


Introduction to  
Climate Change  
and Climate  
Justice



## Why I got involved

A dark, grayscale photograph of a climate protest. A group of people is gathered outdoors, holding various signs and banners. One prominent sign on the right says "#ECOLOGICIST @ExxonSHELL". Another sign on the left says "LESS MEAT LESS MEAT". In the center, a large banner is partially visible with the text "WE ARE THE FUTURE". The background shows trees and a fence.

For the longest time, I had no interest in learning about climate change. I always ignored it and quite frankly, I really didn't know anything about it. It wasn't until I joined a Climate Justice organization (JMJU) that I realized how important it is that we take climate action. I began to do research on it every single day, and I became worried over our world's current situation. I think it is crucial that us youth take action because it is our future at stake. We must deal with the mess our past generations created.

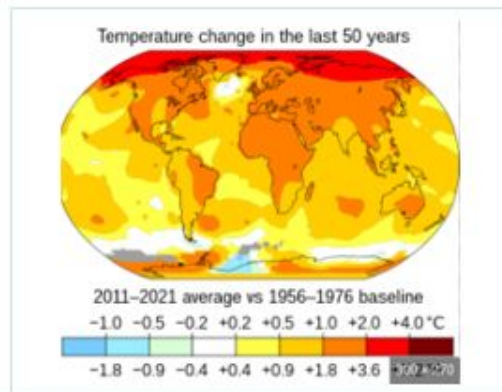
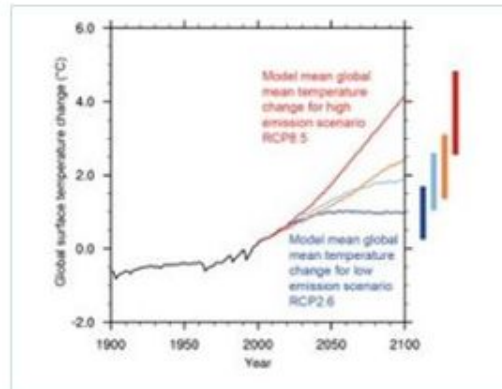


## Some information about JustME for JustUS

JustME for JustUS (JMJU) is an organization run by youth that is working to get accessible climate justice and civic engagement opportunities for youth in rural Maine. Rural Youth Organizers like me are the decision-makers in JMJU's work. We are given training and resources and are empowered to become climate justice leaders.

# A Brief Background

Over the past 100 years, Earth's climates have been changing, but the past few years have been the hottest on record. Climate change effects are being seen everywhere. Now is the time to take action.







# Key Terms

- **Global warming:**

The heating up of the Earth caused mostly by the burning of fossil fuels (oil, coal and natural gas), which releases heat-trapping carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

- **Climate change:**

The changing of climate patterns (e.g. more precipitation, more intense storms, floods or droughts) on Earth caused by the burning of fossil fuels.

- **CO<sub>2</sub> (Carbon dioxide):**

Carbon dioxide isn't bad. It is needed for plants, because they breathe in the carbon dioxide and breathe out oxygen for us to use! But when there is an overload of carbon dioxide, that's when it becomes a problem. Our plants can't absorb it fast enough and it gets stuck in our atmosphere. That heats up the planet!

# Key Terms

- **Greenhouse Gases:**

Gases in Earth's atmosphere that trap heat.

- **2°C:**

The amount of global warming above pre-industrial levels (200 years ago), which could lead to catastrophic outcomes for human populations (and countless other animal and plant species). The Earth has already warmed by 0.8°C above pre-industrial levels.

- **Carbon Footprint:**

The amount of greenhouse gases and especially carbon dioxide given off by a person's activities.



# What is Climate Change?



# Causes of Climate Change

The three major causes of climate change are:

- Burning coal, oil, and gas
- Deforestation
- Increased livestock farming





## Effects of Climate Change

- **Warmer temperatures:** increases the possibility of heat waves, which can pose health risks particularly for young children and elderly.
- **Human Health:** Worsening air and water quality, increasing the spread of certain diseases, and altering the frequency or intensity of extreme weather events.
- **Rising sea levels** threatens coastal communities and ecosystems.
- **Changes in the weather patterns:** rainfall and amount of stream flow can affect water supplies and water quality.
- **Changing ecosystems:** influence geographic ranges of many plant and animal species and the timing of their lifecycle events, such as migration and reproduction
- **Increases in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events:** heat waves, droughts, and floods can increase losses to property, cause costly disruptions to society, and reduce the affordability of insurance

# A Climate Emergency



## Defining Climate Justice

Climate justice means recognizing that climate change has negative effects on most people in the world. It is also the idea that climate change impacts those who have done the least to contribute to the problem. (For example, Indigenous peoples) Climate justice says that wealthy countries who have benefitted the most from using fossil fuels, must do more to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also, actions to address climate change and reduce our greenhouse gas emissions must be done in a way that is fair for everyone.

# Why is Climate Justice Important?

“Climate impacts can exacerbate inequitable social conditions. Low-income communities, people of color, indigenous people, people with disabilities, older or very young people, women *all can be more susceptible to risks posed by climate impacts like* raging storms and floods, increasing wildfire, severe heat, poor air quality, access to food and water and disappearing shorelines.”



## Some questions!

- **What is the difference between global warming and climate change?**
- **What are fossil fuels and how do they cause climate change?**
- **Name some examples of changes in climate or extreme weather. What are some recent extreme weather events that have happened around the world?**
- **Why might people with higher incomes be responsible for more emissions?**
- **What are other reasons why some people may have higher emissions than others? What are some barriers people face in reducing their emissions?**





# Ways To Take Climate Action

## **Practice Self-Education**

The first step in empowering and amplifying voices within vulnerable communities is self-education.

## **Speak up**

One conversation can lead to many other conversations. Starting small is a great way to begin.

## **Write to politicians about climate change**

Influencing politicians to act on climate change is a great way to get involved. Tell them how you feel about it and what they should do!

## **Elevate the Voices of Impacted Communities**

Once you've educated yourself, get to know the social justice advocates in your community, and support them however you can.

# Youth Led Organizations You Can Connect With

- **Maine Youth for Climate Justice**

A coalition of youth and youth-led organizations from across the state that advocates for climate justice.

- **Maine Youth Power**

Helps to build the power of youth across the state through trainings and campaign support.

- **Maine Youth Justice**

A youth led campaign fighting for the end of youth incarceration in Maine.

- **JustME for JustUS**

Provides a network and resources to build the political power of youth in Maine around climate justice efforts.

- **Maine Youth Action**

A group aiming to mobilize and empower a youth-led climate movement through legislative, political, and electoral means.

- **Maine Youth Action Network**

Provides opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, including youth leadership conferences.



## Organizations You Can Connect With On Climate Change

**JustME for JustUS** - <https://www.justmeforjustus.org/>

**Climate Action Net** - <https://www.climateactionnet.org/>

**MEEA's Change Makers** -

<https://www.meeassociation.org/programs/changemakers>

**Blue Hill Heritage Trust** - <https://bluehillheritagetrust.org/>

**Island Heritage Trust** - <https://www.islandheritagetrust.org/>