

Cristina Baquero
Eco Footprint Club
@eco_footprint_club
Colegio Nueva Granada

BREAKING NEWS: Young adults begin to take over the climate crisis
“Climate change is an issue for today, not tomorrow”

Who is taking action?

Alexia Leclercq, the woman pictured on the right, is one of the many young adults who are beginning to take the climate issue into their own hands. She graduated from Harvard and is summa cum laude at NYU where she studied the Politics and economics of inequality. Although she is one of many to stand against the climate change crisis, her approach is slightly different.



In her school, much like in other schools worldwide, she was taught about climate change as if it were a problem of the future. Statements from the UN (United Nations) general assembly President, Maria Fernando Espinosa Garces, stating humanity has “[only] 11 years left to prevent irreversible damage from climate change” mistakenly convince people this is not an issue humanity has to deal with just yet. However, this is an issue of today as Alexia Leclercq points out.

Coming from Taiwanese and French roots she has experienced firsthand the effects of climate change. In Taiwan, her family's home country, she has seen how climate change has slowly been destroying a place she considers her second home. According to *nature geoscience*, a peer-reviewed journal focused on all aspects of earth science, typhoons in Asia (China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, etc) have “intensified by 12-15%” and will continue to intensify. Her own family has been forced to evacuate their home multiple times in the past few years due to an increase in hurricanes and earthquakes. Leclercq herself faced not one but two earthquakes on her last visit to Taiwan. The only question now is, what is she doing to help?

In 2019 Leclercq realized that although climate change affects the whole world, there are certain communities that are inevitably affected more than others. Amongst these communities are colored people as well as disabled people. Climate change is an issue that is, in her words, fueled by “colonialism and capitalism” which are both systems that exploit BIPOC (Black,

Indigenous, and People Of Color) communities. This is why in 2019 she co-founded Start: Empowerment (S: E), an environmental justice NPO (nonprofit organization). The organization's mission is to “use education as a tool to achieve social-environmental justice and liberation for all”, but what does that mean?

It means they are saving the world by closing the gap between education and action. The true issue is that although many people are informed about the implications climate change has, they are not equipped to act on their knowledge. What good is it to be educated if you don't use your education for something? At S: E they host public events and create curriculums tailored to classrooms in order to “[blend a] learning experience that fosters action”(S: E, 2022).

At S: E they have multiple programs such as their “Climate Justice Community School” where they aim to build a community that raises political awareness through education. They also have a summer school, a Youth Vanguard program, and even offer internships to people who wish to get involved in the fate of their own planet.

Why is Alexia Leclercq so inspiring?

When Leclercq went to the US she was the first-generation immigrant of her family. Through hard work and passion, she managed to graduate from Harvard and gain a degree with “highest distinction” from NYU. She is an example to all and gives hope to every first-generation immigrant or to any person anywhere by being an example of how hard work and motivation do have an impact and can take anybody very far. She was able to use her experience and her education to truly have an impact and help vulnerable communities. This story can inspire others to use their experiences and their education to help the community and the environment since we are the only ones who can truly make a change.

What is the takeaway from Leclercq's journey, actions and achievements?

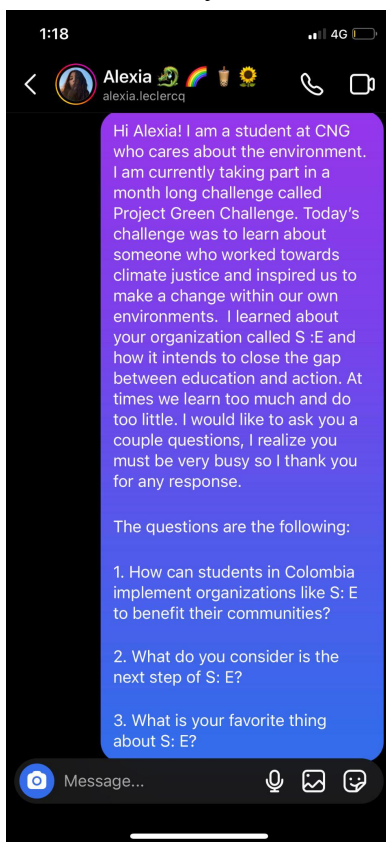
If Leclercq’s journey teaches us anything it is that you are never too young to act in favor of what you believe in. Every day young people are faced with issue they feel they are too young to have an impact on. The truth is that anyone who wants to make a difference can if they are willing to put in effort and time.

Leclercq is a first-generation immigrant in the US, and although this might have restricted someone else it is perhaps the very thing that fuels her every action. Having Taiwanese roots she understands the severity of the climate change issue. Although it is easy for some to forget as it is not present in their daily lives, it was impossible for her to ignore. TA every turn she would see people from her family being affected by this issue. Leclercq could have left this issue in the hands of more “powerful” people, however, she realized if she didn’t do something then who would? Her journey shows that no matter where you come from, or how old you are you can always make an impact.

Her achievements alone speak volumes. She has co-founded an organization that seeks to bridge the gap between knowledge and action while winning various awards for her actions. It is never too early to start nor impossible if one is passionate enough.

Questions:

1. How can students in Colombia implement organizations like S: E to benefit their communities?
2. What do you consider is the next step of S: E?
3. What is your favorite thing about S: E?



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