

# YOUTH ACTION GUIDE

# CLIMATE

## INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel of Climate Change released a report stating that the world had **only 12 years to limit global warming** to a 1.5-degree Celsius rise. (This was a follow-up to the 2016 Paris Agreement to keep global warming under 2 degrees Celsius.) The panel recommended taking severe action to avoid some of the worst effects of climate change, including **cutting carbon pollution by 45 percent by 2030**. Despite the urgency of the moment, governments across the world have been slow to react. In fact, in 2018, the world was **on track for a 3-degree Celsius rise**. That alarming fact has led to a growing movement of youth activists, who have taken on the fight for the future of the planet.

**In this guide you can find out more about three key figures in the global youth climate-change movement who inspire us all, and four youth organizations that are taking steps to ensure that you can still safely contribute to the fight during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

# WHAT YOUTH ARE DOING

## THREE CLIMATE ACTIVIST LEADERS



### GRETA THUNBERG, SWEDEN

**“You are not mature enough to tell it like it is. Even that burden you leave to us children. But I don’t care about being popular. I care about climate justice and the living planet.”**

**Fridays for Future** began in August, 2018, when then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg began striking by herself outside of the Swedish Parliament every schoolday for three weeks to protest the lack of action on the climate crisis. In December 2018, Thunberg gained international attention when she spoke at the United Nations COP 24 summit, in which she held adults accountable for the lack of action on climate change.

She has led and inspired climate actions, strikes, and marches around the world, has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, and was named Time’s Person of the Year in 2019 (CNN).

### ALEXANDRIA VILLASEÑOR, UNITED STATES

**“By the time the youth are in positions of power, it’ll be too late to reverse climate change. We have to force politicians to start acting on climate change. Why go to school if we won’t have a future?”**

At age 13, Alexandria Villaseñor was caught in a smoke cloud during the California wildfires. An asthma sufferer, she became ill. During that time, she researched climate change and the temperature changes that contributed to the severe fire. Inspired by Thunberg, in 2018 Villaseñor decided that she would protest every Friday outside of the United Nations in New York City where she now lives.

Alexandria is the founder of the youth climate activist nonprofit **Earth Uprising**.



### VANESSA NAKATE, UGANDA

**“Climate activism is doing everything you can to protect nature by either using your voice or daily consumption habits to protect nature. You can choose sustainable ways of living to protect nature and that is still activism.”**

Vanessa Nakate started protesting outside of the Uganda Parliament in January 2019, also inspired by Greta Thunberg. Vanessa was prompted to act by the rising temperatures in her country and the threat climate change poses to agriculture, which drives the Ugandan economy.

Vanessa is the founder of the **Rise Up Movement**, which works with climate-change activists across Africa. Her work in Uganda includes installing energy-saving and renewable energy sources in schools.

# YOUTH-LED CLIMATE ACTIONS

## AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED FROM HOME

Concerned about climate change but not sure what you can do? Learn about **four climate-action organizations** that will help you learn more about the climate crisis and how you can get involved while quarantining! Follow each of these organizations across social media to keep up-to-date. Many of these groups regularly share news, events, and hashtags.

### 1 350.ORG

Need to learn more before you dive into action? 350.org has plenty of educational videos about climate change and virtual trainings in community organizing to get you up to speed.

**350.org** was founded by college students and the author Bill McKibben, who wrote one of the first books about climate change. The organization provides a platform for learning about climate change and activism. 350.org has grown into a global network of everyday people, organizers, and groups who all hope to end the power of the fossil-fuel industry. The organization has campaigned against the Keystone XL and Dakota Access pipelines in the United States; stopped highly toxic oil fracking all over Brazil and Argentina; and participated in many grassroots efforts, such as the Global Climate Strike.

The organization is all about free and accessible education. They have a collection of videos ([350.org/videos/](https://350.org/videos/)) from past movement efforts and free documentaries addressing different aspects of climate change resistance, such as the experiences of indigenous people in Latin America and a glimpse into the climate crisis actions being done around the world by ordinary people.

350.org has created a list of different resources designed to help you learn more about community organizing while quarantining at home. The list includes webinars, PDFs, and virtual trainings—all free. Check out the resource list at <https://350.org/locked-down-try-organizing/>.



### 2 POLLUTERS OUT

[POLLUTERSOUT.ORG](https://pollutersout.org)

Sometimes joining the movement is as simple as signing an online petition or posting a hashtag. **Polluters Out** is all about simplifying participation.

Founded in January 2020, **Polluters Out** is a youth-led organization committed to reducing the fossil-fuel industry's influence over "indigenous lands, governments, banks, universities, and climate negotiations."

Polluters Out has three **key demands**:

1. That the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and all governments reject big polluter sponsorship and involvement in negotiations and panels.
2. The rejection of false solutions—especially "carbon markets" in the Paris Agreement—and advancement of proven people-led solutions.
3. The advancement of a Conflict of Interest policy at the international, national, and sub-national levels to keep major polluter corporations and countries in check and to have them pay climate reparations.

Polluters Out has a **digital petition** ready to be signed on their website that you can sign to demand that the UNFCCC refuse funding from fossil-fuel corporations. You can also **sign up for their e-mail newsletter**.

**The Sunrise Movement** is a U.S.-based movement of young people calling for the United States government to prioritize the environmental crisis. They call for **the end of fossil-fuel-company interference** in environmental policy and the election of leaders committed to protecting all people.

The Sunrise Movement champions **the Green New Deal**, a 10-year plan to shift American society to utilize completely clean and renewable energy by 2030; to guarantee living-wage jobs for all, and to prioritize an ethical transition for workers and communities at the forefront.

Sunrise organizers commit to:

1. Ending climate change and creating jobs
2. Growing power through community-based conversations
3. Nonviolence
4. Collaborating with other movements

### 3 THE SUNRISE MOVEMENT SUNRISEMOVEMENT.ORG

If you're passionate about the relationship between climate change and social justice, check out the Sunrise Movement.



To continue its work throughout the time of COVID-19, the Sunrise Movement created an online "Sunrise School," which allows young people to connect, learn about issues facing U.S. society, and take action in their own communities while social distancing. The Sunrise School offers **three levels of free online training courses**. Visit their website to learn more and participate!

### 4 SustainUS SUSTAINUS.ORG

If you want to fight against special interests that harm the environment, look no further than SustainUS.

**SustainUS** is a youth-led organization pushing for justice and sustainability by supporting youth in speaking up for important issues at the national and international levels. SustainUS recognizes that the small number of those with power (corporations, billionaires, and politicians) do not always do what is best for everyday people. People hit the hardest by climate change, international agreements, and UN treaties usually do not get a say in key decisions. Young people must deal with the consequences more than any other generation. SustainUS believes that the youth must have a voice in these decisions. In 2019, SustainUS hosted a Global Conference of Youth, with more than 200 young leaders from all over the world.

The organization sent a delegation of young indigenous people to the UN Climate Talks in Madrid, where they stood up to major polluters. Currently, SustainUS is launching a campaign demanding that fossil-fuel CEOs and lobbyists, who have a conflict of interest, no longer impact climate policy. In 2020, the organization plans to:

- Educate **more than 100 youth** in international climate policy, storytelling, direct action training, and media engagement
- Work alongside movements in the U.S. to push presidential candidates to support a **Conflict of Interest** policy that prevents industry from having outsized influence in setting climate policy
- Demand that elected officials support the Conflict of Interest policy

To get involved, **sign up to join the e-mail list on its website.**

For more resources centering on youth civic engagement, keep an eye on our website and social media.

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