THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by ANNA ROSE, 2010 Churchill Fellow

THE PETER MITCHELL CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP to research youth peer-to-peer climate change education projects

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the Internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Signed

Anna Rose
8 September 2011

Index

1. Introduction
2. Executive Summary
3. Programme of People and Organisations Visited
4. Lessons Learnt
    a. Communicate the Future Through Finding the Seeds of the New in the Ashes of the Old
    b. Hope is a strategic decision
    c. Use blogs to frame issues, spread information, and build an online community of thought leadership
    d. Use Video to show authenticity
    e. Consider Ways to Plug Youth in to the Emerging Trend of Crowd-Sourced Solar
    f. Decentralise the Movement into Small Groups to build Community
    g. Create Transformational Opportunities for Youth
    h. Use Stories of Young Peoples' Courage
    i. Adult and young adult support for High School Student Programs
    j. The need to be part of a broader infrastructure
5. Conclusions
6. Recommendations

At Harvard University with Professor Marshall Ganz

Introduction and Acknowledgments

An enormous thank you goes, of course, to the Churchill Trust. I will always be grateful to The Trust for giving me the opportunity to undertake my fellowship. I love telling the story of how the Churchill Trust was established, with everyday Australians chipping in to commemorate Winston Churchill's life and support Australians making a difference. It's an honour to be associated with the Trust and its mission of helping Australians contribute, with their talents and hard work, to making our great country even greater.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to meet with me. Some of you I had arranged meetings with in advance, but many of you I stumbled upon through serendipity and often with late notice. Thanks to all of you for your flexibility, openness and willingness to share lessons from the amazing work you are doing.

I am especially grateful for having been awarded a sponsored fellow, the Peter Mitchell Churchill fellowship. Peter Stuckey Mitchell was a grazier from Bringenbrong near Albury NSW. Given my own farming heritage, I'm honoured that I can help fulfill his wish of supporting young Australians through the Churchill Trust.

This report was written on the land of the Gadigal people of the Eora nation. I was reminded on many occasions throughout my fellowship that the wisdom we need to protect our planet is held by Indigenous peoples across the world, if only our society would listen.

In Beijing with the Chinese Youth Climate Action Network

Anna Rose (Chair, Australian Youth Climate Coalition)
Suite 32, 61 Marlborough St, Surry Hills NSW 2010
+61 2 9699 8690

Executive Summary

Young people have always been front and centre of creating large-scale social change. Students, in particular, have led movements throughout history from civil rights to the suffragettes and beyond. The youth climate movement in Australia is similarly leading the way by educating tens of thousands of young Australians about the problem and the solutions, empowering them to make change, and mobilising them to create and support action to reduce greenhouse pollution. Yet for young people to support each other to self-organise requires effective systems and practices, especially when working with and in institutions such as high schools and Universities.

My fellowship focused on youth responses to climate change around the world. I looked at (1) successful peer-to-peer education models and (2) innovative youth-focused and youth-run storytelling and advocacy strategies. By peer-to-peer climate education models, I mean youth run projects or campaigns that can empower the generation bearing the initial brunt of climate impacts with the knowledge and skills needed to reduce greenhouse pollution and solve the climate crisis. Within this topic, my fellowship aimed to examine the effective use of new media to communicate climate change. This includes online content such as blogs and video, as well as social networking and other forms of online story telling that appeal primarily to youth. I also sought to examine the growth of mass youth-based movements around climate change action. I looked at the interaction between online and offline activities, and the best ways to structure volunteer-based youth organisations focused on climate change.

My Churchill trip took me to three countries: the United States, Great Britain, and China. The differences were pronounced, yet some common challenges were shared, such as which structures best support youth-driven mass movements; and how to retain volunteers and bring them up the 'ladder of engagement' over time, and how to continue growing a movement when you feel you've hit the limits of how many volunteers and members you can manage.

My journey ended up introducing me to challenges and ideas that extended the scope of my work but which are fundamentally linked to the original questions I posed. These include the role of religion and spirituality in youth climate organising; transformative thinking on the global economy; the role of local place-based organising in providing focus for national movements; the history and past organisational structures of social movement organising; the importance of leadership development work; the rise and fall of social movements and the factors that lead to each; and the role of teachers in successful school-based climate initiatives. However, the lessons shared in this report focus mostly on my original objective: helping Australian organisations running *youth peer-to-peer climate education and communication campaigns* become more successful.

My key areas of learning on this topic are set out in this report, but I also posted updates on my blog during my fellowship to share my lessons along the way. In addition, I will turn this report into a series of blog posts to make sure that the lessons and recommendations can be easily digested by a broader audience. In addition, I will be running a seminar on the results of my fellowship for the Australian Youth Climate Coalition's leadership, who are at the frontline of innovative youth peer-to-peer climate engagement.

Program

People and organisations visited. In some of these cases I didn't visit the organisation's office, but had a useful meeting with a staff member in an informal setting.

USA

San Francisco	350.org
	The Engage Network
	Movement Strategy Centre
	Alliance for Climate Education
	Sum of Us
	Rainforest Action Network
	International Rivers Network
Boston	Professor Marshall Ganz, Harvard University
	Josh Lynch, ex-Energy Action Coalition
	Aaron Swartz, Demand Progress
	Avaaz
	New England Climate Summer
	Bill McKibben, climate change author
	Nico Mele, Echo Ditto & Harvard lecturer
New York	Purpose
	Marty Linsky, Harvard Professor
	Various groups at the Personal Democracy Forum
Washington, DC	Centre for American Progress
	Van Jones, Green for All & Rebuild the Dream
	MoveOn
	Progressive Policy Institute
	Energy Action Coalition
	Richard Graves, youth climate blogger
	AFL-CIO
	New Organizing Institute
Chicago	Little Village Environment Centre
	The Midwest Academy
Minneapolis	Netroots Nation conference– met tens of relevant organisations

England and China

London	UK Youth Climate Coalition
	National Field
	Compass
	Finance Innovation Lab (WWF-UK)
	Luke Bretherton
	Global Poverty Project
	Climate Rush
	Greenpeace UK
Beijing	Green Student Forum
	British Council China
	Greenpeace China
	Chinese Climate Action Network and China NGO Forum
	Institute for Environment and Development
	Greenovation Hub
	Chinese Youth Climate Action Network

Key Findings and Recommendations

Communicate the Future Through Finding the Seeds of the New in the Ashes of the Old

"The future is here, it's just not evenly distributed yet"

One challenge in communicating the solutions to climate change is that we are asking people to take a leap of faith and support the unknown (new technologies, new beliefs and values, new ways of organising our economy and our society), when most people feel comfortable and safe with the existing order of things. Fear of change - or more specifically the loss that accompanies major change - is a defining feature of human nature. Fear of loss is a major barrier to garnering more support for action on climate change.

A conversation with Charlotte Millar helped shed clarity on how to move forward with this problem. She has done a lot of work on examining existing systems, and how they self-stabilise around the status quo. Her work - and the work of organisations such as the Bricana Institute and Otto Scharma's Presencing Institute - focuses on finding the seeds of the new in the ashes of the old.

Most indicators show that our society is in a state of environmental collapse, with climate change accelerating this. Many places are also experiencing symptoms of economic and social collapse, too. Paul Gilding's book *The Great Disruption* focuses on the coming economic and environmental collapse and decision points it will force in our society. Paul has named this period 'The Great Disruption' and argues it will happen within this decade.

However, in all of our systems (such as our financial system, food system, education system, etc) there are innovators doing important work. This work can build the basis of new, sustainable systems in a new kind of society, after severe climate change impacts have forced major changes in everything we do.

In Bill McKibben's words, when it comes to climate change we need to avoid what we can't manage and manage what we can't avoid. We're all working as hard as we can to avoid what we can't manage (case in point: Australian carbon price debate) but the bit that we need to start focusing on is managing what we can't avoid; managing the consequences of the temperature increases that are already locked in.

Charlotte's work, and those of others who have come to this realisation, focuses on sensitizing policy makers and the public to these innovations. She focuses on two systems - food and finance - to help strengthen and showcase their work. In showcasing a new kind of future that is tangible and positive, some of the fear of change in the public falls away.

Rachel Botsman and Roo Rogers' book *Collaborative Consumption* is an enormously important contribution to this debate. The book is a comprehensive catalogue of many of the seeds of the new economy, based on sharing rather than consuming and hoarding that which we rarely use. The book's website states: "From enormous marketplaces such as eBay and Craigslist, to emerging sectors such as social lending (Zopa), peer-to-peer travel (Airbnb) and car sharing (Zipcar or peer-to-peer RelayRides), Collaborative Consumption is disrupting outdated modes of business

and reinventing not just what we consume but how we consume. New marketplaces such as TaskRabbit, ParkatmyHouse, Zimride, Swap.com, Zilok, Bartercard and thredUP are enabling “peer-to-peer” to become the default way people exchange — whether it’s unused space, goods, skills, money, or services — and sites like these are appearing everyday, all over the world.”

Charlotte also assists in connecting innovators within the systems to work collaboratively. This involves a lot of work strengthening relationships between individuals through strong processes. Charlotte says, "If you have funding, invest in process then find good people to facilitate the process."

One note of caution however: in the UK, climate campaigners have already achieved ambitious climate change legislation, which has widespread public acceptance and bipartisan political support. Therefore, the UK climate movement has more scope to focus on more long-term thinking than Australian climate advocates, who are still “in the trenches” struggling to pass climate legislation and convince large sections of the public that acting on climate change is worth it.

Recommendations:

1. Young climate activists should help identify, foster and encourage young innovators doing things differently to reform the workplaces, sectors and systems they work in. They should help connect innovators within systems to encourage collaboration, and showcase their work.

2. Communication materials aimed at demographic groups who may be afraid of change will benefit from stories of new systems and ways of doing things that are already on-line. For example, stories showing existing baseload renewable energy plants overseas (and the people who work there) will help dispel the myth that “renewables can’t provide baseload power”.

Hope is a strategic decision

"Hope is not a matter of personal psychology. In the face of uncertainty, operating from a position of hope is a strategic and practical response. The choice to be optimistic is perhaps the most important and most political choice an individual can make" – Paul Gilding

Amongst climate campaigners in the UK and China I noticed a new understanding underpinning our work - we are no longer working to "stop climate change". It's too late for that. The chance we had to avoid dangerous temperature increases has passed, with most Governments and business failing to act on scientific warnings.

Two recent books have been influential with climate campaigners – Bill McKibben's "Eaarth" and Paul Gilding's "The Great Disruption". I was scared, for a while, that this understanding of the devastating news coming from the field of climate science would make climate change campaigners, especially young people, give up on activism and instead go build a house in the forest high above sea level near a water supply.

But instead, there's a kind of tacit understanding that we must keeping working for the "least worst" scenario; to save as many ecosystems, communities and species as possible through limiting the temperature rises that occur over what's already locked in, even while we mourn for those victims of climate change for whom it is too late.

The new undercurrent in the movement is hard to describe: it's the ability to hold the grim, brutal facts with us, but with a lightness that still allows us to do our work.

There are processes that can be used to encourage people to be able to "hold" the reality of climate science, whilst being able to do the day-to-day work of climate education and advocacy without being bogged down with despair.

The secondary challenge is how to communicate the broader message of climate change to a public with such a limited understanding of the issue to begin with. We know that messages of death and despair turn people off out of fear. The solution seems to be to communicate the facts but also the fact that it's still worth fighting.

Recommendations:

1. Be honest in our communications with people that it's no longer about future generations. People and ecosystems have already been irreversibly changed and damaged by the almost one-degree Celsius of climate change the Earth has experienced so far.

2. Then, remind people constantly that we have to approach our work from a place of hope, and that choosing despair is un-strategic and not useful in terms of fighting to save what's left. In other words, we must keep trying to avoid what we can't manage and manage what we can't avoid.

Use blogs to frame issues, spread information, and build an online community of thought leadership

I conducted an experiment while I was on my fellowship. I wanted to see if I could build a stronger online community around my Churchill fellowship travels – a group of people to toss ideas around with, and who would in turn spread my blog posts further than my immediate friendship networks. I pledged to write frequently on my own blog to share many of the lessons that I was learning, and the meetings I was having, with the rest of the youth climate movement in Australia. I promoted my posts only by Facebook and Twitter, and managed to dramatically grow both the readership of my blog, and the level of discussion it hosted.

At the same time, I was examining other organisations' use of social media in various contexts. In China, environmentalists use the social networking sites Weibo and RenRen to communicate news, despite penalties from the Chinese Government.

For example, while I was in Beijing, protests occurred in Inner Mongolia after a coal miner deliberately ran his truck over a farmer and killed him. Details of this incident were posted on one of the internet forums that are popular with Chinese students by a member of one of the student green groups I met with. The police later visited the office, and home, of the student, and shut down their internet forum temporarily. Many other Chinese blogs have been permanently shut down, and some bloggers have gone missing, especially since the "jasmine revolutions" in the Middle East have made the Chinese government even more sensitive than usual to any criticism.

Also while I was in China, a major oil-spill occurred in the central Bohai sea, but details of the spill were hard to find. The incident was originally made public by posts on the internet, including on popular microblogging service Weibo. Journalists were able to then follow this information up by contacting the company directly. The email list-serv Beijing Energy Network is also an excellent source of information about clean energy and climate-related events and companies working in Beijing. Note: There are still some good blogs that provide commentary on China – for example China Law Blog, Greening the Beige, and China Development Brief (although their posts are archived now).

The UK has a small progressive blogosphere but not many environmental or climate-specific blogs. It appears that the revenue model, like in Australia, isn't yet at the stage where bloggers can earn a living wage from advertisements on blogs. In the U.S. however, there is a much larger blog community and one of the highlights of my fellowship was attending Netroots Nation, the largest gathering of progressive bloggers on Earth. I met dozens of climate and environmental bloggers and was inspired by the energy and direction they have helped give to the broader U.S. climate movement.

In this era where people have little time for reflection on their work, the process of writing a blog, reading others' blogs, and the online discussion that occurs in the comments field, is incredibly important. Yet at the moment, when you search "Australian climate blog", the first page of Google results is for Australian climate denier blogs. Given the increasing centralization of Australian media, now is the time for climate activists in Australia to prioritise developing a healthy blogosphere with rich, engaging content that serves (a) to inspire, connect and develop the existing movement and (b) as an entryway for new people to learn about, and get involved in, the movement.

As a final aside on this topic, one lesson I learnt from Netroots Nation that is useful to share is this: you should spend as much time promoting your blog post as you spent writing it.

Recommendations

1. The climate movement in Australia should begin to prioritise developing a richer blogosphere to frame our issues and tell the stories of our movement in accessible ways. We can build on existing blogs such as Climate Spectator, Green Dan Blog, New Matilda, Crikey and Paul Gilding's blog.

2. Youth organisations and youth projects working on climate change should train participants to blog about their work and promote their posts, once written, to their friends and families.

Use Video to Show Authenticity

For many people across the world, watching Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth* was the thing that spurred them into understanding, and acting upon, the climate crisis. Al Gore understood the importance of video, and we must ensure we continue to use it when working with young people on climate change.

Authenticity is key. Real stories, real people, real vulnerability, real empathy. There's a reason the stories of Tim DeChristopher and Tamsin Omod (mentioned earlier) have garnered so much interest in climate change: they're real people, with real faces, who people can relate to. Video is an excellent medium to tell authentic stories. Whilst on my fellowship, I attended a screening of the film "The Last Mountain", which tells the story of people and communities in Appalachia, West Virginia fighting mountaintop removal. It's a powerful documentary, and there should be more like it. The documentary 'Gaslands' has had a similar impact.

In the U.S I met with the Alliance for Climate Education (ACE) who are doing excellent work engaging high school students in climate change. They hire charismatic presenters in their 20's who go to schools and do a presentation that uses video and personal stories. Then, students form "action teams" and make sustainability changes in their school with support from the ACE presenter who visited them. The Action Teams are brought together at conferences to develop their leadership skills and form networks between schools. In just two years of existence, ACE has risen quickly to become the nation's leading climate organization focused on high school students. They have taken a complex subject and made it compelling to hard-to-reach teens, presenting to over 640,000+ high school students nationwide in less than 2 years. Their unique multimedia, animated presentation, delivered by dynamic, young, performance arts-trained presenters has proven to be able to reach students in a way that sticks. A recent study in the Chicago Public Schools showed that ACE contributed to a 58% improvement in climate science understanding amongst students.

The US-based organisation Invisible Children also heavily uses video and multimedia to target high school students to get involved with their organisation. I recommend looking at their work.

Videos don't have to be highly produced feature films to have an impact. One of the most impressive videos I saw on my trip was a short clip of Lady Gaga talking to her fans about why she supported the repealing the 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell' policy, and then showed her calling her political representatives asking for the law to be changed. This is an innovative new way that the climate movement in Australia can use celebrities who endorse their causes!

The Australian Youth Climate Coalition is already quite advanced at using video, but there is potential for even more focus on this are to yield large dividends in recruiting new people, and moving audiences to act after they have seen authentic stories told in a compelling manner via video.

Recommendation:

1. The Australian youth climate movement should continue to prioritize reaching out to young people with video skills, training our volunteers in video, and consider making a feature film in the next several years.

Consider Ways to Plug Youth in to the Emerging Trend of Crowd-Sourced Solar

“Here comes the sun” – The Beatles

The UK's 10:10 campaign will, this September, launch the pilot project of a new program called Solar Schools. It's a simple concept: crowd source the cost of installing solar on schools from the local community.

In the words of 10:10's Campaigns Director Daniel Vockins:

"That way the community feels ownership over something positive to do with climate change and you can then use that as an incredibly interesting leaping off point for all sorts of even more interesting campaigns around renewables or anything else climate related for that matter (both during and after the programme). The toolkit we're building gives a virtual roof to every school in the country and allows individuals and local businesses/orgs to buy panels/cells for the schools. It then uses social networks to help them get other class mates/parents involved."

The program has a very clear ladder of engagement, which brings people along from a very low base of interest, skill, and involvement through low-barrier actions (donating, asking for money, planning the solar installation, community education) and turns them into leaders. Many people involved in social and environmental change work say that the reason they got "hooked" is that they experience the feeling that it is possible to change things. This kind of program guides students along a path where they will achieve an impressive outcome, and at the end of it will have a sense that ordinary people, led by high school students, really can change things. Once students have had this realisation and developed the leadership skills that this journey will bring out in them, it’s likely that they will continue on to other climate-related work and advocacy.

The trend towards crowd-sourced solar is also taking off in the United States, with the launch of new company Mosaic Solar. Mosaic Solar’s motto is “Together, we can all go solar”. Their website features a quote from Buckminster Fuller that echoes the kind of work being done by Charlotte Millar: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Other U.S. organisations are doing similar things. One Block off the Grid (1BOG) is a nationwide group purchasing initiative working to accelerate the adoption of renewable energy and sustainable living solutions. It works through education, assessment tools, community purchase pricing, financial and logistical support 1BOG currently operates in 8 cities across the country. They identified the three biggest barriers to household solar: (1) Green home improvements are expensive; (2) Big ticket items are confusing; and (3) It’s hard to figure out who to trust. By pooling people’s money together, discounts can be negotiated. By educating and equipping their members to go through the process, and by vetting solar installers to find the lowest price for the highest quality, 1BOG overcomes the barriers.

One final example: Solar@work is a joint project of the World Resources Institute and the San Francisco Department of the Environment, created to help Bay Area businesses obtain affordable solar electric systems. Essentially, it is a group-purchasing program that was created to secure discounted solar pricing for

commercial building owners, provide an affordable solar financing option, and stimulate local economic development.

Lisa Curtis, writing on Solar Mosaic's blog, argues that this trend is more than the "groupon" of solar. She quotes Lisa Gansky at the recent Cleantech Forum talking about the concept of a broader trend called The Mesh: "The Mesh is a fundamental shift in our relationship to the things in our lives. We're moving to an economy where access to goods and services trumps ownership of them. The opportunity of the Mesh is to really design and support better things easily shared."

From schools to communities, community-funded solar could be the next big thing in an economy based on sharing. It's a variant on Australia's Hepburn Wind Farm, which is community-owned, because solar can be installed on a smaller and cheaper scale (like a school) – but it's clear that the trend is coming to Australia too.

Recommendations:

1. The Australian climate movement should consider how community-owned solar/ voucher solar/ crowd-sourced solar, is growing in Australia, and what opportunities there are for the movement to link in to this.

2. The youth climate movement should consider whether there is scope for crowd-sourced solar to work in Australian schools, in a similar project to 10:10's solar schools.

Decentralise into Small Groups to build Community

Movements that are based on (or have built from scratch) strong relational ties, social relationships, and a strong sense of community are movements that will last. They're stronger and more resilient, and will therefore be more likely to survive attacks and low points, and take actions that require greater courage.

I'm not saying there's no place for organisations based on shallow or weak ties – how else can we widen the circle of those involved? Low barrier actions like online petitions have an important place in a movement's ladder of engagement. But for the youth climate movement, which in Australia has taken on the role of holding a deep movement base, it's essential to focus on building strong relationships between members.

During my Fellowship I spoke with Marianne Manilov from The Engage Network regarding the 'small circle' model practiced by Rick Warren's Saddleback Church and by many movements throughout history. This is much easier in identity-based movements (like youth, women or people of colour) because of the shared identities and natural inclination to want to spend time with "people like you". However, there are also groups like the Sydney Alliance, Citizens UK and the Chicago Collaborative (all based on Saul Alinksy's relational community organising model) who have a model of relational organising between diverse communities and diverse leaders.

Looking at the growth and sustenance of large, powerful movements over time, it's clear that a strong sense of community and strong relational ties are absolutely essential. Being in relationship with one another changes the lives of the individuals involved. Activists become loyal not just to the issue, but also to each other. That can keep movements going through hard times, rather than people deserting the movement when they lose interest and move to another cause. Whilst on my Fellowship I watched the PBS Documentary 'The Freedom Riders' which gave me an important insight into the strength of the ties that connected the youth civil rights movement. Small groups are an excellent way of doing this.

Recommendation:

1. The Australian youth climate movement should trial the Engage Network's model (or a similar model) of small groups in order to build community

2. The climate movement should continue to learn from US and Australian evangelical Churches model of small groups, which allows a sense of close-knit community to remain even as they grow into mega-Churches. Rick Warren's book *'Purpose Driven Church'* has more on this.

Create Transformational Opportunities for Youth

"Gather round, because today won't come again…I am blessed to be a witness" – Ben Harper

Before I left Australia to complete my Churchill fellowship, I went through Oxfam's simulated refugee experience, 'Refugee Realities' (http://www.oxfam.org.au/refugee/public/index.php). I found it very powerful and wondered what kind of similar transformative experiences we could create on climate change – especially for young people. My fellowship gave me further opportunity to reflect on the importance of transformational experiences.

Transformational experiences don't come from facts. Reading an article about climate change is unlikely to be a transformational experience for most people. Well-written books, however, have been known to be very powerful – such as the "spear to the chest awakening" that businessperson Ray Anderson from Interface Carpets had while reading Paul Hawken's book *The Ecology of Commerce.* Sometimes, it can be a transformational experience can be vicarious. That is, hear about someone else's experience can change your own life. The arrest and jailing of Tim DeChristopher was a transformational experience for many in the climate movement in the U.S. The 'Plane Stupid' climate protests in the UK against the Heathrow expansion were transformational because they led to winning the campaign. That meant they changed people's perceptions of what's possible, even for the people who weren't there and didn't experience it firsthand. For many Churchill fellows, the journey itself will be a transformational experience.

Well-designed transformational experiences strengthen peoples' commitment to the issue they're working on, and to the movement they're working in. They create deep ties and unforgettable memories. They are sorely needed to strengthen the depth and resolve of our movements.

As I finish writing this report, many of my friends from the youth climate movement in the United States are engaging in peaceful civil disobedience by holding daily sit-ins outside the White House protesting the proposed tar sands Keystone XL pipeline (http://www.tarsandsaction.org). As at 3rd September 1009 people have been arrested.

Josh Fox, Director of the film 'Gaslands' wrote about why and how the protest was a transformative experience for him:

"The sit-in itself was intensely moving and beautifully organized and orchestrated…The camaraderie of the activists gave me hope and a sense of support that I have direly needed during this fight…Taking a stand with so many others right in front of the White House, urging Barack Obama, a president that I support, to do the right thing, gave me an immense pride as an American."

Another participant, Adam Maynard, reflected:

One of the most remarkable things for me about this action was the ability of a group of complete strangers to come together and rally around a common vision. It was even more astonishing to me that part of that goal was arrest. The vast majority of us, like myself, were first-time participants in a demonstration of this kind and had never been arrested before. This could have made for a nervous bunch, but after spending

several hours at a civil disobedience training session last night we were comfortable enough to put our trust in one another and take this leap of faith together.

For many of the participants, taking part in the protest, getting arrested, and being supported throughout the process by a strong movement of others would have been a life-changing experience.

Recommendations:

1. Where possible, create transformative experiences as part of peer-to-peer education and advocacy campaigns for young people. This could range from a climate change 'Refugee Realities' simulation to a mass peaceful youth protest in Australia.

2. Important climate-related experiences (e.g. going to Antarctica, going to the Torres Strait or Pacific islands and seeing the impacts of climate change firsthand) that have made significant impacts on individuals within the climate movement should be shared through social media, blogs, video and other mediums with an aim to helping create vicarious transformational experiences for others.

Use Stories of Young Peoples' Courage

A key focus of my Churchill fellowship involved examining the best ways to communicate climate change in order to inspire young people to get involved in groups like the Australian Youth Climate Coalition. One important finding was that telling compelling stories of young people who dared to undertake extraordinary actions as part of climate change campaigns was highly motivating to young people.

Two stories in particular seemed to cut through to large numbers of young people in the USA and UK respectively: that of Utah student Tim DeChristopher interrupting a federal oil and gas auction (and subsequently being sent to prison for two years); and the story of young UK climate activist Tamsin Omond scaling the walls of Westminster.

When the media report on these kinds of stories it appears to serve two purposes:

- For youth not already engaged in climate change, these stories helped draw them in to learn more about the issue after seeing the story reported in the news and thinking these actions were "cool".
- Inspiring young people already engaged in the issue to do more, dream bigger, and dedicate more of themselves to the climate movement. Interestingly, for this group of young people (and I include myself among them) stories of highly courageous acts from other, non-climate related campaigns also had the effect of inspiring reflection about how they can take their actions on climate change to the next level. For example, learning about the actions taken by "undocumented" young people (predominantly Mexican-American) as part of the campaign to pass the D.R.E.A.M Act was incredibly moving and inspiring, and had many youth climate activists in America thinking about what kind of risks they need to take in their campaigning work to garner more attention on climate change as an intergenerational issue.

It is important to have high-profile examples of people showing leadership, in order to inspire others and spur them on to act. A note of caution when it comes to applying this lesson, however: it is important not to portray the young people involved as once-in-a-generation heroes who are aberrations or highly different in terms of their backgrounds, experience or motivation from the rest of the youth climate movement.

Both Tim DeChristopher (USA) and Tamsin Omond (UK) emphasise in media interviews that they are ordinary young people and that they'd like to see the kind of actions that they took become much more mainstream in the youth climate movement. Of course, they are leaders, and have become so through their actions, but they make it clear that any young person could have had the strength and courage to do what they've done, when faced with the facts on climate change and the lack of action from power-holders.

Finally, these stories of courageous young people do not need to focus just on one individual. While I was in the United States, young people and local residents organised a march (http://marchonblairmountain) in Appalachia, West Virginia, to protest mountaintop removal.

Mountaintop removal is the practice whereby mining companies blow up mountains with explosives to access the coal inside. It is destroying local communities, causing cancer and other illnesses through contaminating the water and air, and deforesting

large areas. More information can be found at www.ilovemountains.org. The organisers knew that marching against coal mining in Appalachia, an isolated area in the heart of the West Virginian coal mining industry, would be dangerous. They therefore were smart about having as many people around America aware of, and supporting, the march, as possible. They created a “virtual march” where people could sign up online as a solidarity marcher, and let their friends know through social media that they were supporting the march. This meant that when help was needed, there was an existing base of support. And help was needed!

The owners of one of the campgrounds, who had previously confirmed they would accept the marchers on the usual commercial terms, changed their mind after the campers had set up tents and unpacked after a long day marching. With only a short period of notice, the campers had to pull down their tents, re-pack and get out of the campground. The organisers knew they’d have to find new accommodation for the next few nights, and they needed money to book it. The Energy Action Coalition sent an email out to their database and to the people who had signed up as virtual marchers explaining the situation and asking for donations. Within hours, they’d received all the money they needed and more.

This was a good example of simple, compelling story telling about real young people in an imminently urgent situation that inspired other young people to act in solidarity. They weren’t just passively impressed with the courageous action being taken despite the risk of danger and arrest, but also moved enough to donate funds in support.

Recommendations

1. Young climate advocates should seek out and promote stories of young people doing courageous acts within climate change campaigns

Young Australian climate activists should seek out stories of tactics used by other campaigns around the world to inspire new members

Young adult support for High School Student Programs

Whilst it is fundamentally important that advocacy elements of youth climate movements be youth-led, there is a subset of activities – involving education and initial engagement with young people who've previously never been exposed to climate change – which can benefit from a more structured program.

The examples of ACE (Alliance for Climate Education) in the United States and the 10:10 solar schools program showed me that there's no reason these kind of programs can't be run by young adults and adults, and indeed will probably be more successful if this is the case. This is because to scale a program beyond, say, 50 schools, requires a high level of structure and a replicable model with excellent project management, along with expertise in a number of things that are beyond the experience of most high students to manage on their own.

However, these school programs create a 'pipeline' of young people who, upon graduating high school, are ready to take more responsibility and throw themselves wholeheartedly into the broader youth climate movement; a movement that is – and will remain – youth run.

Recommendations

1. New organisations focused on climate change education with high school students should be open to hiring young adults and adults to work with high school students to run the program; rather than expecting school students to autonomously self-organise beyond the limits of their school.

The Need to be Part of a Broader Infrastructure

"We don't need more organisations, we need more glue" – Josh Lynch during our conversation in Boston.

The Churchill fellowship reinforced my existing understanding of a movement as an ecosystem. An ecosystem is a complex, interconnected system made up of various actors working together and separately. The youth climate movement cannot solve the climate crisis alone; neither can the direct action wing of the climate movement; the education wing; the political strategy wing or the policy wing. Beyond that, because climate change is a problem that goes to the heart of our economic system and model of growth, the climate movement must work in solidarity with other movements who share the same values of empathy, responsibility and stewardship and promote a different relationship between humans with each other, and with the earth.

I was privileged on my fellowship to learn much about both the US and UK progressive movement infrastructures – their history, their successes and failures. Reading Matt Bai's *The Argument* whilst in Washington DC and meeting with many of the institutions that hold together the progressive policy and media efforts was indeed a unique experience.

One thing that became clear was that the institutions and individuals whose job it is to connect various elements of the infrastructure together are playing a very important role. Witnessing certain "connectors" flick through their mental Roladexes of hubs and nodes when I asked them to recommend people to meet with at my next destination was an impressive sight to behold.

The ubiquity of Twitter and Facebook amongst the youth climate movement internationally (even in China where activists can get behind the firewall using VPNs and other technology) means that these connections can be made even more quickly and easily. For example, when my flight from Washington DC to Minneapolis was changed and required me to spend an entire day in Chicago, I used Facebook to ask my network who to meet with, and within less than an hour had organised two very useful and enlightening meetings (Little Village Environmental Justice and the Midwest Academy) based on suggestions from "connector" friends. Netroots Nation, which I was privileged to be able to attend, is one of the most important events for connecting the technology-advocacy part of the progressive and environmental movement in the US. It was fascinating to see this ecosystem come together to learn together, party together, and argue about policy together (one night I was part of a heated argument about the way the environment movement handled the cap and trade legislation that had failed to pass Congress).

Recommendations

1. The youth climate movement should consider its place in the broader ecosystems of climate change, environmental causes, social justice causes and the progressive movement. Remembering that we are part of an interconnected ecosystem where others can help us, and we can help others, and together we can think very long term about what the ecosystem needs to look like in 15-20 years, can help our work be more effective and intentional.

Conclusion

During my fellowship, I gained many insights and lessons that can be applied to the Australian Youth Climate Coalition and other youth-run climate change initiatives in Australia. I also learnt lessons that can apply to the broader climate change movement in Australia.

Rather than providing me with one “spear to the chest” realisation about youth peer-to-peer climate change education and advocacy projects, my fellowship provided an opportunity to reflect on a range of issues within, and related to, my area of exploration.

Perhaps the key lesson I bring away is the importance of strong and deep relationships in organising. Without enormous amounts of money or organisational resources, relational organising – building lasting, deep relationships amongst a network of young people who enjoy spending time with each other – is key.

This includes, but goes beyond, making peer-to-peer climate education and organising “fun”. It makes this work a core part of fulfilling young people’s need for community and solidarity. This need that can be met by local organising but strengthened even more when young people realise they are part of a national, and even global, movement for change.

In examining the *attitudes, structures* and *experiences* that support such bonds to be forged, I came across the concepts of “transformative activism” and “engagement organising”. I saw both these concepts at work in the places I visited with strong movements, and saw the consequences of not embracing these attitudes in places where youth-driven climate movements were weaker.

Of course, the lessons I learnt on my Fellowship are part of a work in progress. I intend to build on them as I continue to work, as part of the Australian climate movement, to solve the climate crisis.

In London