



Category 5: From Climate Anxiety to Climate Activism

A Story of Personal Growth



Hold it! Who Am I?

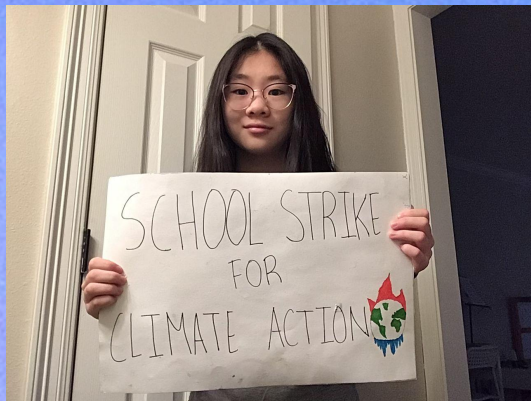
Hi there!

I am not big on introductions, but here are the basics:

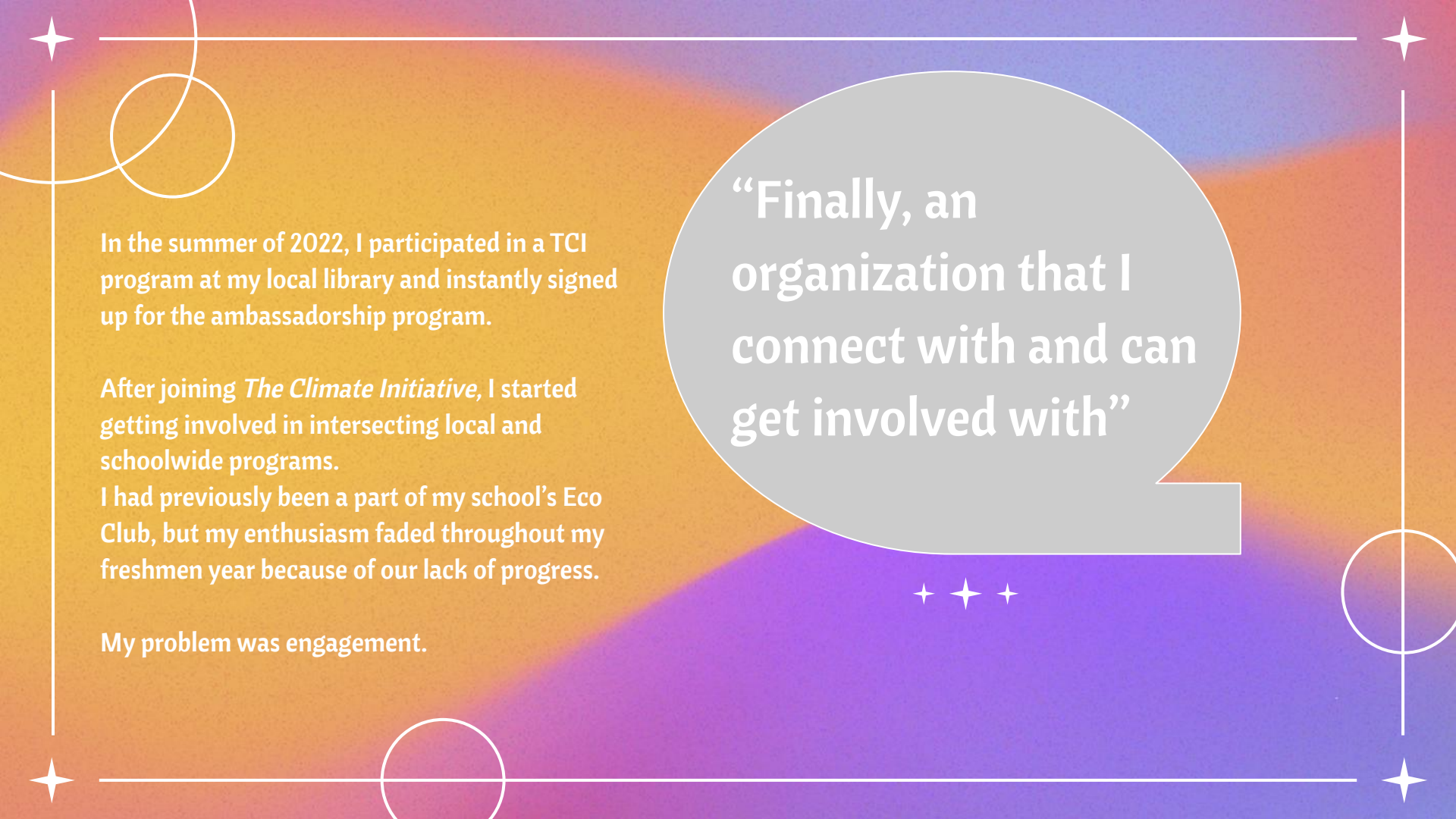
- My name is Siyeon Joo (15)
- I was born in Seoul, South Korea but currently reside in Louisiana
- Or in other words, I like to tell people that I live in a sinking bayou.



Starting Out



We all start with worry. Whether from family, friends, or the news, we all get anxious about the future of our planet. After a year of creating an Instagram account dedicated starting climate activism and consistently striking every Friday for *Fridays for Future*, I surprisingly felt more hopeless than before. Posing in front of a camera only to have the same 15-20 people like my post felt pathetic.




In the summer of 2022, I participated in a TCI program at my local library and instantly signed up for the ambassadorship program.

After joining *The Climate Initiative*, I started getting involved in intersecting local and schoolwide programs.

I had previously been a part of my school's Eco Club, but my enthusiasm faded throughout my freshmen year because of our lack of progress.

My problem was engagement.

“Finally, an organization that I connect with and can get involved with”



Surprisingly, I was asked to serve on the executive council where I now help organize activities that engage our local community



AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED IN OUR ENDANGERED SPECIES POST (WHICH YOU SHOULD CHECK OUT IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY!), OUR CLUB PRESIDENTS LED AND ORGANIZED A TRIP FOR ECO CLUB TO KICK OUT AN INVASIVE SPECIES!!

WHICH SPECIES?
APPLE SNAILS!

IN ST. JULIEN PARK IN BROUSSARD, WE WORKED TO REMOVE INVASIVE APPLE SNAILS AND THEIR EGGS FROM THE PARK'S PONDS.

We have hosted goat yoga, cleanups, etc., and I head our social media account, which is a centralized source that educates and informs students on the climate crisis.



"HUMANS HAVE CREATED THE GREATEST CRISIS THAT WE SEE ON THE PLANET, AND THE GREATER THE CHALLENGE, THE HIGHER WE'LL RISE TO OVERCOME IT."

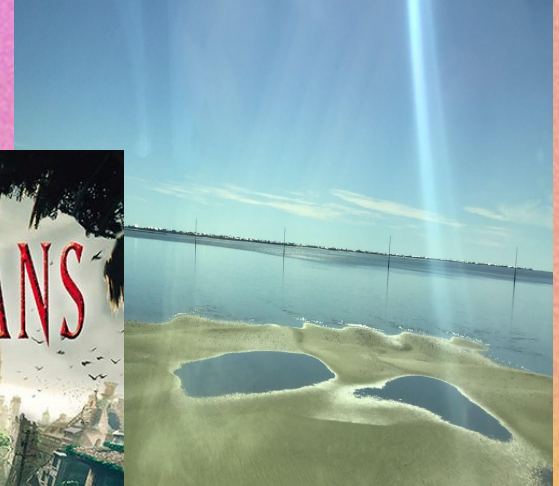


**-XIUHTEZCATL MARTINEZ,
ARTIST AND
ENVIRONMENTAL
ACTIVIST**

Global and Local

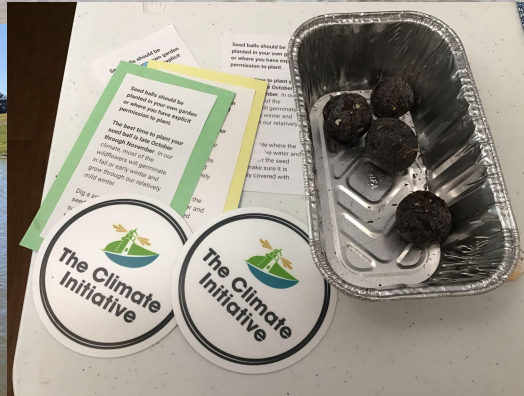
Coming to a new school, I thought Eco Club would be the only obvious program where I could highlight the climate crisis.

However, after working with my local library, I started branching out to the garden club, my book club, and brought up discussions to my friends to connect people's interests with the climate emergency.



“Think Globally, Act Locally”

For the longest time, I was focused on becoming the “next Greta Thunberg” I had never fully processed the phrase, “Think globally, act locally,” before joining TCI



I realized that climate change pertains to all aspects of our world.

Yes, it is a global concern, but that is not just geographically confined. Climate change is more individualistic than we sometimes think: it affects every part of our personal life no matter our interests.

With TCI, I was able to connect the clubs, organizations, and people I would have never imagined were connected with my climate anxiety.

TCI gave me the confidence, resources, and emerging relationships for me to expand on.



Rebuilding does not seem like a sufficient option for Louisiana; it is time we listen to nature to prevent the worst.

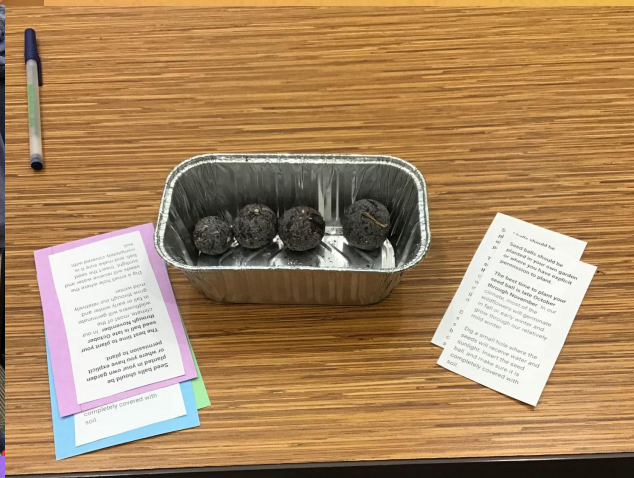
One of those projects is quite simple but fulfilling to my dream of working in journalism: A published newspaper article and a partnership with my local library!

Part 1

Part 1 of my action project was connecting with my local library to fuse climate change and literature.

As a bookworm, this was especially heartwarming because books and other media is how information gets shared and stored.

As much as I would enjoy discussing our rising neighbor seas and carbon footprint, I realize that people will not pay as much attention unless I made the issue comprehensible enough for people to be passionate about.



Part 2: A Simple (?) Article



Drafting and Crafting

Publishing in my local newspaper after gaining confidence from TCI was no easy feat. Connecting with my local library made me realize that it is not too early for me to spread the word.



Results...eh not now

I continuously sent letters to *The Advocate*, and after many trials, I was able to contact an editor who was willing to publish my article.



Raising the Bar

I am now working on raising my voice on a larger scale and using my passion for writing to speak about how the climate crisis individually connects with us.

Siyeon on “The Warm,
Sticky-Sweet Resurgence of
Hotteok”



Siyeon Joo on “Food Is Identity.
For Korean Chefs Who Were
Adopted, It’s Complicated.”

Beforehand, rejection from the publication world was what led me to consider multiple perspectives both within my threatened state, Louisiana, and the global solutions already presented.

By combining what I had already learned, the encounters I had from educating other people, and the research and news that had circulated and defined much of my activism journey, I strived to create an article that was not just depressing, but also a cry for hope.

I call this an action project because it made me realize that publication is a heftier process than I thought. This article is a personal statement that testifies not only my concerns, but also my persistence of them.

Engagement is Key



My article did just that. I linked what a new normal looked like for many Louisianians (the devastating hurricane seasons) to the long-term effects of the climate crisis.

After publishing my article, I gained the confidence to approach others on the topic of the climate crisis and push them to consider how it applies to them.

Working with the publication world and my library (a hub for community building), I had matured with confidence to educate parents and friends about an issue I had previously kept to myself.

To be quite frank...



Although I have not started the typical wide-scale protest or impressive event, my voice has grown incredibly to inspire community engagement by education.

Especially within clubs, book talks, my newspaper article, or even with my friends, my confidence and knowledge of our threatened climate has surprised people to care more ask me more about what they can do.

For me, that is a big first step! Getting people's attention and seeing that they should and can start caring is how I think we can increase climate action.

Closing



But I encourage you to find a medium that best expresses how you raise awareness for any issue.

Like me, you may be able to stumble upon organizations that fit your interests and people from various programs that you can connect your voice and talents with.

Even though I attend a small, private school in the middle of Cade, Louisiana, I have become a beacon of hope for my peers to ask and ponder the weight of the climate crisis.