, life experiences, and diversity. Effective teaching of science should also provide a history of how it was founded and its relevance to communities. In

an article by Emily Howell and Dominique Brossard on science literacy in a digital world, the authors propose that “community literacy” might be an answer to how we move forward with understanding science today. They raise this question, “to what extent do individuals need to be science literate themselves, and to what extent could they instead combine forces with their friends, neighbors, and influencers in their community”? If basic scientific literacy becomes commonplace it can more successfully integrate different systems of knowledge.

Teaching science literacy that includes both Western science and Indigenous knowledge can be more effective when discussing ecological and climate literacy. In *Original Instructions: Indigenous Teaching for a Sustainable Future*, Dennis Martinez confirms the fundamental differences between the two but that it can be useful to find a way “how and where” they can work together, “Western science has many good aspects as a useful quantitative tool, but it does not fit with Indigenous cosmologies and worldviews. In these modern times of unprecedented environmental degradation, we need both” (Nelson 147).

### *Importance of Indigenous Knowledge to Activism*

The combination of Indigenous knowledge systems and Western science is considered by some environmentalists to be a form of ecological literacy, or “native science”. It is possible that the resources of these two knowledge systems can interact to create a stronger understanding of environmental science literacy. As defined by Gregory Cajete, a Tewa Scholar. In his words, “native science” is:

... a metaphor for a wide range of tribal processes of perceiving, thinking, acting, and 'coming to know' that have evolved through human experience with the natural world.

Native science is born of a lived and storied participation with the natural landscape.

[...It] is the collective heritage of human experience with the natural world. (Luu)

Native science encompasses a dynamic and culture-based learning system that is critical to the progression of environmental activism. Practicing environmental advocacy fit for the future includes this perspective and puts equal weight on both western and Indigenous concepts of knowledge. Melissa K. Nelson, of the Ojibwe nation, expands on these themes of "Traditional Ecological Knowledge":

Indigenous Peoples have millennia-old Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) that are tribally and geographically specific... This "TEK" or native science holds the memories, observations, stories, understandings, insights, and practices for how to follow the natural laws of a particular place. TEK is often encoded in the stories and songs of the oral tradition and within particular rituals and daily practices. (Nelson 41)

Understanding TEK and other perspectives of "native science" will only improve environmental activists' work, research, and outreach.

In Sonya Atalay's journal article, *Indigenous Science for a World in Crisis*, the author mentions the possible accomplishments that could be made in recognition of these human and nature interactions, but also the criticism. Atalay recognizes that the contributions and reclamation of Indigenous knowledge can further community healing, but also has the potential to "deepen existent trauma that Native people may have around loss of land, language, and culture" (2). The author also notes that Indigenous knowledge systems represent the idea that it is equally as important to dedicate time to make existing knowledge accessible as it is to discover

new things. Atalay uses the term “knowledge mobilization”, and how it is a free-flowing system that passes information freely between communities. The free flow between Western science and Indigenous knowledge will continue to be important to the understanding of ecological science, “Western science can assist our restoration efforts with its powerful quantitative toolkit, its technology. By working the two systems of knowledge together, even though we can't translate cosmologies across the board...we can create better ecological science” (Nelson 137). In section two, there will be more information on how Indigenous groups identify with environmental activism. More examinations of TEK will be discussed in greater detail in section four.

### **Where There is Room for Improvement**

#### *Better Media Outreach*

There are ineffective practices that do not support the work environmental activists are trying to accomplish. It can diminish the reputation of the collective and cause undesirable criticism in the media. So often it is the most consumed content that misrepresents activism and the work by environmental activists. The use of biased representation is an example of how the manufacturing of environmental activism could take on a negative transformation. Popular media networks often pick and choose who to best represent a movement or what content deserves airtime. Media greenwashing romanticizes nature's destruction and can create a negative influence on new generations of activists. If this type of activism is “manufactured” then there will potentially be greater problems with accessibility. It will take on only the removed and superficial definition of manufacturing I have described; “to perform (an act) or bring about...by

artifice or contrivance[.] To invent (a fiction); to deliberately fabricate (a story, statement, etc.) (“manufacture”).” Like the definitions, manufactured environmental activism is a nuanced way of working, so it is vulnerable to misuse. This is a potential danger in nonprofits that are then creating *their* forms of environmental activists.

For example, one of the prominent activist groups today is the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. It’s often referenced by celebrities and documentaries. The group was recently a major resource for the Netflix documentary *Seaspiracy*, which became a viral phenomenon. Sea Shepherd is a nonprofit group that began its base in Canada but has extended their work globally. Founded in 1977 by Paul Watson, also a founding member of Greenpeace, with a main goal to protect marine life. They work in over 20 countries to stop crime with fisheries and hunting (“Our History”). The group had a show on Animal Planet at one time called “Whale Wars”. They have been the leaders in fighting wildlife injustice since they began. This is the face that is picked up by the mainstream media that is believed to work effectively. What isn’t shown is that they represent the opposite. Sea Shepherd is responsible for perpetuating hate with their large social media presence toward Indigenous communities. They cause cultural conflict in other countries as well.

In the Siberian Yupik Village on St. Lawrence Island; it is an honor, lifelong passion, and rite of passage for a young man to provide food for his village. In one of few articles on this event, Frank Hopper, of an Indigenous community news website, describes that in 2017, “16-year-old Agrabiqq became a striker [with]... skills his ancestors had practiced for 2,000 years”. He hunted a bowhead whale and felt the call to make the strike, “his village was only allowed eight strikes per year and a strike counted even if the harpoon only grazed the whale. One shot could provide food for all the nearly 700 residents of Gambell, or it could mean one less whale

for the village to survive on that year if he missed”. Going with tradition, Agragiqq became a striker when he successfully hunted the whale. Out of pure pride, his family posted on social media showing off the success and huge meaning this had to his village. This event got a lot of local coverage and made it to many viewers online. Paul Watson, founder of Sea Shepherd then posted a rant on Facebook calling him a “murdering little bastard” and other obscenities; noting that cultural tradition was irrelevant. This post sent global hatred and death threats to the boy with hundreds coming in the first day of Watsons post. In response, the Alaskan local government tried to affirm his actions to the public, emphasizing the pride he should feel for providing for his village. But the damage was done, Agragiqq’s family is trying to pursue legal action to get more visibility for cultural tradition; but they also don’t wish to be further victimized either. Agragiqq was angrier for the danger this brought to his family than anything else and expressed his frustration over not knowing how to push back against the social presence of Paul Watson. Watson has refused to apologize in a second video he put out (Hopper).

Sea Shepherd is always praised for their triumphs in activism, but they are potentially creating activists that do not understand the multiple perspectives and contexts necessary for environmental work. Their group does not help positively develop the attributes for effective environmental activism.

## Documentary

Within the world of documentary, it is easy to use resources such as Sea Shepherd as evidence for environmental injustice because of their influential presence. Simply because everyone, in their own way, thinks they are doing what is right to influence the environmental

movement. But with all the potential of documentary it is important to remember that one activists' influence can represent an entire community and inspire others to act similarly in response. Individual activists' who have worked on a cause for years triumph over going viral. In 2010, the Academy Award for best documentary went to the film, *The Cove*. The star of the film is activist and former dolphin trainer, Ric O' Barry. He set out to expose the dolphin hunt in Taiji, Japan. In an article written about events after the film came out, a journalist explains that the small town has been hunting for hundreds of years, "Taiji is the only place where "drive" hunting occurs. This involves forcing dolphins into the now infamous cove, where they are then penned in by long nets. The dolphins are then either sold on to aquariums to become performing exhibits or butchered for meat" (Milman). This practice was shared in the film with a biased perspective that aligned with O' Barry. It ignored deeper cultural connotations that can be reverent to marine life in the town. The documentary enraged wildlife activists in the United States. Groups such as Sea Shepherd and others would stay in the town and verbally harass the community. The article by *The Guardian* discussed how Megumi Sasaki, Japanese filmmaker, created the film *Whale of a Tale*. She covered years of conflict between the community in Taiji and the activists. The filmmaker does note that *The Cove* was a well done film, but it was successful because it concealed the viewpoint of the community in Taiji. The article emphasizes that the common criticism by Sasaki and Japanese citizens is that the film did not attempt to bridge a cultural gap in understanding but bully them instead. The practice will not change with threats and force:

"It's such an irony. If these activists just stopped pressuring Japan, the younger generation would not care about eating this and it would basically all go away..."

The dolphins slaughtered in Taiji aren't considered at risk of becoming extinct, so the hunting throws up broader questions. Do we have the moral right to kill animals in this way? What about pigs and cows dispatched in miserable conditions in the west? Who has the right to tell who to kill or eat? ...In Japan, people think humans are only part of nature and no animal is better or worse. It's very puzzling for them when westerners say dolphins and whales are intelligent and human-like, because all creatures are special. What makes an intelligent animal, anyway?... We hand-pick the animals we like... but we don't pay attention to others that are endangered". (Milman)

The situation with making *The Cove* and the resulting conflict is an example of tactics that could never be effective to progressive environmental activism. The film and response created a clash within the activist community as well. With Western activists protesting the cove and others protesting *them*. This example shows that a film can make someone feel passionately about whatever side is being represented. The information sharing strategies through media are never going to be simple. Environmental and wildlife injustices are always going to be multidimensional. Going forward it will be important to consider the cultural context in which environmentalism is taking place.

## Television

The effective, reality-based media mentioned earlier involves the activists having more control over their representation. There are activist representations on T.V. that perpetuate unhealthy practices as well. Practices that cause activists to lose ownership over their stories and intentions. For any episodic media, the goal is to keep viewers returning to the program. With the

intrigue of reality TV, it is focused on people's lives and the possible drama that comes with them. A recent example of where the media is trying to drive the environmental activist's narrative is with the television show, "The Activist". The backlash against the show was so large that it never made it to air in the fashion it was originally intended and was instead changed from a series to a single documentary. The premise of the show was to create:

...a reality show where six contestants would compete in a variety of activism-themed contests before appearing at a summit of world leaders in Italy — a format that press materials called "awe-inspiring," "ground-breaking" and sure to "inspire real change."...starring six contestants taking part in a variety of challenges, described as "missions, media stunts, digital campaigns and community events" in CBS' original news release, with success based partly on online engagement and "social metrics." Three celebrities — Usher, Priyanka Chopra Jonas and Julianne Hough — would host.

(Sullivan).

Another aspect of the show includes a mid-season incentive where the remaining contestants would go to the G20 summit in Rome to compete for their cause. In an article for *Variety*, there was further criticism for making activism a thing to be judged and only by celebrities that were known for their fame, while in reality they have had incidents that contributed to the injustices many activists work against (Willman). Brittany Packnett Cunningham, a social justice activist, responded in an interview that there were millions spent on makeup, the hosts, and travel that could have gone to activism and that this type of media visibility is "deeply dangerous" and that, "this extends a societal belief about what a good activist looks like: someone who is ready for prime time, someone who fits a particular archetype and is great on social media and is perfectly

marketable (MSNBC)”. Cunningham speaks on the potential dangers of manufactured activism and the concern that it could create activists that exist as industry owned spokespeople.

A twitter thread by a young woman who was interviewed to potentially be on the show raises the question of what large television companies are trying to create; and what they are trying to do to activism in the future. Clover Hogan posted about having the interview with a producer of the show and how they were evasive as to why they were creating it in the first place. She was first told that the show would be great to “put eco-anxiety on the map”. When it was time to recount her history in activism the producer pressed her to rephrase it to how a TV show would want to hear it. She repeated herself until she was in tears and the interviewer said it was perfect. After feeling humiliated, a producer asked about her work in an environmental organization. He cut her off and told her to “talk like an American”, and “...at the end, he revealed that this would be a competition show with activists going against each other for resources. I remember thinking I was in a Black Mirror episode. When the call ended, I cried & called my mum. The whole time, I was made to feel as if I was failing a test” (Hogan).

The show was admittedly a failure by all parties involved. Many apologies were made by both the show's producers and the group Global Citizen. The hosts also apologized for their involvement. This all occurred as recently as August 2021 and what really stuck out from the fallout was the way in which it brought activists together to oppose the series. Many activists agree that modern activism is a collaboration and system of healing. The development of this activism would be similar to “intersectional environmentalist” founder Leah Thomas’s description of previous forms of environmentalism. To recall her response in an interview, “environmentalism that we have now that has been thought of as being “progressive” has only been progressive for one group of people” (Uthman). If representatives for environmental

activism are chosen for their ability to go viral, that will lead to continued problems of inclusivity. It will continue to exclude marginalized voices.

The public has developed a new media reality; one that doesn't need to just consume content or be enraptured by celebrities. Proven through "The Activist", many individuals oppose falsehoods and discuss what is ineffective in order to move forward. While others remain unaware of the harm that media can do to communities, cultures, and causes. The developing understanding of social media influence has also exposed the inaccessibility of environmental activism in all media formats.

### *Job Opportunities*

There are many pathways to pursue in a career for those passionate about environmental activist work. Spending time pursuing activism ideally shows where space can be made for them to join in respective environmental fields. Whether in science, communications, or art; someone should have the support to understand the comprehensive work and "real life" application their interests could have in a career. It is more realistic than ever to find opportunities for these jobs, "the International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that 24 million jobs worldwide could be created by the green economy by 2030 alone" (Kimbrough). Membership with an activist organization can be continued indefinitely, with support for their endeavors and continued connection to their community. It could also serve as the educational foundation for the activist to then move on independently from the organization and pursue solo activist work.

The critical factor to remember for manufactured environmental activism is that it is *specifically* for those who have had no prior involvement, and do not know much about activist work aside from their initial interest. To have developed an expertise, starting from no

background knowledge, is the goal of manufactured activism. There is already an increase in “green jobs” and the need for people with these skills. In the last five years even, there has been a major change, “LinkedIn jobs data showing in 2015 the ratio of US oil/gas jobs to renewables/environment jobs was 5:1, but by 2020 this was 2:1” (Kimbrough).

### *Improved Community Engagement*

To improve community engagement between activists and the public, organizations leading activism could do better at sharing the different opportunities activists can be a part of. This can start with understanding how citizens and activists can be involved in local and national U.S environmental policy. Resources for environmental activism in the United States must include information regarding public policy and the global actions the U.S. government takes part in. If the resources are accessible, activists will know how to better maneuver through these conversations and have stronger skills for debate. Many organizations are seen lobbying on Capitol Hill, especially during major legislation periods. On the Hill, there are many lobbyists from different organizations, but it is only a few that are sent to best represent the group. Environmental activism that is more in touch with local communities should have a large and representational group be a part of these discussions. There is more opportunity for emerging activists to: find their personal passions, practice those in-person conversations with policy makers, and learn how to have confidence when representing their community. For manufactured activism, the main responsibility for facilitating conversations like this is on the organization. They set up the meetings, they provide the experts and create learning sessions. Activists can apply what they’ve learned when they return to work on a local level.

As the climate crisis grows, so does the benefit of creating more environmental activists with a basic level of political knowledge. Many people involved in activism today are constantly sifting through conflicting political views on climate change. When I began environmental activist work, I had no idea about town hall meetings or that many government policy discussions are open to the public. I did not know about lobbying, or the rights citizens and constituents have to speak to their members of congress. None of those resources were made readily available to me and without them I felt alone in my concerns regarding environmental injustice.

*Accessible & Ethical Information: How Scholars Treat the Topic of Environmental Activism*

Lack of representation among minorities is a recognized and ongoing problem for environmental activism. In a journal article by Dorceta Taylor, *American Environmentalism: The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Shaping Activism 1820-1995*, Taylor provides a detailed history of the environmental activism movement. She also discusses the voices that have dominated the movement at different points in history and the resulting “template” for how activism should be practiced. Taylor prompts the idea that although moments for the environmental movements in history were progressive, they were also exclusionary. Taylor calls for a change in the way activism is practiced, one that is more modern:

...among the most urgent...a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, broad-based environmental agenda that will appeal to many people and unite many sectors of the movement... the movement has to re-evaluate its relationship with industry and the

government, re-appraise its role and mission, and develop strategies to understand and improve race, class and gender relations. (2)

Taylor also addresses the problem of environmental activist injustice and how those activists in vulnerable communities were excluded from their own narratives of displacement, pollution, and mistreatment throughout history. She discusses the view that environmentalism is inherently built upon white, middle-class actions and opinions and makes the case that this has, “deprived us of a deeper understanding of the way in which class, race and gender relations structured environmental experiences and responses over time” (2).

While Taylor analyzes the inequalities and unjust treatment within environmental movements, another area of scholar criticism focuses on digital media representation. There is a growing weakness in information sharing in modern environmental movements (from early 2000’s) with press manipulation and misinformation. In the article by J.M Bacon, *Dangerous pipelines, dangerous people: colonial ecological violence and media framing of threat in the Dakota access pipeline conflict*, the author criticizes the way the media depicts the environmental movement. Using the example of the recently covered Dakota access pipeline conflict that threatened the land of the Standing Rock Sioux Indigenous community, Bacon writes that the popular media recognition of the environmental defenders only reached the country’s attention months later. Bacon states that it is common for Indigenous movements to be repressed by the media. The way in which attention was only just brought to the Dakota pipeline protests in 2021 despite the activist work that goes back to late 2015 is a clear example of that repression. Modern media tools and techniques provide a new discourse within environmentalism that must be put under scrutiny. Bacon uses the term “colonial ecological violence” to describe the displacement of indigenous communities forced away from nature

because of land exploitation. This will continue if a colonized version of environmental activism understanding remains (Bacon 1).

Authors Zachary Vernon and Phillip Payne point out a weakness within the field with a slightly shifted perspective; this is the way people are accessing information about activism. A significant portion of literature on environmental activist representation for the modern day speaks to the lack of accessible resources discussing environmental activism. There isn't a lot of information that is easily found that teaches about modern American environmental activists themselves, and how exactly it is relevant to people in their specific communities. Environmental activist education is incredibly disjointed throughout the country. English professor and author Zachary Vernon claims there is a lack of any "ecocritical scholarship in southern studies" in America despite their urgent increase of climate refugees and habitat destruction. Environmental educators argue that it is also an issue to even define and present activism's role in history (Payne). These scholars discuss that it is generally hard to teach activism with its attachment to controversial topics. There is no formal model on how to facilitate education with a comprehensive grasp on activism.

Another common theme of environmental activist criticism is the way people involved in activism engage with each other and the effects a collective group of people can have on one another and the public. Environmental scientists and sociologists such as Mark Lubell and Edward Walker suggest that in the field of collaborative activism, intent of the organization and individual behavior is important when analyzing what impact they will have. In *Grassroots for Hire* by Edward Walker, the author highlights the problematic nature of professionalization and capitalist intentions in advocacy. There are paid positions within companies for advocacy consultants and public outreach. A facet of the consultant's work is to occasionally create groups

of activists with views aligned with their company. Which isn't all that different from some of the positive practices in the nonprofit groups. These outreach positions in both large industries and environmental nonprofits make collective activism more of a gray area and worthy of criticism.

In an article by Mike Lubell, the author provides data on environmental activist's behavior in relation to a collective interest model; made using surveys in both small communities and nationally. The General Social Survey Environmental Battery from 1993 received over 2,000 responses. Lubell states that when considering collective activism there must be an awareness of "free-riding incentives". The author criticizes previous literature that promotes the strengths of activists that work in a collective, yet they do not address the logic behind it. His survey data and resulting conclusions find, "...when the collective benefits of environmental activism are high, the individual utility of environmental activism is near zero when people think they cannot affect collective outcomes. Fortunately for the goals of the environmental movement, many people perceive a high level of personal efficacy" (Lubell). This will be discussed further in section four.

Leah Thomas, founder of the organization 'Intersectional Environmentalist' writes about the need for inclusivity in environmental activist literature. This author represents another facet of literature that exists in the field. This is the work written by current environmental activists whose time is also devoted to their active work in advocacy. Thomas' literature argues that the only way forward is "intersectional" approaches to environmentalism, "the environmentalism that we have now that has been thought of as being 'progressive' has only been progressive for one group of people and that's not fair" (Uthman). She recently participated in panel discussions alongside Malala Yousafzai and participated in the climate marches in Glasgow for the

Conference of the Parties (COP26). This type of scholarship is important to the field because of the relevant and evolving experience these authors have that influences their writing. This field of literature written by the activists will be discussed later because of its relevance to manufactured environmental activism.

## Part 2

### Environmental Activism at Work

#### *Activists Strategies That are Critical to the Success of Manufactured Environmental Activism*

#### **Environmental Activist Profiles: Motivations for Activism**

*The following are profiles of people that are working today in environmental conservation and justice. They describe their motivations, interests, and strategies. These profiles are presented as evidence that for the modern environmental movement to progress, new strategies that support manufactured environmental activism must be adopted. The information about these advocates comes from first-hand interviews and articles describing their work.*

#### ***Xiye Bastida***

Xiye Bastida is a climate activist from San Pedro Tultepec, Mexico and is currently based in New York City. She is a member of the Indigenous Otomi-Tultec nation of Mexico. In interviews with *E360* and *Entrepreneur* magazine, this activist recalled her journey into environmental advocacy and her advocacy projects. Bastida moved to New York with her parents in 2015 after her town was nearly destroyed by mass flooding. Three years prior to the flooding, there was a severe drought. Then, upon seeing the effects of Hurricane Sandy, she

noticed how the events in the United States were related to her home in Mexico and becoming more common globally. Bastida has a family history of climate justice advocates, but she really got involved when she noticed the warped narratives that were taking place in the climate change discussions today. She believes “Greenwashing” was becoming a cop out for companies to shirk responsibility, and the blame is wrongly placed on individual citizens for the climate crisis. She joined environmental clubs at school and started networking with other activists. She got 600 of her classmates to join in a climate strike in 2019, rallying people behind the idea that youth deserve a bigger seat at the table of climate justice negotiation (Barrowclough).

Bastida places a lot of value in the diversification of the environmental movement, and recognition of indigenous communities that have worked in environmental justice for a long time. She also aims to make youth more politically aware and engaged; encouraging people to vote and be a part of policy conversations. Bastida implied in an interview that knowing about earth systems and what is happening to our planet will be important to begin in early education and peer to peer interaction. The goal is to get more people involved in activism. She has taken an active role in that, “...I started a youth activism training program in which I taught over 40 youth how to be activists. And the first lesson was how to start an environmental club at your school, and how to communicate the different layers of the climate crisis to our peers... we need to meet people where they’re at” (Bagley). There is a clear model in her work that shows how her personal history started first as an independent interest in environmental activism. She then quickly turned her passion to finding ways to get more youth involved. Xiye Bastida is a leader of the campaign, Fridays for Future, and the People's Climate Movement. Xiye Bastida’s emphasis on “greenwashing” explores the very pressing issue of blame placed on the wrong

people for the climate crisis. She also directs her activism toward creating more activists and helping them become more politically aware.

### *Quannah Chasinghorse*

Quannah Chasinghorse is an Indigenous rights and climate advocate. She is a member of the Gwich'in and Lakota Sioux tribe in Alaska. The tribe includes First Nation people from both Canada and Alaska. In an interview with climate advocate and writer Maia Wikler, Chasinghorse said she does not claim the title of environmentalist and instead considers herself, "...an indigenous youth trying to stick up for our ways of life" (Wikler). Her passion and time are dedicated to protecting the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. And with that, she seeks to protect both the communities and ecosystems that rely on its health. Companies want to further their exploitation of the refuge; opening the coastal plain to offshore oil and gas development. The activist, along with other Gwich'in youth, is a part of the Youth Council that travels across the country advocating to protect their lands and spread awareness for missing and murdered indigenous women. The council meets with policy makers to advocate for change in legislation. For Chasinghorse, this is only a piece of the multidimensional advocacy she takes part in. She recently attended the 2021 Met Gala that held the event with the theme "America" and entered the space with the intention of bringing visibility to Indigenous beauty. She says on her Instagram, "... I was able to showcase beautiful TRUE (native) American "culture". I did not celebrate American independence (nor will I ever), I celebrated my indigenous bloodlines coursing through my veins...", the social media buzz around her fashion brought recognition to the glaring lack of representation for Indigenous people in popular media. It provided the

opportunity for her advocacy to reach a broad audience as well. In another interview with The Oxygen Project, she recognizes the work of many groups that create an awareness of climate change and injustice; but the United States government is not approaching climate change appropriately. Now, she claims, it's time to put pressure on those in power. The climate movement is still in need for the recognition of indigenous voices and experiences (Pezullo).

The work of Quannah Chasinghorse informs multidimensional activist approaches between people and the environment. For her, it isn't environmentalism, but a fight to keep nature alive and healthy. This is an important aspect to remember in the context of this thesis. Chasinghorse doesn't identify as an activist or environmentalist but is included in this collection of major influencers. It is critical to consider this perspective within the context of all the modes these environmental defenders are working in (Bastida, Thomas, and Chasinghorse). Melissa K. Nelson discusses some collective ideas of how Indigenous people view working with the environment:

Today, those of us who are younger and of mixed-blood heritage are doing many things to recover and restore these essential ethics and practices of sustainability in a modern context. Because of these diverse knowledge systems and teaching bundles within Indigenous communities, there has been much debate and discussion about the stereotype of the "ecologically noble savage," as well as concerns over a romanticization of the past. What is interesting is that these questions do not often concern Indigenous Peoples themselves... But the question of whether Indigenous Peoples were, historically, environmentalists or not, is almost irrelevant. To say that American Indians were the "first ecologists" fragments environmental matters from other issues of daily life and imposes a modern postcolonial concept onto a historical, precolonial context. (47)

Quannah's work exemplifies the way modern indigenous community members continue to defend the environment in their own way. Indigenous knowledge and work are foundational to all of what modern environmental activism needs to improve upon; inclusivity, accessibility, and passion.

### ***Leah Thomas***

Leah Thomas is an activist, or an “eco-communicator” as she calls it, that coined the term “intersectional environmentalism”. Through the online publication *Assembly*, Thomas reveals that she began her deeper involvement in activism after an event in 2014 where Michael Brown, an unarmed black 18-year-old, was fatally shot by a police officer. This started her investigation into how her education in environmental science and her identity as a black woman related to one another. Thomas did not like the idea of her classes mentioning the greater effect of climate change on black and brown people as a side note in the conversation (Uthman). She continued making these connections with the deep history of environmental racism in the United States. On her website she says that her activism lies in her body of written work that covers “inclusivity in environmental education and movements” (Green Girl Leah). She also communicates through her social media presence. In June 2020, she posted a graphic from the “Intersectional Environmentalist” Instagram account, “Environmentalists for Black Lives Matter”, and it went viral. Thomas uses the term to expose the reality of social justice being inseparable from environmental justice. Thomas was inspired by the work of Kimberlé Crenshaw, a professor of Law:

In coining the term “intersectionality,” Crenshaw was initially inspired by the Combahee River Collective, a Black feminist lesbian collective from the 1970s ... coining the term intersectionality to address the dismissal of a case where our system failed to recognize prejudice happening at the intersection of gender and race for Black women. Without a proper way to identify what occurs at the intersection of various identities, our systems fail to address blind spots that permit the perpetuation of injustice. (“About Us”)

From Crenshaw's work, Thomas was able to create another contemporary form of intersectionality; bringing with it a media presence that allows for a larger audience to see how continuing to refer to it as “environmentalism” alone is not enough to move ahead. She exposes the histories of marginalization and power that exist within the term. The addition of “intersectional” begins to recognize the history and provides a framework for new ways of seeing. Thomas’ modes of activism exist in writing and knowledge sharing through social media. Thomas’ reiteration of intersectional feminism provides a more tangible foundation for what future ideas of environmental activism should be.

The profiles of these environmental advocates highlight the resilience, perspective, and adaptation needed to promote a form of successful and inclusive activism. All three have different ways of positioning themselves within the modern activist space, but they have similar strategies and goals. There is a common desire between them for greater public outreach, accessibility, and understanding. They suggest that not all voices are equally amplified in the climate movement, and that there’s an urgent need to put pressure on those in positions of power so climate change can be addressed. Their successes raise awareness for the strength and power in creating an accessible form of collaboration.

## **Other Examples of Activists Effectively Using the Popular Media**

In modern popular media (for this discussion “modern” will be considered 2000 and on), individual activists or activist groups have greater control over the way they choose to work and connect with the public. Today, it’s difficult to tell how to best represent an activist's personal work across the wide array of platforms. There are positive and effective uses of their platforms that support multidimensional activism.

Environmental activism today often relies on the media as a tool for visibility. As shown by the practices of the three activists, popular media can provide global exposure they may not otherwise receive. Environmental activism throughout history has many tones. Media portrayed activism as both a negative and positive attribute to American society through news and film; thus, swaying public opinion. As a brief example, by the 1970s, environmentalism became an American phenomenon leading president Richard Nixon to address its importance to common culture with the first nationwide Earth Day. It came with its own political agenda that omitted and embellished certain histories to progress the mainstream trend of nature (Pennybacker). Televised advertisements for the environment also became more popular. The first Earth Day drew the largest crowd protests across the country ever with 20 million people participating. The decade utilized forms of media as a tool to expose environmental crimes and injustices (“The Modern Environmental Movement”). It also continued to present nature as purely a thing of pristine beauty while omitting any coverage of environmental degradation. From then on, the media's presence has become central to environmental activism.

For example, social media has been able to expose long concealed histories of companies partaking in unsustainable practices. In an article by Thomas Lyon and Wren Montgomery on

social media and greenwashing, they mention that these big businesses were able to partake in “decoupling”; also known as “greenwashing” in environmental activism. Decoupling, in regards to the environment, is a company putting forth a public persona of being ecologically sustainable while behaving differently in their non-public sphere. As the environmental movements of the 1970s gained more traction, greenwashing gave the companies the ability to show they were allies to the environmental activists. Now the large corporations and conglomerates can be put under more scrutiny. People can easily post about them and their experiences. The company’s social media presence on twitter or Instagram also makes them vulnerable to two-way communication that wasn’t always available.

Environmental activism has a presence in all social media platforms. These platforms give power to activists because of the ability for anyone to film or photograph, and then directly post from their phone. This content often is taken up by television news outlets or sourced in films and are critical forms of reference. A major benefit for environmental activists on social media is public engagement. Before media such as Twitter and Instagram, people did not have the ability to access easy communication to large corporations, celebrities, or policy makers. New media is changing that. It is also changing how the environmental activists communicate with each other and organize. Protests and meetings can be organized via social media channels and collaboration between large groups has been made easier. There are apps specifically created for groups to organize their schedules, find educational resources, and participate in volunteer programs.

The mobile application, *Mobilize*, helps facilitate communication in organized activist groups. Any organization can register their group online and invite members to create profiles. Upon entering their information, members can locate the group they are registered in. Within the

app, activists are put into units by their location or interests and have the ability to chat. In addition, the organization can send out mass messages. It is a social media network that is dedicated to making activism more accessible online. *Mobilize* is an example of one of the many activist apps gaining traction. This app has become so successful that another nonprofit platform called EveryAction bought *Mobilize*. The app has even greater financial backing to reach more people than before, “with the acquisition, EveryAction can now extend *Mobilize’s* organizing tools to its existing base of more than 15,000 clients, which includes the Sierra Club and the Human Rights Campaign” (Hatmaker). Not only does this highlight the effectiveness of the app, but also that more people are engaging with activism and seeking resources.

Social media is a powerful tool that supports environmental activists’ abilities and interests. As a reminder, a large part of Leah Thomas’ activist presence comes from her creation of social media content. Her post, “Environmentalists for Black Lives Matter” went viral through its powerful message and use of graphics (“*Intersectional Environmentalist.*”). After that post to her Instagram account (and gaining 395,000 followers), “Intersectional Environmentalist” curated a feed of visually appealing and informational content. Nonprofits and many other environmental activists are having great success with sharable content. This content is anything that can be posted to their static feed, Instagram stories, or twitter accounts that then can bring the viewer to another information or involvement source. An example of this would be an organization using the “swipe up” feature on Instagram stories to directly send the viewer to a petition or donation page. The short form content and visual appeal creates quick viral moments for things such as Earth Day or International Tiger Day. One post is then shared repeatedly until it is trending.

Recognizing the power of social media; larger nonprofits have recently begun to partake in serious dedication to optimizing their online presence. Nonprofit organizations like the World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy now have entire branches in their company devoted to activism, outreach, and strategies for engagement (“Our People.”). They create jobs that focus on maintaining a positive and generative social media presence. The employees in the organizations inspire activism in several ways. They design competitions or hashtag challenges to draw interest. They produce the easily consumed content as well. These teams use social media to make people aware of volunteer or ambassador programs. As opposed to physical tabling, or posters, this is a way to make more people see that there are existing ways to be involved.

## Documentary

Environmental activists increasingly utilize documentary film to spread awareness. Streaming services are widely popular, and YouTube is more mainstream, creating even more platforms for film. Documentaries can create powerful and viral recognition of environmental issues. Recent films shed light on wildlife trafficking, climate change, and climate change impact on communities. Many successful filmmakers representing and partaking in activism create documentaries that highlight many perspectives on an issue. Most often an environmental documentary is effective today when it includes human and environmental injustice in combination. As an example, the Academy Award nominated film, *The Garden* includes several viewpoints on conflict over the Los Angeles 14-acre South Central Farm:

In the wake of the 1992 riots in South Central Los Angeles, the garden was created by the city as a way to heal the community. In turn, it became the largest garden of its kind in the country, sustaining more than 350 families and an antidote to the surrounding inner-city blight. The garden flourished for nearly a decade, until the city notified the farmers in 2003 they would be evicted within two months and the garden destroyed to make way for warehouses and a soccer field. (Starkman)

The garden was used by many Latin American immigrants living in Los Angeles. The director documents members of the community garden, surrounding neighborhood citizens that were against the garden, and the politicians or celebrities that became involved. While the film was in favor of those fighting for the garden, it also depicts the dispute that revealed claims of “brown vs. black racism, anti-Semitism and “pimping poverty” (Starkman). It successfully captured that the community as whole, those with the garden and surrounding neighbors, were experiencing environmental injustice. Filmmakers documented the amount of pollution and damage the construction would do to the community. In the end, local organizer corruption and millions of dollars in backroom legal deals led to the destruction of the garden; upending many lives that depended on it. The perspective of the activist that is creating the documentary film and the tone they set in said film is the determining factor in how the public receives activism and views the subject of the documentary.

Activists making documentaries are also successful when they are creating content that has been typically suppressed by popular media filmmaking. The film, *Our Generation* by Sinem Saban and Damien Curtis, was filmed in Australia and focused on the Indigenous communities there that struggle for land and human rights. With a highlight on the Yolngu people of Northeast Arnhem Land, where the largest Indigenous community exists, the documentary captures

conflict that has occurred against these communities, and the forced assimilation of Indigenous communities by the Australian government and popular media. The Yolngu people in Australia's Northern territory face human rights injustices and the filmmakers worked closely with this group to uncover this story. These filmmakers truly represent environmental activism working effectively in documentaries because their film was not just a one-time project. It originated as Our Generation Media, which sought to command attention for Indigenous communities. Their group has done media campaigns as well as other documentary films that range from Indigenous legal rights to community health. This has inspired grassroots activism in Australia and around the world after *Our Generation* was released internationally (“Our Generation Media Projects”).

## Part 3

### Activists Response to Environmental Policy

Methods of practicing environmental activism do not only extend to media representation. American activists are always responding and raising awareness for what happens in environmental policy. This year there have been climate events that involve many world leaders with rising expectations from the public to face the climate crisis. Environmental activists are working to raise awareness for events such as this while also waiting eagerly to interact with world leaders and politicians alike. In this section, I will explain the intent and response to the Earth Day Climate Summit held in the United States as well as the happenings at the Conference of the Parties in Glasgow. Following this I will explore the ways in which environmental advocacy has been effective in confronting world leaders involved.

On April 22nd and 23rd of 2021, The United States held a Leaders on Climate Summit in which President Biden invited forty world leaders to speak on facing climate change. After quick re-entry into the Paris Agreement the president announced the need for a gathering of the world's leaders to address the United States desire to re-emerge as a champion in climate change mitigation. This summit was also a crucial opening to a yearly schedule of global environmental advocacy. Biden recognized that this was a good start to address larger issues at COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021. COP is the United Nations Conference of the Parties, and this is the 26th gathering since 1994 when the treaty, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, was signed. As a partnership between the United Kingdom and Italy, this summit is being held in Glasgow and is presumed to be the biggest climate event since the Paris Agreement

in 2015 (“What Is COP26?”). In between the U.S Leader Summit and the enormous event that is COP, there are other global leader events such as G7 in June and G20 in October. Both events are semi-formal forums in which world leaders from both industrial and developing nations prioritize climate and plan for the future. All the meetings bring leaders together not just to speak of the developments of their countries, but to uphold the heart of the Paris Agreement- the NDC (as previously discussed in section 1).

Going into the U.S leaders' summit the hope of hundreds of institutions and activists were for President Biden submitting an NDC with bold updates that aligned with the current goals of other European countries. Biden did just that; he opened the two-day summit with a speech where he committed to drive the U.S toward a net-zero emissions by 2050 and to reduce emissions by 50% based on 2005 levels by 2030. Over half of his opening speech was focused on building out more American job opportunities to support climate efforts and to benefit the economy. Specifically, he mentioned the ability to create “millions of middle-class union jobs”. Of course, a speech that promises so much is expecting pushback from our country both in government and large corporations. But it seems that besides trying to appeal to America for these climate contributions, it was a performative way to meet the taunting initiatives the United Kingdom laid on the table; a reduction of emissions by 78% by 2035 (Macaya 2021). The consensus from environmental activists around the world on this speech was that the promises are ambitious, but what they want to see is a country that proves it is a leader in the climate crisis. Restoring faith to other world leaders is something these global activists are all waiting for (Kangujam 2021).

The Earth Day Climate Summit did not only consist of President Biden’s speech, but also statements from every country that attended the meeting<sup>2</sup>. The leaders' speeches aimed to state

their NDC contribution and ask for aid from the United States and other wealthier countries who are more responsible for the current state of the environment. While the United States did not pull funding from foreign aid programs, they took a backseat in environmental politics. Now, the Biden administration's re-entry into the Paris Agreement and ambitious climate goals have once again entered us into the global conversation. The interaction between other countries at the U.S climate summit portrays worldwide acknowledgement for a crisis poorly handled. Countries in the Global South with a smaller geographic area criticized industrial nations who were not doing their part to build out appropriate climate and biodiversity initiatives in partnership with other countries. The summit was also an opportunity for these countries to call out issues with how the Anthropocene is portrayed to Western countries. Prime Minister Lotay Tshering of Bhutan made a statement at the summit in which he drove the point that industrial countries are not doing enough:

“What more NDCs can we pledge? Yet, leaving no room for complacency, we are drafting our second NDC, which will be more ambitious. This will be a clear indication that, though small and economically challenged, we have realized beyond doubt that sustainable development is the right way in the long run. But even with our efforts, we remain highly vulnerable to climate change. We face increasing threats from extreme climate events such as flash floods, glacial lake outburst, wind storms, forest fires, and landslides. I cannot understand this irony of contributing a law to environment preservation, yet having to suffer so much... We urge all countries, particularly the major emitters to set more ambitious targets ahead of COP26.” (Skynews)

This statement echoes many of those made at the summit from the countries in the Global South. They know they are doing more than their part but are only the smallest fraction of the problem

to begin with. Together these countries continue to speak on their environmental suffering as well as success in hope to let industrial countries reflect.

My impression is that the common agreement by activists is that there is an urgent need for global multilateral approaches. But as mentioned before, this call to action has only reached a performative point. The reaction from environmental activists around the world ranged from disappointed to apprehensive. This was exemplified by climate activist Xiye Bastida. She is a part of the organization, FridaysforFuture, and she closed out the first round of summit speeches. She mentioned in her speech that this summit hosted leaders mainly from the Global North and those mostly affected by climate change were not present nor being represented. She urged world leaders to act on their support of colonialist objectives and continued exploitation of the Global South. After the two-day event, Bastida's speech resonated with other youth activists from around the world. While there were physical protests internationally in response to the summit, many activists also took to social media. They emphasized concern with the repetition of promises being made and foolhardy beliefs that the promise of a job increase will be a solution. There will still be impacts to their communities around the world that go overlooked. The consensus among these activists is that while ambitious and seemingly great the promises are, everyone is watching, "so show us your next best move" (Precht-Rodriguez).

My initial reaction to this event was disappointment along with every other activist. I spent hours taking notes of every promise made by the leaders in attendance. I sat in my grief on another Earth Day where world leaders take advantage of its commercial allure. My action in response to the summit was to hold my own event at an assisted living facility in which I did a film screening, a presentation on current environmental issues, and sustainable living practices. My previous actions have included educating very young children as well. So, in reaction to the

summit, I tried to make people more aware of our current situation. If I just sat in my discontent after watching this summit, I would be no better than the leaders that watch and do nothing.

At COP26 (Conference of the Parties) in Glasgow, the specific goal was to thoroughly update the previously mentioned NDCs and to solidify the “Paris Rulebook” which were supposed to be the strict rules to follow for those in the Paris Agreement. Some main topics of discussion were hoped to be: addressing loss and damage, carbon markets, transparent reporting, and global climate finance. Over the eleven-day event there were speeches by global leaders and activists. Each country once again says what they will do to address climate change. But, as opposed to the Earth Day summit there is a real agreement being drafted. And the common theme this time is countries discussing what they will not pledge to do and what they will not agree with regarding finance and greenhouse gas emissions:

In what has been the fiercest opposition to the summit's draft agreement published Wednesday, Bolivia's chief negotiator Diego Pacheco said his country and 21 other allied nations -- including major emitters like China, India and Saudi Arabia -- would oppose the entire section on climate change mitigation. He argued developing nations should not have the same targets as rich ones...And he accused rich nations of trying to "transfer responsibility" to the Global South. (Dewan and Kottasová)

The issue of money ultimately took over the end of the conference and is where the discussions halted. Despite this, there were a few successes. Twenty-three countries committed to work towards stopping the use of coal. By 2030, over 100 countries pledged to end deforestation. Also, the United Kingdom, European Union, and United States created a new “multibillion dollar ‘Just Energy’ transition partnership” (Discover Eco).

The two events prompted similar activist responses, after COP26 the discontent grew even further. The conference that began on October 31<sup>st</sup>, was considered by activists to be an “utter failure” and a “conference of polluters” (Kaplan, Sarah, et al.). During the Earth Day summit, a very effective tactic was executed by Xiye Bastida and the organization Fridays for Future. The group, ignited by Greta Thunberg, organized climate marches throughout the United States while Bastida also made her speech at the summit (SkyNews). Reaching out to leaders directly while simultaneously activating the public is an impactful approach to addressing climate justice. Environmental activists were furious over the lack of representation at the conference. Bastida represents the strongest theme that influenced the climate summit as well as all the events in COP26. That younger generations should be seen as a central player in combating the climate crisis. Youth were present in both the COP presentations and leading the climate marches. Young people are a part of that minority of people whose voices are not heard in the room where the climate discussions happen. Just on Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup> alone, Fridays for Future gathered over 30,000 people in Kelvingrove Park in Glasgow. Then, on November 6<sup>th</sup>, over 100,000 people gathered in Glasgow to create the representation and attention that was not being generated by those inside the event (Carmichael). More often now, organizations and individual activists are aware of the power of gathering people together. For the many activists that attended in Glasgow, the achievement was not in the conference, but the people outside of it. The COP26 Coalition organization organized a series of marches in not only Glasgow but across the world called “A Global Day of Climate Action”.

I participated in a climate march that happened in my city in response to COP26. I too had high hopes for this event. So much so that I took part in a video made by the World Wildlife Fund that was a call to action for the world leaders participating. This video called for the

recognition of many issues the world is facing if they cannot improve upon their promises of the Paris Agreement. This video was met with a lot of support, but also there were hate comments. Most of the comments were about the futility of our efforts. For both of my actions, I did what I could to highlight hope for the future, but also call for awareness. COP26 reminded me that being an environmental activist means that we need to be ready for anything. It is so important to hold onto the passion for activism during difficult times. All the climate events this year impacted and guided my writing process for this thesis. Right now, what I can do is write about ways to improve activist efforts so that when another major event happens, there is another path of advocacy.

## On Climate Grief

### *A personal reflection*

The tone of the climate change conversation in the United States is one commonly full of tension and strain. Everyday there is a new disaster being shared and there is no room in U.S society for personal time to deal with climate anxiety. So, many people force themselves to continue life as usual. Without any political intervention, that is what many people are being pressured into; not to deny the changes in climate, but to just keep moving on as if everything were the same. This act of avoidance is what many government officials are calling for us, the citizens, to do. The topic of climate is highly emotional and to engage with it as if it doesn't invade upon every facet of humanity would be foolish. Those who have been fighting against injustices for so long meet these environmental issues with such passion that it is frustrating and disheartening when policy makers maintain a cool composure when discussing the very same issues. The act of persistently trying to engage others in activism is to face a range of emotions head on with very little guidance. This toll on mental health is why there is a call for more public acceptance of activists.

A conversation like this clearly cannot be written without the recognition of our individual climate realities. Around the world millions of people are losing their loved ones and facing horrors no one thought possible. And now in 2021 a new type of grieving has become more globalized than ever- climate grief. Everyone is seeing the world change in real time through new platforms. Without even realizing it, individuals have been going through this grief for the past decade or more. In 2007, Steven R. Running wrote an article on the *5 Stages of*

*Climate Grief*, and the resemblances to typical grief are quite striking. Long ago, many people who didn't keep up with the environment may have found themselves in stage 1-denial. They could not believe that the earth was warming let alone that humans were responsible for it. Despite the data since the 60's the social cultural divide had made people non-believers. In Stage 2, anger, there is a refusal to change one's lifestyle or practices that are comfortable. Stage 3- Bargaining; at this point people would accept that the climate is changing and yet they are now stating that the change wouldn't be bad or impactful, it might even be a good thing. There would still be no acceptance to make change. Stage 4- depression, this feeling comes from finally seeing the facts, the rapid warming, and feeling hopeless that there could be a solution (Running 1 and 2). Some people may have gone through these motions quickly as a teenager or young adult and have moved on to the final stage that so many of us are in now- acceptance. Within acceptance it seems, is where environmental activists exist. They have accepted climate change and a changing planet and have chosen to look for solutions. On social media, comments either resound with anger or resignation. The common tone in these activist circles feeds on the feelings of hopelessness. It sometimes erupts into a competitive atmosphere of "who's doing better activist work?" and this competitiveness only provokes climate anxiety further. This begins an even greater battle between people who are both wanting the planet to be saved and don't feel seen. It is valid to feel hopeful of the new ideas commencing in climate remediation and wildlife rehabilitation. It is also valid to recognize the constant disasters and wildlife trafficking tragedies

What might be lost here is that the topic of climate change is not simply a more circular debate, it is also grieving. Everyone grieves in their own time - so much so that there are books, intensive therapies, and expensive treatments to help people work through it. Still there is no one

answer on how to handle this all-encompassing anguish of losing someone or something you love- or losing the life you've grown accustomed to. When entering the new waters of climate grief that are coming to the forefront of mental health issues, how are we as global citizens supposed to be aware of the acceptable and unacceptable grieving people are going through. We are entering this new world together. And no one wants to be on their own.

## Part 4

### The Future of Environmental Activism

#### *Potential Impacts on Public Opinion and Opportunity it Creates for Activists*

#### **World Wildlife Fund Panda Ambassador Experience**

I joined the World Wildlife Fund Panda Ambassador program in 2016. I found it through Google when the program was just being piloted. As one of the first hundred activists, I had the chance to see the program develop over the years. Through the WWF website I submitted my application and was then contacted for a phone interview. Upon entering the program, I agreed to their terms and conditions, mainly about what ways we do and do not represent the organization and there were examples of what we could be removed from the group for. The main requirement to remain in the group was to lead four events every year related to the conservation work done by the World Wildlife Fund. These events could be anything if the proposal was accepted by the “Activism and Outreach” team. After that, I was invited to their ambassador database on the website. It provided educational resources for the people within the group. The resources had topics for every field of conservation WWF was involved in. The site also had a page for the project proposals. Where ambassadors can provide an explanation of a project and request materials for it. The organization would send packages of educational materials such as pamphlets or mini books, depending on the audience. With children, the materials are directed towards what would keep their attention. I have received bookmarks, stickers, stuffed animals, and bandanas. To aid the host of these events there are pages on the WWF website that provide

members with pre-made digital slides on a broad range of topics along with notes for the presenter; there are even “how to” guides for those that need some help getting started. Once the event is completed the hosting member would provide a write up and images from the event itself.

The program holds monthly meetings to discuss current events, WWF actions, and ambassador opportunities. Now, ambassadors also have the opportunity to connect with WWF scientists and experts. Just this year, they joined the Mobilize app to connect their growing network of ambassadors to each other. Every year, the organization gathers the ambassadors to participate in Lobby Day where we advocate to our representatives for international conservation funding on Capitol Hill. I have participated three times. It is preceded with a Panda Ambassador Summit, where all the ambassadors can get to know each other in person and talk about projects. During that time there are two days of lobby training where we participate in practice meetings that resemble what meeting with congress members would be like. It allows us to speak about our concerns in a supportive environment. We can take these experiences forward and utilize them with officials in our respective communities. The training also proposes a critical aspect of advocacy; that activists will face opposition and hostility at some point. Within the organization there are people from both political parties that have a passion for environmental conservation. The WWF team facilitates discussion on how to navigate that and work together toward a similar goal.

As a long time member, I admit that I do enjoy participating in the organization. I believe this organization has been successful in creating a community and sense of closeness between people that work around the country. I feel that the people leading the group care and want to do their best to continuously better the program. My profile is on the landing page where people

sign up to join the program, with a photo and interview. I, alongside other longtime ambassadors, are featured in their magazine as well. The article, *Ambassadors to the World: Meet the Next Generation of Environmental Activists*, speaks of our past projects and passions in environmental conservation. But these media features never appear to be forced or ingenuine, because they take the time to learn about their members and respect the multiple ways the activists are using their resources. The program changed the course of my life and allowed me to develop long lasting friendships. Because of my long-time membership, and how I've seen it grow, I am proud of the work WWF has done. I am also proud of myself for not letting go of that initial desire to do more. Joining a group such as WWF was out of my comfort zone at first but pushing myself to become involved built my confidence and through that I gained my voice. Most importantly, the program emphasized that we can make an impact by building our own network of knowledge.

### **My Definition of Manufactured Environmental Activism**

My experiences at the World Wildlife Fund helped me see that there is another type of activism, one that is created to support the activist. I call it “manufactured environmental activism” and I know it can work. I believe that it has the potential to support environmental activists of all kinds across the United States. I define “manufactured environmental activism” as a support system that provides education and support for individuals from all backgrounds to become involved in advocating for a healthier environment; and shares the resources they need to be successful in either a nonprofit or on their own. This support includes opportunities for collaboration and specific training about activist strategies. The target audience are individuals who care about the environment and are seeking ways to become involved but do not know how

to engage in environmental activism. Manufactured environmental activism creates activists that are confident to advocate for their cause because of the experiences they have in the organization. They are given various educational resources, opportunities for collaboration, and specific training about activist strategies.

If I return to my definition of “manufactured”, it refers to the process of building something out of raw materials which, I must reiterate, is a good thing. “Manufactured” refers to taking the passion and potential of the individual (raw material) and transforming it into that individual's desired product. In this case, taking action to improve the environment. Because manufacturing is a process, the final result - the experience of the individual - will be shaped by the activist group they chose to join.

### **Opportunity Manufactured Environmental Activism Creates for Activists**

For me, Xiye Bastida, Quannah Chasinghorse, and Leah Thomas are significant role models for those passionate about environmental activism; they provide examples of environmental advocates who are responding to the urgency of climate change with innovative strategies. They are also inspiring others across the country to use similar tactics. Each uses their own form of “manufactured environmental activism.” The strategies they use are growing in popularity because of the continuous success and the repetition of these tactics is what makes manufactured environmental activism partly formulaic in nature. All three individuals are either leading or a part of a group of environmental defenders. To practice manufactured environmental activism is not cold, calculating, or pre-packaged. It is a background of skills that centers around shared experiences and builds off a network of knowledge. For those without any activism

experience, the proof of successful approaches makes the work they aspire to do more achievable. From the perspective of someone with no experience, but a desire to get involved, manufactured activism opens a world of opportunity.

One of the strongest benefits of manufactured environmental activism is its ability to educate people on how to engage with their communities and get more people involved in activism. The benefit of individual activists working with a nonprofit is that the organization can provide ideas known to be effective for sharing the activist's knowledge, this system ensures less discomfort and uncertainty on the individual's part. There will be many resource sharing strategies for event organization and public engagements. This is a system that is used in variations by organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, American Conservation Coalition, FridaysforFuture, and World Wildlife Fund.

Speaking of FridaysforFuture, Xiye Bastida creates activists specifically for the purpose of reaching more communities across the country. She approaches activism by speaking to large audiences and organizing people across the country. Her strategy involves formal education settings and starting mobilizations. The intent for these activists is to give them a greater sense of autonomy and confidence to voice their opinions. The strong educational element to her work is a great example of the opportunity manufactured environmental activism creates to engage with the public through a multitude of approaches. With specific focus on youth participation, Xiye knows why the work within educational settings is key. If manufactured environmentalism is to move forward, there is a need to make people aware that anyone has the potential to be an activist; it is this idea that manufactured environmental activism executes as its mode of operation. Xiye is teaching the next generation of environmental advocates; they will be crucial to the future of climate change.

Bastida has participated in protests, online meetings, speeches, and writing articles to reach large groups of people. This demonstrates the critical need in environmental activism to accommodate individual ways of receiving information. Nonprofit organizations can keep this in mind when educating activists how to disseminate what they have learned. To support the activist, the organization can also provide supplementary materials such as informational sheets, petitions, images, or video; resources that cater to all ways people prefer to learn. Or depending on the age bracket of the audience, it could be child-oriented material. The important thing here is to have the nonprofit make the activists' events happen with all the resources they need. With this extra support, activists gain confidence and eventually are comfortable organizing on their own.

Organizing a public event is stressful and can cause anxiety. Within a program of manufactured activists, connections with others in the group is critical. Especially when social media is also a prominent, and almost essential tool to activist practices. The nonprofit would provide regular online, or in person meetings where the members can recap their projects and others can celebrate their work. The new development of the social media applications just for activists is an example of how nonprofits can build even more connections within the group. In a collective with strong peer support and allyship it can be easier to have constructive conversations on activism strategies. An important aspect is the nonprofits' ability to teach the activists how to make their events accessible for the community. In a supportive atmosphere, leadership in the group can bring awareness to events that could unintentionally create exclusion. Such as only holding events in institutional settings. The support the activists require to work in their own communities can be difficult and at times confusing.

The need for strong connections between activists can be seen in Quannah Chasinghorse and Leah Thomas' work. Leah Thomas curates' content that promotes intersectionality in environmentalism. She creates posts that share information on how to decipher media and provides step-by-step methods to political organizing. She is trying to bring activists together and raise awareness that many activists' causes are interconnected. Quannah Chasinghorse uses her social media presence as well as her shared life experiences to advocate for the environment and human rights. She enters spaces of privilege and uses her platform to raise awareness for minority communities as well. By using her social media presence in this way, it connects activists from around the world to each other. Her work is an example of the strength that comes with allyship between environmental defenders. With threats to the environment, people act in response to their personal experience. They are protesting, marching, lobbying, writing, and creating. By maintaining these connections to many sources of information, activists can understand and adapt to issues in the environment as they continue to evolve. Modern activists develop strategies that emphasize inclusive advocacy.

A network of offices has the potential to be a benefit for manufacturing activism. By having local offices that connect to the larger organization, the activists can engage with local offices that have a deeper community understanding. It also allows for group leaders to be more attentive toward their members. An impression I gather from my own experience are the common criticisms people have of groups led by nonprofits are that they promise support while failing to effectively communicate with their members. There is also concern that a federated structure could make the groups appear ingenuine. From my own experience, nation-wide offices for these groups have proven to be successful. The World Wildlife Fund and the Nature Conservancy both have offices throughout the country. If an activist needs materials or expert

guidance, they are able to meet local leaders at those offices. Ideally this structure strengthens the activists' interest and confidence to pursue their work. The organization's local networks would theoretically have leaders that are aware of conditions in nearby communities and could help activists in the area. Multidimensional perspectives in activism do not involve speaking for others or the nonprofits taking over the individual's projects. The organization works with the activist and while the activist works alongside their community. Just as manufactured environmental activism is a tool that works alongside all pre-existing forms of environmental activism.

### **Pitfalls and Problems Specific to Manufactured Environmental Activism**

There is potential for manufactured activism to cause harm to activism as a whole if not executed properly. As seen recently with the TV show "The Activist", there are going to be more threats to modern activism. Manufactured environmental activism as a phrase already sounds somewhat mechanical. To recall Mike Lubell's collective interest model from the 90's on group activism, individual intent and goals of the organization will vary. So, it's possible that looking to create activists this way will also do the opposite of what is the ideal.

In Edward Walker's, *Grassroots for Hire*, he analyzes the way activism was adopted by major corporations to achieve their own goals. What Lubell and Walker investigate is an important part of manufactured activism's nuance and potential. In the past, the work of activists and their success from campaigning was recognized by large companies. Those companies began their own strategic outreach, hoping to take advantage of "on the ground" advocacy as another marketing tool. They create groups that align with their values and develop tactics of public engagement that follow similar models to grassroots activists. Thus, creating an "astroturf" form

of activism that presents itself as genuine but holds more capitalist intentions (Walker). Industrial companies couldn't overlook the increased power activists' influence has on American society. They decided if you can't beat them, join them. These similarities are what can confuse the intentions when manufacturing environmental activists.

The data from Lubell on the collective shows a weakness that could “over-simplify” a complicated field of work, especially the one I am proposing. Returning to Dorceta Taylor, some problems with blanket views of activism, like Lubells’ general criticism of activist collectives, and the conclusions of its effectiveness, “...makes it difficult for us to understand the contemporary environmental movement and accurately predict the rise of the grassroots mobilization such as the environmental justice movement” (Taylor 27). Manufactured environmental activism as a facet of the larger social movement will have to be aware of the constant vulnerabilities when creating a collective of activists.

Groups created by nonprofits can make resources more accessible and communication more effective. It also has potential for exclusion; and possibly this industrial format Walker is proposing. As I previously mentioned, proper activist education has awareness of approaches to activism that can perpetuate issues within the environmental justice movement. If this education is missing within any part of the manufacturing process, the strategy may be useless. It may also fail if manufactured environmental activism can't reach the broad audience described in the definition. The point is for anyone from any background to have the opportunity to participate. Returning to the perspective of Jeanette Armstrong, there is inherently exclusion and the possibility for exploitation in “Western” ways of environmental advocacy. It is critical to improve awareness of this and make sure activists are acting inclusively:

If I look around at how the land has been impacted by what I call the Western culture, one of the things I see is an overuse of resources by some people and a lack of access to those same resources for others. In other words, there are some people with a right to have more and some people with no right...When you look at the idea of democracy from that perspective, you can see there's something profoundly wrong with a hierarchical system in which people sitting next to you or next door to you don't have access to the same things you do. That seems to me to be a profoundly basic communal principle: Everyone in a community needs to have the same access to the basics and the same access to the joys and pleasures of life. (109)

As I have explained in other parts of this thesis, activists must understand the conditions in their own communities and their accessible methods of action. Armstrong makes the strong point that it's critical for everyone to have access to the basics and joys of life. So, when creating a collective of activists, the principle is the same.

## **Future Trends**

### *Better Media Outreach*

For the future, it will be important to also stay up to date on activist representations in popular media and how the activists utilize it in the United States. For manufactured environmental activism to work, there will need to be a wide range of media related resource tools provided by the nonprofit organizations involved. This could be in the form of learning how social media platforms work for advocacy or how to decipher the media being put out. It is

up to the activists to have the skills to work with and around the media to get what they need from it. More research must be done on social media and activist engagement to fully see the influence it has on the public. With that being said, there are strategies being implemented right now that show positive potential (refer to part 2). Manufacturing environmental activism will contribute to creating effective content because of digital media education. If more people are given the resources to know how to engage with the platforms, the activist could have a greater influence over how activism and environmental issues are portrayed.

If a nonprofit were to utilize Manufactured environmental activism it will provide extensive resources to create public outreach. The organization provides materials such as speakers notes, images, and engagement ideas. In this process, the individual hones their expertise in deciphering digital content and how to use it in the context of activism. The ability to experiment and learn what is effective for public engagement and reception helps the activist succeed in producing their own content. With a nonprofit that has the goals of creating multidimensional activists, there must be an understanding of the intent behind the production of environmental related media. This would mean the activist has developed “digital media literacy”, which was previously discussed. That background of literacy allows for a comprehensive media outreach that is informed and effective. The organization will have a focus on accessibility with media and the areas of exclusion that activists can work to modify at the local level.

In regard to even more mainstream content, television is also making the activists' presence more popular. Environmental activists with a multidimensional perspective can use the platform for outreach while avoiding exploitation. The strength of using this platform doesn't come from connecting activism solely with major entertainment or glamor but sharing the real

experiences of activists. It will be important for activists of the future to master ways to gain more viewership. Using examples from the advocates in section two, Quannah Chasinghorse and Xiye Bastida both were involved in major televised media, in dramatically different ways. Quannah Chasinghorse attended the Met Gala in 2021, with networks such as E! News and Vogue featuring her. As shown with her post mentioned previously, this wasn't just about the media consumption, but the deeper connotation of cultural visibility on primetime networks and indigenous forms of dress (Chasinghorse). Xiye Bastida was a featured speech at the Earth Day Climate Summit, which was streamed by platforms such as MSNBC, CNN, and BBC. Bastida's speech was included alongside the global leaders attending. This type of outreach is what will support the broad outreach of manufactured environmental activism and enhance the future of environmental activism in general.

### *Job Opportunities*

A common request by environmental activists is the recognition of marginalized voices, and validation that American policy makers will prioritize climate action. Typically, meetings involving these policy makers have only granted seats to people of privilege who often have no effective solutions to offer, but the involvement of young activists have begun to change the playing field. Young people today are approaching activism with stronger public engagement techniques and are also facilitating conversations with the nation's leaders. They use any resource available to share the threats to their futures as a result of their persistence and space within the public eye they are getting invited into the important discussions. Nothing can be perfect, but there are a handful of members in Congress that are working to bridge the gap

between activists, policy, and jobs. They seek to recognize environmental activism as more of a vocation than a volunteer pursuit to other members. Manufactured activism possesses a similar goal. Led by Congress members Ed Markey, Alexandria-Ocasio Cortez, and Bernie Sanders; they have introduced the “*Civilian Climate Corps for Jobs and Justice Act*”. Supported by President Biden, the act seeks to re-introduce the Civilian Climate Corps that exists within AmeriCorps for modern day. The principle of the act is to create paying jobs to address climate change. As a program that originated from the presidency of FDR:

This legislation updates, modernizes, and expands the concept of the New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps: ensuring that all Americans who want to participate may do so, regardless of race, age, or gender; broadening the range of eligible projects; providing 21st century health and education benefits; deepening partnerships with unions; and preserving Tribal sovereignty. (Press of Ed Markey)

Participation in the program would include healthcare, support for transportation, housing, and childcare. The program would provide resources to educate those involved and facilitate connection with pre-existing organizations and groups. The hope is to also use this legislation to enlarge the scope of jobs in the green sector. Corp members could discover new opportunities with the other organizations throughout the employment. The potential of this program can also center youth environmental leadership and real future planning.

Activist response to this plan is varied (Rott and Detrow). Many believe it could end up excluding much of the proposals in the originally introduced act, forming a program that doesn't plan to change anything. Activists also believe it could lead to validation in the eyes of both political and public landscapes. It wouldn't just mean that the climate corps creates paying jobs, but that all environmental activists in their pre-existing groups could be recognized. The work of

an environmental activist isn't extra-curricular; the workload is often that of a second job. A second job they love, but that doesn't pay.

Environmental activists' programs and jobs can entice some more apprehensive Americans to accept global, multilateral approaches to combat the climate crisis. Those global connections, as we know from the past, can only happen if there is a sense of stability in this country by the American people. The youth activists that enter the conferences and forums are making the public comfortable with activists as a resource. To create more activists themselves, activist leaders try to make these strategies approachable as well. Xiye Bastida created a group of forty activists through a group education session. Starting sessions with like-minded individuals that all are on the same page makes the experience inclusionary and accessible to anyone.

This Civilian Climate Corp is something that is still an idea and not being practiced. Manufactured environmental activism strategies align with the coalition in the way it is being described in the current legislation. The two systems would support each other in the future. If manufactured activism becomes more prominent, the creation of paying jobs would be another opportunity for those who want to continue their involvement past their activist education. Manufactured activism would be that in-between step that makes green jobs more legitimate. Someone could begin with education and outreach strategy within a nonprofit in an unpaid role and then move on to a professional career.

As discussed, a lot of the climate change conversations in 2021 since October have been perceived as a failure in the eyes of environmental activists globally. Looking at the bigger picture, it is devastating that once again the responsibility to save the earth is thrown at members of the public that aren't creating a majority of the problem. It is unfortunate that to bring awareness to critical life-threatening conditions, policy makers must be convinced through

incentives. But as a global issue, the truth is that the U.S must start somewhere. This nation is not the leader in facing the climate crisis, no matter if the President claims that to be so or not. The U.S. government has not even dealt with the exploitation of millions of people here. If there is another strategy for activists to receive an invitation into the conversation of climate policy, do we take it? The current development and next steps for manufactured activism could be the beginning of acceptance for legislation like the civilian climate corps or at least green oriented jobs. Manufactured activism within non-profit groups will facilitate and provide these opportunities for inclusion as well. This facet of manufactured activism doesn't seek acceptance from the activists, but from the policy makers and apprehensive members of the American public.

Manufactured environmental activism will strengthen global connections over time. During the Earth Day climate summit and COP26, countries in the Global South continued to press that those in the Global North need to take responsibility. The United States agreed to work with many countries, with strong opposition from the nations policy makers. American environmental activists have been calling for global support for a long time. And recently, the pressure has been so constant that even policy makers opposed to climate change have been forced to greenwash their campaigns to pacify constituents. Whether they care or not, communities are pushing back. By continuing to manufacture activists there will be an even greater turn out to put pressure on the government.

## *Accessible & Ethical Information*

Regarding the content learned and shared in the organization, the resources provided are wide-ranging, accurate, and accessible. Science literacy will become a greater priority for resources. Experts sharing this information won't just explain what is important in climate science, but also how the activists can interpret it. This type of skill may often be confused for needing a solely Westernized academic background in science. It is more the idea of understanding the scientific concept being conveyed in the first place. If this happens, one can know what type of research they must do and what they are being asked to understand. For non-scientists, understanding a scientific article can be a battle. With science literacy, the individual knows how to look for their ideal resources to understand a concept. They can form their own opinions based on the facts and not through several filtered channels. To include science literacy in manufactured activism would spread beneficial techniques on a wide scale. But the question is how to accomplish this.

Emily L. Howell and Dominique Brossard in their journal on misinformation and science literacy in the digital age mention some central factors. Through k-12 education, students can learn how to decipher types of information and find it online as well as be taught comprehensive approaches to the sciences. This will be the most valuable technique. The problem with educating adults is that they already have beliefs that were built outside of science and when they are prompted to search deeper, they hand pick articles that fit the narrative they are already comfortable with; even when these articles are from non-reputable sources. This practice is only acting as confirmation bias. These authors stress the importance of transforming and documenting these formal structures for new generations. But it also seems that peer to peer

contact could be part of the solution in educating adults (Howell and Brossard). The main idea here is transforming and documenting formal structure for the future. If manufactured activism is in part formulaic, a system of what has begun to work in science literacy education, would aid in creating an ideal practice in activism.

These foundational ideas can lead to more complicated concepts when manufacturing activists, such as “digital media science literacy”. This is the ability to see science presented in the media, know ways of accessing these sources, and decipher the goals of the platforms. This will be another necessary addition to modern effective activism techniques. A simple and buildable background of science literacy can create progressive ways of thinking; people learning of their own innate biases can help them evaluate data properly.<sup>1</sup> Introducing science literacy as a normal practice can guide activists to understand how an individual learns and takes in the information (Howell and Brossard).

There will ideally be a background of Indigenous knowledge systems and how non-Indigenous activists can work with consideration for this community. Western science and Indigenous knowledge would be addressed as equally critical- and with nuance. The education that would be made available should be thorough enough to make activists aware of how these systems can be inaccessible or exploitative. The idea is not to constantly tell the developing activist what they cannot do or do not know, but how they can very easily move through these spaces with inclusion in mind. Multidimensional awareness in education is a step that future activism would benefit from.

When introducing resources for ecological or environmental literacy, they cannot only include western science. It also should include knowledge from Indigenous communities that has been made available to the public. Sonya Atalays’ article on, *Indigenous Science for a World in*

*Crisis*, has mentioned the possible traumas in sharing work that so often in the past and present is criticized and targeted (see keywords). On the other hand, the author uses the term “knowledge mobilization”, and how it is a free-flowing system that passes information freely between communities. It speaks to how at some point, the creation of new knowledge is not enough; studying how to move it through diverse spaces is just as crucial. The author states:

...there is now a greater recognition that Indigenous knowledge systems, including traditional ecological knowledge (TEK), are valid forms of science, and that these knowledge frameworks provide useful and necessary understanding for our contemporary world and the problems we face. The interest in acknowledging Indigenous sciences... is growing...including environmental sciences, engineering, and other STEM fields.

(Atalay 5 and 6)

This statement explains the need for not just one perspective to make science accessible to everyone. The continued biases and marginalization of entire communities and people cannot continue if there is to be an effective and decolonized version of environmental, ecological, and overall science literacy. If manufactured environmental activism works in the way I am describing, it will be a format that does a better job of working alongside Indigenous groups and holding organizations to a standard of ethical practice. Leah Thomas states how to have this success:

“I think organizations need to set goals...that flow throughout the entire organization and each department. They should also have measurable goals that they can be held accountable for and someone to hold them accountable. Some of these goals can include making sure there’s diversity in all levels of an organization or having support for BIPOC employees. On an individual level, it’s important that people come to terms with what

they may have done wrong in the past, instead of denying it, so they can move past it and begin anti-racism work”. (Thomas)

It will also amplify this knowledge and issues affecting Indigenous communities. Many points of reference in this thesis came from research and experiences of BIPOC. It has dominated the argument for manufactured environmental activism as well as the need for activism in general. That is because creating activists in the way I describe will not work without multidimensional understanding.

## Conclusion

There is uncertainty for our future in the United States. Inevitably, many will experience climate grief and fear. Environmental injustice will continue as activists protest. And activists will always have to work hard to be heard. I believe manufactured environmental activism, as I have explained, is happening now. And if it continues in a positive and effective way, it will create more support for the quickly changing climate movement. I believe this because over the course of those six years with the World Wildlife Fund, I have seen the potential for myself and lived within that experience. Before I joined WWF I felt excluded from the knowledge and resources that would help me in understanding what was occurring within my own community. Since then, I learned that I have a right to take action in my community.

The people advocating across the country must be seen as critical to the future of the United States and the nation's leaders have a responsibility to utilize everything at their disposal to make activism a more acknowledged field of work. We as activists need them to listen, and in turn they need us to support them to stay in office. If activist numbers continue to grow, they will become the defining factor in who leads our government locally and nationally. Addressing climate change, and the exploitation of both minority communities in the U.S. and the Global South is urgent. The strategies of manufactured activism are already being enacted by non-profit groups. It will not speak over others, but alongside environmental defenders, indigenous communities, and those who work towards decolonization. The group, Fridays for Future has a manifesto in which one segment reads, "Urgent climate action and assisting with adaptation is

not an “honorable duty” or “solidarity” it’s reparations for the injustices high income nations and sectors have caused through their exploitation” (FridaysforFuture). It will be important to recognize that this creation, this manufacturing, is a major tool in the modern environmental movement.

The WWF “Activism and Outreach” team and their resources manufactured me as an environmental activist. I was created from their model of what activists should do and represent. And yes, that may sound odd. But also, they provided me with opportunities to make my own path. Over years of observation, I saw the themes of what is becoming manufactured environmental activism. “Manufactured” as per the definition, doesn’t follow the piece that speaks to “creating with little or no creativity”. It does involve formulaic approaches, but also builds from raw material. Manufactured activism takes the raw passion, the raw discontent that we may have with our situation and can convert that into the product of a multidimensional, accessible form of activism. It doesn’t favor those of privilege or higher education. The gatekeeping properties that have existed to exclude environmental activists from connections to people in leadership in the past don’t exist here. It won’t disregard the established and developing grassroots groups but raise awareness for them.

It could be argued that what I am discussing here is simply an ideal form of activism. That one can wish for things to be this way, but it won't ever happen. I lived this experience, and I am tired of the inaccessibility that still exists in environmental activism. These aspects shouldn't be “ideal”, they should be the bare minimum when organizing a group of activists. From the things I have witnessed and been directly involved in, I have been able to write a thesis based on hope. I am still hopeful for the future. I want as many options as possible to bring that

hope and recognition to my community. I hold out hope that one day my neighborhood will have a healthy ecosystem and I'll hear the frogs once again.

### **Afterword**

Apart from my commitment to environmental activism and those key moments that got me there, I never understood my personal interest in activism. Growing up I was never the type of person to challenge the way of things. For me to share and explain why I believe manufactured environmental activism is an effective device, I first need to speak on the personal aspects that go into building a person ready for this role. For me, to be an activist, it is necessary to yield some vulnerability.

I was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I grew up with a mixed cultural upbringing from my father- born in Toluca, Mexico, and my mother, who is white with European descent. My father came to the United States when he was sixteen, and like many others, was seeking what was perceived as a better life. Living on a bag of chips those first weeks in America, he found a small job, then another. He worked through several positions until he met my mother working together at a restaurant. Not long after they got pregnant with me and married. When I was five years old my father gained his citizenship. I mention this only because growing up that history was hidden from me as it didn't align with the typical American family narrative.

I struggled with identity issues that many also have when growing up mixed. My mother's side of the family consistently tried to make me forget who I was. I was white, as far as they were concerned. Because my parents both had to work so hard when I was young, they were

unable to step in against the cultural brainwashing I was experiencing. Nor did they know how to do so when we relied on those same family members for both shelter and finances. My father's family is in Mexico; I was baptized there and visited a few times in my childhood. I will never forget the emotional goodbyes from my grandfather when we would leave, as if he knew no number of trips could help us hold on to what we were losing.

My white family members hide their passive aggressive remarks made to my sister and I as their love, but the words still dug in, eroding away at thick skin. Our bodies were never like theirs. Skin tinted - a beautiful tan that they would rub their pale complexioned arms against to share the wealth, but when it darkened with the sun it was too dark, and we shouldn't go out anymore. Curvy - so we should track what we ate. Hair dark and thick - beautiful until it adorned arms and legs and then we should shave, no matter the tender age of youth. As I was exposed to the world outside of the familial circle of my younger years, the unspoken disdain that hid under each remark began to show itself but seeing the truth had not undone the damage. My shame for being mixed verged on denial. It was only through outside influences that I began to find understanding and guidance on this subject.

I was aware from a young age of climate change and its effect on humans even if I did not yet have the words to explain those happenings. Milwaukee, as beautiful a city as it is, is in the top ten of the most segregated cities in America, and the entire county is at the top of most segregated metropolitan regions (Luthern and Mollica). I attended the district schools I was assigned as everyone does in both elementary and middle school. The middle school was in the heart of downtown Milwaukee, in an area with a heavy Latin population. Classroom windows were almost always shut to prevent the smog that tended to seep in after noon and students often excused themselves to cough in the hallway. I realized over the years that many of my friends

had developed asthma and it was not uncommon for students to rely on inhalers and fall ill to upper respiratory infections. On the bus ride home, I watched as the building of factories and highways never ceased, the city continuing to grow and spread even when my school felt like it was already surrounded in a cloud of thick smoke. Having lived in this environment for the majority of my life, I developed health issues that negatively affect me today and will continue to do so for the remainder of my life.

Despite it all, that middle school taught me more about art and culture than I have ever learned elsewhere. Up until that point I'd never had friends who also had immigrant parents and seeing others with a similar background and family as my own was new and different. It provided a comfort that I still struggle to put into words. Due to the concern over my health, when it came time for high school my mother pleaded with another district in tears for them to move me to another school. When it was approved, as much as I was relieved, I also felt incredibly guilty that I was privileged enough to leave that district behind while my friends had to stay. I felt guilty that I was, once again, running from myself. My identity.

At my new high school, I discovered that even if environmental racism didn't affect those walking the halls beside me, it would affect me and the people I cared about who weren't so lucky. This was before I understood what environmental racism was or how it specifically targeted these marginalized minority communities. All I knew was that it only made me angrier as time passed and that high school made me feel as though I was living in the upper middle class white bubble. It was during college that I dedicated time to studying environmental injustices and learned the history of it nation-wide. Through this study I began to piece together that the people I cared for and identified with most, were the very same ones who were the main targets of climate injustice. Simultaneously I also began to deconstruct the cultural denial that I

went through and found that not only was it not uncommon, but that the shame I had was never coming from me. It came from the whitewashing my own family members imposed upon me in attempts to keep me separate from my culture; the shame they felt towards me, the shame that they disguised in backhanded compliments and passive aggressive remarks. I had to come to the realization that just because these family members treated me “correctly” in the way they included us in family gatherings and sent greeting cards, did not negate the wrongness of their actions towards me nor the trauma they had inflicted. The bubble had popped.

Accepting these truths was not simple or easy. I felt betrayed by my own family for taking and hiding a part of myself from me and I was angry that it took me so long to find love for the identity that was lost to me. It was through this anger that I made up my mind to never allow others, even those whom I consider family, to tell me who I was or dictate which parts of me were worth more than others. The decision to devote my work to social-cultural research and advocacy is as much of a retaliation as much as it is a reconciliation. When I started this work, I did not know where it would lead, only that in doing so I was tearing apart the perception my family had for me and that for me to live a life true to myself it was necessary that I do just that.

It was then that I joined the World Wildlife Funds Panda Ambassador Program. I’ve had the privilege to meet people that have changed my life forever. One of these people being the family member of a murdered snow leopard activist from Mongolia which went on to serve as the topic of my undergraduate thesis and became an essential part of my life as an activist. It played a large role in prompting my deeper involvement in both environmental activism and work for justice for environmental defenders. WWF did not give me everything I wanted to achieve, but I was grasping for anything, and it gave me something to hold onto. It found me at a time where I felt helpless and gave me some of the power, I’d felt I’d lost back to me. They

accepted where I was at and worked with me from there. WWF provided structure to the potential uncertainty that comes from this involvement and, most importantly, it made me more aware than ever of the need for justice and how closely climate justice intertwined with social justice. The organization Fridays for Future- a youth led global climate strike movement reflects this sentiment, “Now more than ever, we must join the masses and follow the lead of environmental defenders, workers, and those most ignored. Join in their struggle for decolonization, justice, and autonomy. We must remember that our liberations are tied together (September 24 - #Uprootthesystem).” This reminds me that everyone has their own ways of power and resilience. For a long time, I didn’t think that power could apply to me because I was told otherwise, but through my experience with all of this I understand now that I was made to advocate for the world around me.

My experience growing up shows how power can so easily manipulate and coerce people into a repressed sense of self. For so long I was afraid of speaking my truth as I feared it would reveal too much of myself. I realize now that I must. I am an advocate because I have been split into two people my entire life. I am losing family members in Mexico to the Covid 19 pandemic due to lack of medical access and yet I have family here in the United States who refuse vaccination. I refuse to feel shame when I speak out against the injustices found within my circle. My own life experience has encouraged me to fight and search for solutions in a country at a crossroads. I do not believe myself to have the solutions to climate justice or social justice. I want to be a guiding hand to those who feel helpless in the face of these things. Just as I once did.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>For specific and extensive examples of the need for science literacy education: COVID-19, a pandemic affecting the entire world, has become a topic of political division in the United States. The presentation of it by former president Donald Trump- dragging the disease into a “rhetorical shadow” and disregarding public education. He instead hid information and created his own reality (Detjen et al.). So often he was calling it the “Chinese virus” or “Wuhan virus”. His associating the disease with ethnicity led to violence against Asian-Americans and Asians across the world; also, once again reinforcing the idea that immigrants and foreigners were unclean and unwelcome. Many members of the American public from then on were divided in their beliefs. Adults who were not researching passed the posts on Facebook or Fox News. In a poll taken this last June of 2021, 46% of Americans believe the virus came from a lab leak in China, and that number increased from 29% last year. In that same poll, 26% believe the virus happened “naturally” and 28% have no opinion or just don’t know. Most notable, 70% of republicans believe in the theory of a conspiratorial lab leak (Brewster). Aside from those that have formed their opinions or made their biases, there are a significant number of people who just have no idea. The pandemic has shown there is a need for someone to have the ability to find legitimate resources and truly form an opinion. In truth, there can be no exact pinpoint of the location where Covid began. But based on facts, there is a link between zoonotic diseases like Covid and “the sale and consumption of high-risk wild species, both in and outside of wildlife markets ... unsustainable food systems currently rely on the large-scale conversion of land for agriculture, which fragments natural ecosystems and increases interactions between humans, livestock, and wildlife (de Wit et al.)” For case studies on similar outbreaks such as the role of wildlife markets and illegal trade in 2002-2003 Sars pandemic, the role of deforestation in Ebola outbreaks in west and central Africa, and the role of agriculture and livestock production in Nipah virus outbreak in 1998 see (de Wit et al.). The issue of zoonotic disease emphasizes the need for activism for biodiversity. Illegal hunting, fishing, and deforestation as well as wildlife trafficking are becoming more pressing concerns and conflict between wildlife and humans is growing. The spread of misinformation has been so blatant with both the disease and the vaccine. But what is central and invaluable are the people that are advocating for the accurate representation of information. These issues that could have led to Covid 19 are just on the surface of what the world is truly facing with the threats to the environment.

<sup>2</sup>This notes compromises of the pledges made by the nations that participated in the climate summit on Earth Day. These pledges are a part of this year’s activist actions within the climate movement.

- President Xi Jinping of China spoke of a “people centered approach” to climate change and calling for equity and justice. He states they intend to uphold the U.N framework and the Paris Climate Agreement. China intends to follow the thought on ecological civilization and implement new development philosophy. They will pursue a low carbon path and strive to peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. A big part of this will

be restricting coal consumption. They state that their commitment to move from carbon peak to neutrality will be a much shorter timespan than what might take many developed countries. China also plans to host COP in the future and supports COP26.

- The Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi opens with the need to pull together during the global pandemic. In regards to the environment and participation he states, “We are doing our part...India's per capita carbon footprint is 60% lower than the global average...It is because our lifestyle is still rooted in sustainable practices (SkyNews).” The prime minister notes that India welcomes partners for sustainable development and disaster infrastructure. They are in need of affordable access to climate aid and technologies. The speech ends with the statement that President Biden and Prime Minister Modi are launching in India and U.S climate and clean energy by 2030 partnership agenda.

- Boris Johnson, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom is pledging a net zero carbon emission by 2035. He made it clear that this was “not about bunny hugging, but jobs”. They are working on carbon capture storage, net-zero flying, sustainable domestic living, habitat loss infrastructure, and much more. The United Kingdom plans to exceed their one-billion-dollar commitment to climate change.

- The Prime Minister of Japan, Suga Yoshide stated they will aim for net zero by 2030. They look forward to their Japan and U.S partnership on ambitious global decarbonization and clean energy. They will also be investing 11.8 billion U.S dollars into public and private climate finance.

- Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany stated they will be climate neutral by 2050 and are working as well to stop the loss of biodiversity. By 2030 they expect to reduce emissions by 50% and by 2038 they will phase out coal and invest in renewable resources. 46% of electricity will be from renewables. They recognize the need to have solidarity with developing countries and plan to invest 100 billion U.S dollars until 2025. The Chancellor mentioned Germany's support of the United States re- entering the climate agreement and Biden's pledge to reduce carbon emissions.

- President Moon Jae-in of South Korea set a pledge to carbon neutrality by 2050. They plan to stop issuing permits for coal power plants and invest in solar and wind power.

- President Vladimir Putin of Russia pledges by 2050 to significantly reduce carbon emissions. They claim to have reduced their greenhouse gas emission from 3.1 billion tons to 1.6 billion tons. The President mentions that the NDC and pledges are a solid legal framework for collaboration moving forward. They are working on infrastructure such as carbon capture, hydrogen as fuel, and revolving around the idea of a carbon pricing system for carbon trading.

- President Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil states that they will aim to reduce emission by 50% by 2030. Even more pressing, the president claims to be able to stop all illegal deforestation by 2030 as well. The President says that less than 3% of emissions comes from Brazil so they are not the largest part of the problem, “Given the magnitude of the obstacles, including financial ones, it is

essential to be able to count on the contribution of countries, companies, entities, and people willing to act immediately, real and constructively in the solution of these problems. This year, the international community will have a unique opportunity to cooperate with the construction of our common future (Macaya 2021)," Bolsonaro takes on the position that the world must see the economic nature of this issue as well. There must be fair payment for the environmental services provided by the amazon biome.

- Prime Minister Mario Draghi of Italy states that they are following a similar NDC to the rest of the European countries and underscores how fragile and vulnerable the country of Italy is to climate change. Italy is the presidency of the G20, an intergovernmental forum for international economic cooperation that hosts 19 countries and the European Union. The Prime Minister then heads this forum and takes responsibility for the G20 accounting for 75% of global emissions.

- King Salman Bin Abdelaziz Al Saud sent representatives to note that Saudi Arabia supports G20 and will host a green Saudi Initiative Forum. They have submitted an NDC that significantly reduces emissions.

-Prime Minister Lotay Tshering of Bhutan states they are already at a carbon negative since 2009 and their pledge is to remain carbon neutral. The Prime Minister makes it clear that their ecosystem is vulnerable to climate change and their country does not have the resources to combat it on a global scale. Their hope is to lead by example and ask industrial countries to do their part.

- President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of Mexico did not update their NDC status at this time. But the current NDC for Mexico submitted in 2020 states a 22% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. The President did make others points on their consumption and resources. They would like oil to be used for domestic demand and not export crude oil or buy gasoline. They will attempt to avoid use of fossil fields over time. They plan to update hydroelectric plants to reduce carbon and utilize water energy more efficiently. By doing so they plan to create 1.2 million jobs. The main topic for the president was to ask Biden to come to an agreement on a migration initiative, "His proposal would ask Central American migrants as well as Mexicans considering emigration to work across Mexico planting trees and crops for three years in return for an eventual six-month US work visa (Macaya 2021)", and eventually with this plan they could apply for a U.S citizenship.

- Prime Minister Gaston Alfonso Browne of Antigua and Barbuda mentions their continued commitment to reducing emissions but that they are also not a great emitter compared to the other countries. As a small nation they ask for financial relief for natural disaster assistance and pandemic resources to prevent climate refugees.

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