

SAMANTHA LEE

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Arroyo High School (San Lorenzo, CA)

October 29th, 2020

Dear Project Green Challenge Team,

As I reflect on my submissions from the beginning of October to the end, I can see a stark contrast in the depth of my engagement. Participating in PGC has given me invaluable insight not only into every niche of environmental justice but also the ways that I can bring my learnings forward. Although the journey was not without obstacles, I can proudly say that this past month has been nothing short of a personal transformation for me. The submissions attached are the five that I pride myself most on--those that most demonstrate my growth and initiative throughout.

I was drawn to the theme of Food Waste immediately, and as the month progressed, it was one that I found myself constantly returning to and connecting to other themes. Delving into the complex, far-reaching effects of food injustice--from the environment to our own wellbeings--made me especially interested in understanding how food insecurity plays out in my own community and what solutions we can turn to, on personal and systemic levels, to combat it. When looking for a good teaching tool, I immediately turned to the creation of a Carrd. Carrds had been so impactful for me during the height of the Black Lives Matter movement in that they served as compact compilations of information, petitions, and other ways to help. Creating a food waste Carrd for Greener allowed me to channel my new-found knowledge into an easily accessible platform that can be consistently updated. On top of that, writing my Greenest response about food injustice on school campuses only strengthened my motivation to make change. Thus, I am including both my Greener and Greenest submissions as part of my portfolio, as I believe they are strong examples of my creativity as well as my personal connection to the theme.

The Home challenge resonated with me deeply in that it made me think about the importance of, well, our homes. Having spent essentially all of the past 7 months within the walls of my home, I was a bit taken aback to learn that even things like our own *beds* can have adverse impacts on us. The use of green cleaning solutions is not something that is new in my household. Both of the recipes I featured in my submission, an all-purpose cleaners and an air freshener, were slightly modified versions of recipes that my mom actually uses on a regular basis. A side effect of this challenge was that I reflected on how my family is actually more environmentally conscious than we think: from turning off the lights when not in use, to always bringing reusable grocery bags, to making our own cleaning supplies,

the habits that I've grown up with are ones that are actually decreasing our impact on the environment (and on our wallets, my parents would probably like to argue). This submission, to me, is representative of one of the many lightbulb moments that I experienced this month.

When tasked with crafting a course outline for the School Greenest challenge, I found myself deeply invested in researching existing courses and planning my own. Being a junior in high school means finally having to seriously consider my future and the kind of setting I hope to be a part of in just a couple short years. With all the factors that need to be considered when choosing the right school, I had not once thought that sustainability could be a factor as well; it is something I will commit myself to researching as I begin the college process, as I want to continue my involvement in environmental justice well beyond high school. Furthermore, this challenge opened my eyes to the role of schools, especially higher education institutions, in advocating for environmental justice--how the classes we take and the material we are exposed to can expand our perspectives, in turn motivating us to effect change. In pushing for more sustainable measures on my campus, I can turn to my learnings from this challenge theme and so many others.

One of the things PGC has made clear to me is that, while the actions we take as individuals are indispensable to fighting climate change, so much more action is necessary in a realm where it sometimes feels like no progress is ever made: politics. Although this is something that came up in several challenges, I felt most empowered during the Economics Greener challenge, when I wrote a letter to California Senator Dianne Feinstein. This letter, though mainly to express my support for the Green New Deal, also allowed me to confront my feelings about the dire effects of climate change in California, particularly the devastating wildfires that have transpired these past few years. Writing to my elected officials is something I would not have done if not for PGC. It is one of many ways I can ensure my voice is heard, and I will endeavor to continue writing--not just for climate issues, but also for things like social justice, legislation, and even to show my support. Moreover, it reminds me that politicians work for the people, and that our voices and votes do matter, arguably more than ever this year.

Lastly, I would like to close off this letter by expressing my gratitude for your team's hard work and unwavering support for all challengers these past 30 days. It has been truly a gratifying experience to be a part of the PGC community, and I know that the fight will not (and cannot) end here. Thank you for your time and consideration; I look forward to hearing from you!

Warmly,

Samantha Lee

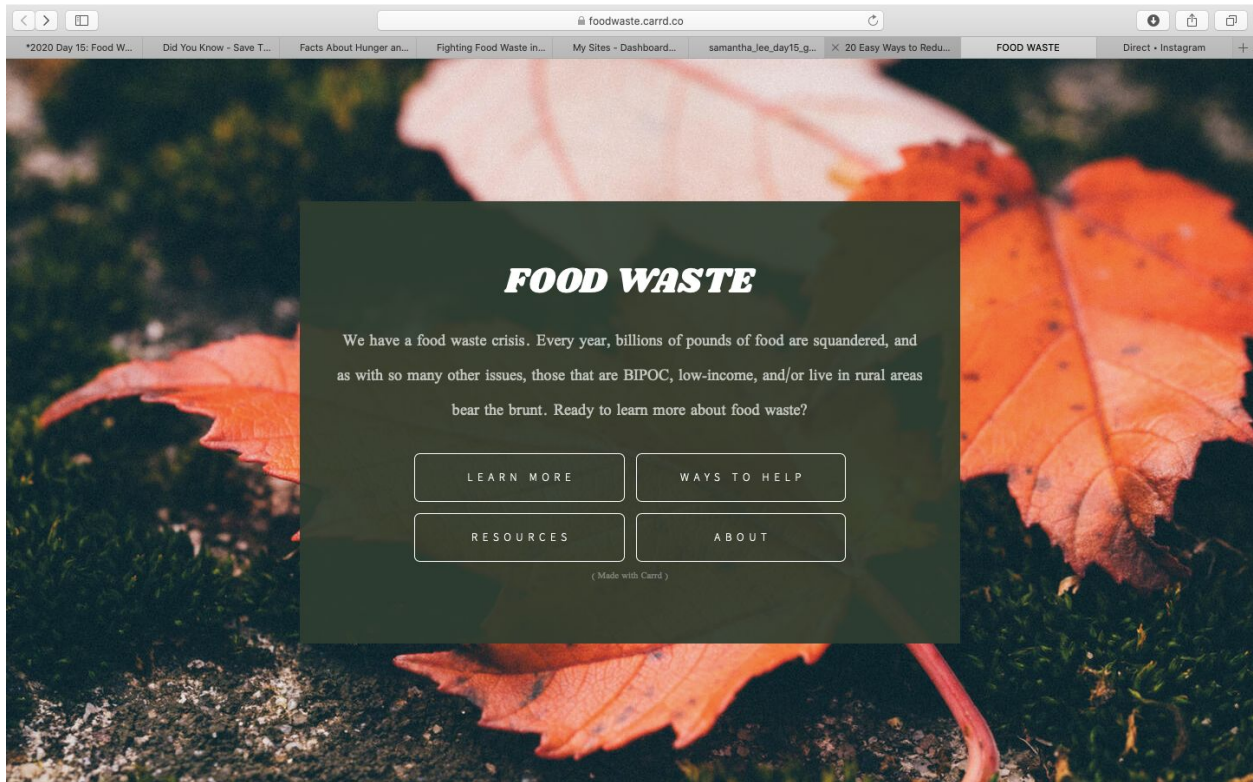
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For my creation today, I decided to make a Carrd! If you don't know, Carrds are mini "landing pages" - they're small websites that work best on mobile, and can have links, images, and buttons that can lead to different pages/subsections (it feels like a maze going through all the different pages!). Carrds really took off during the beginning of the Black Lives Matter movement, and hundreds of people were creating Carrds with information and resources related to different issues - so I thought it would be perfect to create one for food waste!

You can view my full card at [this link](#)! I'm very proud of it.

I included:

- a "Learn more" page, leading to three subsections: food waste facts, a compilation of articles about food waste and insecurity, and misconceptions.
- a "Ways to help" page, with a bullet-point list of ways to limit food waste
- a "Resources" page, with links to Turning Green's partners' pages and Save The Food's various food waste tools.
- an "About" page, so you know it's me :^)



squandered, and as with so many other issues, those that are BIPOC, low-income, and/or live in rural areas bear the brunt. Ready to learn more about food waste?

LEARN MORE

WAYS TO HELP

RESOURCES



greenmantha to educate about food justice, i created an interactive carrd with links to facts, articles, ways to help, resources, and more! i have really loved the concept of carrds as a teaching tool, so i decided to use it today to spread the word about food waste. food waste is one of the most impactful issues of our generation--everybody is a part of the issue, but we can also be a part of the solution. link in my bio for the whole carrd!!

@turninggreenorg #savethefood #PGC2020



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After reading “The hidden crisis on college campuses: Many students don’t have enough to eat” by *The Washington Post*, I reflected on how food insecurity and food deserts play out in my own community. I come from a not-so-well-funded school where 50% of the student body receives free or reduced lunch, and we are also majority BIPOC. And while we do have free breakfast and lunch programs, there’s always the matter of supply vs. demand--do we have enough meals to feed every child?--not to mention that the scope of these food programs has been dramatically limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. I think about my classmates; people I have met that I know would be impacted by the pandemic and food insecurity, and I feel both frustrated and motivated.

In some ways, I thought that universities would be more well-equipped at the institutional level to combat food insecurity and ensure that all their students have consistent access to food, but it was saddening to me to see how some low-income students had to struggle. This just highlights how food insecurity is so intertwined with socioeconomic status and other factors like race, gender, and sexual orientation. Since the beginning of this challenge, I have been able to expand my definition of social justice to include environmental justice, and now I know that food is another factor we need to keep in mind in our fight for social justice. Already vulnerable groups are made even more vulnerable by food injustice. Those that identify as LGBTQIA+, are Black or Indigenous, and/or come from certain backgrounds are more likely to face food insecurity alongside housing insecurity.

This challenge was another opportunity for me to assess my privilege when it comes to certain situations. Nobody should ever need to question where their next meal or location will be; unfortunately, we operate in such a way that it is so hard for us to find and implement systemic solutions.

One of the organizations in Alameda County that is working to address food insecurity (and food waste!!!) is StopWaste (stopwaste.org). I knew about them prior to this challenge, and words cannot express how much I admire this organization. StopWaste combats food waste and in turn food insecurity by working directly with schools. They educate students and staff about food waste, implement recycling programs, and work with schools in two ways: Anchor Schools and Priority School Districts. Priority school districts are districts that work with StopWaste to support sustainable food practices and

waste reduction. They create 3-stream sorting methods and are provided with environmental education services in return. (My very own school district is a part of this program!) Anchor schools are experienced “model” schools that work to create new programs and education tools to further limit food waste in their communities.

As vice-president of the environmental club at school, I hope that I will be able to support StopWaste by learning more about their presence on my campus and across my district and create campaigns or initiatives around it. One thing StopWaste does is a food sharing table, where students can place food--except for entrees--that they do not want and other students can stop by and take it if they please. It is a simple yet effective solution to keep students from just tossing their fruit or milk carton without second thought, and it leaves the food open for students that are in need of food. I hope that, once the pandemic is over, I can think about creating a plan to implement a food sharing table in my own cafeteria!!

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CLOROX WIPES: Especially with COVID-19, Clorox and other kinds of wipes have been integral in our daily routine for keeping our home clean. I learned, however, that a main active ingredient in Clorox is Alkyl Dimethyl Benzyl Ammonium Chloride (what I learned from the Body challenge: you already know it's bad when you can't even pronounce it), which releases formaldehyde (!!!) and can worsen or even cause asthma and respiratory irritation. This is not very comforting for me to know as I have asthma and also once used a Clorox wipe to clean my hands...oops. But above all, it makes me wonder how these chemicals are making it to shelves without industry professionals opposing them. In the EWG Database, these wipes had a score of D, with concerns for the respiratory system and reproductive toxicity.

A safer alternative I found for Clorox wipes was Dapple's Fragrance Free All Purpose Wipes. These had an A rating for "Lowest Concern", and the risks were much lower than those of the Clorox wipes. For the health of myself and my family, I think that switching to this product or any other healthier cleaning wipe or spray is an obvious choice, and once we exhaust our Clorox wipes I hope that we will make the change.

For my DIY Cleaning products, I chose two, modelled off of recipes that I already use at home and also recipes from online. My first recipe was for a homemade cleaner using vinegar, water, and lemon. At home, my mom makes a cleaner from vinegar and baking soda to scrub and clean our stovetop, pots and pans, and sink, so I already can confirm the effectiveness of vinegar-based cleaners. A bit more effort when scrubbing will get you fantastic and all-natural results. (Source: goodhousekeeping.com)

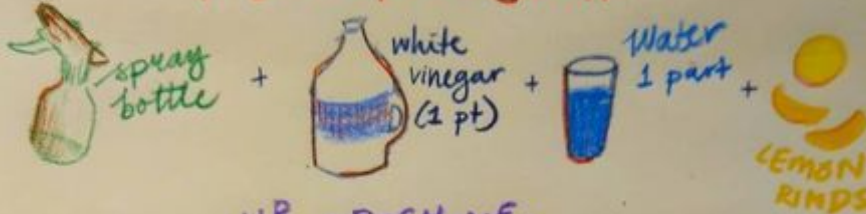
My second recipe was an air freshener; this one is made from citrus, water, and baking soda and can be lightly spritzed around a room. (Source: limoneira.com) My mom likes to take orange or lemon rinds and place them in a bowl to freshen up the kitchen, so I went searching for a citrus air freshener and found this sprayable version. I think that this version is not only easy to make but also usable for any and every room, as probably not everybody would like to have a bowl of citrus peels in their bedroom or bathroom.



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ALL PURPOSE CLEANER



AIR FRESHENER

CHOOSE ONE:



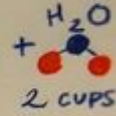
ORANGE




LEMON



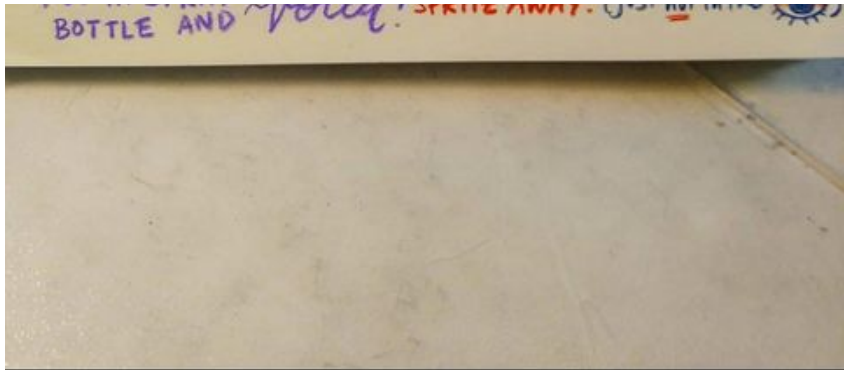
LIME



1/8 CUP BAKING SODA

PUT IN SPRAY BOTTLE AND *voila!* SPRITZ AWAY! (just not in the )





greenmantha it's not really a secret that cleaning products are chock full of chemicals to keep our homes sparkling clean and fresh, but as with so many other things, we never consider the effect that these popular products have on us. overtime, these toxic products can cause respiratory harm, reproductive harm, and so much more. cleaning green means going for accessible, simple, and effective solutions made from commonplace items--solutions that don't have detrimental effects on the environment and on our own health, but still work just as hard as a store-bought cleaner.

these two recipes were inspired partially by online recipes (goodhousekeeping.com and limoneira.com) and partially by green cleaning methods my mom already utilizes at home!

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3 UNIVERSITIES

BROWN UNIVERSITY:

- *WHAT DRAWS ME IN:* Brown strives to explore sustainability beyond the classroom. Student organizations and environmental initiatives are prominent on campus as well! They have an Office for Sustainability as well as an Institute for Environment and Society.
- *UNIQUE:* Brown is very interdisciplinary in its education--they have an open curriculum, where students do not have a set of credit requirements--so the environment can be explored from so many different perspectives, through both the sciences and the humanities.
- *LAUNCHED:* 2014-15 academic year, but Brown has been working on environmental justice long before then
- *SPECIFIC CLASS: Politics of Climate Change!* Explores how politics can both encourage and obstruct climate action, as well as how social movements shape our response to the crisis.

UC BERKELEY:

- *WHAT DRAWS ME IN:* their College of Environmental design! Honestly, it sounds like a department I would want to be a part of: it explores architecture, urban planning, and design--my current career interests--and how they intersect with the environment.
- *UNIQUE:* I don't think I've ever seen a department or program like this at a school before, so this is definitely super cool for me and is something I will look into more as I begin to consider my university path!
- *LAUNCHED:* 1959, but has roots all the way back to 1894
- *SPECIFIC CLASS: Planning for Sustainability!* With a focus on Bay Area sustainability efforts, it discusses how we can make our urban communities more sustainable.
 - This is literally my dream class.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON:

- *WHAT DRAWS ME IN:* Washington is such a beautiful location, and this university has a very strong involvement with the environment and the numerous career paths it can lead to.
- *UNIQUE:* Their College of The Environment programs seem very hands-on, with possibilities for super cool research and exploration opportunities!
- *LAUNCHED:* Unsure
- *SPECIFIC CLASS: Sustainable Choices!* A class specifically dedicated to helping students personally make sustainable choices in their daily lives and understanding how these choices create broader change--kind of like Project Green Challenge as a course...

MY CLASS SYLLABUS

URBAN SOLUTIONS TO FOOD INSECURITY

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Food insecurity threatens millions around the world. What solutions can urban spaces provide? How do we create and plan cities that don't leave communities with unequal access to food? Students will explore how food insecurity is intertwined with our health and wellness and create a final project at the end of the semester exploring a possible urban solution to food waste.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be able to define important terms like food insecurity and food apartheid.
- Students will be able to understand the implications of food insecurity on the health, mental wellness, and development of communities.
- Students will be able to understand and analyze how food insecurity plays out in major cities around the world.

- Students will be able to look to examples of cities, neighborhoods, and community organizations that have successfully reduced or eradicated food waste and food insecurity.
- Students will be able to apply their learnings to an end-of-semester project and presentation.

CALENDAR:

- **MONTH 1; UNDERSTANDING THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM:** Students will learn about what food insecurity and food waste are exactly by exploring different works and articles.
 - Screening of food waste documentaries: *A Place at the Table* (2013), *Wasted! The Story of Food Waste* (2017)
 - “The hidden crisis on college campuses: Many students don’t have enough to eat” by *The Washington Post*
 - “Food apartheid: the root of the problem with America's groceries” by *The Guardian*
- **MONTH 2; EXPERIENCE:** Field trip time! Exploring and immersing ourselves in the city; evaluating the ways they are structured, analyzing city data to identify commonalities, vulnerable areas, etc.
- **Month 3; COMMUNITY:** Field trip pt. 2, connecting with residents directly to understand their concerns and struggles. Halfway check-in: how much have we learned so far? What are we still interested in learning more about, or what are we looking forward to for the next 3 months?
- **Month 4; SPEAKERS:** presentations from organizations targeting these issues, as well as professionals and those in food production--understanding how food reaches us and where food inequalities stem from.
- **Month 5; IDEAS:** Preparing for final presentations; exploring what could work and what won’t work based on our experiences from Months 1-4, as well as how cities or communities in other places have successfully combated these issues.
- **Month 6; PRESENTATION:** Presentation time!!

PGC THEMES: food waste, plant-based, zero-waste, wellness, and soil!

ENGAGEMENT:

- end-of-semester project with multiple components--an interest survey, research, interviews, "proposal", etc.
- class discussions: discussion at the beginning of class to break the ice and gauge understanding of the topic; what solutions work best; what are the direct and indirect impacts of food insecurity; discussion at the end of class to gauge objective understanding and personal reflections

ENCOURAGING TEAMWORK: I would emphasize that this is a problem that could affect anybody; that in order to solve these problems, it is so important that we look at the situation *together* and collaborate on it.

I sent my teacher my syllabus draft, and she replied that she liked the premise of my class; she also encouraged me to add learning objectives and incorporate them into the calendar to give the course more structure--so this is the final product of that feedback!

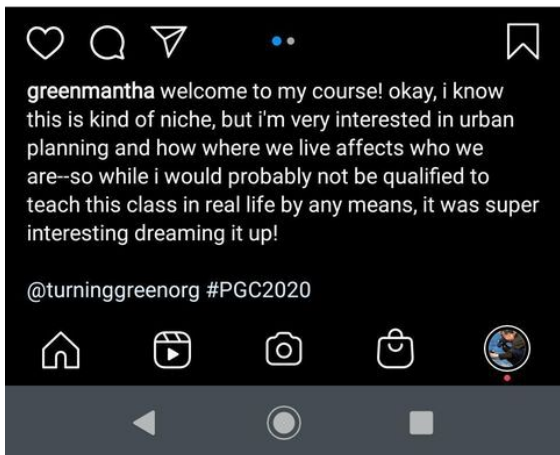


URBAN SOLUTIONS TO FOOD INSECURITY



2/2

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VIDEO

In my opinion, the most important component of the Green New Deal is the second part of it: how to address the shift from an economy reliant on fossil fuels to a circular and clean economy *without* adversely affecting those most at risk. When it comes to adding or removing components, I think that the Green New Deal as it is already encompasses all of the major climate issues we need to address, and is very thorough in its goals. Investment in and expansion of the renewable energy industry is definitely one of the issues at the top of my list; from there, we can work on dismantling the fossil fuel industry, switching and training workers for green jobs, and creating better communities and cities.

LETTER

Dear Senator Feinstein,

My name is Samantha and I am a junior from San Leandro, across the bay from San Francisco. I am writing to express my support of the Green New Deal and hope that you will reconsider your stance on this issue.

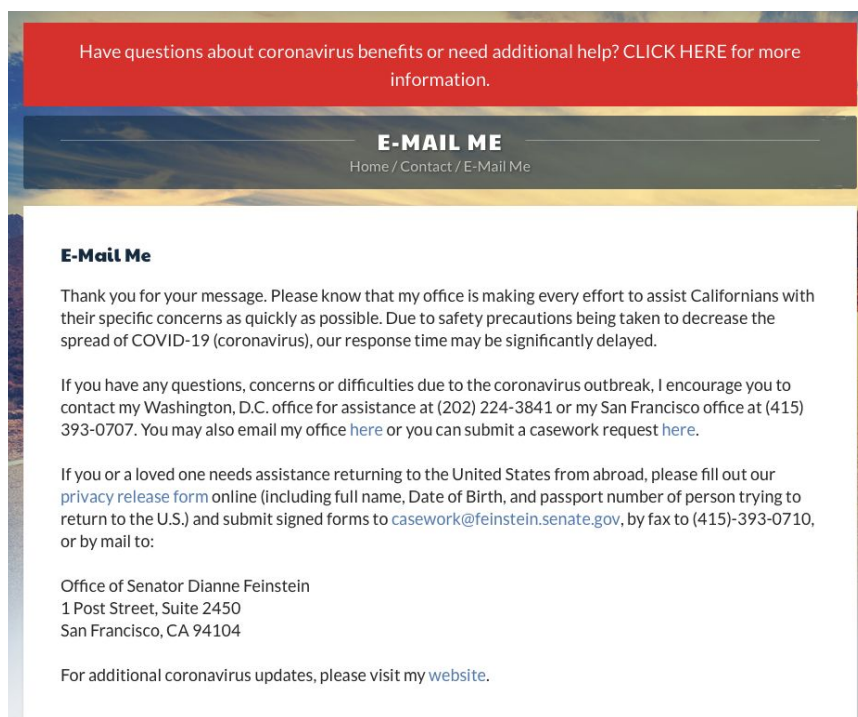
I first want to start off by saying that I do appreciate your actions to curb climate change and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as your protection of ecosystems in the United States. I am glad that I have officials representing me that are understanding of the severity of climate change and are taking actions to combat it.

However, I am also well aware that you have not supported the Green New Deal in the past, citing its inability to pass in the Senate. Even if it would likely not pass, it is still important that we advocate for it and foster discussion around climate change and its ties to racial and economic justice. Climate change is not an issue where its solutions can be watered down, half-fulfilled, or denied upfront. It needs to be addressed as a whole, and the Green New Deal does just that--it confronts and supports the transition to a cleaner economy in ways that are actionable. I support the Green New Deal because it acknowledges the possible effects of the Green New Deal on those that would be impacted by the phasing out of the fossil fuel industry; it fights to create better transportation and housing for communities; and even encourages the stewardship of ecosystems, as you have fought for before.

When it comes to something like this that threatens the existence of humankind, it can no longer continue to be a bipartisan disagreement, but a race to take the actions that are necessary. We need to support solutions that will match the enormity of the situation at hand, even if our goals can seem preposterous to achieve; I believe that, as a senator, you do have the power to rally support around this cause, even on the side where it may not be so well accepted.

In the end--and this is in no way an insult--your generation will not be the one bearing the brunt of the climate change crisis. I, along with millions of young adults globally, will need to be tasked with combating and surviving through the changes to come--that is, unless officials like you are willing to step up and confront the issue head-on. Climate change is already claiming lives, forcing migrations, and so forth. As a senator of California, you are likely familiar with our environmental crises over the past few years. Last month, I read a quote that made me consider just how strongly we need to act: "I don't need a time machine to see climate change--all I need is a window." The day that I woke up to the entire world around me bathed in orange, with the air smothered by smoke and ash, was the day that I realized climate change is not something that we can be moderate about. We cannot err on the side of caution in a time like this.

Best,
Samantha



Have questions about coronavirus benefits or need additional help? [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

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E-Mail Me

Thank you for your message. Please know that my office is making every effort to assist Californians with their specific concerns as quickly as possible. Due to safety precautions being taken to decrease the spread of COVID-19 (coronavirus), our response time may be significantly delayed.

If you have any questions, concerns or difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak, I encourage you to contact my Washington, D.C. office for assistance at (202) 224-3841 or my San Francisco office at (415) 393-0707. You may also email my office [here](#) or you can submit a casework request [here](#).

If you or a loved one needs assistance returning to the United States from abroad, please fill out our [privacy release form](#) online (including full name, Date of Birth, and passport number of person trying to return to the U.S.) and submit signed forms to casework@feinstein.senate.gov, by fax to (415)-393-0710, or by mail to:

Office of Senator Dianne Feinstein
1 Post Street, Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104

For additional coronavirus updates, please visit my [website](#).

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greenmantha today, i wrote a letter to California Senator Dianna Feinstein, and honestly, i feel extremely empowered. my letter went into the impacts of the Green New Deal and how imperative it is that we take the boldest actions possible in this time--here is the ending paragraph of the letter.

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