

Team Name: Bigfoot

School: Koforidua Technical University

Changemakers Impacting the World

1. 2025 Goldman Environmental Prize Review

The 2025 Goldman Environmental Prize recipients are a truly inspiring cohort, demonstrating extraordinary courage and effectiveness in defending the environment at the grassroots level. This year's winners highlight the power of local activism to create **global, systemic change**, spanning major issues from pollution and mining to biodiversity and legal rights.

What stands out most is the precedent-setting nature of their victories:

- **Protecting Water and Health: Laurene Allen** (United States) successfully pressured an industrial giant to close, ending two decades of **PFAS (forever chemicals)** contamination, a huge win for public health in New England. Similarly, **Semia Gharbi** (Tunisia) led an intricate campaign that not only returned 6,000 tons of illegally trafficked Italian waste but also spurred the European Union to **tighten its rules on waste shipments** abroad.
- **Granting Legal Rights to Nature: Mari Luz Canaquiri Murayari** (Peru) and the Kukama women's association achieved a historic victory by winning a court decision that granted the **Marañón River legal personhood**, setting a crucial precedent in environmental law in Peru.
- **Safeguarding Ecosystems: Besjana Guri and Olsi Nika** (Albania) protected the **Vjosa River** from a dam boom by securing its designation as the first Wild River National Park in Europe. Meanwhile, **Batmunkh Luvsandash** (Mongolia) created a 66,000-acre protected area to safeguard the Eastern Gobi Desert's unique biodiversity against large-scale mining.
- **Stopping Destructive Infrastructure: Carlos Mallo Molina** (Canary Islands) led a campaign that resulted in the cancellation of the Fonsalía Port project, thereby protecting a critical 170,000-acre marine sanctuary for whales, sharks, and sea turtles.

The 2025 Prize winners serve as a powerful reminder that the most significant environmental policy shifts often begin with focused, courageous action by ordinary citizens in their own communities.

2. 2024 Brower Youth Award Recipients Review

The 2024 Brower Youth Award recipients embody the innovative, passionate spirit of **emerging environmental leaders** who are transforming local challenges into opportunities for change. This year's recipients demonstrated a broad range of community-focused, solution-oriented projects that highlight the intersection of environmentalism with fields like art, technology, health, and education.

Key highlights of the 2024 awardees:

- **Creative Conservation:** **Austin Picinich** (Kirkland, WA) showed that conservation can be a form of art, successfully **saving salmon through art** and community engagement. **Asa Miller** (Hartsdale, NY) took on an international challenge by actively helping to **restore Cuba's coral reefs**.
- **Community Health and Sustainability:** **Yuki Qian** (Pittsburgh, PA) addressed a critical indoor environmental health issue by working on **radon remediation** in her community. **Vishruth Dinesh** (Fremont, CA) focused on foundational resilience, empowering youth towards self-sustainability through practical **gardening** initiatives.
- **Driving Policy and Education:** **Raina Maiga** (Indianapolis, IN) focused on the vital work of civic engagement, empowering young people to organize and advocate for **policy change**. Similarly, **Amelia Southern-Uribe** (Fayetteville, AR) made the case for a more inclusive movement by supporting **equitable climate education**.

The projects spearheaded by the 2024 Brower Youth Award recipients illustrate that impactful environmental leadership starts young, thrives through creativity, and focuses on creating tangible results within their immediate spheres of influence. Their work is essential for building a more sustainable and just future.

3. Choose one changemaker who inspires you most and research them.

Headline: Fighting Waste Colonialism: How Semia Gharbi Stood Up for Environmental Justice in Tunisia

When I read about Semia Gharbi, I was struck by how one woman's determination could change both national policy and international behavior. Semia Gharbi, a scientist and environmental educator from Tunisia, became a global symbol of environmental justice after exposing a major illegal waste trafficking scheme between Italy and Tunisia. Her courage and persistence earned her the **2025 Goldman Environmental Prize for Africa**.

In 2020, Tunisia received more than 6,000 tons of supposed "recyclable plastic" waste from Italy. But when the containers were opened, much of the waste was discovered to be regular household garbage, hazardous materials, and non-recyclable products. This was not only a public health threat but also a violation of international environmental treaties such as the Basel and Bamako Conventions. Gharbi and her organization, the Green Tunisia Network, led investigations, rallied the media, and pressured the government to act. Her activism paid off — by 2022, the waste was returned to Italy, and several officials involved in the scandal were arrested.

What inspires me most about Semia is how she connects local activism with global impact. She didn't just expose corruption; she also educated communities about their environmental rights and built coalitions that continue to advocate for transparency and sustainable waste management. Her story shows that environmental issues are not only about nature — they are also about justice, ethics, and equality.

As a university student, I see her work as a reminder that activism doesn't always need to start with big resources or international fame. It can start with research, awareness, and a sense of duty to protect our environment. Semia's fight against waste colonialism teaches us that every voice matters, and that standing up for our planet is also standing up for our people.

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1njXU8umMECYWALHpuQMpXwXte6L06uEU/view?usp=sharing>

Instagram Post

