National Environmental Youth Advisory Council Launch

[music playing]

DJ Heat:

All right, everyone, we are getting ready to kick things off. So please, if you haven't already, make your way to your seat. Also, make sure you have your phones on silent. We will begin in just a moment.

[music playing]

All right, let's get ready to get this show started. I've been your DJ, DJ Heat. And I'd like to welcome to the stage right now your emcee for today's event, Little Bacon Bear. Now, a little bit about Bacon. She's from right down the way, Prince George's County, Maryland. She's known for her work as a DJ and on-air personality. If you're from here, you probably heard her on 93.9 WKYS and also seen her celebrity interviews on YouTube Music. She is also the official DJ of the DC United soccer team, and you can catch her on Fox 5 DC as a correspondent. So, ladies and gentlemen, please make some noise for Little Bacon Bear.

[applause]

Little Bacon Bear:

Hey. Wow. Great intro music. Great intro music. Can we give another round of applause to my DJ up there?

[applause]

That's my friend, a homie, a colleague, DJ Heat. You can catch her on the court, on the TV. What else you got, Heat?

DJ Heat:

Oh, man, just every sport possible, I'm out [laughs].

Little Bacon Bear:

Truly every sport possible. But if you didn't catch it, I am Little Bacon Bear from right here at home, Prince George's County. If you're with me right now, let me get a "Yur".

DJ Heat:

Yur.

Little Bacon Bear:

Lots more energy, let me get a "Yur".

DJ Heat:

Yur.

Little Bacon Bear:

All right, listen, I'm an interactive host and I'm kind of short, so I like to talk, if you talk to me and we talk to each other. That's cool, right? Excellent. So I'm going to be your emcee for today. Anybody from right here at home?

[applause]

Put your hands up if you're from right here. All right. Okay. And if you're from somewhere else, put your hand up.

[applause]

All right. Okay, well, welcome to DC, my out-of-towners. I want to invite you here and say hello. What's good? I know that you guys flew here from wherever you came from, but we're excited to have you here at the NEYAC conference. I believe that young people deserve a seat at the table, right? Right. We can cheer for that. We definitely can cheer for that.

[applause]

And I do know that since we all align in that, and Minister Regan is also believing that. He believes that people deserve a seat at the table. And young people, we should be there. At a time when the environmental movement is at a turning point in this country and across the world, this administration and the EPA are stepping up the National Environmental Youth Advisory Council. We're just going to say NEYAC because it sounds so much better. It rolls off the tongue, right? NEYAC. The NEYAC is the first ever body of young people from ages 16 to 29 that will regularly convene to discuss the most critical environmental and public health issues that are facing young people and their environments right now. How cool is that, right?

[applause]

All right, all right. Now, later in the program, we will have the opportunity to meet the 16 inaugural members, but we got to hold off on that. I do want to welcome to the stage, if he is ready, if I can get his smile, I do know it's him. Good, great. I want to bring him to the stage. His name is Representative Maxwell Frost.

[applause]

Yeah, yeah, yeah, lots of cheers for that. He is our first special guest and he's going to give his thoughts on this. We are so excited to have him because he is the first member of Generation Z to be elected to Congress. And he is one of the youngest members of Congress. Yes, he's locked in and laser focused and working to deliver change and real results on real issues. So for that, can I bring him out to the stage? Representative Maxwell Frost.

[music playing]

[applause]

Maxwell Frost:

How's everybody doing?

[applause]

Awesome. It's amazing to be here with everyone today. This is a nice theater. I like this. I might have to do a concert here. I'm Congressman Maxwell Alejandro Frost, proudly representing Florida's 10th congressional district here in the United States. Do we have people from Florida here? Florida?

[applause]

Okay. I used to say I come from the great state of Florida. I don't say that anymore. Now I say I come from the beautiful state of Florida. We're a beautiful state with beautiful people. I'm so excited to be here with young leaders from across the entire country as we kick off the EPA's new Youth Advisory Council. You are all here because you recognize that we are in a climate emergency. I mean, my home state of Florida is one of the frontline states in the climate crisis. Right now, the surrounding water in the state of Florida is the temperature of a hot tub. Because of that temperature, our hurricanes, natural disasters and storms are worse, lasting longer, happening more frequently, and leaving vulnerable communities literally out to die.

While fires, floods, and droughts affect every part of our country, you're also here because you all know that we have the power to end this emergency. The work that the EPA is doing is key to our generation's success and fight for both a livable future and a livable present. And I like to say livable present because for a long time, the climate movement has been based on talking about the future, future generations. And I care about future generations, don't get me wrong, but I also care about myself. And I want to, we know that the climate crisis is not coming, it's here. It is here. It is here right now. People are being displaced globally, but also here in the United States. Our most vulnerable communities do not have the resources they need to deal with the consequences we have already sewn in for ourselves as humanity, but the good news is the worst impacts. We can still end that.

We can still mitigate the worst impacts of the climate crisis. And the work that the EPA is doing is key to that fight. From the bipartisan infrastructure law that has meant billions of dollars for climate resiliency and the Inflation Reduction Act signed by President Biden, which has put the most amount of money in our country's history towards ending the climate crisis. The EPA is also putting billions of dollars into making sure that underserved and historically neglected communities finally get the access to clean drinking water and healthy place to live, thanks to the environmental justice projects that have connected, yes, that have connected communities to the funding they need. And this is important.

I always like to tell people. Look, I come from the organizing space that's been my life. The district I now represent, I've also been jailed and for nonviolent protest. This is the world I come from. And often times, especially in advocacy, we forget about all the different types of work going on. Right. And there's really two streams here at the climate crisis. We're working at ensuring that we end it, which means doing drastic, bold legislation and change to ensure that we step away from the harmful products of fossil fuels. But not just that, but also what are we doing now. For the people now. To build a new green economy now and have climate resiliency now that sees the world through the eyes of the most vulnerable. And that is something that is Administrator Regan gets. It is part of the reason why this Youth council is a thing. I mean, the issue of environmental justice is at the heart of my work and is at the heart of my community, whether it's the center of my district paramour, where Thurgood Marshall and Martin Luther King spoke, and communities fought against terrible air quality caused by crisscrossing highways. Or Eatonville, which you can read about actually at the African American History Museum. It's a community in my district where residents have -- will say they've never had clean water to drink. The EPA's working with my office. The EPA is working with my office at ensuring that we handle this. And so either way, I wanted to come by and say thank you to all the work that you do across the country. A lot has been done, but we got to be clear, there's a lot more that we need to do. And the administrator in this youth council will play a vital part in ensuring that our generation's perspective is at the table and actually heard.

Yes, we're impatient, but patience has a death toll when it comes down to the climate crisis. I say the same thing with gun violence. We have a lot of work to do, but every day we lose 100 lives a day and we can never forget that. And so, I appreciate you all so much for being here. We know that the cost of not doing anything is far greater than the cost of taking bold action now as it relates to the climate crisis. And in the words of the late great Congresswoman Barbara Jordan, “what the people want is simple a country as great as its promise”. And we are all working for that promise every single day. So thank you all so much for everything.

[applause]

Keep fighting and have a great day. Thank you so much.

[applause]

Little Bacon Bear:

Wow. Representative Frost. Now, they gave me like this paragraph about them, but I did not know he was a musician also. They put my musician on here, so I feel like I have to press him out about that later, right? I want to get to the bottom of it. Does anybody like money? I've never heard people so bored about money. Do you like money?

[applause]

Okay, now, since I have your attention, I have some money in my pocket. She said okay. Okay, well, what does that have to do with you? Right. You want to put it in your pocket? Would you put it in yours or put it in yours? Okay, let's play a game. Let's kill some time. I call this a baking challenge. And when I was on the radio, it's a very, very simple game. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses, or you lose. But if you go to correct, well, you get some of the money in my pocket, right? I know it's a little pocket, but it's a lot of money. Okay. Anybody want to try first? Ah, I like what's your name? Who? Devonte [spelled phonetically], make some noise for Devonte at one time.

[applause]

Wow. Okay. Devonte, where are you from? Georgia. Oh, okay. Savannah, Georgia. Like Georgia peaches. Okay. Here we go. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Give me three fruits that have seeds in them.

Male Speaker:

Grapes, Watermelon, [unintelligible].

Little Bacon Bear:

Okay, round of applause today. I got your money. I got your money. But it only gets harder from there. Who wants to follow them up? And I'm going to remember. What about you? What's your name?

Male Speaker:

Nick.

Little Bacon Bear:

Where are you from?

Male Speaker:

[unintelligible].

Little Bacon Bear:

Los Angeles, California. Okay. You like music? You love music. Do you love music? You’re a real fan. Okay. Let me get no ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Of course. Four music groups with at least three members in it. Oh, we got him there.

[music playing]

Oh, wow. Oh, man. We thought we had him in L.A., right? Okay. Who else? Who wants to go? Right there in the back. What's your name? Yeah. You with the Ascot or is it a tie? What's your name?

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

Noel with the tie. Hey, Noel. Say, hey, Noel. All right. Where are you from Noel?

Female Speaker:

Laura, Maryland

Little Bacon Bear:

Laura, Maryland

DJ Heat:

She says she remembers you.

Little Bacon Bear:

She remembers me. From where? From broccoli festival. Oh, yes. I was at Broccoli Festival. I did host there. But you're from Maryland, you said. Right. Okay, Maryland girl, you should know this one. Okay. No ums, no ahs. No long pause Noel. Can you name four professional sports teams from right here at home?

Female Speaker:

The Orioles [unintelligible].

Little Bacon Bear:

Wait, wait, wait, wait. The Orioles. Um. What was the first rule of this game?

[laughter]

Little Bacon Bear:

No ums. Right. Okay, that's a -- thank you.

[music playing]

Thank you D.J. Heat. Thank you. Anybody want to try for a game winning question right here? Because this one's really good. Okay. Right here. What your name? Yes you! Lucas. Where are you from? Rockville, Maryland. So you're prodigal mojo. Okay, let's see here. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. I’m thinking animals. Can you give me six animals with a ferocious bite? Go!

Male Speaker:

Snapping Turtles.

Little Bacon Bear:

Oh! Snapping turtles,

Male Speaker:

Tigers.

Little Bacon Bear:

Tigers.

Male Speaker:

Um.

Little Bacon Bear:

Oh, wow. Well, that um bites. That um has a ferocious bite, doesn't it? Okay. One more. Anybody else? Anybody else? Because I know I want to get somebody right here in the front. What's your name?

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

One more time.

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

Can I call you RA for short? Is that fine? Okay. RA, where are you from?

Female Speaker:

I'm from Philadelphia.

Little Bacon Bear:

Philadelphia. Like the Eagles, right?

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

Oh my gosh.

[laughter]

Oh okay. No pressure RA. You got time. What grade are you in?

Female Speaker:

I’m in Fifth.

Little Bacon Bear:

Fifth. Okay, so you should really get this one. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Maybe you can tell me. Five things you can find in the checkout aisle at the grocery store.

Female Speaker:

Candy

Little Bacon Bear:

Candy, yup.

Female Speaker:

Receipts.

Little Bacon Bear:

Receipts. Okay, sure. Silence. [laughs]. Okay. Okay. RA, that's a.

[music playing]

Okay. Okay, so thus far I have one winner or two winners. Just one. Just DeVante and Noel. You lost. It's okay. One more, one more. Right there in the back. Way in the back. You're going to have to show for me. What is your name?

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

Miss April, make some noise for April.

[applause]

All right, Miss April, where are you from? Don't tap on him. He can't help you. Okay. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. You said your from DC, right? Let me get three Go-Go bands. Chuck Brown's band.

DJ Heat:

That's correct.

Little Bacon Bear:

Okay. All right.

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

[laughter]

Little Bacon Bear:

Uh, where essence.

[music playing]

Nah nah nah nah. Okay, well, I guess for that I do have to quit. But if you still want to win some money, I can still make that happen. I still got it in my pocket. Devonte, I didn't forget about you, but we came for the NIAC. Of course we could do this all day. I do want to take this time to introduce some people, I believe. I believe I get to do the honors. Can I do the honors? Can I bring all my 16 participants one time? All right, so since we're talking about young people, I want to bring some young people to the stage that are doing the work and all about their work, and they have great outfits and great coming out songs. So I'm going to introduce them like this is a basketball game, a sporting event, and talk about their lives. If we're ready to do that, let's make it happen.

Next up is the moment you've all been waiting for. It's time to meet your NIAC committee members. Each of these 16 young people have shown an incredible commitment to protecting human health and environment in their communities and are well equipped to advise the EPA Administrator Regan. First up, I'd like to bring to the stage Alexandra Anchorman [spelled phonetically].

[applause]

Yeah. Alexandra. She is 25 from Alaska. She currently serves as the head of the environmental department for her local tribe, where she oversees initiatives like recycling and composting and so much more. Alexander has a passion for environmental stewardship and decided to join the NIAC, where she will represent her tribal community. Welcome, Alexandra.

[applause]

Whoo! Followed up by the one and only Emmanuel Alcantara [spelled phonetically]. Come on down. Now, he is 27 from California. Pulling for L.A. is made up of black and brown residents experience some of the most a severe air pollution in the entire country. His upbringing inspired him to get involved in local politics, and he is eager to enjoy -- to join the NIAC and help foster a more livable nation. So, round of applause to Emmanuel.

[applause]

Up next to the stage, the one and only Rachel Brulé [spelled phonetically]. Yes. Come on down, Rachel. She is 27, from southeast Louisiana. Her research is dedicated to the interconnection of cultural knowledge, environmental protection, and the health of people, animals and plants. She was inspired to join the NIAC because she believes it's important that the EPA hears directly from indigenous communities impacted by environmental degradation. Welcome, Rachel. Hey.

[applause]

Up next to the stage, if I can get the one and only Nick Blumenthal [spelled phonetically]. Now. Nick. He is 21. He is from Iowa and he works in food and agriculture sector because of his work. Nick understands the critical link between agriculture and a healthy environment. Nick is excited to serve on the NIAC alongside fellow passionate young people, where he can actively participate in planting the seeds of impact for a greener tomorrow. Nick Blumenthal, ladies and gentlemen.

All right. His name is Colton Buckley. I like his hat a lot. He's 29. He's from Texas.

[applause]

Now, as a young rancher, Colton has seen firsthand how the effects of irregular weather patterns and environmental issues impact -- yes. I wish I had a hat to give him one too. But, you know, he's doing the work. And shout out to Colton Buckley from Texas.

[music playing]

Up next to the stage, the one and only Kristy Drutman. Kristy is 28 and she is from New Jersey. Christie is an entrepreneur, content creator and a founder of a climate tech company, Green Jobs Board. Did I get that right? All right. Excellent. Her long-term focus is a career building. And, making clearer pathways for young people to pursue a long term careers in the climate space. Please welcome Kristy Drutman

[applause]

Alright. Up next we have one Wanjiku Gatheru. She is 25 from Pennsylvania. Excuse me.

[applause]

Oh, I love your dress. Come on fits. Wawa as environmental justice scholar activist is grounded in climate optimism because she believes in our capacity -- a capacity as a generation to live in a better world. Wawa founded black girl environmentalist. Come on, a national organization that empowers black girls and women and non-binary individuals in the climate. I wanted to do the dance heat. Stop. Okay. One type of Wawa got through.

Next to the stage, I want to bring Meghana Kunapareddy. She is a teen from Texas.

[applause]

Growing up surrounded by the oil industry in Houston, it inspired Meghana to educate other students on the disproportionate impacts of the industry, and she has since worked to implement student led climate justice education curriculum over 50 districts. And she's ready to use her knowledge to serve on the NIAC. Meghana Kunapareddy.

[music playing]

All right. Next to the stage we have Shannen Maxwell. She is 27 from Missouri. Now living on her family farm, it's hotter than being a good steward of our environment. Goes hand in hand with being a good steward of our communities. This belief has led her to pursue a career in politics and policy, and she is excited to represent. One time for Shannen.

[music playing]

All right. Coming on down we got Gabriel Nagle. He is 18 from Colorado. And Gabriel was exposed to climate change when a wildfire hurt his local community. Gabriel committed to -- Gabriel is committed to fighting for environmental justice. And he's a Filipino American. Come on now. And he seeks to amplify diverse voices and ensure that the climate action is inclusive and effective at all levels. Please welcome Gabriel Nagel.

[applause]

[music playing]

Now she's from Washington, D.C., and she is 25 years old. That's Kiera O'Brien. Born and raised on an island. Her interest in the environment was defined by time spent outdoors in nature, hiking, fishing and with her family. When she went to college, she spearheaded the creation of a bipartisan nonprofit called student for Carbon Dividends. Now working on the renewable energy in the private sector, Kiera is excited to join the NIAC because she believes an intergenerational dialog is essential to effectively tackling climate change. Come on down. Kiera O'Brien.

[music playing]

Next from Illinois. She's 24 years old. Her name is Lisette Perez. As a Mexican American from the south side of Chicago, Lisette witnessed the challenges and disparities that marginalized communities face in terms of environmental justice, equitable access to parks, and environmental education. She's inspired by the legacy of Hazel Johnson, the mother of environmental movement. Lisette will bring the unique perspective of inner city youth of color to the NIAC to ensure communities like hers are represented in important environmental justice conversations. Well done, Lisette Perez.

[music playing]

You guys may want to do karaoke, but I'll keep going. Page C -- excuse me, I'm skipping someone. Sorry. Asada Rashidi, she is 22, from New Jersey.

[applause]

Growing up in New York with a quarter of children -- where a quarter of children, including her two brothers, battle asthma due to poor air quality from industrial activities and diesel trucks, Asada realized the profound impact that the environment can have on our health. She is committed to raising awareness, empowering her community and ensuring their voices are heard nationally. Asada is looking forward to crafting fresh, inclusive solutions on the NIAC to paint a greener and more equitable future.

[music playing]

Welcoming Asada Rashidi.

Now, I don't want to get this wrong, but please don't be mad if I get it wrong, okay? Odisiginor? Did I get the right? Osasenaga. Come on down Osasenaga. Come on down. Now, Mister Idahor is 20 from Massachusetts. He became aware of the environmental health disparities which were disproportionately affecting his community while he hosts a podcast. You guys got a stream it. It is on all platforms, right? Okay, got two. It's called the Climate Doctor no MD. To communicate scientific information in an accessible way. Mr. Idahor is excited to use his skills and life experiences to help the NIAC address environmental health communication at EPA. Welcome to state [unintelligible].

[music playing]

[applause]

And last. I do not believe that she is in the building, but we still want to show her some love, whether she streaming online or she – oh, you are here! Come on. You're here. Last but not least, we have Sophia Kiani, 21, putting on for Virginia.

[applause]

That's what the Page. Oh, I skipped you Page. Sorry. My bad page. Page Tsirigotis come on down. She is 19, from North Carolina. Coming from a family that was concerned with environmental issues, she realized at an early age that the environmental stability is the basis of our future as a planet. As a psychology major, she's excited to bring a psychological context to the NIAC to address the environmental changes in our communities. Page believes that it is essential to understand the emotions, motivations, and beliefs driving people stances on environmental issues. Cannot forget Page Tsirigotis.

[music playing]

Tsirigotis. I got it. Thank you, thank you. And we can not forget Sophia Kiani. Like I said, she's not here today, but she is 21, from Virginia. And after witnessing disastrous environmental impacts of pollution in Iran, her family's own country, Sophia was inspired to get involved in the environmental work. During her senior year in high school, she founded the Climate Cardinals, the largest youth led climate nonprofit in the world. Wow. Sophia is eager to contribute to the diversity of the NIAC and is excited to use her voice to ensure policies better serve the communities worst impacted by climate change. She can't be here but make some noise for Sophia Kiani.

[music playing]

And with that, I think it's right that we give a round of applause to these great folks right here.

[applause]

Okay, now, I think you guys have to stick around because I have to bring the Administrator Regan to the stage. Can we do that? All right, so he wants to introduce these folks here. He wants to show them lots of love because he is the first black man and the second person of color to lead in the U.S. EPA.

[applause]

Yeah, definitely cheers to that. He is a native of North Carolina, where he has developed his passion for the environment while hunting and fishing with his father. I believe it's Aggie Pride. NCAT is where he went. Of course, down there in North Carolina. He is a son of two public servants and prior to his nomination as the EPA administrator, Michael Regan served as a secretary of North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality. We are so excited to have him here today. Please welcome the environmental -- the EPA administrator Michael Regan.

[applause]

Administrator Regan:

Hello, everybody. Let’s give it up for a Little Bacon Bear.

[applause]

I have $0 in my pocket, so stay focused on her.

[laughter]

Listen, I'll be really quick. I just want to do two things. The first thing is, I want to express my gratitude to these individuals on the stage and those who couldn't be with us. The President and I are extremely excited to have the youth voice at the table with cemented seats. This NIAC that we've set up will be here long after we are. And we believe that youthful voices deserve a seat at the table permanently. So, as we tackle the climate crisis, as we think about environmental justice, as we think about equity, inclusion. As we think about the impact on our mental health, these young people will be advising me and this cabinet on how we approach these very serious issues. So first thing is to say thank you all for dedicating your time and attention to this.

[applause]

The second thing is what all young people require, which is a break for a selfie. So we're going to do a selfie real quick.

[laughter]

And then we're going to take a break. Thank you all.

[music playing]

Little Bacon Bear:

We have to get a selfie. Hold on. Can I get everybody on their feet right, fast. We got to get in a selfie. So let's get our good side. Can we do that? Or at least get a good smile, at least. All right, count us down, boss. Count us down. Three, two, one, cheese!

You looked great in that one. I know you did. Thank you, my NIAC folks. I can't wait to meet all you guys in person. We got to be friends now. You got great song selections and great fits. Great fits all the way around.

Can we get another round of applause from my committee here?

[music playing]

Alright. So I'm going to get over here because they told me to get over here. I had to get out of the way as we reset for the next thing, but, it sounds like I didn't give away enough money. I did hear that. Can we give away some more of that? Can we do some more challenges? You got your sound effects ready for him? Because I want to hand out a better L. Okay.

DJ Heat:

I'm confident this time.

Little Bacon Bear:

You're confident?

DJ Heat:

Yeah. I'm confident.

Little Bacon Bear:

Well, because I broke the seal on it. I mean, it kind of hurt a little bit. Honestly. I saw the hurt on some faces. It might [unintelligible] from LA.

DJ Heat:

I know. I was confident in April. But it's okay.

Little Bacon Bear:

That's okay. She is in DC for real.

DJ Heat:

I know she raising a roof.

Little Bacon Bear:

Okay. Let's see if we can redeem ourselves in this one right here. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Who's next? Are you pointed to somebody. Who'd you pick?

Male Speaker:

I picked Chloe.

Little Bacon Bear:

Chloe. Who’s Chloe? You're Chloe. Hey, Chloe. Okay. I'm picking you. Where are you from? Virginia. Well, that's the first rule of the game. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses, but I'll let you go, ah Virginia. Oh, man. Okay. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you give me five artists that are married? Artists or musicians. Or you could have to be either or.

DJ Heat:

She was technical.

Little Bacon Bear:

Well she was just trying to save some time. She's trying to drag it out.

DJ Heat:

Oh. Oh, okay.

[laughter]

Little Bacon Bear:

Jay-Z. Beyonce. Well.

[laughter]

DJ Heat:

I mean.

Little Bacon Bear:

Aren't they married to each other? Can we give It -- just give her an L. Just give her an L.

DJ Heat:

Really?

[laughter]

Little Bacon Bear:

I mean, they're married to each other. I feel like that was kind of a cheat code. I don't know. Okay. Does anybody want to redeem it for her maybe? Fix it. Right there in the back. Where you from? Yeah, in the blue and the blue shirt. You put your hand. Yeah. Yeah you. One more time. Florina, where are you from?

Female Speaker:

Fairfax, Virginia.

Little Bacon Bear:

Ah, Fairfax, Virginia. Let's just get all these ahs out right now, okay? Here we go. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. I'm going to sit right here for this one. Oh, God. Can you give me five sports that are played with a ball? Okay. Oh my God. Oh my gosh. At this point, I'm just I'm just I could just keep it.

[music playing]

Shit. Are they just too easy or are they just too easy? Did you think you were coming to talk about the environment or like, climate or something you didn't expect, like a challenge? Oh, I can understand that. Okay. One more. He said Owell [spelled phonetically]. Owell. Yeah. We can have a good time. Nah, nah, nah. We can’t have a good time. I came for a good time. Maybe you have a good answer though, since you spoke up. Here we go. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Give me five cartoons I can find on Cartoon Network right now. I don't know.

DJ Heat:

Oh, he just straight up said.

Little Bacon Bear:

Well’s that's not a bad thing. Can you name five books?

DJ Heat:

Ooh.

Little Bacon Bear:

Ah oh. Okay. Okay. No pressure. No pressure. Do you think you're still thinking what you keep thinking? And I'll move on and I'll come back. How about that? Okay, let me go more into the back. I haven't been on this side at all. I did not show love over here. Okay? Right there with long hair in a shirt that says something I can't read from here. It is blue. Defend our climate. That's right. That's a good message. What’s your name? What's your name?

Male Speaker:

What?

DJ Heat:

Wow.

Little Bacon Bear:

Jake. Jake, where you from? Don't count that.

Male Speaker:

[unintelligible]

DJ Heat:

Why is everyone so unsure about where they're from.

[laughter]

Little Bacon Bear:

Right? I thought. Okay. That's fine. Okay. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you spell Pacific like the ocean?

Male Speaker:

P-A-C-I-F-I-C.

Little Bacon Bear:

Oh my gosh. They can spell. So trivia is not so good but spelling is good. So I'm right there. And I got Devante’s money too. Okay I didn't forget. All right. Anybody else want to go? All right. Back there, back there, back there. What's your name? Yes, you. Siam [spelled phonetically] where are you from? You're from Laurel also. That's your friend. So you lose like your friend. Are you better at this? Okay. All right. This is my favorite question five. Okay. This is my favorite one. Can you give me. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Got to say that. Three state capitals.

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

I wasn't sure, so. Yeah. Okay.

DJ Heat:

Sounds right to me.

Little Bacon Bear:

That's three down. I think I can get two more, and then I think I can get out of the way. Okay, way there in the back. What's your name, yes you? Ashley. Round of applause for Ashley. Takes a lot to be, you know, in the back and still have some, yeah. What have you got? Yeah. See what -- I thought if I rephrased it, that would help and it did not help. So she's from Virginia also. Okay. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Who has the worst drivers? Virginia. Just kidding.

[music playing]

DJ Heat:

Virginia is where you from.

Little Bacon Bear:

It’s definitely Virginia. You guys are the worst drivers. That's okay. No harm, no foul. I said -- I heard a lot of debate about that. They said they're better drivers. That's fine. It's okay. I'm a Maryland driver and we drive great. He said what? Okay. No, no, no driving beefs here. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you name five animals with fur.

Okay a dog. A cat. Oh my gosh. I just thought that was so easy. Right? That was so easy. Jesus. There going to have me up here doing comedy here soon because I guess vacant challenges are not the strong suit. Just one more. Oh, gosh. And now I'm getting more hands. Because now you're just getting more excited because you think you got better answers to the next thing. You don't. Right here in the stripes. Where are you from? Maryland. Rondo plus for Maryland woo!

[applause]

Oh, man. Okay, what do I got for you guys? No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you give me five planets? Wait, wait, wait. You said Venus. Okay. Sorry. I thought you said my elbow like my weenus thing. Okay. All right. Venus and Saturn. That's five. Give me six. Okay. He knows all the planets. Okay, I got him. Okay, okay. No pressure, no pressure. Oh, okay. All right, all right. Well, I think I got all my all my money's given away. I think I got all my money’s given away. So I think for that -- who is from D.C. proper? Who's from D.C.? You're from D.C. You're from D.C. for real?

Well, that's complicated. She said she wasn't born here, but she lives here forever. Does that. Does it count? I'm looking for someone from D.C. proper. I'm so sorry. I'm just looking for someone specifically from D.C. Miss Avery, I had you. I had you, okay. Right here. You. What's your name? Lalo. All right. Lalo's from D.C. I'm going to get him out really, really, really easily. Okay. We have lots of monuments in D.C. I think we have more than like anyone else in the world or some other crazy stat. But can you tell me where the big chair is? The big chair at the capital. No, no, no. I thought you said you were from D.C.

DJ Heat:

But Miss April back there, like I know this one.

Little Bacon Bear:

That's okay. No. No harm, no foul, no harm, no foul. Does anybody know where it is? Just shout it out if you know it. What? Oh my gosh.

DJ Heat:

I heard ten different --.

Little Bacon Bear:

Duke Ellington, they do have a chair. They do have a giant chair. I would have taken that. But what I meant was. Thank you Anacostia. Thank you. Right there, right there, right there. Okay. All right. Anybody else want to try before I move on about my dad? Anybody else in here? Any final takers? I’m seeing more hands. Right there with your hand up with your straight hair. Yes. Is it red hair? Yes you. Hey! Hey, Zoe. Where are you from?

She's of Dallas, Texas. Whoa! Texas. I got kicked out of camp in Texas. So I can only, like, you know, I got to be nice to Texas. I'll tell you about that story later. Okay. Here we go. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Are you from Houston at all? Doesn't matter. Okay. Here. Can you give me three artists from -- rap artists from the state of Texas? You have so many.

DJ Heat:

Ooh.

Little Bacon Bear:

Travis Scott. What about? Eh. Come on. Real hot girl. Oh, Megan. And then. Jeeze okay. This is tough. You can't name three artists in Texas. Travi, Megan, because you -- because I gave it to you. And maybe BumBee. She said who? Okay. All right. She's lost. She's lost. I'm starting to sweat for them right now at this point. Honestly. I should just give it up.

DJ Heat:

No.

Little Bacon Bear:

Okay.

[Cross talk]

Little Bacon Bear:

One more. [unintelligible]. This will be my absolute hardest one I could possibly think of. Okay, I pick you right here in the front. What's your name? Alexa. Alexa, can you turn on some music? No, I'm just kidding. Alexa, where are you from?

Female Speaker:

New Jersey.

Little Bacon Bear:

Oh, boy. Ooh, okay. You're from New Jersey. You know who else is from new Jersey? Joe Budden. Can you name three Joe Budden songs?

DJ Heat:

Wait. Wait. Wait.

Little Bacon Bear:

No, I'm just kidding. He can't do it either. No. No pressure, no pressure. That's okay. That was that was a crazy setup. Okay. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you give me three colors of the train lines here in the metro? Okay. Which direction do those go? Which way does Red go? Well, it only goes in a U so that's how I would know if you knew. Yeah, but it goes like this is what I'm trying to. I'm just trying to get you out. Round of applause for Alexa.

[applause]

Oh, man, I'm about to lose all my money. I didn't tell you how much was in my pocket yet, but you know. Okay. All right, that's fine. Can I give one more?

DJ Heat:

Let's do it.

Little Bacon Bear:

I could do this really all day. I'm really a lot of fun on a first date just because of this alone. Where have I not picked? I like her hand because it's so strong and she thinks she's going to get it right, and I feel like she might get it right. Yes you. She's now she's unsure. It's crazy. Right there in the red. Is it a red sleeve – no you just put your hand. You! Yes, you! Hey, what's your name?

Female Speaker:

Charlotte.

Little Bacon Bear:

Charlotte. Kentucky. All right. Charlotte from Kentucky. From Appalachia at all?

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

Okay. Just curious. No ums, no ahs, no long pauses. Can you give me five types of chips.

Female Speaker:

Barbeque.

Little Bacon Bear:

Yup.

Female Speaker:

Sour Cream and Onion. Chedder.

Little Bacon Bear:

She knows something.

Female Speaker:

[unintelligible]

Little Bacon Bear:

She knows a lot about ships.

[applause]

DJ Heat:

All right.

Little Bacon Bear:

She could have kept going if I let her. I'm not going to lie. She could have kept going if I let her. All right. Well DJ Heat.

DJ Heat:

Yes.

Little Bacon Bear:

I think we can do the honors here in just a minute.

DJ Heat:

Okay.

Little Bacon Bear:

But can we play something for the East Coast folks? Right quick.

DJ Heat:

For the East Coast folks real quick.

Little Bacon Bear:

I’m going to see the East Coast. I'm going to put a DJ challenge on. What do you think is more [unintelligible] the east or west coast? The more south, you know.

DJ Heat:

The East or the West coast.

Little Bacon Bear:

Is it Westard. Westard! Okay. Well, let's just see. Let's just try.

DJ Heat:

Alright.

Little Bacon Bear:

Let's just see which way is more turnt. I already got my best idea, but let's see.

DJ Heat:

Okay, play.

Little Bacon Bear:

Play some for us.

[music playing]

That's East Coast.

DJ Heat:

That’s East Coast.

Little Bacon Bear:

I can't do this dance, though. Can anybody do that?

DJ Heat:

Mc. Make another hint.

Little Bacon Bear:

Anybody. You got it. You got it. Let's see it. Let's see it, let's see it, let's go. Let's go! Yeah, yeah, yeah. All right, all right, all right, all right, all right. He put off for Philly. You did something. Where are you from?

Male Speaker:

Oregon.

Little Bacon Bear:

Oregon.

[laughter]

Well, now just I'm just all confused at this point. Okay, so he ripped for the West and then went. That's cool. What else you got? Let's see. Let's see. Ah, really West Side. Really West Side. Anybody put for the West. Anybody from L.A.? Let me see it then. You can put a walk on the floor.

[music playing]

Snoop Dog! Okay, okay, okay. All right, cut that, cut that. You know what? I have an idea.

DJ Heat:

Okay.

Little Bacon Bear:

Everybody is excited to rap and excited to make music until it comes time to do that, right?

DJ Heat:

Yes.

Little Bacon Bear:

Or everybody's excited for karaoke until it's, like, turned on them, right?

DJ Heat:

Yeah.

Little Bacon Bear:

So play a song. Don't play a song. Never mind. We’re not going to make nobody sing. Not going to make anybody sing because we got to keep this program moving just a little.

DJ Heat:

Let’s get it.

Little Bacon Bear:

I want to bring to the stage. Next up, he is a trailblazer. He has worked tirelessly to engage young Americans on the issues that are most important to them. Senator Bernie Sanders has been a leader in the Senate on so many important issues, especially his work to protect our environment. Senator Sanders -- Senator Sanders has brought so many young people to the political process, and we are excited to have him here today to speak to us. Please welcome Senator Bernie Sanders.

[applause]

[music playing]

Senator Bernie Sanders:

Well, thank you very much. And let me thank Little Bacon Bear for that introduction.

[laughter]

I don't have to tell anybody here today that these are tough times for our country, tough times for the world, tough times for the planets. And what we are here today to understand is that if we do not work together ceaselessly and boldly, there ain't going to be much of a planet left for your generation and your kids and your grandchildren. So loudly and clearly, I'm not a good singer. I'm not going to sing. But what I am going to tell you is we got to stand up. We got to fight. We have to tell the fossil fuel industry that their short-term profits are not more important than the future of this planet.

[applause]

Now you all know what's going on, and you don't have to be a scientist to understand it. You have to have eyes and ears. To see it and to hear. What we saw just last summer was the warmest summer in the history of record keeping. What we saw in Canada, not far from where I live, terrible forest fires. Uncontrolled forest fires. And here in D.C., I remember walking the streets, breathing this disgusting air. And you had the same thing in the West Coast. In my small state of Vermont, we had the worst natural disaster, the worst flooding that we've had in almost a hundred years. Thousands of homes were damaged. Small businesses destroyed. You all know the terrible fire that took place in Hawaii killed over 100 people. In China, a million and a half people were displaced from their homes, million and a half people because of the flooding in Iran. They had to bring down the government, shut the government because the temperature was over 120 degrees.

And it's not going to get any better unless we bring the world together to demand a major, major reduction in carbon emissions. And I was very pleased to see that President Biden just met with President XI of China, in what apparently was a productive meeting, because if we do not work with China right now, is the major carbon emitter in the world, we are number two. We were number one for many years. If our two countries do not work together, we're not going to succeed in addressing the climate crisis.

Now, I'm telling you a lot of bad news of what will happen if we do not act aggressively. Let me tell you the good news. And despite what people are saying, if we move toward a green economy, we are going to create millions of good paying jobs for you and your friends. That's what we can do.

[applause]

And we're beginning to see that. We understand that sustainable energy is the future for our economy. We need solar all across this country. And I'm very proud to work with Administrator Regan, who's going to be up here in a minute. The head of the EPA on a program which will provide millions of households in this country the ability to put solar panels on their rooftops.

[applause]

And more and more, we want to build that solar in this country. We need workers to do that. We need workers to install the solar. We need workers to work on wind and other forms of sustainable energy. So, anyone who tells you that moving to a green economy is bad for workers, I don't think is being accurate about that. But the bottom line right now is that climate change is an existential threat to our planet. It impacts not just the United States, but every other country on Earth. And in fact, tragically, it impacts some of the poorest countries in southern Africa even more, who had nothing to do with carbon emissions and creating this crisis. So right now, all over the world, in poor countries, Latin America, Africa, you're seeing people unable to grow their crops because of drought, unable to stay on their land because there is no clean water to drink or for irrigation. And they have to leave. Their migrating. You see, an increase in disease.

So, these are tough, tough issues. But I absolutely believe is that if we bring this world together, I mean, the positive aspect of this, is this is a crisis which can and must bring the world together instead of investing in war and guns and planes. Maybe we invest in sustainable energy so that all of the children of the world have a chance to live good lives. So, with that, let me just thank you. And thank the administrator for forming the National Environmental Youth Advisory Council. We need your help. All right. You're going to be there with us.

[applause]

We need your ideas. We need your ability to communicate with other young people on this issue. So, I want to thank all of you for being here. I want to thank Administrator Regan for the great work that he is doing. And without further ado, let me introduce to you our outstanding EPA administrator, Michael Regan. Thank you.

[applause]

[music playing]

Administrator Regan:

All right. Give it up for Bernie Sanders. You know, I'm really grateful for his friendship and partnership. Senator Sanders has done so much to mobilize young people, get young people involved in what we're doing, and it's near and dear to my heart that he's focused his efforts on climate change. He's not shy about it. He has big dreams and big goals. True story. The first time I ever spoke to Senator Sanders, he called me up. No warning, and I answered the phone, and he said, Michael, I read your bio. I think you're qualified.

[laughter]

And we need to spend about $10 billion to put solar roofs on every American's home. Just four months ago, I was in Vermont and he and I announced a $7 billion program solar for all.

[applause]

So, he has big dreams, big visions. But more importantly, Senator Sanders always delivers. It is now my pleasure to introduce Miss Sheila Matthews, our moderator for today's fireside chat. Sheila is an on-camera host and digital producer at Andscape, a black led media platform dedicated to creating, highlighting and uplifting the diverse stories of black identity. Part of the Disney network, Andscape is united by the shared mission of illuminating black culture. Sheila previously worked for the KIPP Foundation and as a proud HBC graduate -- HBCU graduate of Bowie State. I can't wait to get this conversation started. So everyone, please help me give a warm welcome to Ms. Sheila Matthews.

[applause]

[music playing]

Sheila Matthews:

All right. Well hello, everyone. Hi. I'm so excited to share in conversation with you all today. We have some special guests are going to join us a bit later, but for now, Administrator Regan, so good to sit down with you.

Administrator Regan:

It's good to sit down with you too.

Sheila Matthews:

I'm so excited. It's always great to share a space with people who are conscious of things that need to happen in this nation, and specifically put the youth first in those conversations, and also fellow HBCU grads. So I'm excited to get to know you a bit more on these questions.

Okay, so something that I think we can all appreciate here is that you have put youth engagement as a focus of your tenure. So I want to know some more about why it's critical to bring youth to the table to discuss these pressing environmental challenges.

Administrator Regan:

Well, it's a great question. And Senator Sanders sort of touched on it, which is we need them. We need that voice. We need Gen Z, we need the Millennials. You know, I've traveled all across this country, maybe 35, 36 states. I've been to 11 different countries internationally. And at every stop, there are young people voicing their opinions, wanting a seat at the table, bringing a ton of different solutions. And so instead of having these passing conversations, we thought we needed to memorialize their voice. This is the first time EPA has ever done this, and I think it's the first time the federal government has really focused the youthful voice towards the environment. You know, starting with climate change, but going through environmental justice, equity and inclusion. And so I am really, really, really excited about this council.

Sheila Matthews:

Absolutely. I think everyone here is excited as well. Yeah.

[applause]

So talk to us more about how you envision working alongside the NIAC Council members.

Administrator Regan:

Yeah, I think that word alongside is so important. Partners, side by side, sleeves rolled up, getting the work done. You know, as I mentioned, we have climate change, environmental justice, plastic prevention, recycling, conservation. And we really have to bridge that divide between our rural and urban communities. We really need to focus on just, so many issues clean air, clean water. And so my plan is, number one, we have to walk and chew gum at the same time. So, we have to tackle all of these. But I want to get their perspective on which of these they would like to prioritize and partner with us on first. I know climate change and environmental justice is high on their agenda, but there are some others that they've expressed interest in. So at the first meeting, we'll sit down, we'll pull out our pens and paper, and we'll figure out exactly how we're going to tackle this from now through hopefully the end of time.

Sheila Matthews:

Absolutely. Well, staying in the spirit of alongside and welcoming and partnering, I heard with some special guests who are ready to join us in this conversation.

Administrator Regan:

I think we do.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah. If you could all give it up for our youth leaders. Saad Amir [spelled phonetically], founder of Injustice Environment. Ariel King [spelled phonetically], host of the Joy Report. And Alex Brabender [spelled phonetically], regenerative finance professional. Welcome to the stage.

[applause]

All right. Welcome y'all. I'm so excited to get this conversation going. So, I've had the pleasure of getting to know them more through zoom calls and just backstage over the course of these weeks. But now it's time for you all to get to know some more about them. So, share with us what initially sparked your passion for protecting the environment, and what has continued to motivate you to get into the environmental field in. And Alex, we can start you.

Alex Brabender:

Happy too. Yeah. It's a great question. I mean, what motivated me, I think, or what motivates me is this hypothetical conversation that I have in my head down the line where I'm, you know, the next generation or even my theoretical children ask me, you know, in relation to climate change, knowing what you knew at the time, what did you do? And I really want to, you know, avoid that. I want to have a good answer to that question. And I don't know if you guys make major life decisions based on avoiding awkward conversations, but I do.

[laughter]

And as -- yeah, you know my background, I, you know, grew up in Southern California and was fortunate enough to really fall in love with our natural world by camping, backpacking, hiking, whatnot. But I had a few “ah ha” moments along the way, and one big “ah ha” for me was understanding that my friends and family, while, you know, they were voting and participating, they were doing something that was totally undermining all of their values, and that was the way that their -- they saved their money or they invested. And a lot of people don't know that, you know, their retirement account, you know, their 401K or their IRA is actually actively undermining their ability to retire into, you know, sustainable future.

And so, I wanted to kind of build that, or just find ways in which, Americans in particular could invest their money, in alignment with their values, especially, in ways that they could be stewards of the Earth. And I guess what renews my passion these days is just conversations like this, with, people that have, you know, solutions that are way different than mine, ideas that are way different of mine. And just I get invigorated by those kind of talks. So thanks, guys.

[applause]

Ariel King:

Good afternoon everyone. I'm originally from upstate New York in New York State's capital. It's Albany, not New York City, for those who aren't familiar. And I'm specifically from the south end of Albany, which is a nature deprived area with a severe amount of environmental burdens. So, I knew what environmental injustice was before I understood the concepts and the movement that is environmental justice. And from there I had -- I was very fortunate to have parents who brought me out to nature and mentors who made it their mission to help young people cultivate a love and appreciation for the outdoors. And so, you know, through summer camps and programs, I had the opportunity to learn very early that one of my main purposes on this planet was to encourage other people to understand the value and beauty of this planet, and to commit my life to environmental protection and the protection of people and planet simultaneously, recognizing that we can't do one without the other. And so continually, that is my focus. That is what propels me through this work. And I believe that if we continue to invest in environmental education early and creating access and pathways for young people to cultivate their own love for this planet, then it'll make it a lot easier for us to all commit to climate action moving forward.

Administrator Regan:

That's awesome.

[applause]:

Saad Amir:

Hi, everybody. Thank you so much for having me. My name is Saad Amir. I'm a climate activist and the founder of Justice Environment, which is a social impact consultancy that focuses on climate change and navigating the just transition. I work as a consultant to the United Nations and do a lot of activism in organizing around democracy, and in particular, getting young people and people of color out to vote.

My journey starts so much from my background. My family's from Pakistan and there are such disproportionate impacts of the climate crisis to so many black and brown communities. Yes, here in the United States, but also all around the world. And, you know, one thing that really stood out to me was when I started my organizing work when I was in high school -- I grew up on Long Island. I created a 100 acre land preserve and an organization around it with a bunch of my friends back in my high school days. You know, but when I went to Pakistan, I just saw how the infrastructure was -- I remember this one particular story. Where there, I was taking some photos at a waterway that was just absolutely littered and covered with a dump, essentially. And while I was there taking photos, I saw a wooden cart drawn forward by two school age children who must have been a ten years old, during school hours. So really seeing how this is an intersectional issue of these people of color across the world having products that are largely from companies centered here, having all of that goes straight into their waterways, polluting their water resources and being drawn by children. And I think a lot of those issues, while we might see them as something of the developing world, they have exact parallels here. And there's a lot of effort that we need to take and improve to include clean air and clean water here as well. And the EPA is doing a lot of great work to do that. But so much of my work centers around those communities and really trying to represent our voices and, you know, just trying to trying to bring forward climate justice and center that in these conversations about climate change.

Administrator Regan:

Yeah.

Sheila Matthews:

Wow.

[applause]

Well, thank you all for such passionate and thorough answers. I love the personal experience that ties into your why. So, Alex, my question is for you. Why do you think -- what do you think are the most effective ways to communicate about climate change and environmental protection to youth? And additionally, how can we ensure that they feel heard, inspired and empowered to take action?

Alex Brabender:

Yeah. Communication. So, you know, in a lot of ways, young people have been barred from contributing to the, you know, our collective vision. A lot of, you know, we have fewer resources at our disposal for the many reasons there. But they've manifested in a lot of unhealthy ways, whether we feel disconnected, disempowered, disengaged.

I think that, you know, I often say that climate change and environmental protection isn't so much of a political issue anymore. It's more of a generational issue with the overwhelming majority of young people are already on board with climate action, regardless of their political, party affiliation or their ideology. I'll -- everyone can coalesce. There's a coalition of young people that are already willing to mobilize around this issue. And, what I wanted to touch on was, one of the ways in which young people can actually change their messaging, their way of communicating to inspire others more and to mobilize around these issues. And I think that's one where we tie climate action as an American obligation. And what I mean by this is that, climate change, as we've heard, is really a threat to our constitutional freedoms, to life, liberty and property, the pursuit of happiness. And to really nail down that messaging there so that people can perk their ears up where they would otherwise not be so enthused about, you know, just the environmental protection for environmental protection sake or the economic arguments that, surround the issue.

You need to, you know, more engage the pathos and engage [foreign language]. If you want, if you want to touch the heart and the why and messaging is really about why. Like, what -- why do we do what we do? And what does it mean to be an American? And what does it mean to be a citizen? And this is what we should be really nailing down here. And one more point, and I'm blanking on it, but, I was going to say -- I'll come back to it. I’m good.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah. We'll come back to it. Something else that we discussed previously to this was how important words are, and that words have power. And we know that when it comes to the climate crisis, this is nothing that we can close our eyes at and it goes away. Ultimately, it will continue. And if we don't take action, it will ultimately get worse. So, Ariel, my question is for you. How do you see the climate conversation evolving over the next 5 to 10 years? And what role do you think all these wonderful young people will play in shaping and driving that conversation over time?

Ariel King:

Sure. I believe that the future of the climate movement is, you know, in this room. It is all of the young people who are so unabashed and unapologetic about their passion and commitment to creating a just climate future. I believe that in the next 5 to 10 years, we'll all be a part of the workforce. If you're in high school now, you'll you know, you'll be starting at your first jobs. And in that time, I hope that every job considers climate. I hope that we have a very intentional, intersectional approach to climate action and climate solutions. And in doing so, we are creating just new opportunities to have conversations about climate that are not siloed. We're not only talking to environmentalist about why we need to preserve and protect the planet. I believe that we have to lead with love. We have to lead with truth, and we need to lead with fact. And so in doing so, we have to make sure that everyone is grounded in the same principles. You know, the principles of environmental justice, for example, that were created in 1992, they still ring very true. And I believe that if you don't know them, you should all, you know, Google the 17 Principles of Environmental justice because so many of them are just so relevant today. And if our workforce and our climate work was more guided by those principles, we would be in a very different situation right now. And so I would love to see, and I hope to see, a more just focused future for, for everyone. So yeah.

[applause]

Sheila Matthews:

And I love that answer. So now Saad. I need your perspective. Your question is, how can we ensure that solutions to climate change are also addressing other pressing issues of the environmental justice, equity and civil rights?

Saad Amir:

Yeah. I mean, well, I first like to ask everybody here, raise your hand if you've ever been to a climate strike. All right. Okay, I see you.

Sheila Matthews:

Love that.

Saad Amir:

Yeah. And that's what gives me so much hope right now, in this moment is when we talk about all of these intersectional issues, when we talk about intergenerational climate action, it's right here in this room, right? When I think about how fast things are suddenly changing. You know, I started my work, when I was in high school, and at the time, it was sort of like, who's this weird brown kid in the forest? You know, they were like, is that Mowgli from The Jungle Book?

[laughter]

You know, I've now since been upgraded to Aladdin.

[laughter]

But, you know, I think we've come such a far away because back then, the discussions very much centered around global warming. Is it real? Is it not real? And, you know, you would sort of see these panels on TV of, of a climate scientist or Bill Nye and, love Bill Nye, and a full blown climate denier and presenting it as if this was a 50/50 scenario.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah.

Saad Amir:

Right. And that's just not the case. The science is clear. The evidence is there. It's been there. And since then, you know, I've been doing this work now for a majority of my life. And since then, the climate crisis has only gotten worse and worse and worse. Our emissions have gone up and up and up, and we keep seeing these massive, massive climate disasters unfold all around the world. And in particular, they impact black communities, brown communities, people of color, the LGBTQ, women disproportionately. And the current climate movement is led by those exact groups.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah.

Saad Amir:

And that's what gives me so much hope and faith is that the reason why these days we center issues of equity and justice and inclusion in so many ways is because the voice of activists. Is because of the rallying cries of the people in this very room who take to the streets and unrelentingly for years, continue to organize again and again and again.

And to be honest, that's the reason why we're seeing the launch of things like this here today, because of the spirit and knowledge and intelligence that young people are bringing straight forward into the climate movement. And when I think about issues of equity and justice and inclusion, we can't solve the climate crisis without centering those things, right. When I think about the future of climate policy and climate action, there's sort of two ways that we can go about it. We're going to have to deal with it no matter what, right? Like we see these storms, we see these floods. We can wait until they're already here or we can take action right now. Say we decide to take action right now.

We fully have the ability to fix issues of inequity. We have the ability to ensure that people of color who have been marginalized throughout so much of history, are brought to the forefront. We have the ability to fix economic issues, to fix issues of clean air, water, land, health, all of those things we can address. Or we can exist in a system where all of those problems get worse, where the rich get richer and communities like ours are continued to be forgotten.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah.

Saad Amir:

And so I want to remind everybody here how pivotal and how essential it is to center environmental justice in the work that you're doing. And I know that the EPA is doing a lot of this as well, because if we don't address that, then what are we addressing? So, you know, I know that a lot of you have been out to a lot of climate strikes. What do we want?

Sheila Matthews:

Climate justice.

Saad Amir:

When do we want it?

Sheila Matthews:

Now.

Saad Amir:

What do we want?

Sheila Matthews:

Climate justice.

Saad Amir:

When do we want it?

Sheila Matthews:

Now.

Saad Amir:

That's what I want. Hello.

[laughter]

[applause]

Sheila Matthews:

I love how you brought in the aspect of community and how important community is and how we all play a part. So, my question to the group and Mr. Regan, you included, we'll start with you, Alex. So, my question is, how can we raise awareness about environmental issues within our communities?

Alex Brabender:

Yeah, I'm a big proponent of grassroots activities and local action. And, ironically, I'm going to advise for you all to avoid rooms like this. You know mean, that means we're going to not be in rooms where people are like minded or share kindred spirits. We want to find people who we disagree with that are like, you know, climate skeptics, climate -- or just moderate on the issue or, you know, even allies, but you don't agree with everything. And then they need to mobilize more, seek out those conversations with good faith and understanding. Especially love, I think is a very, good part of that. And yeah, just, I think one way in which we can increase awareness is by getting outside of our bubble, getting ourselves a little bit more uncomfortable and not preaching to choirs.

Sheila Matthews:

Totally. Yeah.

[applause]

Oh yes.

Ariel King:

I think another way that we can support our communities is funding. I think hearing about the fact that, you know, all of the climate movement right now is led by a more diverse group of people than it ever has been. However, philanthropic dollars are not being properly distributed to those groups that are led by Bipoc, that are led by young people. That's a problem. And that's, one of the huge ways that we could ensure that the communities who are being most affected by climate change are able to tell their own stories. I think it's always important to create opportunities for those who are impacted first, in words, to be able to tell their own stories.

And I think that this advisory council is so exciting and so important because you all come from communities where you are experiencing some of the worst, most catastrophic impacts of the climate crisis. And, you know people, these are your homes. And so, as always, it's important to listen to people. It's important to ask questions and not believe that you are the expert. Right. Always go in with an air of wanting to know more, wanting to be benevolent with your time and with your understanding. Using your skills and adding to whatever grassroots organizing is already happening in a space and not taking over, or even, you know, helicoptering in and believing that you have all the answers, all the solutions.

And so those are definitely some ways, I think also just investing in environmental education will be so crucial. There are so many states now that are starting to require climate and environmental education. And I think that we should be using those models everywhere. Like I said before, if we are creating a habit of, you know, environmental protection and intersectional environmental education, then it's, you don't have to explain it later. And so, yeah, that's some of the ways that we can go about that.

Alex Brabender:

Yeah.

[applause]

Saad Amir:

No, I think that's absolutely true. And it is that community building and that participation that helps build a movement. You know, movements don't move on their own.

Ariel King:

Right.

Saad Amir:

It takes momentum. And that momentum comes from us. We are that movement. And when I think about one of the most important ways to make change, right, what I think we often hear about from environmental groups or in school or on TV is like, “do you use a reusable water bottle?” Have you stopped using plastic straws? You know, and that's all fine and good. And we need to make those changes in our society. But one of the things, one of the solutions that I think we need to fundamentally center in the climate justice movement is democracy.

Ariel King:

Yes.

Saad Amir:

We have to center how important it is to get out and vote, because when we often talk about these large scale changes. Yeah.

[applause]

If we want to see these large scale systemic changes on our infrastructure, on our water systems, on clean air, on climate justice, we have to make sure we're getting out to the polls. And so many of the initiatives that we're seeing right now taking place, including the launch of this council, is because of the way that people voted in 2020.

Sheila Matthews:

Right.

[applause]

Saad Amir:

And when I think about how important voting is, it's not just like you physically getting out and voting right. Like I recognize. I'm in Washington, D.C., surrounded by like a bunch of climate people. Like, yeah, I hope most of you are registered to vote. If you're not registered to vote, please go right now to vote.org.

Ariel King:

Right.

Saad Amir:

Register to vote. It'll take at least less than two minutes.

Ariel King:

Yes.

Saad Amir:

But -- and I know some of you are too young to vote right now, and that doesn't mean you don't have power or a voice in this as well. When it comes to democracy, it only works when we organize. That only works when we show up. And to be honest, when we look at the facts, we look at the statistics. In presidential elections, less than half of young people, youth voters 18 to 29, show up to the polls. In midterm elections, it's about a third. That's not good enough.

Ariel King:

Right.

Saad Amir:

And I need y'all to do better.

Ariel King:

Yeah.

Saad Amir:

And I know some of you are like, “oh, well, I do get out and vote”. That's great. And I love that for you. I love that for us.

[laughter]

But what I also need you to do is to go have conversations with your friends. I need you to get out and organize in your communities. I need you to go and post on social media. I need you to go and do that collective organizing and movement building. Because a lot of the times there is such a disconnect between these upper levels of our government and us and our communities and our experiences. And I think sometimes people don't feel inspired, they don't feel connected. We can do that work ourselves and we can bridge that gap. And that's on us. We talk about accountability for them. This is the accountability for y'all. And so we have to continue doing that work because it doesn't just happen. And if we don't do that work then what we will continue to see are these climate calamities all around the world unfold again and again and again. And frankly, I'm not okay with that reality. So are y'all going to get out and vote?

[applause]

I love it.

Administrator Regan:

I don't know what else is left to say.

[laughter]

Sheila Matthews:

[unintelligible]

Administrator Regan:

You know, my answer is simple and is exactly what you're doing, which is leverage a platform. And so the best thing that I could do is create a platform for young people to offer this level of insight and optimism. I think, thanks to President Biden and working with Congress, EPA has about $100 billion to invest in clean water, clean air, environmental justice, combating the climate crisis. And so we're going to spend over $100 billion in the next 4 or 5 years, I think bringing people to the table to help advise on how we invest those resources is critical.

I also, you know, we regulate major industries. Chemical, petrochemical, utilities, water, utilities. And so, I think as we're designing regulations and policy, in addition to investing tens of billions of dollars, this is a moment. And so, we've created this opportunity for these young people. Take the activists off the street, bring them into the boardroom, give them a platform, and let's talk about how we, in a unified way, invest in all of our communities.

And the last thing I'll say is there is an opportunity for every single aspect of life here. You know, we're talking about a trillion market for sustainability in clean energy.

Sheila Matthews:

Yeah. Absolutely.

Administrator Regan:

So, this is the opportunity to make capitalism work for everyone. There are spiritual reasons. When I travel the country and you meet with indigenous people, there are spiritual and cultural reasons why we protect our air and our water. There are economic reasons why we should. There are national security reasons. And so hopefully the representation that we have in NIAC will understand the gravity of all of the decisions that over 17,000 proud EPA employees think about every single day. So, I've got a very talented EPA staff, world renowned scientists, engineers, lawyers. They are as excited as I am about opening the door to Gen Z and Millennials, helping them understand the gravity and the magnitude of the decisions that we have to make, making them as accountable as we are, and then collectively thinking about how do we make this country as great as it should be?

Sheila Matthews:

Absolutely.

[applause]

So listening to all of you, on that last question, something that really stuck out to me was the common theme or the through line here of doing your part. And I'm thinking about the people who are watching on the live stream, who will watch later, who are in this room, who are getting educated on the topic. And in the spirit of inclusivity, I'm really curious to hear from you three about what is one thing that somebody who is just joining this fight for this change could do? I know we mentioned, you know, inserting paper straws versus plastic straws and things like that, but what is one thing, it doesn't to be your top thing. I know it's many things we can all do that you would offer to somebody?

Alex Brabender:

Just one thing.

Sheila Matthews:

Tough question.

Alex Brabender:

I'm going to try to get away with a couple maybe. One that I was saying earlier was, you know, don't shy away from patriotic language. I know it sounds cheesy, but it's what's needed. Two is don't forget what capital markets mean and how they shape our society. You know, I would avoid pestering people about their individual consumer choices, as you were talking about and, focusing on how we can better invest in a future that is regenerative and actually reflects our values.

And then if I can sneak away with one more, you know, net zero by 2050, is not enough as many have said before. And we need to really be focusing on net zero emissions ASAP, A-S-A-P. And anyone who's saying anything but maybe 2030 is, in this need that needs to change. And so make sure that that's reflected in your messaging that we're looking for ASAP. Yeah. Thanks, guys.

[applause]

Ariel King:

Think anyone who is feeling ambivalent about joining the climate movement or who, you know, doesn't feel like they know enough to be able to be a real advocate, to understand that you shouldn't be an expert before you start taking action. We need a lot of imperfect environmentalists who are doing the work and talking about the importance of climate action to be able to make real change. And so, yeah, like, you definitely don't need to have all the degrees in environmental studies to be able to be involved. And yeah, just do your research. I think that's important. Like, do your own homework. Don't let other people tell you what you should believe. Yeah. Because that's a really important part of self-determination, is understanding what is happening around you and being able to reflect that and create action on your own based on your understanding. So do your research.

[applause]

Saad Amir:

I mean, the first thing I would say is vote. If that wasn't clear, you know. But I do think that for people who are new to the movement and joining, I would say find your environmental superpower, right. And that doesn't mean like go get a PhD in climate science and study that atmospheric whatever. Right. That's all great if that’s your vibe. I love that.

Ariel King:

[laughs]

Saad Amir:

But at the same time, climate is a jobs issue. It's a justice issue. It's a food issue. It's an agriculture issue. It's a transportation issue. It's an energy issue. Whatever it is that you do in your line of work, whether you are a lawyer, whether you're a doctor, if you're an engineer, if you are a janitor, if you're a chef, whatever it is that you do, you are making an impact on the system, and you too have the ability to change what you do and how you interact within whatever system it is that you work in. And even as students, that's true too. And so, what I would say is reflect, find the thing that you're passionate about and find how that intersects with environmentalism. Find how that connects to the larger movement and bring that. When you bring those real, authentic qualities of yourself, you start to find that, oh my God, I'm making a difference. I can do what I love and I can change the world. And that sounds pretty sweet to me. So that's my advice.

[applause]

Sheila Matthews:

All right, well, before I let you all go, I do have one more question, but I want to take a second to shout out the New York members. Congratulations.

[applause]

[unintelligible] accomplishment. So, my question is to everyone on the stage, starting with Alex ending with the Administrator. But it's for you all. So, my question is in 30s or less speed round here. What's one piece of advice you'd like to share with our NIAC members?

Alex Brabender:

You know, I think, keeping in your heart that the greatest obstacle to achieving something is believing that it can be done is the first thing is just. You have to believe that it's possible. And, I think that it -- whatever we've set out to do today, it is possible. And we really need to keep that, front of mind and in front and center. And yeah, I think that's one thing that I would really just -- I love that quote. I forget who it is, but it's, something I have, replaying in my head all the time. So.

[applause]

Ariel King:

You are all selected for a reason. Use your voice and make sure that you're heard. Yeah.

[applause]

Saad Amir:

What do we want?

Sheila Matthews:

Climate justice.

Saad Amir:

What do we want?

Sheila Matthews:

Climate justice.

Saad Amir:

What do we want?

Crowd:

Now.

[laughter]

Saad Amir:

Keep that energy. Keep that joy and keep that energy. Maintain your voice. I think a lot of the times when you go from the streets into the seats, you tend to compromise what it is that you are saying.

Ariel King:

Yeah.

Saad Amir:

Don't do that.

Ariel King:

No.

Saad Amir:

They're doing some great work here. They are investing records amount of money into all sorts of climate goodness. Tell them where to put it.

Ariel King:

Right.

Saad Amir:

Tell them where you come from. And make sure it goes to the places that it needs to go. Advise them. That's why you're here. Raise your voice. Speak up and do not compromise. Continue to do the work in your community and bring that perspective here. That's my advice.

[applause]

Administrator Regan:

I think that. One thing. Just to remind you all that while there are 16 of you, you are representing tens of millions of people. So, every time we meet, every conversation we have, I want you all to feel that burden and use that time wisely so that when we're together, you're thinking about the tens of millions of young people you represent. And when we're trying to solve these complex problems, we're going to close the doors. And we should not leave without resolving some of them. So, when you have that burden of thinking about representing tens of millions of people, I think you will have a stronger desire to get some things done. So just remember that.

[applause]

Sheila Matthews:

Well, thank you all so much for taking the time to speak with me today. It was inspiring to me and I'm sure it was to everyone watching and everyone in the audience. One more time for our amazing fireside chat panel and Administrator.

[applause]

Administrator Regan:

And our moderator.

Sheila Matthews:

Yes. All right. [unintelligible] everyone.

[music playing]

Little Bacon Bear:

Wow. What do we want?

Saad Amir:

Climate justice!

Little Bacon Bear:

When do we want it?

Little Bacon Bear:

Now.

Little Bacon Bear:

I love the chant. I love the chant. Round of applause for my panelists there, man.

[applause]

Now I'm like, what should I do when I get out of here? How can I do my part? Of course, right. You're thinking the same thing right. Of course. Well, once [unintelligible] my DJ. DJ Heat again. She works so hard. And thank you to all of you. Whether you're from here, just visiting here, for being here. We appreciate you. And as we close out, I want to thank you guys for joining us to mark this historic occasion. Thanks EPA, for having me host this and letting me join the celebration.

I don't know about you, but I'm excited to see all the work that my NIAC folks are about to commence and get to. We hope that you continue to follow the NIAC’s work and stay engaged. And thank you for doing your job and have a good one, guys. Have a good day. Yeah, yeah. Can we take a selfie before we go real fast? For the grams. Something for Instagram. We got to prove we did it right. All right, you can sit. You can stand. Whatever. You ready? Here we go. One. Two. Three. Beautiful. You look great. You look great. You look amazing.

[music playing]

[end of transcript]