

This Is The 16-Year-Old Leading The Next Climate March

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At just 16 years old, Climate Reality Leader Jamie Margolin is one of the 13 plaintiffs suing Washington State for failing to take adequate steps to fight climate change.

And on July 21, she'll be at the helm of a mass youth climate march in Washington, DC, led by her organization, Zero Hour.

Jamie, who hails from Seattle, WA, says her upbringing was what led her to take interest in environmental issues, which she believes are inevitably intertwined with social justice.

"I've always just been a political nerd and a science nerd in general," she said. "I grew up in a politically aware household."

Back in 2016, she gained hands-on experience organizing voters while volunteering on Hillary Clinton's campaign.

"My mom is a Latina immigrant from Columbia, so I did a lot of translating for people who didn't speak English," she says. "After that, my already big political awareness and passion just exploded."

Following the election, Jamie became a community organizer at Plant for the Planet, a youth organization that seeks to fight the climate crisis by planting trees across the world.

Since her involvement with Plant for the Planet began, Jamie has traveled several times to the state capitol in Olympia to lobby for common sense legislation to curb climate change.

“I wanted to take it to the next level,” she says. “I very much saw the emergency that is the climate crisis – this is a ticking time bomb, and I wanted to make more national waves.”

Then, in the summer of 2017, Jamie was accepted to attend the Climate Reality Leadership Corps Training in Seattle, which she says pushed her to further her environmental activism.

“There were a lot of awesome youth present at the training,” she says. “It was nice to be in a room full of people who understood.”

From there, she says she began to think seriously about organizing a youth climate march, which then evolved into her organization, Zero Hour.

“We decided on the name Zero Hour because people don’t recognize the urgency of climate change,” she says. “It is threatening our very survival, and people don’t realize that there’s no more time to keep pushing it down and delaying it till later.”

The goal of the march, Jamie says, is to instill a sense of urgency and call attention to communities disproportionately affected by the climate crisis.

“When most people think about climate change, they think about the polar ice caps,” Jamie says. “We want them to think about the children it affects, the refugees that it creates and the lives it’s ruining.”

In addition to the march, there will also be a lobby day, taking place on July 19, in which young people will call on their elected officials to divest from fossil fuels.

“We want our senators to pledge to stop taking money from the fossil fuel industry,” she says. “If they don’t, we will call them out publicly.”

“Together, we are a movement of unstoppable youth organizing to protect our rights and... ensure a livable future where we not just survive, but flourish.”

As a high schooler herself, Jamie believes it’s especially important for young people to be involved in climate activism, and is determined to build a movement that represents those on the frontlines.

“We’re doing this because we care and, as you can see with the Parkland students, youth can really have an impact,” she says. “We aren’t being paid for this, and there’s no hidden agenda.”

But Zero Hour won’t end with the march, or even the lobby day. Jamie says her organization will continue to fight for those on the front lines of the climate crisis.

“People like Scott Pruitt won’t be alive to see the worst of the climate crisis,” she says. “But we are, and we’re inheriting this mess. That’s why our voices are special, and people listen.”

Be Part of History

We’re so inspired by Climate Reality Leaders like Jamie. Join the youth-led call for climate

action! You can get involved with Zero Hour – by taking to the streets at the Youth Climate March on July 21 and by participating in the lobby day on July 19. To learn more, visit the Zero Hour website.

And if you're inspired by Jamie, remember that you can become a Climate Reality Leader, too! In August, we're headed to Los Angeles to welcome the newest class of climate champions like Jamie. It's going to be the largest training ever – and you don't want to miss it!
