

GEN Z ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS

Est. Time: 60-90 minutes

Subjects: Civics, Social Studies

Age Range: Middle & High School

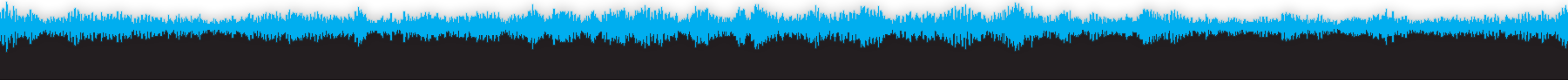
See the full lesson [here!](#)



★ *TEACHROCK* ★



How has Gen Z participated in activism around climate change?

In this lesson you will:

- Learn about youth activists involved in the climate movement and the ways in which they organize and spread their message
 - Listen to activists on how marginalized communities are impacted by climate change
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- When you hear the word “activism” what do you think of? What comes to mind when you think of “activist”?
 - Is there a social issue that you’re particularly passionate about? What have you done or would like to do about that issue?
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In 2015, young people filed a lawsuit suing the United States for its contribution to climate change and destroying the planet they will inherit.

Read this [Vox piece](#) on the lawsuit, known as *Juliana vs. United States*.





Consider or ask a friend:

- Why did the young plaintiffs sue the United States?
 - Do you believe they had a valid case? Why or why not?
 - Should the government be held responsible for irresponsible actions that led to consequences that affect young people's present and future?
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One of the young people involved in the *Juliana vs. United States* case is activist and rapper Xiuhtezcatl Martinez.

Martinez is a part of the organization Earth Guardians, and has been featured in several publications, such as *Rolling Stone* and *Time* magazine for his environmental work.



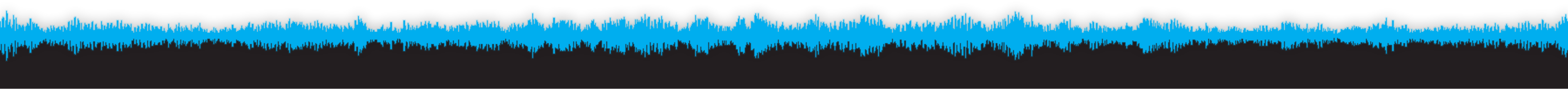


BOOMBOX WARFARE

Listen to Martinez's song, "Boombbox Warfare" with rapper and actor Jaden Smith.




Consider or discuss with a friend:

- What are some social issues Martinez and Smith highlight?
 - What role might music play in relation to the issues that are brought up in the song?
 - Who do you think Martinez and Smith are addressing? Use the lyrics as evidence if necessary.
 - Why do you think it's important to involve the youth in discussions about social issues?
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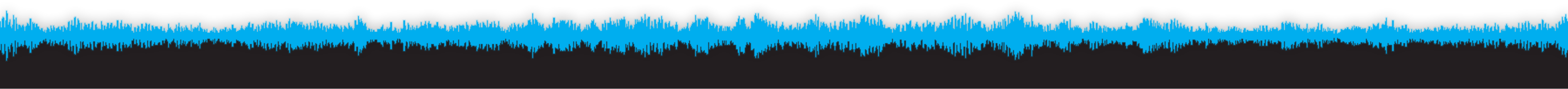
In 2018, 25 people between the ages of 7 and 26 sued the Colombian government for not stopping deforestation of the Amazon rainforest.

Read [this article](#) about how young people in Colombia are participating in environmental activism offline and without large platforms.





Consider or discuss with a friend:

- According to the article, what are some limitations of social media activism?
 - List the alternative ways young people in Colombia have spread awareness about climate change
 - What issue relating to climate change is of major concern in this region?
 - What are some of the dangers Colombian environmental activists face?
 - List some of the things to come from the lawsuit against the Colombian government
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The Amazon Rainforest covers nine countries in South America, with 60% of its basin located in Brazil.

It is the largest rainforest intact, and plays a crucial role in regulating the planet's carbon and oxygen levels due to the 40,000 species of plants native to the region.



The Amazon is also home to over 180 indigenous groups which totals hundreds of thousands of people.

For indigenous people in Brazil, their land and home have been threatened by lax government policies that fail to protect the rainforest and instead encourage deforestation, logging, mining, and other agribusiness.

There have also been countless acts of violence, such as murders of indigenous people protecting the Amazon.

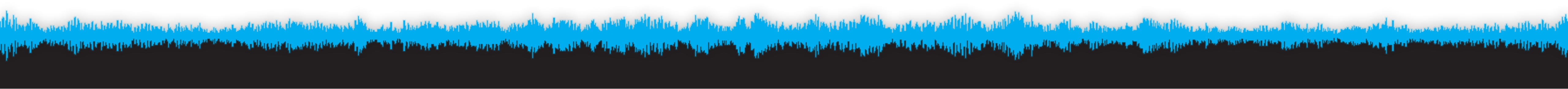


Artemisa Xakriabá is a 20-year-old indigenous climate activist from Brazil. She's a member of the Xakriabá people. Read [this piece](#) from *Dazed Digital* and watch the video of Xakriabá's speech at the 2019 Youth Climate Strike in New York City.





Consider or ask a friend:

- Who or what is Xakriabá representing? What is she advocating for?
 - In her speech, she mentioned that “the fight for Mother Earth is the fight for all other fights.” What do you think she meant by that?
 - According to Xakriabá, how can one support indigenous people in Brazil?
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Watch [this video](#) of climate activist Isra Hirsi.

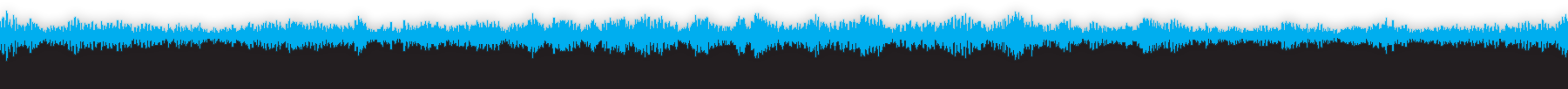
Hirsi hails from Minneapolis, Minnesota. When not in school, she serves as the partnerships director and one of the co-founders of the U.S. Youth Climate Strike organization.

In 2019, she won the Brower Youth Award for her activism work.





Consider or ask a friend:

- According to Hirsi, what was the goal of the Youth Climate Strikes?
 - Who is majorly impacted by the climate crisis? Why is it important to elevate marginalized voices in the movement?
 - Hirsi mentions that being “Black, being Muslim, and a woman within the climate space is definitely surprising for a lot of people.” Why would this be surprising for some people? Why is it important to have leaders from marginalized communities?
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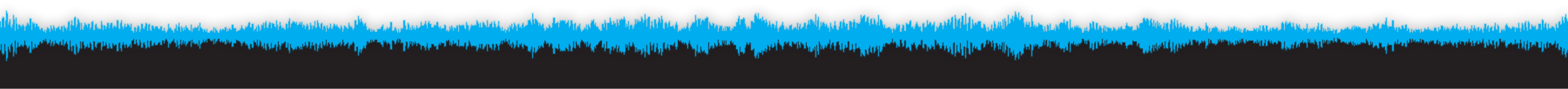
Daphne Frias is a 21-year old youth activist involved with gun reform as a part of March for Lives, disabled activism, and environmental activism.

Watch [this interview](#) with Frias in which she talks about intersectionality in the environmental movement.





Consider or ask a friend:

- According to Frias, how should people be holding each other accountable in the climate movement?
 - She mentions that the word “intersectionality” is thrown around, misused, and not implemented into organizations. What does intersectionality mean? (Research the definition if necessary.) What would intersectionality in the climate movement look like, based on what Frias is saying?
 - How do mainstream notions of being conscious about one’s impact on the environment highlight socioeconomic disparities? What does Frias say the climate movement should be about?
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SUMMARY

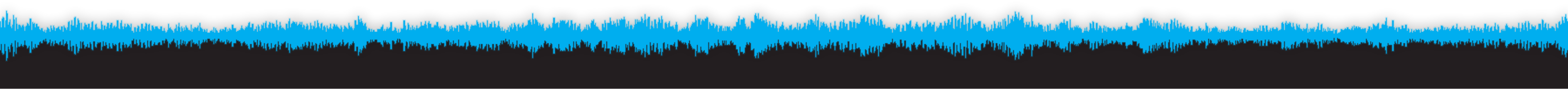
- Some of the leaders of the climate movement are young people who have been left out of larger discussions
- To raise awareness of how climate change affects them or the communities around them, youth activists have turned to the justice system, music and the arts, community organizing, and social media to try and implement change
- Youth activists in the climate movement have prioritized how climate change must be discussed in relation to racism, disability rights, indigenous rights, and the role of capitalism in the destruction of our environment



BE CREATIVE

Create a protest poster about climate change (or any social issue you feel connected to). Do further research if necessary, in regard to the politics, economics, and other intertwined issues.

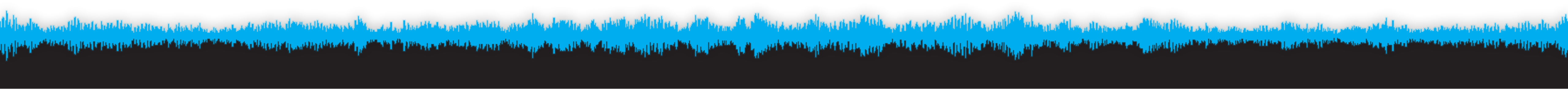
You may also make a presentation about the issue, a zine, an art piece, a speech, a Tik tok, or any creative outlet that provides background information on the social issue and your stance and passion about it.



BE CURIOUS

Research other youth activists in the environmental movement. Learn what their platform is and how they spread their message.

Watch the three part docu-series **Vox Atlas: The Amazon**. You may also do further research about the 2019 Amazon fires. Write a response or discuss with friends, peers, family, etc. your thoughts on what you watched and researched.



BE CURIOUS

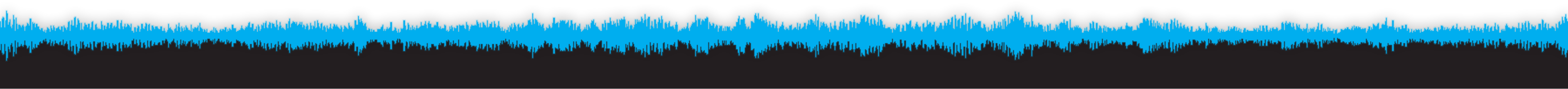
Many of the activists mention how climate change impacts marginalized communities the most. Research how climate change has impacted Black and brown communities, the disabled community, low income communities, etc.

In the lesson, Isra Hirsi mentioned that being Black, muslim, and a woman may be surprising to those in the climate movement. The movement has been criticized for centering white activists and ignoring BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) activists. In January 2020 Ugandan youth climate activist Vanessa Nataka was cropped out of a photo that featured her and fellow climate activists Greta Thunberg, Luisa Neubauer, Isabelle Axelsson, and Loukina Tille. Write a response reflecting on the controversy, along with the work of Nataka.



CONNECT

Share your work with us! Either you or an adult in your life can share your environmental project with TeachRock on **Instagram** or **Facebook**, email to **info@teachrock.org**, or Tweet it to **@TeachRock**





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