



Climate, Gen-Z, and Environmental Justice

A New Communications Framework

March 2022

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PNNL is operated by Battelle for the U.S. Department of Energy

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Who is Gen-Z?

The Emerging 'It' Generation

- Ages 14-25
- 30% of the global population (WE Forum)
- \$360 billion in spending power (Bloomberg)
- 8% of the electorate in 2020 (Pew Research)



Who is Gen-Z?

The Emerging 'It' Generation

- Digital native, hypercognitive generation
- Grew up in an age of scientific consensus on climate change
- Believe in dialogue as a conflict resolution and change mechanism



The Digitization of Climate Discourse



intersectionalenvironmentalist

PLACES WHERE ASIAN WOMEN DESERVE TO BE SAFE:

- AT HOME
- AT WORK
- IN TRANSIT
- AT SCHOOL
- IN PUBLIC
- SURELY WHERE!

"Cultural patterns of oppression are not only interrelated but are bound together and influenced by the intersectional systems of society."

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color, particularly Black neighborhoods.

BOOKS ARE A FORM OF POLITICAL ACTION.

BOOKS ARE KNOWLEDGE. BOOKS ARE REFLECTION. BOOKS CHANGE YOUR MIND.

IN THE SAME WAY THAT social trauma can be passed down from generation to generation, social healing can be passed down from generation to generation.

4:42 News

CLIMATE FRONTLINE

EMERGENCY ON PLANET EARTH

Climate Frontline
6.7K Subscribers

Channel 4 News reports, dispatches and stories from those on the frontline of climate change

Subscribe

Mary Annaïse Heglar @MaryHeglar

Anyway, I thought it might be helpful to admit this in public since the language of climate change is often a barrier for people who are climate curious, but don't know how to enter the conversation. I've been doing this work for 8 years & didn't know a basic term.

11:10 AM · 2/27/22 · Twitter for iPad

1 Retweet 44 Likes

Mary Annaïse Heglar @Mary... · 2/27/22

Replying to @MaryHeglar

I super appreciate all the science types in my mentions teaching me even more about this whole "chemistry" business. I don't promise to remember all this, but other non-science folks, take note: sometimes people are kind when you admit you don't know something.

TikTok @browngirlgreen

We have to talk about the "Environmental Education Gap"

Vox 6,272,100 subscribers

HOME VIDEOS PLAYLISTS COMMUNITY

All playlists

Created playlists

- Vox Borders: India
- Missing Chapter
- Vox Darkro

Vox Series

- The Good
- Climate
- Vox

Who has access rights to beautiful places?

- Locals relocated to climate-risk areas
- Indigenous Peoples Represent 4.2% of those displaced but make up 1.6% of the population
- Gen-Z and climate displacement media: are pursuits of justice for the displaced generational?



VICE World News

The Rich and Famous Took Over Australia's Most Famous Beach Town. The Locals Are Now Homeless.

Many of those priced out of celebrity hideaway Byron Bay have been among the worst impacted by Australia's recent deadly floods.



By [Gavin Butler](#)

March 17, 2022, 2:06am



Across Party Lines, Gen-Z Demands Climate Action

Youth-run green groups move to pressure U.S. Congress over climate

By Merdie Nzanga

4 minute re



≡ "Progressives need to hold the line against moderate compromises that won't do enough to stop climate change," said Zanagee Artis, co-founder of Zero Hour, one of several youth-led climate groups that assembled armies of young canvassers to support electing Democrats.



1/3

Audrey Lin chants during a demonstration by the Sunrise Movement near the White House demanding acti...

Young Republicans see shift in GOP: 'From outright denial to climate caucus'



Source: Sharon Udasin

But with two-thirds of Americans indicating that the government should do more on climate change - a stance that Butcher observed "is especially true among young people" - she said Republicans need to be talking about these issues and involving the younger generation in the discussions.

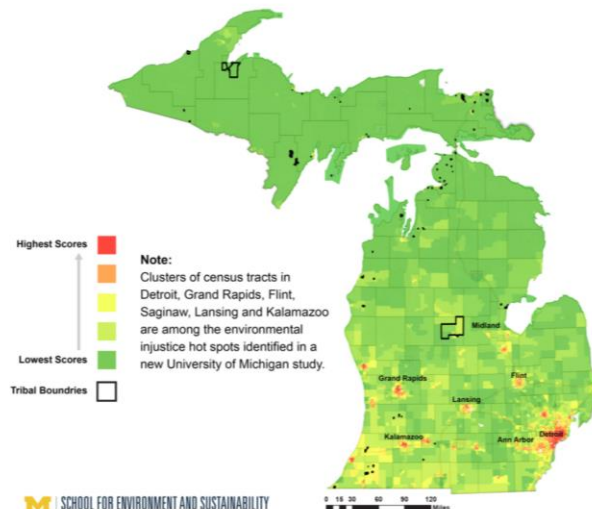
"The GOP has notoriously struggled with young people," she added.

Gen-Z Sees Climate Change Through the Lens of Environmental Justice

Racism and social justice issues are a top concern for Gen-Z (62%) just ahead of environmental and climate change issues (47%)(Blue Shield of California)

U-M study reveals hot spots of environmental injustice across Michigan

Heat Map of Michigan Census Tracts Ranked by Environmental Justice Scores



July 25, 2019

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ANN ARBOR—A new study by a University of Michigan student team has identified “hot spots” of environmental injustice across the state. U.S. census tracts in Detroit, Grand Rapids, Flint, Saginaw, Lansing and Kalamazoo are among the hot spots

Reimagining Emory courses through arts and social justice

The Arts & Social Justice Fellows Program adds new dimensions to existing courses through collaboration with Atlanta artists

By Susan M. Carini • March 10

Students in Emily Burchfield’s “Environmental Data Science” class are there to crunch the numbers. However, in its last iteration — as part of the Arts & Social Justice (ASJ) Fellows program — students were solving for questions that defy a quantitative answer.

A partnership among Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Emory Center for Ethics and Emory Arts, the ASJ program brings Atlanta artists into Emory classrooms to help students translate their learning into creative activism in the name of social justice. This year, seven artists partnered with faculty in Emory College of Arts and Sciences, Laney Graduate School, Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing and Candler School of Theology to co-teach existing courses.

Gen-Z and Sources of Climate Knowledge

Scientific Sources

- Based in climate science and learned through formal education e.g., IPCC
- Understands climate in a scientific, objective contexts
- Acquires knowledge of the natural environment through hypothesis, theories, and models

Traditional Sources

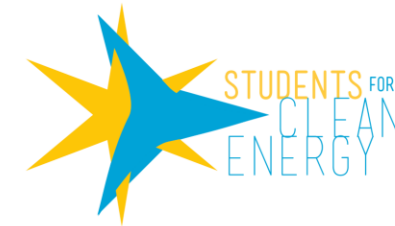
- Based in collective social and cultural knowledge e.g., Indigenous wisdom
- Understands climate through an intersectional context
- Achieves connectedness with nature through deliberate environmental behavior



Meet the Student Leaders Behind Environmental Initiatives on University Campuses



"Communication [about climate change issues] is more intersectional. We're not just burning fossil fuels, we're burning fossil fuels that impact certain communities."



U-M '22, Student Sustainability Coalition Leader



Priorities Vary for Youth Environmental Leaders

If student leaders could act on a single environmental issue tomorrow, it would be...

"Gen-Z are incredibly passionate about environmental issues and others as well who are often marginalized or excluded from having a say in political elections...[I would] address **voter disenfranchisement**."

"Expanding **renewable energy infrastructure** and better **public transportation**."

"A focus on **job creation**...from the more immediate understanding of job creation in renewable energy but also in a broader perspective of how things like the care economy and the education sector represent crucial, low-carbon economic sectors for society."

A New Communications Framework for Climate Discourse

1. Identify how media narratives around climate change may or may not play into generational preferences for discourse
2. Explore digital narratives of climate change
3. Know Gen-Z's priority concerns (social justice and racism)
4. Deepen awareness of new and traditional knowledge forms
5. Anticipate differences among specific climate actions within Gen-Z



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Thank You

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