

Jamie Margolin's 2019 Congressional Testimony

My name is Jamie Margolin, and I'm a 17-year-old climate justice activist from Seattle Washington. I am missing a lot of school to be here, it's my senior year of high school, college application deadlines are looming and to be honest, I've barely started because I'm too busy fighting to make sure I'm actually going to have the future I am applying to study for.

You're here spending a few moments with me, but that is nothing compared to the hours that members of congress have spent with lobbyists from corporations that make billions of dollars off of the destruction of my generation's future. I want the entirety of congress, in fact the whole US government, to remember the fear and despair that my generation lives with every day, and I want you to hold onto it. How do I even begin to convey to you what it feels like to know that within my lifetime the destruction that we have already seen from the climate crisis will only get worse?

What adds insult to injury is the fact that we keep getting promised what isn't there. On college applications I keep getting asked what I want to be when I grow up; the media, pop culture, politicians, businesses, and the whole world tells me that I and my whole generation will have something to look forward to that we just don't. You're promising me lies. Everyone who will walk up to me after this testimony saying I have such a bright future ahead of me, will be lying to my face. It doesn't matter how talented we are, how much work we put in, how many dreams we have, the reality is, my generation has been committed to a planet that is collapsing.

This is a foreign affairs committee, so I thought I'd tell you a story about the country my family is from. I am the daughter of a Colombian immigrant. My abuela grew up on a farm in Colombia, the kind of farm that actually replenishes the earth instead of ruthlessly extracting

from it. No pesticides were ever used, there were no monocrops, instead there were rotating crops and a diverse array of them too, that worked together to help each other grow. The soil was so rich and alive you could drop the seed of pretty much anything and it would grow. My abuela and her siblings could shimmy up a tree and pick their lunch, the river was clean enough to wash and drink from, and the land was well taken care of and respected.

I will never get to experience that harmony and paradise on earth that she did.

I know foreign affairs deals with international development, but this whole idea of development is backwards. We think that development means big cities and lots of money, but in reality places like where my abuela grew up are just as rich as any American metropolis.

The fact that you are staring at a panel of young people testifying before you today pleading for a livable earth should not fill you with pride, it should fill you with shame. We are exhausted because we have tried *everything*. We've built organizations, organized marches and worked on political campaigns. I sued my state government in a lawsuit called Piper vs.[1] The State of Washington along with 12 other youth plaintiffs, for contributing to the climate crisis and denying my generation's constitutional rights to life, liberty and property. The lawsuit is also arguing that the natural resources of my state are protected as our right under the Washington State Constitution.

The shellfish, salmon, orcas, and all of the beautiful wildlife of my Pacific Northwest home is dying due to ocean acidification caused by the climate crisis, and communities all over the Seattle area are suffering from the new fossil fuel infrastructure being built to lock in decades more of climate destruction into my state. My friends and I were warned to stay inside the last two summers because our city was shrouded in smoke from wildfires. Is this the future we have to look forward to?

We the youth are working to make sure it isn't. On July 21st of 2018, after an entire year of nonstop organizing, despite being full time high school students, my organization, [Zero Hour](#) marched on Washington D.C. in a pouring rainstorm and in 25 cities around the world, demanding urgent climate action from you and all our leaders.

And that was only the beginning. This past July of 2019, Zero Hour organized the Youth Climate Summit, in Miami Florida, where we educated and united roughly 350 young people from across the country on climate action. Throughout the entirety of 2019 we have implemented a campaign called *Getting To The Roots of Climate Change*, where we have trained over 600 youth climate justice ambassadors (and counting) to educate their communities on the root systems of oppression that caused the climate crisis. We are bringing a delegation of youth to the upcoming UN climate summit, where our voices will be heard by leaders from around the world.

By 2030 we will have known if we have created the political climate that will have allowed us to salvage life on earth, or if we acted too late. By then, we must be well down the path towards climate recovery, but this must start today. By 2030, I will be old enough to run for congress and be seated where you are right now. By then we need to have *already* achieved net zero greenhouse gas emissions and be rapidly on the path to climate recovery. The good news is that experts agree there are multiple pathways to decarbonize the U.S. energy system and that doing so is technologically and economically viable.

The most frustrating thing is that the US government can't even *begin* to imagine the massive political shift that has to happen in order for us to solve this issue. Solving the climate crisis, goes against what this country was unfortunately built on, colonialism, slavery and natural resource extraction. This is why youth are calling for a new era all together. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report that we have only a few months left

in order to create the massive political shift needed to transition our world to an entirely renewable energy economy. This needs to happen within the next 10 years, which is our deadline to save life as we know it.

People call my generation, Generation Z, as if we are the last generation. But we are not. We are refusing to be the last letter of the alphabet. I am here before the whole country today announcing that we are instead Generation GND –Generation Green New Deal. The only thing that will save us is a new era. It is right here, testifying before you that history is being made. You've heard of the Reagan Era, the New Deal Era, well the youth are bringing about the Era of the Green New Deal.