

**WE MAY BE SMALL
BUT OUR IMPACT
IS HUGE**
SERIES 3 EPISODE 7



@mothersinvent  

[Theme Music Intro]

Xiye: Welcome to season three, episode seven of Mothers of Invention. I am Xiye Bastida and I am not the former President of Ireland. I am an 18 year old indigenous youth climate leader from Mexico, a freshman student at the University of Pennsylvania, the co founder of Earth initiative and lead organizer for Fridays for Future, a global youth climate justice movement.

Pooja: And I'm Pooja ready. I'm an Indian American comedian in my twenties and I co-host a comedy show called Kutti Gang. I'm from rural Kentucky, but I **now** live in the anarchist jurisdiction of New York city, just like my friend and other comedian on the show, Maeve Higgins. This career choice as a comedian has been confusing for my parents, which is why they're still telling their friends that I'm a white house intern.

Thimali: And I'm the series producer of the show, Thimali Kodikara.

Pooja: Oh, Hi Thimali!

Xiye: Oh, my god - Hi Thimali!

Thimali: Hi you two! I'm so happy. You both accepted my invitation to co-host our youth takeover season finale. You're going to help me close out with a giant bang, so thank you so much for joining.

Xiye: Thank you. We're so glad and happy you asked us. This is so awesome and it's such a great opportunity.

Pooja: Yeah.

Xiye: And I really, really admire mothers of invention for kind of changing the conversation on climate and making it more accessible, making all of us intersectional environmentalists at this point. I really appreciate everything that you are doing for the climate movement and we're so happy to be part of that.

Pooja: I know. Right? Honestly, climate change hits home for me down to my roots and Telegana and South India.

Pooja: I come from a lineage of sugarcane, rice and dairy farmers. And I grew up in rural Kentucky having neighbors who counted on farming, corn and soybean makes me feel really connected to climate change and wanting to combat it.

Thimali: Yeah!

Pooja: I'm a huge fan of this podcast because it gets me back to my social justice and public policy roots. But the Thimali, are you sure? Maeve and Mary don't mind us taking over their show?

Thimali: I mean, why don't we give them a call and ask?

Xiye: Yes. Yes. I love Mary very much. We've spoken on panels before together. She's the literal greatest Pooja. I'm not worried at all. Let me give him a call right now.

Pooja: Okay.

[SFX: Numbers Dialling]

Pooja: I dunno, I just, I'm really nervous. I don't want Maeve to think that I'm swiping her spot on the show.

[SFX: Phone Rings. Mary & Maeve On The Phone]

Maeve: Hi. I just, I heard that. Pooja, I just got my former President to graduate me as a climate expert in the last episode, finally. And then here you are in my seat. I mean, it only took me three seasons to get some respect around here, but I guess don't mind me!

Pooja: I'm so sorry Maeve, Oh my God!

Maeve: Pooja, I'm only messing -kind of. It's just one of those jokes. That's a tiny bit true, but it's okay. I'm just here. I'm having a drink. I'm on my sofa. It's Oh God. It's only half 11.

Pooja: ***[Laughs].***

Mary: Don't be so mean, Maeve! Xiye and Pooja will do a fantastic job today.

Pooja: *[Laughs].*

Pooja: Oh Mary! Well, if I do a good job with today's guests, could I potentially graduate as a Mary Robinson approved climate expert?

Mary: Well, Pooja I've heard that you're a high achiever and that you're the pride of your parents. So no doubt you will.

Maeve: Excuse me. Mary - are you joking? It took you two and a half years to graduate me as a climate expert.

Thimali: Oh gosh. That's true.

[Laughter].

Mary: Maeve, Maeve. The youth climate movement is so impressive. It's impressive to me beyond words because of the way it's developed. I've had so much experience and learning from young activists. I remember chairing a panel between ministers of government and young people. And I mean really young, I mean 11, 13, 14, 15,. And they were so engaged internationally and they really cared about those much less well off they show the solidarity and empathy, which was extraordinary. The climate crisis has made global youth, a marginalized group. It's simply not right that young people like Xiye and Pooja are expected to deal with this challenge on their own.

Mary: And yet it's them who are leading this movement. And frankly, we have an awful lot to learn from them before we get out of this problem.

Thimali: Hear, Hear!

Xiye: Yeah, Mary, thank you so much. You're an inspiration. I remember hearing you speak at COP 25 actually, and I knew right away that you were not only an ally, but a pioneer of the climate justice movement. We won't let you down.

Mary: Well, now the very best of luck to both of you and have a great time and have fun.

Xiye: Thank you!

Pooja: Thank you so much, Mary! And thanks, Maeve.

Maeve: You're welcome!

[SFX: Phone Hangs Up]

Thimali: Well ok, I'll ask Mary and Mauve to come by at the end of the show when you're all done. Are you ready ladies?

Pooja: Yeah, let's do it!

Xiye: Yeah let's do this.

[Theme Music Transition]

Xiye: Did you actually intern at the white house?

Pooja: I did! I worked in the East wing for the first lady Mrs. Obama in 2015.

Xiye: Woah! I would love to meet her or work for her or, you know, just be in her presence.

Pooja: She is as incredible as she seems. And it was just an amazing and nerve wracking experience. I spent every day just trying not to spill ketchup on my shirt or get tackled by the secret service.

Xiye: So how did you end up in comedy after that?

Pooja: Well, I needed to find an outlet to unpack the fact that I look like a broke Mindy Kaling, but thanks to my Southern upbringing, the voice inside of my head is of a white man named Everett.

[Laughter]

Pooja: No, I mean really comedy and writing is incredibly cathartic and it's allowed me to express myself about lifes, small annoyances, like man spreaders on the New York city subway and deal with deeper issues like having to navigate dealing with microaggressions as a woman of color in the United States.

Xiye: Yeah. I completely feel you on, the microaggressions and the man spreaders. I am myself an immigrant from

Mexico and I've definitely felt all of that, but you also worked at the UN foundation. So how did that go?

Pooja: Yeah, after the white house, I worked at the United Nations foundation right around the launch of the Sustainable Development Goals. And that's when I actually came to know Mary Robinson as the climate rock star that she is, honestly, I could care less about the Kardashians. Mary Robinson is my favorite influencer. And sure Maeve is a comedy hero of mine. I recently performed on her comedy show, which has been a bucket list item for me since I started performing, which was super exciting.

Xiye: That's amazing. Yay.

Pooja: Oh, thanks. I appreciate it.

Xiye: It's awesome that you went from sustainable development goals to comedy. I definitely have to check that out. If you don't mind, send some to me.

Pooja: Of course, with all the climate work you do, you definitely deserve some entertainment. You're also inspiring me to declare right here and right now that I need to up my climate creds before the episodes over. You're just casually working on rescuing the entire concept of Future from extinction. The fact that you became a global climate leader at 16 while trying to finish high school blows my mind

Xiye: I mean, it has been complicated, especially with COVID 19. You know, you've seen on the news the youth climate movement was us striking, us skipping school, us going out into the streets and now we can't do that anymore. So we have had to shift our entire mode of organizing to online, which has been a really, really good challenge for us because it showed us the power of organizing the power of community. And, I also started college this year.

Pooja: Yeah that's right, congratulations Xiye.

Xiye: Thank you, So now it's about balancing both organizing and school, um, even more than before.

Pooja: It must be hard to be away from home right now. You're from an indigenous community in Mexico, right. What was your journey to New York city like?

Xiye: Yeah, so my Dad is from the Otomi-Toltec indigenous community, which is located in the Highlands of central Mexico, about 40 minutes West from Mexico City. And I was raised with my Dad's indigenous philosophy, which is basically one of reciprocity for Mother Earth. And I think that that's the thing that has influenced my climate activism the most. Because when you grow up thinking that everything is interconnected and that humans are supposed to take care of that interconnectedness, everything that we are doing is just breaking that relationship.

Pooja: Wow. That just gave me chills to hear you talk about the foundations and principles of your indigenous community and how you all view your relationship to Mother Earth. How did you actually get into climate activism?

Xiye: One of the first things that really shifted me into activism was that I experienced a flood in my hometown. Actually one day before I left for New York City.

Pooja: Wow.

Xiye: And when I got to New York City, I saw what Hurricane Sandy had done to Long Island because my godfather lives there. So I instantly saw this relationship between the climate crisis affecting the most vulnerable communities, but also that the climate crisis was already happening, that we didn't have to wait a hundred years to see it. I thought that we had to change that narrative. So I started constructing my own story. So, you know, I did what I could do at 15 years old. So I joined my environmental club and they were just doing things like recycling. So I decided to organize my club to go lobby, go testify at city hall and ultimately go, and organize the first global climate strike, which was called upon by Greta Thunburg. And I got 600 of my classmates to walk out with me.

Pooja: Wow.

Xiye: Which was amazing, 5,000 kids from all over New York, uh, skipped school that day for climate justice.

Pooja: That's incredible. I'm so glad that you had that experience.

Xiye: And I know that you spend months getting the 2020 census out and you haven't stopped moving at all either. You've been getting out the vote for the US election.

Pooja: Yeah. Making sure my community was counted in the US census was super important to me because although South Asians are a rapidly growing minority within the United States, we are one of the most undercounted groups on the census. So, I'm really happy with all of the work that we were able to accomplish there, but to get ready for the election, I've been helping folks navigate the process of registering to vote and requesting their absentee ballots and my friends and I are phone banking as much as we can, but like everyone else I'm super nervous and scared, but I've also seen what community can do when we find each other. So it's been really inspiring.

Xiye: Yeah of course.

[Music Transition]

Pooja: So in the last episode, on new economics, Bina and Omar, explain the power of community cooperatives. It was so inspiring to me and made me feel really hopeful.

Xiye: Yeah. It was such a good episode.

Pooja: I just couldn't believe how many community cooperatives are here in New York city where it feels like cold, hard capitalism reign supreme.

Xiye: Mhmm.

Pooja: Knowing that the same organizing principles that have brought composting or birthing services to the South Bronx are the same principles rural women in India are using to save forests is just amazing to me.

Xiye: Right? It was such a clear reminder that if people in marginalized communities don't have access to money to get things done, people power can fill the gap. The exact same thought is behind the youth climate movement. As young people, we've had less than basic access to resources. Politicians have not shown up for climate legislation that we need, but only a handful of young people have voting power of their own yet. So people power in enormous numbers is how we are getting things done in the urgency that it deserves.

Pooja: That's so awesome. Young people have been involved in environmental and climate justice since it became an issue, right?

Xiye: Totally.

Pooja: But it feels like it's really just blown up in the last four years. Can you explain how it unfolded?

Xiye: Yeah, of course, I think that it's actually been here forever because indigenous philosophy is to take care of Mother Earth. And that has been around for thousands of years. I would say that the first youth climate organizations that we know of today are [Earth Guardians](#), [Bye Bye Plastic Bags](#), which started nearly 10 years ago by dear friends of mine. But in the past three years, we have seen a surge in youth climate organizations that I think is a result of the Paris agreement. We have seen organizations like sunrise, [Zero Hour](#), [Fridays for Future](#), [Re-Earth Initiative](#), [Youth Climate Strike](#) and [International Indigenous Youth Council](#), and many, many, many others. But most impressive yet is how the youth have mobilized the world to speak up for climate justice. The first youth climate strike had 1.3 million people.

Pooja: Wow.

Xiye: The second one had 1.6 million people. And the third one on September 20th of 2019 had 7.6 million people striking around the world.

Pooja: Wow. That's really awesome.

Xiye: Right?

Xiye: And I think this growth just shows our power to mobilize and it gives us hope and optimism for our power to come together in the future. And our demands have always been to listen to science and to follow the [IPCC report guidelines](#). But most importantly, we want climate justice.

Pooja: Wow. That's so incredible and inspiring. I just feel like it's because all of these rapid actions that the climate crisis is finally one of the top voting issues in the 2020 US election.

Xiye: Yeah. Finally. So today our mothers of invention audience will have the special opportunity to hear our hopes, our fears, our dreams in our own words, but

everyone will also have a chance to hear how powerful our organizing strategies are because we plan on making sure that we have a future we want and are entitled to.

[Music Transition]

Pooja: Our first guest is Brianna Freuan. Brianna is a 22 year old youth climate activist from the Pacific Island nation of Samoa. She's been involved in climate activism since she was 11 years old. That means that her climate justice career has spanned half of her life already. Now that is dedication. Brianna is a student at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, studying politics and international relations, but she's also one of the founding members of [350 Samoa](#). So with the massive time difference, we are so happy she wanted to come talk to us. Welcome Brianna!

Brianna: Hi, thank you for having me!

Pooja: So on a scale of one to please tell me when this is over, how has your lockdown in Oakland been Brianna? It must be really hard to be away from your family and Samoa right now.

Brianna: Yeah. I feel like it hasn't been the easiest year. I felt very far from home with the borders to Samoa being closed. But I feel like I'm also very fortunate to be in New Zealand, which has been one of the countries that's been able to contain the virus. And so, yeah, I feel like I'm very fortunate.

Xiye: You know, Brianna, I want to ask you, so these days when we hear the word New Zealand, all of our minds go to your Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern.

Brianna: Yeah. So for the pandemic, I really commend her and her party for being very proactive. She's definitely been putting people first, which we really appreciate. We are one of the more fortunate countries to have a very low death toll and to have smaller outbreaks than other countries of our, our same size. And I'm also very grateful for her handling the situation in New Zealand, because we have such a close relationship to the Pacific islands.

Xiye: That's amazing.

Brianna: Um, with the climate crisis I think she is one of the leaders who admits that it's real. And so her just knowing that is a great plus. Hopefully, our Green Party gets in with her. And if they form a coalition, I'll have a lot of hope for that government because the Green Party are always proactive here in New Zealand and getting strong climate policy across.

Pooja: What are the biggest challenges back home in Samoa right now?

Brianna: For Samoa, in our everyday lives, we can see that our coral is bleaching. We're seeing that the ocean is coming in closer and closer and we're not having the land that we used to have when, say my grandparents were growing up in Samoa. And, you know, we have things like, the frequency in floods now the frequency in cyclones. We have longer droughts and everything that climate scientists said were going to be true about the crisis has already become true in Samoa. That's really the climate realities that so many people have to live with in, in my Island and many islands like her.

Xiye: Yeah. And I think that that's something that a lot of, especially small islands have been faced with you know, the narrative for so long was that the climate crisis was going to hit us in 2100 and that's not true.

Briana: Yeah.

Xiye: Who or, what inspired you to get involved in climate and environmental activism at such a young age, 11 years old, that's amazing.

Brianna: So I grew up in Samoa I, although I was born in New Zealand, we moved back to Samoa when I was around three years old. And so my whole life was being in nature, being back on my Island. And my parents always reminded me of how lucky I was to be growing up in such a peaceful place, a place where, you know, I was never more than 10 minutes away from like the most beautiful beach that you would see on a postcard. And so I always knew that I was very grateful to be living this Island life. And when I was young, I heard the word climate change at one of my mom's work conferences. So my mom worked for an environmental organization in Samoa. And so I would sit there at the back of these environmental conferences. And I would hear about this thing called climate change and scientists that work with her would talk about it and what that could mean for places like Tokelau, which is also another small Island in

the Pacific that my grandma's from. And they would say that, you know, Tokelau would be lucky if they had another 50 years. And as a young child who loved her Island. And I even loved Tokelau, even though I had never been there. I was so scared and, and that's what really pushed me into this movement. Cause I just thought, man, I can't just sit here and do nothing. You know, and I really wanted to put my foot down and to get involved into something that was part of the solution.

Xiye:

Definitely an amazing experience that you had. I'm so happy you did. And now I wanna, you know, brag a little bit on your behalf, you won a writing competition, to attend a UN environmental conference. And that's where you were introduced to 350, I believe. So can you tell us a little bit about that experience and also how you started through 350 Samoa?

Brianna:

Yeah, thank you. So yes, I did get to, to go to this children's conference. And I do say kids because we were like 10 and 11 years old, I think, I think the age was 10 to 15. And they would hold workshops for us. And there was one that I signed up for, which was like building a wooden car, and I was late to the workshop. And so as I was walking down the hall, the door for the workshop that I had signed up for was locked and then the only door that was wide open was the one for [350.org](https://www.350.org). And so I walked into this workshop and I got introduced to this organization and I always tell people that, there was something that opened that door for me. Because I got into this workshop and I got introduced to this amazing organization that I truly believed in because they were so action focused. And I just told myself that day, that I would go home and, and start 350 Samoa. And I remember telling the man who was running the workshop his name was Kevin and I told him, I said, Kevin, I'm going to go home and start 350 Samoa. He was like, 'Oh, okay. I believe you'. Um, and then I actually got to meet Kevin a couple of years ago at a COP. And I ran up to him and said, 'I don't know if you remember me. I, you met me when I was a kid, but I did start 350 Samoa it's been running for eight years now'. Um, and that was really great. Great to kind of see that full circle moment and see that the people who actually got me started in this movement are still going strong in this movement.

Xiye:

That's an amazing story.

Pooja: So awesome. So after that conference, you attended the Rio plus 20 earth summit in 2012, right?

Briana: Yes.

Pooja: Yeah. I would love to hear about that as well as the policy work that you've been involved with.

Brianna: Yeah, so when I was home and me and my friends started, 350 Samoa, we were doing these small actions that we felt were tangible for us - like composting recycling or like a carpool registry. We still saw the climate realities still get so bad and we still, you know, watch the news and, and see, you know, our emissions are still going up by so much. We still saw so many other communities in the world struggling with climate change. And we just felt like there wasn't enough happening. And I think that was a realization for me, that climate change is so big that we can't really put ourselves in one spot and expect to fix this crisis. That there needs to be really a bigger approach to what we were trying to do. And one of those approaches I felt like was policy, if nothing is happening on a political level nothing will really change or the change we want to see will not happen and so that's why I really wanted to get into policy. And so that was my interest in going to Rio plus 20, was to see what these world leaders were actually having a mind for change. That was really a part of my learning process of how important it is to have our young voices in this political space, because we will be the ones that take this baton and make sure that what we decide on today is actually being implemented tomorrow.

Pooja: That's incredible and it's so true, having youth representation there is the only way that we can nudge and convince our leaders to listen to us and to advocate for future generations. But for those of us who may not be familiar with the COP, do you mind giving a bit of an explanation about it? What happens there?

Brianna: Yeah. So COP also stands for a Conference of Parties. It's the annual climate negotiations that happens between governments, civil society, um, you know, nongovernmental organizations, activists, advocates, they all come together to follow negotiations that happen between parties or, or different countries about climate or about the environment. And so one of the most talked about COP's was COP 21, which was the Paris Agreement. And the Paris Agreement was kind of one of the monumental moments in COP history where

a document was put together by governments and signed by governments on what they were willing to commit to, when it comes to the climate crisis.

Pooja: Yeah. COP 21 was memorable for sure. Xiye, have you attended any COPS?

Xiye: My first COP was COP 25, where are you at COP 25?

Brianna: Yes, I was.

Xiye: Oh my gosh. I can't believe we didn't cross paths there, Um, but all of these types of actions have actually, uh, been drawn from past movements. So that's what I wanted to ask you about what past movements, what past organizations have inspired you?

Brianna: Oh, that's such a great question. I think the organization that really stood out to me was Greenpeace, just because it was so action focused. But as I grew up and I kind of came to a realization that race plays a big part in my life. Greenpeace didn't have that many brown and black activists, and it was something that I kind of realized growing up in. And I was kinda like, oh, wait, I never see people that look like me, you know, in their protest or in their commercials. And so I started looking for brown, black and indigenous activists within organizations. And people and communities, I feel like really inspired me that I saw myself within we're really indigenous uprising. So the Dakota pipeline, Mauna Kea in Hawaii and all the indigenous folk and then of course like the civil rights movement, um, in the US. Actually one of the organizations that has also inspired me has been the Polynesian Panthers. This was a group of Pacific Islanders who organized around, um, something that happened in New Zealand called the Dawn raids. During my grandparents' era, a whole bunch of Pacific Islanders were brought into New Zealand for labor and to kind of help build in these cities that we have today. And when the system had used them and were done with them, they started cracking down on immigration they would go into their houses at night and remove them from their homes. And so what had happened at this time was a group of young activists emerged. And they called themselves the Polynesian Panthers named after and inspired by the Black Panthers in the US and they were young people just like us. Um, I think the average age was 16.

Pooja: Wow.

Brianna: And they dressed up exactly how the Black Panthers used to dress up. So they all wore their big Pacific hair out and they wore the black caps and the leather jackets. And they went in, they started protests, they went into protected houses. They just organized around community. And that has been a big inspiration for us as Pacific activists to know that we have a history of, you know, our people standing up for our people.

Xiye: That sounds amazing.

Pooja: That's so inspiring.

Brianna: And I know that's not climate related or not environment related, but I feel like that's still inspired me because it's back to the same root of the cause, which is, colonization, capitalism. And it was, fighting against that system.

Pooja: I love that answer because it's true the climate crisis can't be solved by, you know, white led corporations. It has to be an intersectional approach. You hit the nail on the head there.

Xiye: Yeah. I was just gonna say that. you really hit every point of it because even if the civil rights movement was not climate related, a lot of the tactics that we use in climate activism come from the civil rights movement. Cause you can not get climate justice until you address all of the underlying issues.

Brianna: Definitely.

Xiye: And let me tell you it's the same across the world. I don't know a country where, uh, youth of color don't feel like they're organizing space is not for them. And as an immigrant in the US, I had to make myself part of that space, like literally, you know, wiggle myself in and we have to intentionally make those decisions, for people to realize that climate justice means racial justice.

Brianna: Yes.

Xiye: Everything changed with the coronavirus pandemic. And I wanted to ask how have you been organizing or dealing with your activism during lockdown?

Brianna: A lot of my organizing has looked like online organizing, I feel like with a lot of us. A lot of zoom meetings, a lot of webinars, a lot of, um, Facebook and Instagram lives.

Xiye: Yeah, I think that, um, our ways of approaching organizing have completely changed, but for the better, because now we're able to include more people.

Brianna: Mhmm.

Pooja: So when you think of a regenerative future in Samoa or in the world, what does that look like to you?

Brianna: For me, I feel like the future that I want to build and I want to be a part of is to be free of restraints of a system that have been, a part of keeping certain people down. You know, these systems are almost built so that some of us are not free. And I want to be a part of this new future where we all can be free from these restraints. And I, I feel like there is a future where we can achieve climate justice and achieve racial and indigenous justice. Like you said, you know, Pooja earlier, it's all intersectional. And so for me, I really want to be brave enough to imagine a world where these all can be solved.

Pooja: I, I love that and I love that you have such an optimistic and positive view. Because we should be able to have it all and you should be able to demand that you can be living on your island for centuries to come and I hope that is the case. What are all the ways that folks at home can fall along with what you're doing in Samoa and Auckland?

Brianna: [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) and they're the same. [Spelt] Brianna Fruean.

Pooja: Well, thank you so much.

Xiye: Yeah. Thank you so much for coming, um, to share your experience with us.

Brianna: Thank you!

[Theme Tune Music Transition]

Pooja: I've been stuck inside my apartment for so long. All of the beautiful soundscapes this season have really helped me escape the walls of my tiny New York City apartment to other places.

Xiye: I feel the exact same way. My apartment is so tiny sometimes and it just feels like I want to open the window and take the sounds from outside in.

Pooja: Totally. It's been really interesting to hear how people have been coping with lockdown all over the world, but also how they're taking in nature differently.

Xiye: Yeah, totally. And well, our final soundscape is super powerful in that regard I think. I remember the minisode, we released a few weeks ago that looked at ways young people can have conversations about the climate with older generations. Well, it's called '[Oh my God Mom](#)'. 18 year old Nicole on 21 year old Gabby from the Cleo Institute. Talk us through tested strategies to have those conversations.

Pooja: Oh yeah, of course. Nicole did such a great job trying to convince her mom to vote for her future. Thanks to Gabby's great advice. It was super insightful. And I've already got a list going of who I'm planning to try it out on.

Xiye: Yeah. And well, Nicole wanted to send us a soundscape from her hometown in Miami, Florida. So let's go visit her on the beach.

[Soundscape - Waves break on the shore]

Nicole: I was born and raised in Miami, Florida. This magical, magical place known for its heat, sunshine, and beautiful people and beautiful beaches. I wanted to record here because this beach is my escape. I've always felt an attachment to the beach. I just honor it and praise it so much. Not just for its beauty but for its ability to cleanse you, with its saltwater it makes you feel like you're on a mini vacation, even from home. I remember summer of 2019 was packed with people with crowds and loud voices and screaming. And now it's just crystal clear water. There's barely any crowds. There's a lot of space for just nature to reclaim its ground. COVID-19 gave Miami beach a little break from the constant heavy footsteps on it. Wildlife has obviously come back. Birds have never chirped like they have before. The waves are alive. The water is aquamarine, teal. The sun is shining like never before. And the earth seems happier. The earth needed a break and only we can grant that for them. These beaches every year come closer to the shore. High tide is scarier

because it gets closer to all of the beach resorts all of the high rise condominiums that are here on the beach.

And to think about the fact that these very beaches that I'm at right now could be lost because of greedy politicians and greedy corporations who continue to burn fossil fuels and emit carbon dioxide, greenhouse gases that are known to heat up this planet is unfathomable because this is my home. These beaches are where I was born and raised!

Unacceptable!

And I could only think about the islands that are currently getting swallowed by sea level rise. And the people that live on those islands that have nowhere to go. This is why we must stop emitting greenhouse gases. The climate crisis is real and our human impact is as well.

This lockdown has just only solidified the fact that we may be small, but our impact is huge. And if COVID-19 could show that a decrease in the amount of people will help clear up the waters and help reduce the amount of pollution. Imagine if we just stopped emitting carbon dioxide and burning fossil fuels, imagine what that would do for our beaches.

[Soundscape - Waves break on the shore]

[Soundscape - Ends]

Xiye:

Wow. I felt the exact same way when I was in Florida and I was sitting on the beach reading Uninhabitable Earth. And it was talking about how sea level rise was going to rise depending on how much we warmed up. So I absolutely feel her spirit and you know how connected she is to her beach. You know, sea level in Florida is expected to rise by six feet in 2100, and that should not be the case.

Pooja:

Yeah. Her message is so powerful. And what's so amazing is because folks can see the effects of climate change with their own eyes. There is a lot of energy going into both federal and state adaptation and mitigation initiatives to reverse climate change. But, you know, as Nicole rightly says, nothing's going to get us there faster than dramatically. Reducing our greenhouse gas emissions and fast.

Xiye:

Yeah. And changing our mindset to do that.

[Music Transition]

Xiye: I'm super excited about our next guest. I want everyone to meet my friend, Jamie Margolin. We met for the first time because of the youth climate movement in Iowa and she co-founded [Zero Hour](#), which is one of the first youth climate organizations in the United States. And today she's a freshman at New York University and the author of *Youth to Power, a guide to being a youth climate activist*. Welcome to Mothers of Invention, Jamie.

Jamie: Thank you all so much for having me.

Pooja: Welcome Jamie!

Jamie: Thank you.

Pooja: So first things first, congratulations. I heard that you got into NYU to study film?

Jamie: I did. Yes.

Pooja: Yeah. So what do you love about film?

Jamie: For me, movies and television have always been my escape whenever I'm overwhelmed, which is a lot. You know, I don't like to sit there thinking about climate change all the time. That's not something I enjoy doing. So I escape into, I, I escape into fictional worlds. I escape into different shows and movies that I like, and that's just my way of coping with the world and coping with everything. And so.

Pooja: And so are you studying remotely too?

Jamie: Most of my classes are online, so I don't really, I'm not like in a classroom, but I'm on campus, in a dorm, kind of living a fairly normal college life to an extent.

Pooja: And you're from Seattle, right?

Jamie: I am from Seattle, yes.

Pooja: Washington State is so beautiful. Can you describe what it was like growing up there?

Jamie: Yeah. I mean, I was born in Los Angeles, but then moved to Seattle when I was two years old. And it's known as the Emerald City in a sense that, everything is green all the time because we have evergreens

everywhere. Like even in downtown and you also see the mountains and you see, and it rains all the time. And so you get the crisp, like have you ever had air that was so clean and so nice that it almost hurt, but like in a good way, like it was so crisp and cold, you were like - Whoa! Like it's like a energy within itself?

Pooja: Yes!

Jamie: When the air is that cold, crisp and smells that good. It's like a shot of coffee. Seattle air is like that. In the fall, right after it rains and in the winter, but that was not the case for the past several summers. In fact, it had the worst air quality in the world. When the wildfires happened - it's so weird to say Seattle's wildfire season. Cause we never had a fire season until 2017. And to be clear, the fires aren't burning in the city, the fire is around Canada.

Pooja: Mmhmm.

Jamie: California and the smoke blows and covers us in a thick layer of smog. And you check the worst air quality in the world and it says Seattle and that's really scary.

Pooja: Mmhmm.

Xiye: I know New Delhi has worse air quality, but when you see that it's actually Seattle, it's kinda surprising.

Jamie: Yes.

Xiye: How did you get to organizing for the environment? Especially because, you know, you were one of the youngest ones when you started. So what prompted you to get into that space?

Jamie: Um, it was the 2016 election that really pushed me into this. I realized like all of the environmental laws and stuff like that were going to be under attack and we're going to be repealed. And we were literally having a climate denier in the white house and I realized that I had to like get my head out of the ostrich hole and just take action. So I started to do community organizing, starting in late 2016, like December of 2016 and onwards.

Xiye: That's awesome. Because I met you through Zero hour, so I'm also wondering how Zero hour really started and how you went from being activated to creating your own organization.

Jamie: Yeah. I'm not a believer in creating something just for the sake of creating it. I believe if you're going to make something it has to be because there's a specific need and a specific, um, a specific gap. There wasn't like a big youth climate mobilizing organization. Um, at least not in the United States that I knew of. So I was like, okay, this needs to happen. And the fires of 2017, that, that was the first time I experienced when breathing hurt in Seattle. So I posted on social media that I was going to start a youth climate march. And I was like, all right, "Who's with Me?" and this girl named [Nadia Nazar](#) from Baltimore who had been following me on social media because of an article I published about the climate crisis replied and was like, 'I'm down, let's, let's do this'. And then I brought in two young people that I met at a summer camp. Um, [Zanagee Artis](#) and Madelaine Tew. And they became the cofounders of Zero Hour.

Xiye: Oh, that's amazing to hear. Um, especially because you were talking about organizing with people who are across the country that also kind of shows the power that we have through social media and other tools to connect with each other.

Pooja: Yeah. So I saw that there was a special climate case that took place in Washington. Can you tell us about that?

Jamie: Yeah. Um, so actually the lawsuit is still going on. So there's an organization called [Our Children's Trust](#), which helps young people sue governments over denying young people, our constitutional rights to life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And it argues that, um, what's happening is active worsening of the climate crisis. Politicians aren't sitting on their hands doing nothing. They're actively doing everything they can to make it worse.

Pooja: Yeah.

Jamie: And actually a lot of States have public trust doctrines, which pretty much says that, um, you have to preserve the resources of the state for future generations. You can't take everything and you can't ruin it all because future generations need that. And that's not what's happening because Washington State is emitting large amounts of carbon and is contributing to climate disaster. And so that is actually the government's active denying of our rights. So with our children's trust, myself and 12 other young plaintiffs are suing the Washington state government for a climate recovery plan. So we're saying you've been denying our rights to life, Liberty

and the pursuit of happiness and denying our rights to, the resources of the state, which are laid out in the public trust doctrine. Therefore, what we're suing for is a court implemented climate recovery plan that the government would have no choice, but to implement. It's been going on for years. I joined the lawsuit in 2017 and it's still going on.

Pooja: Well, it's awesome to see that you all are standing up to the government and exercising your constitutional right, and asking for what you all deserve. So I love that and kudos to you for that.

Xiye: Yeah. And I think Jamie the way you just described the climate crisis and climate justice specifically has definitely influenced people at the grassroots level but also like national and international politicians. And I want to bring your memory back to when we were in DC, back in 2019 when you actually spoke in front of Congress, with Benji backer, Vic Barrett and Greta.

Pooja: Yeah, Vic is awesome. I remember him from the very first episode of [Mothers of invention](#).

Xiye: Yeah.

Xiye: It was just really, really powerful. So I was wondering if you can bring back your, uh, the audience to that experience and how it felt is big in front of politicians.

Jamie: Yeah. So, um, it was really amazing to testify before Congress, that was a moment where the eyes of the world were on us? You know, everyone was there. Everyone was listening. And so I knew that it had to be good. So I stayed up like really, really late the night before with my mentor, perfecting it. And then I remember waking up that morning and I was like, okay, here we go.

Pooja: You were ready to fight.

Jamie: Yes. So I read my testimony and it really landed with a lot of people. And then it was time for the Q&A, and they refused to ask me any questions. They only wanted to ask the Republican kid Benji backer questions, because he was going to echo back everything that they wanted to hear. They're like, is it true? That capitalism is wonderful. And he's like, 'yeah, I love capitalism'. I was like, Okay. I got extremely angry. They were like completely skipping over Vic and I who came with a very climate justice perspective so I actually like chimed

in. And this is actually what made the headlines is not my testimony, but my rebuttal and kind of jumping in and interrupting. And then Greta also chimed in. And she was like, you know, Sweden makes the same excuse of saying we can't take action because the United States isn't. So your argument isn't valid. We shut them down really good.

Xiye: How do we actually get people to hear climate activists and what are some tactics that you have discovered when it comes to strategy and just getting the message out?

Jamie: Here's the thing, showing people, graphs of like carbon has already worked on the people who it will turn. You have to communicate the climate crisis on a very personal level. But it can be easy for people to relate to, 'Oh no, someone lost their home. Oh, no. Someone got sick'. That's very personal. People understand that. I'm not emotionally moved by a carbon chart, but I am emotionally moved by someone's story.

Pooja: Yeah.

Xiye: For sure. There's this statistic that says that people are 20 times more likely to remember data if it's linked to storytelling. So I definitely feel that.

Pooja: There are so many impactful youth climate organizations out there right now. How are you collaborating with them?

Jamie: It's when the moment calls for it, we come together. For example, with the September 20th climate strikes, we all pitched in. With the recent, um, teachings against environmental racism. A lot of different organizations came together. We know of each other. We follow each other on social media. We're acutely aware of what each other is doing.

Pooja: Trump sending a tweet is like the bat signal and then everyone assembles.

Xiye: Yeah. And you know, on that note of, you know, the upcoming very, very upcoming, um, precedential closing of the race, uh, one presidential candidate has an inadequate climate strategy and the other one doesn't have a climate strategy at all. So it's not like this vote is actually going to get us everything we need but no matter what we have to keep going. So how do you see

the future of the movement and of you personally going into 2021?

Jamie: Well, I wouldn't say Trump, Trump doesn't have a climate strategy. It's not like it's doing nothing. I want us to move away from the thing of inaction. It's not an action. It's active destruction. So he has a strategy of active destruction.

Xiye: Yeah, you're right.

Jamie: I mean, here's the thing I'm very clear about the fact that I'm voting for Joe Biden and also very clear about the fact that I'm not happy about it and both can coexist.

Pooja: Totally.

Jamie: The planet can not afford another four years of Trump.

Xiye: I just want to thank you Jamie, for such an insightful, um, look into your activism. Not only from when you started while your inspiration was, but how you keep going and what your aspirations for the future are. Because I think that we're all allowed to follow our passions and care about our future at the same time and they don't have to be together. Um, so I just want to make sure that our listeners get a chance to follow your work. So please tell us where we can follow you on social media and connect with you?

Jamie: Yeah. If you want to connect with me on Twitter, you can follow me at . If you want to connect with me on Instagram, you can follow me at . And if you want to, I have a book that came out recently called *Youth to Power: Your Voice and How to Use It*, which is a guide to being an organizer for any cause. So if you want to read that book, you can go to www.youthtopowerbook.com or find youth to power at your local bookstore, or you can type in youth to power on audible or any audio book, listening website - Because I recorded the audio book, lost my voice in the process.

[Laughter]

Thank you so much for having me and yeah, everyone, please do stay in touch and connect with me after this.

Pooja: Jamie, you are amazing. We really appreciate you spending time with us today.

Xiye: Thank you! Bye!

Jamie: Bye!

[Theme Tune Music Transition]

Thimali: You absolutely killed it. Those were such amazing interviews with Jamie and Brianna.

Pooja & Xiye: Thank you! / Thanks Thimali!

Pooja: I mean, they're both really exceptional humans, so co-hosting, this episode was so much easier than I expected.

Thimali: You know, Brianna's story about walking through a magical door to her climate work with 350.org and Jamie's position on climate justice also just hit me in the gut because it's, it really just embodies the approach that we all believe in on the show that oppression and suppression of marginalized peoples will not be tolerated at any point. But knowing that there is such intricate work being done on organizing strategies amongst young people is just another reminder for me that it's just nuts not to always be listening to or engaging every single point of perspective in the room. So thank you so much.

Pooja: I feel like I learned so much from you Xiye! It was just so great to hear your perspective and to hear you interact with Brianna and Jamie, it was really inspiring and informative for me.

Thimali: And what about you Xiye, did you learn anything new?

Xiye: You know, Brianna talking about how she just wants to be free with all of us. It's just amazing.

Thimali: Mmmhmm.

Xiye: And Jamie talking about not wanting to be part of the climate movement because it's not her passion, but having to be because it's kind of her duty as youth. It's another perspective that's also really, really ingrained into this youth. Um, so I think that I learned so much from both of them. I've learned more about myself as a climate activist and I hope the audience does too. I'm always so inspired, actively listening to other people because sometimes we think we already know everything, but the reality is that we don't. Um, so I

would encourage everyone who's listening to keep your minds open and know that these types of conversations really, really foster cooperation.

- Thimali: Yeah, hear hear! Um, before we start wrapping things up though, I want to make sure everyone can follow along with the work that you're both doing.
- Pooja: Sure you could follow me on Instagram at [@pooreddy](#) and on Twitter at [@areyoureddy?](#)
- Xiye: And you can follow me on Instagram at [@xiyebeara](#), and on Twitter at [@xiyebastida](#)
- Thimali: That's great. Um, Mary and Maeve are in the waiting room. Should I let them in?
- Xiye: Yeah.
- Pooja: Okay. I'm excited to let Maeve know that I'm for sure better at this job than she is.
- Maeve: Pooja I heard that now I'm annoyed because I actually can't be annoyed because you did such a fantastic job on this episode. Well done. And you can have my job. Okay. Actually, no, wait, what am I saying?
- Pooja: *[Laughs]* No, I mean, I'll take it I'll take it.
- Maeve: No wait! I misspoke *[laughter]*.
- Maeve: I was listening and I have to say you did such a wonderful job. Both of you did.
- Pooja: Thanks Maeve.
- Mary: Yeah. I must say, uh, I'm really so impressed by this episode and how well you both hosted it. Brianna and Jamie were so impressive. The quality of organizing in the youth climate movement never ceases to amaze me. And if I can just talk about Jamie for a minute. The way she described taking part in the congressional hearing, I thought it was wonderful that she wasn't being asked anything and then she interrupts how important to interrupt at the right moment, and make sure your voice is heard. You know, her wisdom on communications, uh, you know, she's right. We need the statistics, we need the facts, but the facts don't persuade anyone. It's the stories that persuade - if only scientists would realize this and somehow communicate more in a way that people can listen to.

Maeve: That struck me too Mary it's not inaction that we need to fight. It's actually active action that people are taking and profiting from the destruction of the climate.

Pooja: Well Mary, did we do you proud?

Mary: You sure did. Actually. You sure did you graduate immediately.

Pooja: *[[celebrating]]*

Maeve: Fine.

Pooja: Oh my gosh!

Mary: Maeve, I'm sorry. You know, I know you're hurt by this, but you know - you did get there in the end.

[Group Laughter]

Yeah, I must say I really am so glad that we ended the season with something that I feel very strongly about. My age has to step aside and make room for young voices for young wisdom. I mean, the way that they collaborate and when the moments are there, they know because of social media and they can come together. It's a way of organizing that I didn't have in my time. And I think this session has been hosted by two extraordinary young women, who had the capacity to draw out their two guests, in a way that was enabling of the conversation and keep the conversation moving. That's a skill. You know, you, you really understand how to, ensure that the listener really understands what we're talking about, which is layers of injustice, which is layers of patriarchy, which is layers of colonialism. It was really, really good.

Pooja: Thank you for saying that.

Mary: However, having handed over all the power and all the responsibility I'd like to give the final word to you, Xiye.

Xiye: Oh, well, thank you so much, Mary and everyone had Mothers of Invention for giving us the opportunity to be here today, I always like to cite stubborn optimism, which is what Christiana Figueres talks about, which is, you know, we can do this. We can come together. This whole season has shown us that we have the solutions, we have the knowledge, to actually move forward. And we are already doing that and we should be proud of the work that we have been doing. So we have to

empower people to take that good action and empower people to bring their passion into, civil society into, uh, activism of all types. Thank you so much for having us today. I'm sure our paths will cross again.

Mary: Yay.

Thimali: Yeahhhh!

Mary: Right on!

[Theme Tune Music Transition]

Mary: Mothers of invention is brought to you by Vulcan productions and Doc Society. Our series producer is Thimali Kodikara and this episode was co-produced by Xiye Bastida.

Thimali: Our line producer is Rebecca Lucy Mills. Our engineer is Lisa Hack.

Maeve: Our development producer is Shanida Scotland. Our episode editor is Sefa Nkyi and our sound designer was Sami El Enany.

Xiye: Our minisode producer was Lauren Armstrong Carter our minisode field recordist was Reva Goldberg and our minisode editors were Alexis Adimora and Lisa Hack.

Pooja: And Aisha Younis oversees our satellite project climate reframe for BAME climate leaders in the UK.

Mary: Our executive producers are Jody Allen, Ruth Johnston, Matt Milios Jess Search and Beadie Finzi.

Mary: And team Vulcan is Andrea Draymer, Susan Grella Kimberley Niehaus Alex Pearson and Ted Richane.

Maeve: Our theme tune was written by Jamie Perera and we are very proudly distributed by PRX.

[CLOSING STATEMENT]

Thimali: As we sign off, I want to thank everyone who has sprinkled glitter in all the crevices of this season. I am proud beyond words. Mothers of Invention is made almost exclusively by women and gender

nonconforming media makers of color based in London, New York and Los Angeles. And almost none of us met in real life. Due to COVID-19 lockdown. We researched, wrote scripts and loaded up social media posts, amidst and loaded up social media posts, amidst catching the virus, experiencing the pain behind Black lives matter, watching our beautiful state forests on fire maneuvering every time zone imaginable, and even internet signals on tiny islands in Melanesia, but what has motivated us through it all are our beloved mothers, our love of all living things and you. Thank you all for supporting our show. Your attention is our rocket fuel and the entire [Mothers of Invention team](#) wants you to know that we believe in the power of this beautiful community and it's spirit and we wholeheartedly believe in love and laughter. So don't give up, never give up. And in the spirit of every feminist leader, whoever waxed the unimaginable, get out the vote!