



# ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



**START:EMPOWERMENT**



# Hello.

**Our mission is to mobilize education and activism to achieve social-environmental justice and liberation for all.**



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& School Partnerships



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# Table of Contents

Letter from the Team

Timeline

Our Work

Empowering Classrooms

Empowering Communities

Empowering Movements

Empowering Youth

What's Ahead (2023)

Funder Thank Yous

Ways to Give

# Letter from the Team



Start:Empowerment was brought into existence in the fall of 2019 when we realized that much student knowledge around the environment and ensuing climate crisis consisted of basic topics like recycling, polar bears and melting ice caps. Existing climate education programs failed to incorporate a social-political-economical analysis of environmental issues, BIPOC knowledge and sustainable practices, and the voices of on-the-ground Environmental Justice groups that are actively fighting against pollution in their communities.

**Thus, Start:Empowerment established itself as a 501c3 nonprofit *intentionally* situated at the nexus of climate education and environmental justice organizing.**

For us, it was critical to emphasize and integrate justice frameworks used by and within movements into school curricula to meet youth where they spend the majority of their time and allow for teachers to easily teach these concepts within their subjects. We also pride ourselves in providing accessible community-based education.

Both operating dually in NYC and TX, as well as led by people of color aiming to serve frontline communities, we remain committed to not only providing quality in-school social-environmental justice education, but also skills-based training and grassroots organizing support in an effort to bridge education and action.

To this day, there is still so much to be done as our mission to mobilize education and activism to achieve social-environmental justice and liberation for all has not yet been *fully* realized. Nonetheless, we stand in awe of the communities, funders, and learners that have supported our work and want to **thank you** by showing just how much we have accomplished together.

In Solidarity,  
Team S:E



# Our Impact Highlights

**3,700**

students reached through the implementation of our to justice-curricula in schools.



**4,500+**

individuals deepened their knowledge through our public events and workshops.



**3,500+**

individuals engaged globally and virtually through our webinars and digital media.



**10+**

community and school partnerships.



# Our Work



- 1** ***Empowering Classrooms***
- 2** ***Empowering Communities***
- 3** ***Empowering Movements***
- 4** ***Empowering Youth***



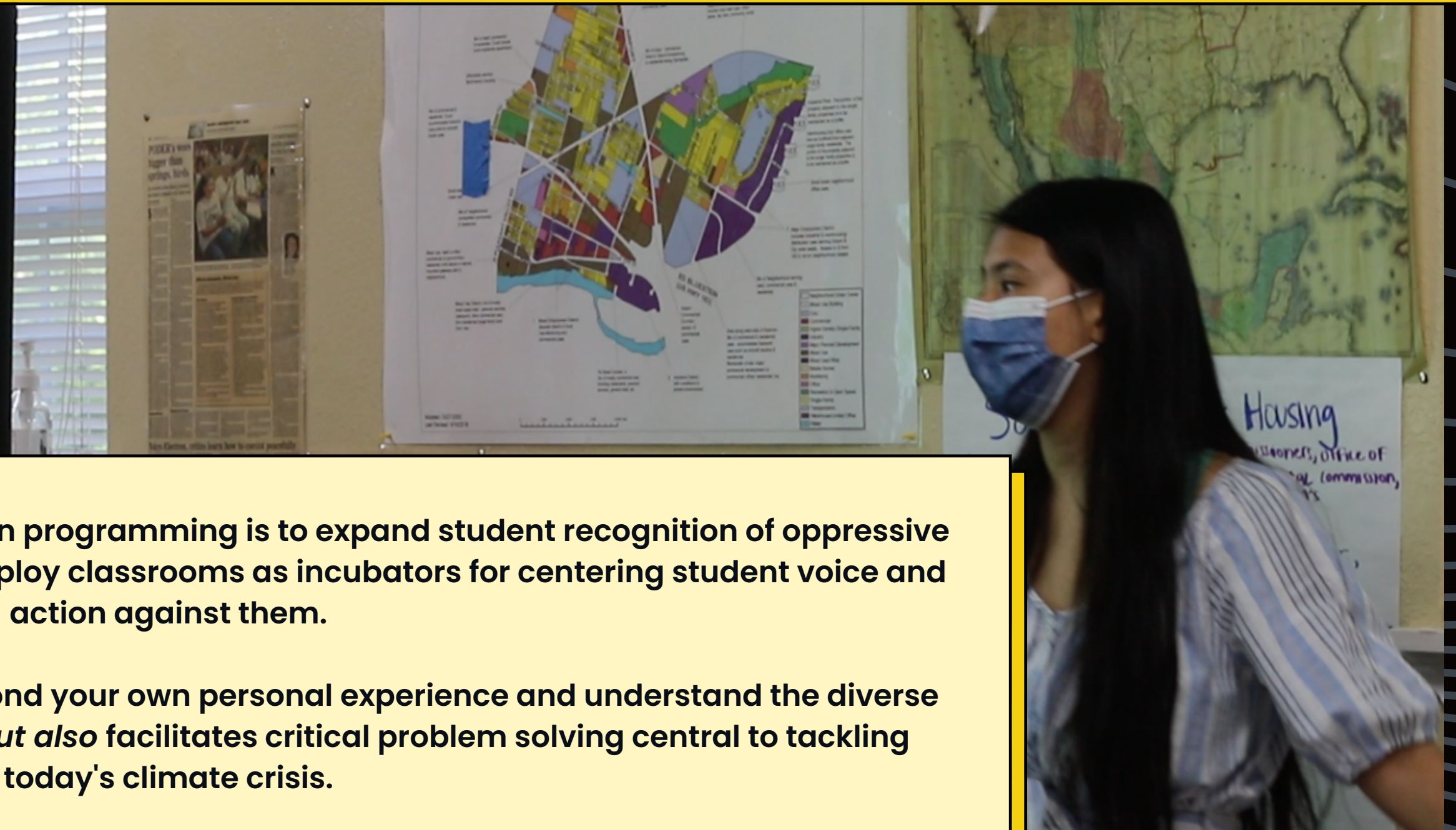
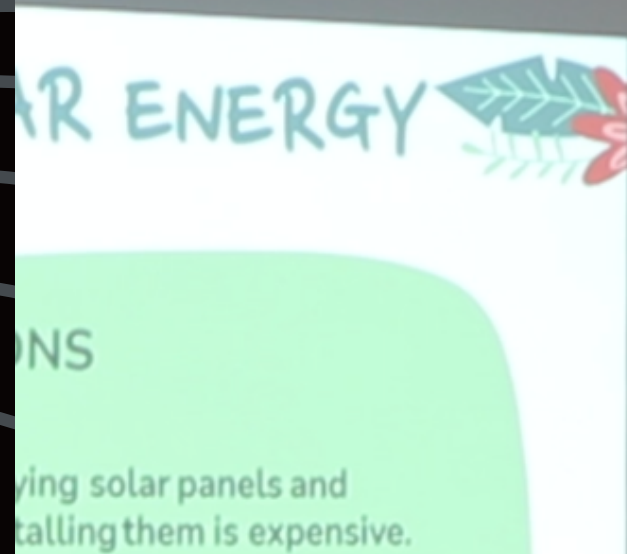
**Our work is focused in two areas – youth engagement and community organizing.**

Public education, youth programming, and curriculum development focus on the long-term educational, civic, and environmental empowerment and engagement of youth.

Community organizing, speakerships, and consulting strengthen the surrounding community and school systems to foster the next generation of change makers.



# 1 Empowering Classrooms



The goal of our Transformative Education programming is to expand student recognition of oppressive social forces shaping society and to employ classrooms as incubators for centering student voice and action against them.

This not only helps students to see beyond your own personal experience and understand the diverse experiences that other people have *but also* facilitates critical problem solving central to tackling today's climate crisis.

# Our School Partners



Horace Mann School  
*Magna est veritas et praevalet*



CELIA CRUZ BRONX HIGH SCHOOL OF MUSIC



## Our Achievements

- **Developed 12 environmental justice lessons** for high school students that are easily integrable in several subject areas (including English, Social Studies, Science, and Math) and align with NY State standards.
- Created **8 Food Justice lessons** recognized by the the **NYC Department of Education's Office of Sustainability**.
- Designed a curriculum suite consisting of Food Justice and Environmental Justice modules and an activity hub for use in formal and informal educational settings.
- Implementation of our curricula and supplementary activity content in schools **improved educational outcomes and student engagement and created young community leaders.**



# Our Work in Action



**Location:**  
**The Celia Cruz High School**  
(Bronx, NY)

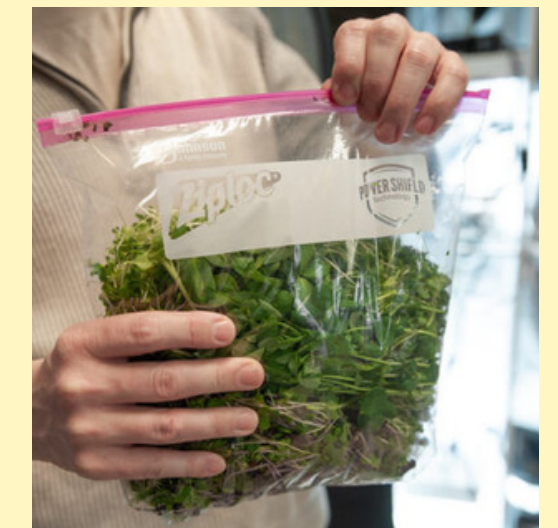
**Focus:**  
Food Insecurity

## Achievement:

### Built a hydroponic school garden

Established a **hydroponic gardening program** at the Celia Cruz High School in the Bronx to educate students about climate and food justice.

- **Regranted \$5,000** to support teacher labor and pay for the greenhouse and hydroponic tent.
- **Planted 20+ pounds of micro greens** for distribution to students and staff members to help fight food insecurity by providing easily accessible, nutritious produce in the school community.
- Provided an engaging **Career and Technical Education (CTE) skills-training resource** developing young agro leaders through the **teaching of our Food Justice curriculum.**





# Our Work in Action



**Location:**  
**People Organized in Defense of Earth  
and Her Resources (PODER)**  
(Austin, TX)

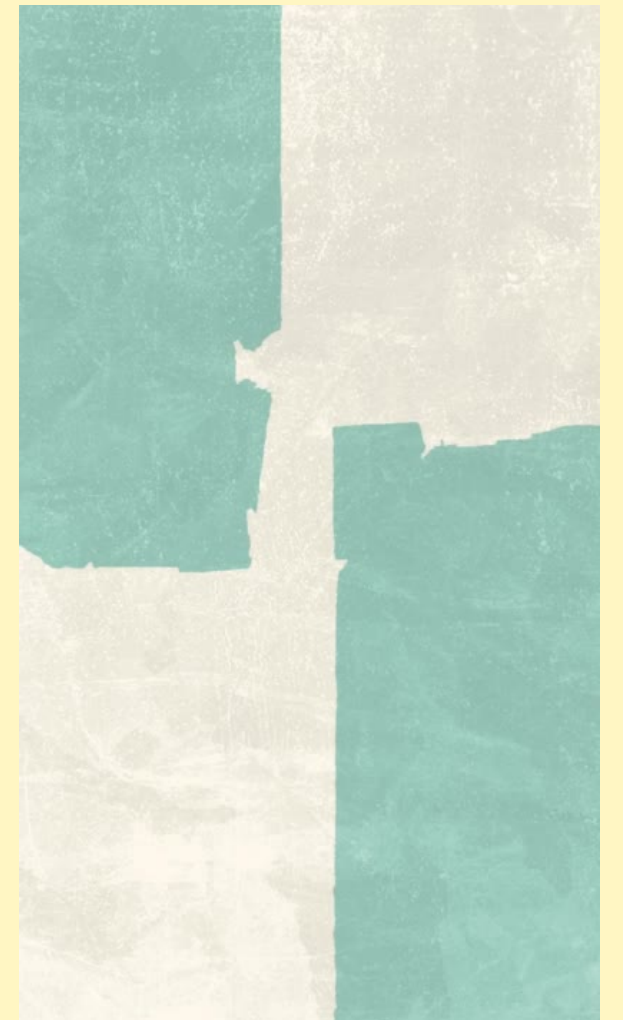
**Focus:**  
Political-Environmental Education

## Achievement:

Developed Summer Curriculum for Young  
Frontline Environmental Justice Organizers

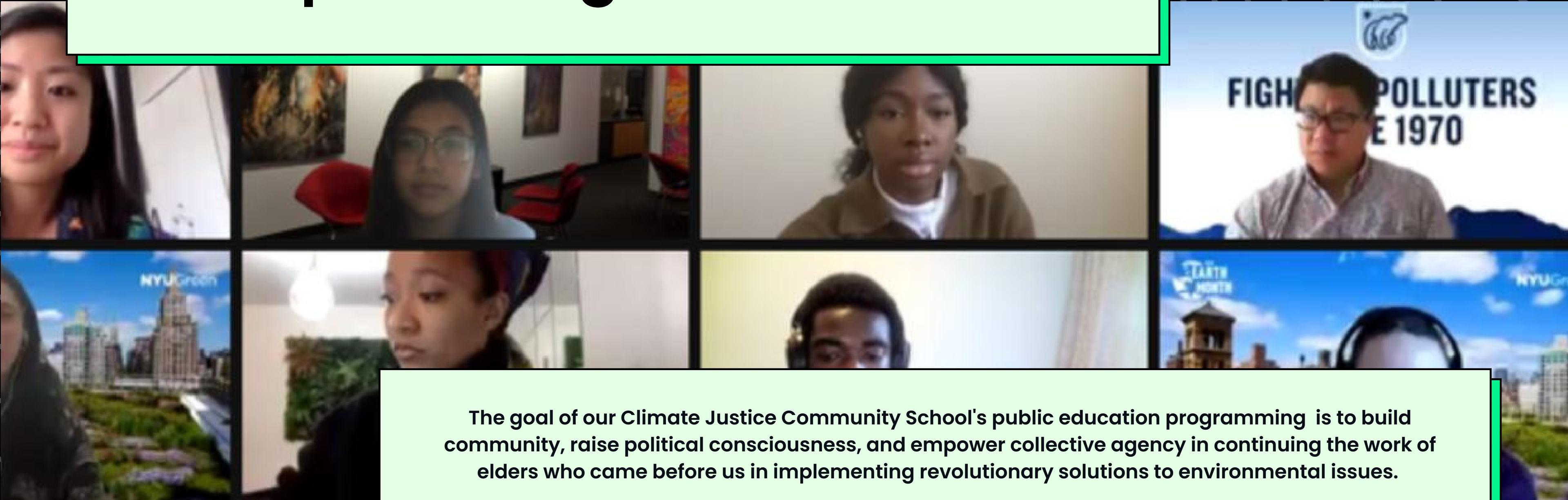
Start:Empowerment **partnered with long-  
standing EJ champion People in Defense of  
the Earth and her Resources (PODER) in ATX**  
on their Young Scholar's for Justice Program.

- **Developed 5 new lessons** on colonialism, capitalism, false solutions, and college readiness. As well as, implemented our food justice lessons piloted at Celia Cruz.
- **Actively bridged education and action by training 15 budding young EJ organizers** (between 13-18 years old) on the systemic causes of the climate crisis that tangibly affected their lives and communities.





## 2 Empowering Communities



The goal of our Climate Justice Community School's public education programming is to build community, raise political consciousness, and empower collective agency in continuing the work of elders who came before us in implementing revolutionary solutions to environmental issues.

This not only helps to connect the various camps fighting for collective justice but also foster a culture of learning (with a non-sectarian left intellectual culture) rooted in the struggles of the poor and dispossessed.

## Climate Justice Community School (CJCS)

The CJCS's mission is to provide a **collaborative space for environmental justice practitioners to host accessible educational events in partnership with Start:Empowerment.**

Our goal is to contribute to building, strengthening, and connecting popular movements in New York City and beyond.

### CJCS Programming

- 1 2022 Summer School Series**
- 2 Climate Experiences**
- 3 WE ACT x S:E EHJLT Training**

## Our Public Education & Event Partners

○ ○ ○ ○



Office of  
Sustainability

THE NEW SCHOOL  
MILANO

## Our Media Partners

○ ○ ○ ○



sane energy project

Decolonize  
This Place





# Our Work in Action [for Overall CJC's]



## Focus:

Political-Environmental Education

## Achievement:

Developed mass political-environmental education events redefining justice and intersectionality in climate work.

## Quick Stats for 2022:

**25** total events

**34** total speakers

**500+** total participants

**22+** total workshops

**1,500** total individuals engaging with resources via our newsletter.

# 1 Summer School Series



In the summer of 2022, we co-hosted **Summer School: Redefining Justice in the Climate Movement**, a six-week, twice weekly foundational course curated by BIPOC organizers from S:E and Sustainable Brooklyn.

In addition raising the political consciousness of attendees, **we co-created 6 unique webinars and workshops each with 17 Summer School educators** (the speakers).

**~300 Summer School attendees** received access to a free e-resource newsletter with recommended readings, recordings, and local actions to join over the course of the series.



## THIS IS WHAT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP LOOKS LIKE

**17**

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS, EJ ELDERS, POLITICAL PRISONERS. ACTIVIST-SCHOLARS AND INDIGENOUS FOLX WERE YOUR TEACHERS

**\$6,000**

WENT TOWARDS COMPENSATING THESE LEADERS FOR THEIR WORK (MANY WHO ARE NOT PAID FOR THEIR ON-THE-GROUND ORGANIZING)

**~\$1,000**

WAS GENEROUSLY DONATED OVER THE COURSE OF THE SCHOOL WHICH HELPED US SUSTAIN OUR PROGRAMMING.

**\$5,900**

WAS FUNDRAISED FOR THE YOUTH VANGUARDS WHO ARE CURRENTLY WORKING ON COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS IN NYC AND AROUND THE WORLD.





## 2 Climate Experiences



### Music for the People Benefit Concert



#M4P supported young and upcoming BIPOC musicians with a heavy justice influence by providing a space to debut their work reaching **over 1,700 people** and connecting attendees to local actions. All proceeds of ticket sales went towards **providing free home-cooked meals to the community** and to **the building and initial stocking of a East Flatbush Community Fridge**.

### Earth Month Convergence

Brought together **120+ attendees** to a mini hybrid **Earth Month Summit** with BIPOC Earth, a club at The New School, in order to feature young BIPOC EJ organizers, prominent thinkers, voices from the Global South, indigenous artists and scholar activists, and leftist communities [speakers pictured below] **to highlight intergenerational and international approaches to praxis.**



# 3 WE ACT x S:E EHJLT Training



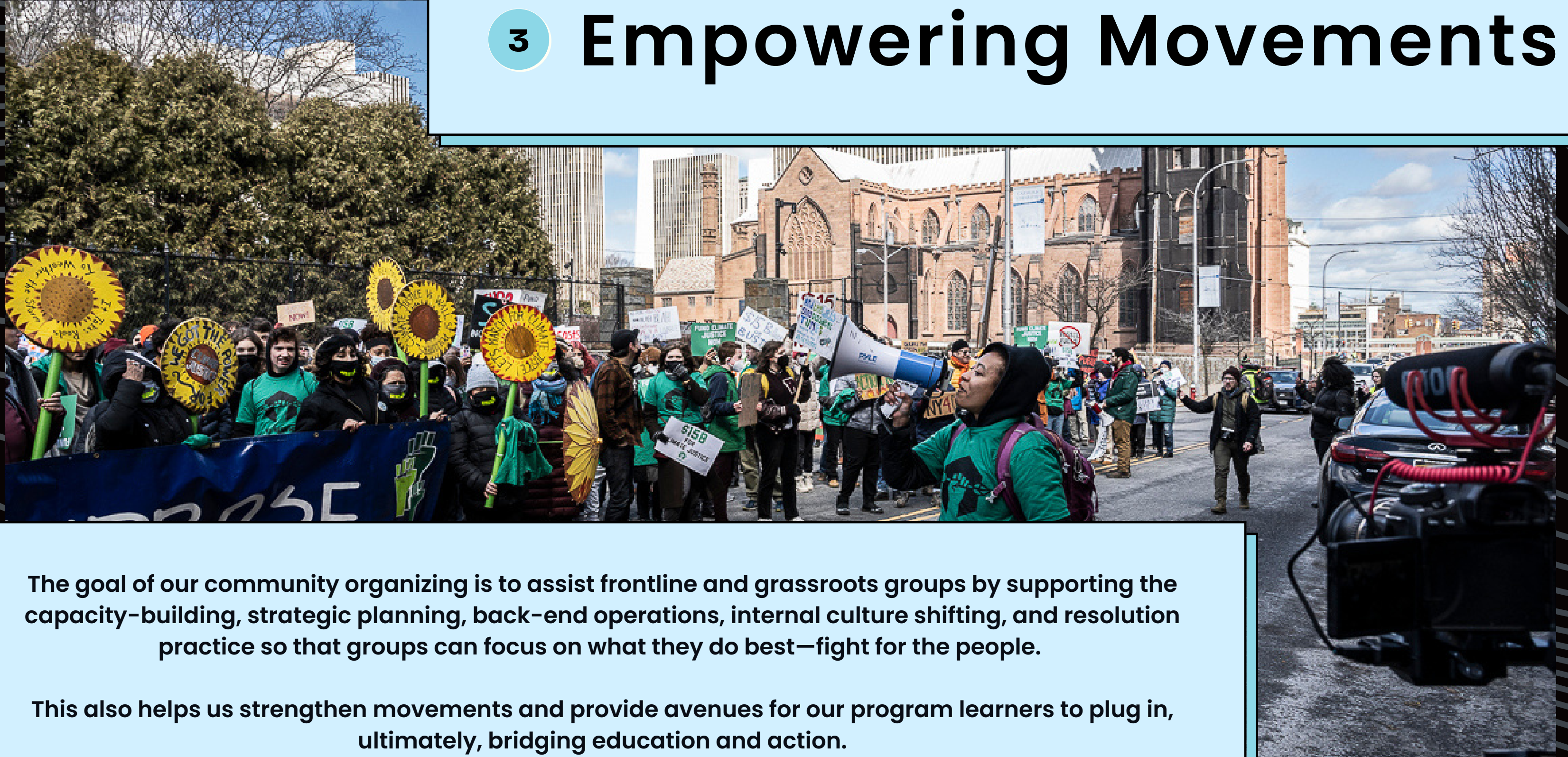
Start:Empowerment collaborated with WE ACT for Environmental Justice, one of the first EJ groups in New York, to co-host their **Environmental Health and Justice Leadership Training** virtually. As a result:

- We helped conduct **4 modules** on climate change and climate justice, food justice, toxic chemicals in household products, and equitable transportation and air quality.
- **Over 50 youth** between the ages of 15–25 broadened their knowledge of climate justice and environmental health and received practical skills training to organize campaigns or projects in the environmental justice movement.
- **Over 20 youth and organizers** shared their community projects and experiences within the environmental and climate justice movements at the virtual EXPO.
- Reached **over 300 individuals** through our digital media.





### 3 Empowering Movements



The goal of our community organizing is to assist frontline and grassroots groups by supporting the capacity-building, strategic planning, back-end operations, internal culture shifting, and resolution practice so that groups can focus on what they do best—fight for the people.

This also helps us strengthen movements and provide avenues for our program learners to plug in, ultimately, bridging education and action.

# Our Organizing Collaborators



**RAINFOREST  
ACTION NETWORK**



CONNECTED  
chef



**NY RENEWS**



**Renewable Rikers**



**PUBLICCITIZEN**

## Our Achievements

### **A champion of a green, just transition under the NY Renewables Coalition.**

- Aided in the creation of NY Renewables Coalition's Climate, Jobs, & Justice Package that seeks to rapidly move NY off fossil fuels, make the state more equitable, ensure a just transition for workers, and create an accessible green economy for all.

### **A champion of climate literacy and education policy through participation in the Climate and Resilience Education Task Force (CRETf).**

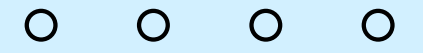
- Supported the creation of an education platform that advances climate education in four key areas: public events, policy, equity, justice and inclusion, and teacher support.

### **An ally of Indigenous land sovereignty movement through anti-pipeline work.**

- Organized with the Indigenous Peoples of the Coastal Blend (IPCB) to fight Enbridge and helped to pause the pipeline in Corpus Christi, TX.
- Continuing to aid IPCB in sustaining their work via 1-on-1 consultation.



# Our Work in Action



**Community Partnership:**  
**No North Brooklyn Pipeline**  
(Brownsville to Greenpoint, NY)

**Focus:**  
Community Organizing

## **Achievement:** **Anti-Pipeline/Fracked Gas**

Stood in solidarity with No North Brooklyn Pipeline group on issues of extraction, environmental racism and energy equity.

- Supported No North Brooklyn Pipeline group's Summer Strike tour aimed at raising community awareness of the illegal and highly pollutative pipeline being pushed through North Brooklyn by National Grid. **Over 500 individuals joined the Gas Bill rate hike strike**, withholding their \$\$\$ so as to not pay for the pipeline.
- Digitally collaborated to circulate the petition against National Grid's Greenpoint Liquefied Fracked Gas Expansion where **over 14,600 signatures were collected**.
- Helped **facilitate the the No North Brooklyn Pipeline group's strategic retreat** envisioning how to restructure its labor division models, continue to bring in communities (especially communities of color) along the pipeline route, and identify methods for resolution.



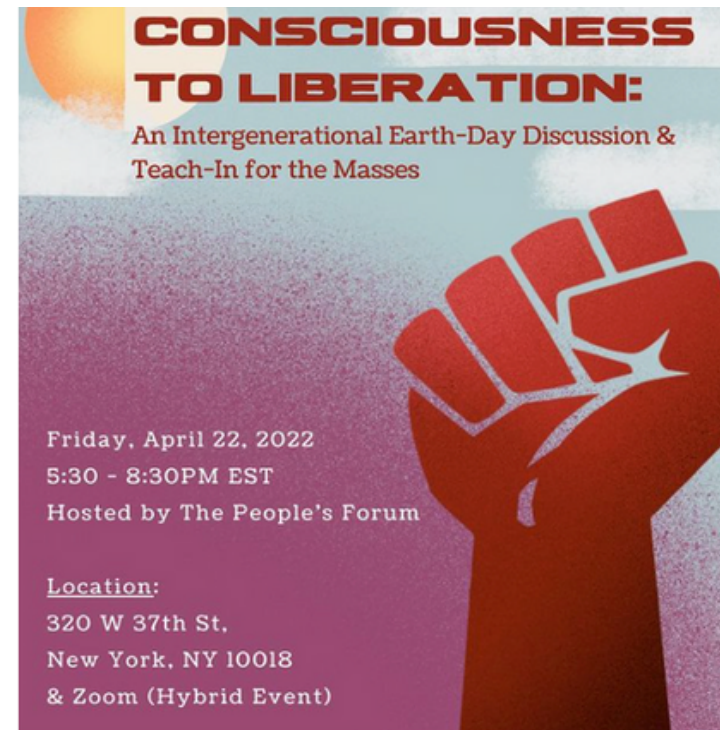
## 4 Empowering Youth



The goal of our Environmental Justice (EJ) Youth Vanguard program is to provide 16–24 year olds who are already active in organizing spaces or have a demonstrated interest in climate/ecological/environmental issues with funding, mentorship, and skills-training on pressing community EJ issues.

This helps strengthen the future of the EJ movement by fortifying organizers' political consciousness, fostering cohort relationships for increased cross-movement ties, and teaching applicable systems-change frameworks that reduce harms and center healing.





# Our Achievements

Historically, youth have been at the forefront of events that have changed the face of history. For us, 'Vanguard' is an aspirational name in that we hope to help in fostering the next generation of conscious, climate activists, organizers, scholars, advocates, etc. one in which will catapult our society forward as the generations before them have.

- **10 youth vanguards** working on community based projects in NYC, Texas, and across the world.
- **\$5,900** raised to support community projects of youth vanguards.
- Provided youth vanguards with **12 webinars and workshops** on Climate and Environmental Justice topics.

Proceeded by the **Youth Community Microgrant program** which had 2 recipients and resulted in:

- the creation of a college ambassadors program which created a stronger college-going culture amongst BIPOC students and community.
- a food drive and clothes donation drive which reached 80+ students at Boston College.



# Meet Our 2022 Vanguards

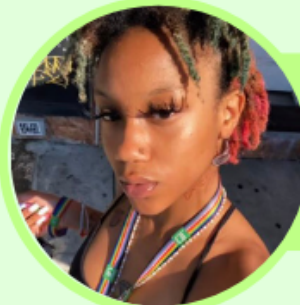
## S:E YOUTH VANGUARDS

S:E



**Melanie, Boston (MA)**  
*Conducting sustainable fashion workshops.*

**Isa, London (TX)**  
*Creating water rights club & implement curriculum at school.*



**Diamond, Harlem (NY)**  
*Creating holiday-based cleanup parties.*

**Ade, Brownsville (NY)**  
*Creating QR-code mural art for residents to find mutual aid.*



**Mars, East Village (NY)**  
*Building an educational project around environmental justice & climate science.*

**Dani, Dumbo (NY)**  
*Planning a recurring food distribution and clean-up event.*



## S:E YOUTH VANGUARDS

S:E



**Ky, Kampala (Uganda)**  
*Celebrating and bringing awareness to Ugandan sustainability & art practices.*

**Elizabeth, Jamaica (NY)**  
*Building a waste management training for hospital workers.*



**Elianna, Jamaica (NY)**  
*Building a community garden in neighborhood school.*

**Matteo, Astoria (NY)**  
*Creating a beginner gardening video series for food accessibility.*





# Meet One of Our Vanguards



## About: **Adérìnsolá Babawale** (she/they)



Photographed with Vanessa Nakate, Ugandan climate activist and founder of Rise Up Climate Movement at the 2022 Fridays for Future NYC Climate March.

**Aderinsola Babawale** (she/they) is a 20-year-old Nigerian American climate activist from Brownsville, Brooklyn **fighting against the illegal North Brooklyn pipeline going through their neighborhood and surrounding areas** through her participation in grassroots groups such as the No North Brooklyn Pipeline Coalition and Brownsville Green Justice, as well as participating in event planning for the Fridays for Future NYC chapter.

### Community Project Details:

Working on a project that will list mutual aid resources on an interactive map that can be scanned via QR code from various common areas within the neighborhood of Brownsville to broaden schools and community access to local mutual aid efforts.

### What they hope to get from being a Vanguard:

As a Vanguard, they hope to use poetry, spoken word and art to bring awareness to environmental justice and personal care as a way of asking how can we deepen the appreciation and care for our world through ourselves and by building community.



Photographed at an Insure Our Future disruption outside the CEO of CHUBB Insurance (a known fossil fuel insurer)'s house.



# Meet One of Our Vanguards



## About: Isa Efimov (she/her)

**Isa Efimov** (she/her) is a 16-year old rising Junior at Image International Academy of North Texas. Isa is currently a Science and Environmental Affairs intern at Pasquines where she writes about the impact of climate change on US territories, as well as the **co-founder of a youth organization called the Water Inequity Network (WIN) which raises awareness about water inequity and other water-related issues in the United States.**

### Community Project Details:

- Co-creating a podcast to spread awareness on water inequity and water issues in New York City and Texas connecting it to issue areas such as pipeline fights and Food Justice work.
- Building off of pre-existing policy work under her nonprofit, Water Inequity Network (WIN), to ensure water access in colonias, substandard housing developments along the Texas-Mexico border.

### What they hope to get from being a vanguard:

Through the Vanguard program, Isa hopes to create positive change in her community and help others learn about water inequity as a whole.



Samples of articles WIN has produced raising awareness around water inequity not only in TX but around the globe.







# WHAT'S AHEAD 2022-2023

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**START:EMPOWERMENT**





## Summer Programming

expanding our 2022 programming to build on the hybrid community learning hub model lead by BIPOC and allied grassroots organizers to include in-person pop-up and political-environmental education events across NYC and Austin.



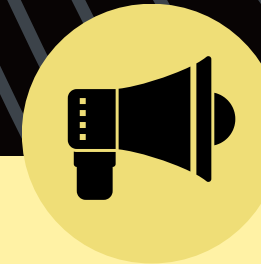
## Education

growing our curriculum suite to include additional supplementary activities, local land-based partnerships, and lesson plans via subscription service + deepening our existing in-school programming.



## Youth Vanguard

expanding our Youth Vanguard Fellowship Program in NY(C) and Austin, TX while continuing to support previous Vanguards and their community work.



## Organizing

increasing our organizing efforts in NYC and Austin by continuing to support the No North Brooklyn Pipeline fight across Brooklyn (NY), the anti-pipeline fight against Enbridge in Corpus Christi (TX), and water inequity issues in nationally.



# Words from Happy Humans



**"I have been implementing the Environmental and Climate Justice Curriculum** in my Environmental Science classes and **I am very impressed that the curriculum is well organized with four separate modules that focuses on specific environmental justice and climate change issues that relate to my students in the Bronx, NY.** I am also very impressed with how well curated the curriculum is with four interactive Google Slides presentations filled with informative videos, maps, diagrams and pictures.

There are multiple activities with teacher prompts designed to engage the students. **I recommend this curriculum to all teachers who want to educate their students about Environmental and Climate Justice!"**

**-- Mr. Alex Goasdoue,**  
*Environmental Science Teacher*  
*High School for Teaching and the Professions*

"I loved the range of speakers/perspectives [in the Summer School series] and I thought it was great hearing about what they shared. **Felt like [S:E] created an affirming space for folks to share.** Loved the conversations around community that the speakers shared."

**-- Kesiena,** Summer School attendee

**"It was not just educational but moving to attend the Environmental Justice 101 panel discussion.** My tendency as a relatively new activist is to pile up stats and facts, and hurl them out into space. **The speakers were groundbreaking BIPOC climate fighters and thinkers who talked about telling stories, connecting the catastrophes to real people living their lives, and how their experiences need to be reflected in both the actions taken to avert the climate crisis, and the results we achieve."**

**-- Margot,**  
Organizer with No North Brooklyn Pipeline

# Huge Thanks to You!

○ ○ ○ ○

**We can do this work with you, but not without you!**  
**Thank you for your continued support in our work big or small.**

## Our Individual Donors

○ ○ ○ ○

**Chidi Asoluka**  
**Dr. Osbourne Blake**  
**Hélène Onserud**  
**Mihir Annaldasula**  
**Peter & Dr. Merci Rosenzweig**  
**&**  
**The many anonymous Apple Benevity Donors**

## Our Funders

○ ○ ○ ○



FIBERSHED



Albert Gallatin Founders Fund

Kinetic  
Communities  
Consulting



By expanding our programming, we're one step closer to achieving liberation for all — but this means that we need your support.\*

## Support Us: Sponsor Our Operations

○ ○ ○ ○

[Coming Soon!]

## Support Us: One-Time Giving (and >\$5,000)

○ ○ ○ ○

No amount is too small!

Use the following options for one-time giving and donations under \$5,000.

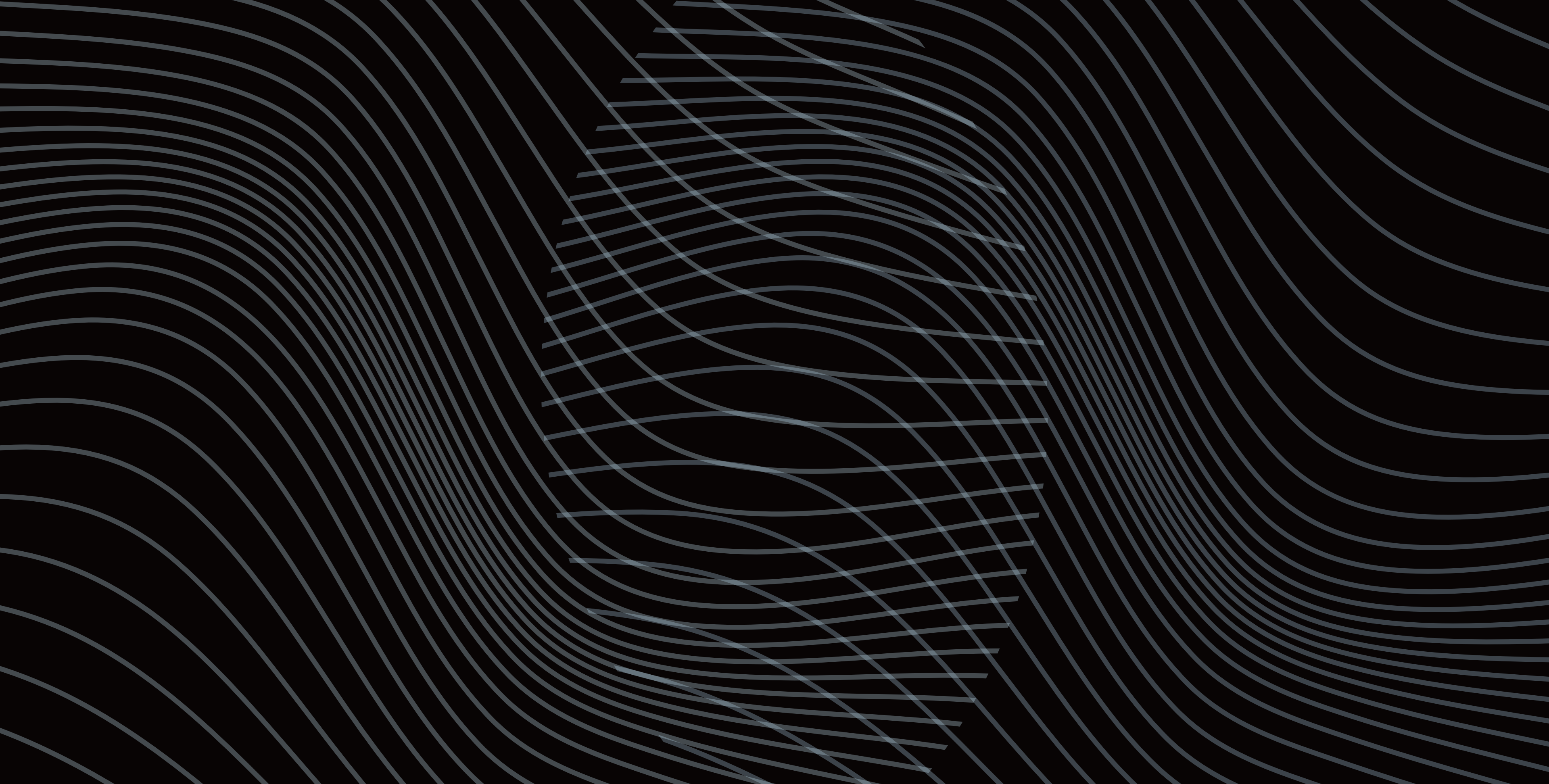
Send [Zelle](#) funds to  
**info.startempowerment@gmail.com**

\*\*Please note: Zelle does have a transaction ceiling based on your bank. Reach out to us at the above email if you would like to contribute a larger amount.\*\*

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