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The person I ended up interviewing me is Emma Florez of Champlain College, she is from Uncasville CT and she's majoring in writing! Here is her picture below:



Questions I asked and her responses!

1. What's something you wish project green challenge included more of? A particular lesson, theme, or issue you wish was more discussed?
 - a. I wish we were given more specific actions we can take to support BIPOC communities. Of course voting, taking everyday sustainable actions, and contacting our representatives is a good start, but I want to know what the people who most need support actually need.
2. Have you noticed a difference in the way people act around you, now that you've been doing this challenge?

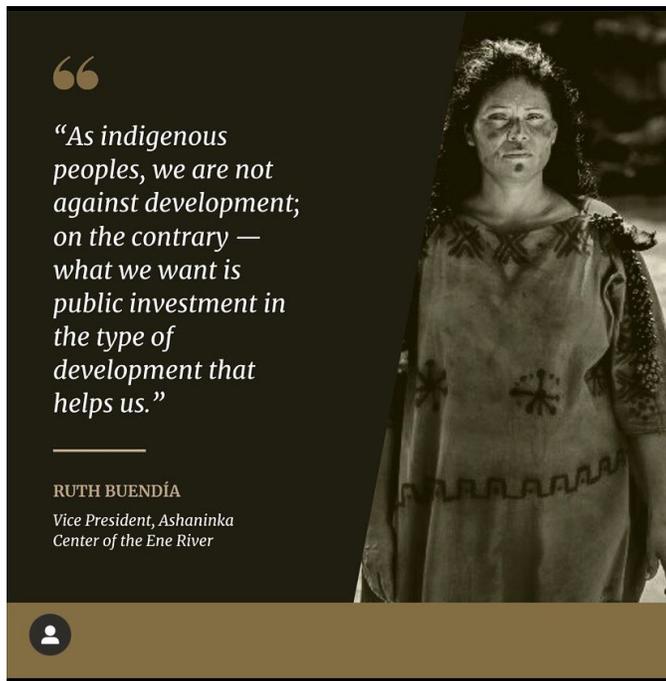
- a. Not particularly. I feel closer to my two teammates, and we've been able to have more in-depth conversations about the environment and what we believe, but PGC hasn't had a direct impact on my social life
3. How has your perspective changed on activism, the environment, politics, etc since this challenge has begun? If it did at all.
 - a. Yes! I definitely understand what my place in environmental/social activism needs to be right now better than I did before the challenge started. I work as an Eco-Rep Area Coordinator, which means I facilitate meetings and assignments for student environmental activists at my school. Sometimes that feels like it's not enough because I'm not out in the world planting trees or bringing clean water to communities, but this challenge has shown me that helping other people find what they can do is a necessary part of the movement. When the world is safer and I have more tools in my metaphorical toolbox, I want to go to protests and actively work in communities to make them greener, but for now, it's enough to teach people and encourage them to do what they can. I also feel like I have a much better understanding of social and environmental issues, so I can write more articulate emails to my representatives and be more informed when I vote.
4. Be honest, do you see yourself as a leader? Do you think other people see you as a leader?
 - a. Yes and no. I actually felt more like a leader last school year when I lived on campus and could physically see the work I did. I helped organize events and brought recycling bins to people who didn't have them. I made tangible progress. It's a lot harder this year because, even though I'm doing more, it's all remote and I can't see the impact I'm making on my community. The most memorable moment as a student leader this year was a video call I was in with staff, faculty, and other student leaders discussing the college's voter engagement plans. I got to share ideas and really feel like my voice mattered. I think that other people see me more as a leader than I do. I work closely with the Eco-Rep captain, two other Area Coordinators, and our faculty supervisor. To me, it just feels like I'm working with my friends, but what we're doing is also really important. I led a self-care workshop in one of the Zoom meetings with the entire Eco-Rep team, and because I have a background in public speaking, it didn't feel like a big deal to me, but my supervisor commended me for my leadership. I work closely with four students, two of whom are brand new to the team, and I'm sure fielding their questions comes across as leadership to them. To me, I feel like I'm just supporting my team and doing what I'm passionate about.
5. What's one thing you want to change in your community?
 - a. I wish people were more aware of the world around them. I've heard people at Champlain say that they believe in climate change, but that they don't think it's a bad thing. We have a lot of climate pessimists, which considering the planet we're inheriting, is fair, but they take it to the extreme of not doing anything about it. People at my school ignore the environmental movement happening all around them. This lack of awareness manifests in other ways, too. Every single woman and nonbinary person I've met has felt unsafe, marginalized, or discriminated

against since they stepped foot on campus. The gender-based mistreatment I've experienced was not targeted violence, but instead the failure to understand that I have boundaries that deserve to be respected. People fail to read the room all the time and use slurs and inconsiderate language. A lot of Champlain students simply don't recognize everything and everyone around them and how they can have a really positive or negative effect on them.

6. What's something you wish more people understood about the environment, politics, social justice, etc?
 - a. The passion of our generation is not a weakness, and it's not going anywhere. Our sensitivity to the things that marginalize us and the people around us helps us do world-changing work. Our ability to recognize the failure of leadership and call it out is necessary to create systemic change. Wanting to protect the planet so we have a future is not pessimistic or attention-seeking. None of us wanted to lose our youth to activism. We want to be able to make the world better, not stop it from dying. It's not our fault that we were left in a world with economic, environmental, and racial crises, yet we're still stepping up to fix it. I'll never understand why people think there's something wrong with that, and I wish people knew we do this work because we care deeply
7. Can you tell me about a particular moment in this experience where you felt like "I'm supposed to be here, I'm doing the right thing, and it's gonna work out."
 - a. There have been a lot of those moments, which has been awesome! One of the biggest Aha! moments was during the Economics challenge. I'd heard about the Green New Deal a lot, and I knew I supported it, but I didn't have a really firm understanding of what all it included. I was really excited to learn more about something I knew was really important. In writing the letter to my representatives, I was able to use my writing skills and all of the knowledge I picked up from PGC. I was able to make an argument for why the Green New Deal is a necessary framework for my state's environmental policy. Everything I'd learned in the past year and a half in college and in the past month of PGC came together, and I got to send an email to several representatives. That one action will make a difference, even if it's just helping me move through the rest of my life with a more integrated understanding of environmental policy.
8. Last question! How do you think you inspire other people? Is there anyone you can tell me about who decided to follow after your example?
 - a. I try not to draw barriers between my environmental activism and other areas of my life. I write about sustainability for my classes, talk about it with my friends, and share about it on social media. I talk to my parents about sustainability issues, and I try to help them see the environment through an intersectional lens (for example, I applaud my mom for using reusable straws but remind her not to support anti-straw policy that could hurt disabled people). Last year, I told all my friends about my work as an Eco-Rep, and one of them got so excited he made me bring information about recycling to his room so he'd know what he could put in the provided recycling bin. Through PGC, I got prompted to start conversations,

and I had a really fun one with my friend Zoe talking about the importance of soil and composting!

This was the favorite post of mine that they shared. I really appreciate it when people highlight the voices of marginalized groups especially when it comes to the environment, so their post stood out to me!



Here are my favorite quotes by her:

- "It's not our fault that we were left in a world with economic, environmental, and racial crises, yet we're still stepping up to fix it!"
- "The passion of our generation is not a weakness, and it's not going anywhere."
- "I try not to draw barriers between my environmental activism and other areas of my life"

Today I got to interview another PGC participant: Emma Florez student of Champlain College and from Uncasville, CT!

We discussed activism, the environment and how we feel about our communities. I appreciated the experience of learning from another activist about her experiences and outlook on politics, justice, and of course PGC2020!

And also my favorite post they have done. Well done on highlighting issues of marginalized groups!





PGC Hero Blog