

The Ecopolitics Podcast Episode 3.1: What Does it Mean to be an Eco-Citizen? Intro to Everyday Ecopolitics Season Three (Transcript).

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Hosts: Ryan Katz-Rosene and Peter Andrée

Guests: Kimberly Nicholas and Manvi Bhalla.

Summary: *What is eco-citizenship and what does it entail? These are the overarching questions that guide this episode's discussions with Manvi Bhalla, Graduate Student and Co-Founder of Shake Up The Establishment & missINFORMED, and Kimberly Nicholas, Associate Professor of Sustainability Science at Lund University. From an introduction to intersectionality and its importance in climate justice action, to the Eat Lancet Report's rough guidelines for how to reduce one's carbon footprint, this wide-ranging discussion explores all the facets of what it means to be an eco-citizen, and who bears the most responsibility for taking action to slow climate change.*

[00:00:00] **Kimberly Nicholas:** Whatever group you're a part of, and it could also be your school, your organization; those are really important places to be active and to start these conversations and start convening, getting people together and talking about, okay, how can we make our university, our workplace, our city, our neighborhood? What are the things that are standing in our way of taking these climate actions, becoming fossil free, and how can we address them?

[00:00:29] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Hello, and welcome to the Ecopolitics podcast, mini season three: 'Everyday Ecopolitics.' This is a podcast for university students tackling some of the key questions and challenges in the field of environmental politics today. I'm Ryan Katz-Rosene from the University of Ottawa, and here with me is my co-host, Dr. Peter Andrée from Carleton University. Peter, I don't know about you, but I'm very excited about this third mini season of our podcast.

[00:00:56] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** The overarching theme of 'Everyday Ecopolitics,' we're really trying to explore how environmental politics is embedded in our everyday lives. It's embodied in the natural and built environments we live in. It's present in all of the social, political, and economic systems, which shape our lives and really it's part of our everyday choices and actions.

[00:01:19] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** In this mini series, we have outlined six questions, six episodes, that are each going to tackle one of these sort of distinct questions pertaining to everyday ecopolitics. And that starts with today's episode, which asks, what does it mean to be an eco-citizen? So again, I'm super pumped about this third season, what about you?

[00:01:42] **Peter Andrée:** Yes, I am, Ryan. We've had some really great listener feedback on seasons one and two, and I'm really excited to be embarking on season number three. In fact, it was listener feedback that led us to change things up a bit this season. Our episodes this season are deliberately set up to bring differing perspectives to the fore about what we,

as individuals, can do to engage in the environmental issues that affect our lives, and then to bring those voices into conversation.

[00:02:12] **Peter Andréé:** So, rather than a long interview with just one person or two people at the same time, which is a lot of what season one and two included most of the episodes this season are basically going to be little radio documentaries that bring unique, and sometimes contrasting perspectives, into conversation. There are times when you, or I, will interview two people and then bring those interviews into a discussion with the other host, and sometimes we'll interview people separately and then have a conversation about what we learned from those different perspectives.

[00:02:45] **Peter Andréé:** As an example of that in this, our first episode of the season, you and I each spoke to a different guest who we thought could really help us unpack what eco-citizenship is all about.

[00:03:02] **Manvi Bhalla:** Being an eco-citizen to me means being an active and engaged citizen who is participating in conversations, learning opportunities, policy spaces, collective action spaces with advocacy, really working in every single sector across all the sectors that are available trying to make sure that community centered approaches are really valued because they are currently undervalued. But, the people we're trying to help with policy, they have the answers, just listening to them is a really important part of being an engaged eco-citizen.

[00:03:38] **Peter Andréé:** Ryan, that's Manvi Bhalla. She was the guest I interviewed for this episode. She's a graduate student who is completing her Masters at the University of Guelph, and about to start her PhD at the University of British Columbia. She is also the co-founder of two organizations, one called Misinformed.ca and another called 'Shake Up the Establishment,' which we'll hear more about a little later.

[00:04:02] **Manvi Bhalla:** I'm turning 24 this year. I am both a researcher in an academic setting, I'm a graduate student, but I'm also a community organizer. I think I like the latter half of the work that I do. In the sense that it really informs where my passions kind of come from, and then it kind of translates to the health research space that I work in a lot of the time in school.

[00:04:28] **Peter Andréé:** So as you'll hear, Manvi's work is as a community organizer through the various organizations she's helped to found and even through her research. She's fundamentally influenced by an intersectional lens, which she also defined for me while introducing her work in climate justice.

[00:04:46] **Manvi Bhalla:** I approach the climate crisis with sort of an intersectional lens, which is an important and critical component because the climate crisis is not going to impact all populations equally. And so with that mindset, a lot of the work that I do tries to take into fact that different populations are going to be disproportionately impacted and so our response needs to ensure that's included in our process of how to address this issue

[00:05:14] **Peter Andréé:** In the conversation I had with Manvi, we went into a lot of depth about what an intersectional lens means and what it ought to mean for eco-citizenship more broadly. And I'll share more of that audio later, but first Ryan, I wonder if you can tell us a bit about who you interviewed for this episode.

[00:05:30] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Sure, well, I'm very intrigued to talk more about how an intersectional lens ought to shape eco-citizenship and hear more from Manvi. For my interview, Peter, I spoke to a colleague from Lund University in Sweden named Kimberly Nicholas.

[00:05:46] **Kimberly Nicholas:** I'm Kim or Kimberly Nicholas. I'm an Associate Professor of Sustainability Science at Lund University in Sweden. So I teach in the masters and PhD programs here, and I'm the author of a new book called *Under the Sky We Make: How to Be Human in a Warming World*, which is about facing the climate crisis with facts, feelings, and action.

[00:06:08] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** I really enjoyed my conversation with Kim, she's an excellent communicator and she really knows her stuff. I started off by asking her what comes to mind when she hears the term 'Everyday Ecopolitics.'

[00:06:22] **Kimberly Nicholas:** Well, when I hear the term politics, I like the definition of who 'gets what and how.' To me politics is about negotiating trade offs in society at its heart. It should be about fairness and equity, ensuring that society works in a way that works for everyone, resources, and basically the structure of society, which is larger than individuals, is set up in a way that works for us all. And adding the *eco* to it incorporates not just human society and for example, healthcare and economies and the things that humans create ourselves, but also incorporating the natural world, which is essential because we are very much dependent on it.

[00:07:08] **Peter Andréé:** I find it really interesting, Ryan, that Kim has started talking right away about negotiating trade-offs in society in a fair and equitable way. This is something Manvi talked about at length as well, this theme of equity and fairness in how we respond to the climate crisis was a big part of her work. For her, everyday ecopolitics fundamentally is about making the environmental movement more accessible to those who haven't, often for structural reasons, traditionally been active in this movement.

[00:07:41] **Manvi Bhalla:** People that are looking to, quote unquote, increase the diversity in policy spaces. I say to them: there are people who are unable to participate in these conversations because they have more urgent needs on a day-to-day level, food, water, shelter, these things are critical to our very existence.

[00:08:01] **Manvi Bhalla:** There are people within, that is currently Canada, that have difficulty accessing these very basic necessities. It is not an accessible movement, in many ways environmentalism is largely a movement that is easier for people of privilege to engage

in these conversations. So, trying to make the movement more accessible is everyday politics at its core.

[00:08:24] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** That's quite interesting that the conversation that you had with Manvi really zoomed into equity at, what I would say, is the micro level. As compared to my conversation with Kim, which I feel like was looking at equity at more of a macro level.

[00:08:42] **Peter André:** What do you mean by that?

[00:08:44] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Well, I suppose one way of thinking about it is that for Kim, the conversation about equity in the context of eco-citizenship really seemed to be about people being informed about broader global climate inequities between countries, and also between different classes of people. We had a conversation about changing our behavior based on being informed about those inequities, particularly as it related to climate change injustices.

[00:09:17] **Kimberly Nicholas:** From a natural science point of view, all the climate sees is carbon dioxide added to the atmosphere and other greenhouse gases. The climate does not care who admitted those greenhouse gases and why; if it is somebody taking their 20th luxury flight for the year, or if it is somebody, heating their home with wood, which is the only thing available to them in order to have a fire and cook food for their children, the climate just doesn't care.

[00:09:44] **Kimberly Nicholas:** On the other hand, I think people do and should care very much, about the equity issues. We know that there are tremendous inequalities and inequities in the history of climate change. That a few countries and a few groups of people have disproportionately benefited from using fossil fuels and disproportionately caused the problem.

[00:10:04] **Kimberly Nicholas:** I mean, that is baked into the *Paris Agreement*, equity is mentioned a number of times. This understanding of common, but differentiated responsibility, meaning that the nations who are the parties of the *Paris Agreement* who have caused the most climate change and have the most resources to deal with the consequences and to prevent further climate change, have the most responsibility to do that.

[00:10:29] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** So, Peter, she actually had a lot more to say about this in the context of fairness, and it eventually led us towards a discussion about intergenerational equity.

[00:10:39] **Kimberly Nicholas:** It's not only about those issues, which we're discussing about the inequalities between countries and between income groups within countries, it's also between generations over time as well as space. For young people today, I think it is profoundly unfair and unjust that they have the world that they have right now. I mean, it

should never have gotten to this point and it's such a huge burden for them, I think, to have placed on them.

[00:11:09] **Kimberly Nicholas:** I write in the book, a little bit tongue in cheek, "forget future generations." What I mean by that is, I actually believe that we do have a responsibility to future generations and we should be thinking about them in our choices. But, in order to do what's needed and right for the climate we actually don't need to think about hypothetical future people; we can talk to and listen to young people today who are very clearly, and persuasively, demanding their right to a stable climate and therefore a safer world where they actually have the opportunities that others have taken for granted.

[00:11:45] **Peter André:** That's really interesting that Kim mentions this burden on young people. This theme also came up in my conversation with Manvi, about who bears the responsibility for eco-citizenship.

[00:11:57] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** What did she have to say?

[00:11:59] **Peter André:** Well, in part, it may have been about the way I framed the question. I started off by asking her how she and other young climate activists approached the question of responsibility to act on climate. But pretty quickly, she pointed out that for many young people it's a big burden that they feel.

[00:12:17] **Manvi Bhalla:** It is a lot of responsibility, it is a huge burden and it's one that we honestly don't have a choice in it seems. Because it's kind of like a hands-off approach that's saying: "good luck on your future."

[00:12:28] **Peter André:** At the same time, Manvi was hopeful that since there are so many youth engaged in environmental action today, particularly on climate change and climate justice, the movement is not short on its most important resource, which is humans, and of all generations I should add.

[00:12:45] **Manvi Bhalla:** For young people that are engaging in this work, something that I find hope in is also recognizing that we could pass the baton, there are so many of us. So, not to take this on as an individual burden that you yourself will solve the climate crisis; you are a part of a large collective.

[00:13:02] **Manvi Bhalla:** It's also important to know that you really can't invest in the movement until you invest in yourself. Centering rest and resiliency has been a huge part of my focus in the last year, because honestly, the more you know about this issue, the sadder you get. I think it's okay to also confront the reality that this is a heavy burden and you're welcome to pass the baton to another young person at any time, or to an older person who is an ally and wants to engage in this space, those individuals are critical towards moving this issue forward.

[00:13:34] **Peter André:** We went in our conversation from the responsibility of an individual, to a shared burden that young eco-citizens can perhaps share among a larger

collective of people of all ages. I know you had plans to ask Kim about this question of responsibility too, what did she have to say about the responsibilities of an eco-citizen?

[00:13:54] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** That's right, I did ask Kimberly: who ultimately bears the responsibility for being an eco-citizen? In particular, I wanted to get her thoughts on whether this was a responsibility that she saw on everyone, or whether, to be blunt, we can get away with some people not taking on the responsibility of eco-citizenship. Here's a clip from when I asked her about that.

[00:14:18] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** As someone who's thought about this a lot, do you see a responsibility for everyone to be an eco-citizen in some respect?

[00:14:26] **Kimberly Nicholas:** Yes, I do. Because I think it is essential to having a successful democracy in the 21st Century, and for the preconditions for us to have a good life in the 21st Century. We cannot avoid the fact that we are in a climate emergency right now and it is going to keep getting worse until we actually make some major, both technical but especially political and social changes, most importantly, to completely stop using fossil fuels. I do think that whatever you care about, whether it is education, or healthcare, or other issues in your community, it is directly linked to climate stability and being able to actually make the changes needed in time to have opportunities in other areas that we care about.

[00:15:16] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Though I should add here, Peter, that Kim did mention some statistics on who in our society is displaying some form of climate concern. She referred to some research coming out of Yale, which basically says that most Americans are either concerned or alarmed about climate change. And in fact, only about 10% of the population that we would call climate dismissive or which you referred to as climate dismissive.

[00:15:50] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** She kind of seemed to be optimistic that with 90% of the population caring to some degree about climate change in some way or other, we might actually have enough of a critical mass to make a difference if all of those people kind of fulfilled their role as eco-citizens.

[00:16:07] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** But, I also want to play another clip for you, Peter. I asked Kimberly if there's an added responsibility for people like her and myself, and you for that matter. Those who are privileged to live fairly secure livelihoods with stable incomes in wealthy countries. Here is what she had to say about that.

[00:16:28] **Kimberly Nicholas:** Yes. I absolutely think that people who have more privilege do have more responsibility and in particular, we can look at income. What the data show is that for people who earn over about 38,000 U.S dollars per year, that's only 10% of the world so maybe students aren't there yet, but the majority of people in the U.S. are actually in that group. That means they're in the top 10% of income earners and also emitters in the world.

[00:16:58] **Kimberly Nicholas:** It's quite disproportionate and it very quickly escalates. Emissions increase rapidly with income, primarily from use of transport. The more money you have, the tendency that the data show is that you turn it into fossil fuels. The biggest way people do that is by flying a lot, and then secondarily by driving a lot.

[00:17:18] **Kimberly Nicholas:** If you look at the numbers, there is just no way to get the kind of emissions reductions fast enough on the scale we need to limit warming to 1.5, or even above that, within the terms of the *Paris Agreement*. We have to reduce over consumption.

[00:17:38] **Peter André:** I see what you're pointing to me here, Ryan, she's really drawing connections between the responsibility of privilege through to the question of consumption. Did Kim see eco-citizenship as being about changing one's consumption patterns?

[00:17:55] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Well, sort of. I was pretty keen to ask her about the difference between our responsibility as eco-citizens in a civic sense versus our responsibility to be good consumers. I've heard in previous episodes in this podcast series, a lot of people are kind of uncomfortable with framing around the idea of personal responsibility as a consumer. So, I asked her about that. She started off by agreeing that there is actually a need to differentiate between these two types of citizenship.

[00:18:27] **Kimberly Nicholas:** I agree that there has been too much focus on people as consumers as our primary or only personal, or individual, climate action. For example, ignoring the role as citizens, as parents, as educators, as colleagues, and all the other roles that we play in our lives.

[00:18:50] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** She pointed to research that she's done, with colleagues here in Canada, showing that most of the personal actions that people have been taking, or that at least have been advocated by governments and even environmental educators, have actually been pretty ineffective. The big one there is recycling, there's this big focus on recycling. She also agreed fundamentally that personal action on its own, quite frankly, isn't going to cut it when it comes to mitigating climate change.

[00:19:21] **Kimberly Nicholas:** We need structural and policy change. Basically it means governments have to stop investing in, and subsidizing, and supporting, and start actually making it impossible to produce and consume fossil fuels. That's the biggest change that we need, and that's a big change that is quite far away from where we are today. We know that we're not on track: no government, no country in the world is on track to meet their *Paris Agreement* obligations.

[00:19:48] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** She also pointed out just how significant of a problem over-consumption is. The flip side of what she's saying is that there could be a significant difference made if we found ways to reduce consumption, particularly in rich countries,

[00:20:06] **Kimberly Nicholas:** Almost half of household climate pollution comes from the 10% highest emitters and that is primarily from household consumption choices. It's about mobility, how we get around, flying and driving. It's about the food that we eat. How we

heat and light and our homes, basically the energy we use in our homes. Yes, we definitely need policies to make those compatible with a stable climate and fossil free. But, the over-consumption angle also needs to be recognized as a social problem, and we need social and cultural change to make it uncool and undesirable, and not something you would post on your Instagram to brag about; you know, here's me at a tropical beach that I flew to. Instead of thinking, "oh, that looks like status and relaxation," you should be thinking, "oh, that looks like a whole year's carbon budget in a weekend. That is not a great idea."

[00:21:05] **Peter André:** Yeah, I see what she's saying. There's a role for eco-citizens to call for and seek out collective political change. But that doesn't let people off the hook, in so far as changing our consumption habits, especially for wealthier members of our society. For those people who do need to change their consumption, what's the way to make that happen?

[00:21:28] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Well, I think one key step for Kimberly is to improve that climate literacy we were talking about earlier.

[00:21:36] **Kimberly Nicholas:** I know that it is part of the government's goals to inform and empower citizens, to actively participate in environmental decisions, recognizing that those are a huge and critical part of all of our lives now and certainly for students in the future.

[00:21:54] **Kimberly Nicholas:** We defined climate literacy in terms of some basic facts, what we say everyone needs to know about climate change, and that's also an organizing principle of my book and it's a framework I've used for teaching for more than a decade now, which is: it's warming. It's us, we're sure it's bad, we can fix it.

[00:22:17] **Kimberly Nicholas:** That is how I've defined climate literacy, linking that with the latest science, for example from the IPCC - the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - to make sure that that is part of students' curriculums. Unfortunately what we've seen from the analysis in Canada, was that most curricula in high school don't cover all of those areas. Many are missing focus on scientific consensus and on solutions, and those are really critical areas because research shows that people need to know all of those areas in order to connect the dots, both to take personal action and to support ambitious climate policy.

[00:22:56] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** That's one key step, improving climate literacy. But, quite frankly, another key one is to really focus on changing the consumption habits of the biggest emitters.

[00:23:09] **Kimberly Nicholas:** The rule of thumb that I use is that if you're around the average of household emissions for your country, don't worry too much about your footprint. That is not the biggest bang for your buck, because the reductions you could make will require structural changes. You need to have clean transport and infrastructure available for you to use to make changes.

[00:23:34] **Kimberly Nicholas:** But if you're a high emitter, you do have to make changes in order to meet climate targets. What our study showed was that the highest impact personal climate actions are to go car, flight, and meat free.

[00:23:48] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** I know a lot of listeners just perked up their ears on this question of dietary changes. This is the main theme that we're going to tackle in our next episode. So to listeners, stay tuned for a whole episode on that specific question. I should add that I asked Kim to clarify, whether she thought a climate safe future really required getting rid of cars and meat altogether or whether there's the space for a greener cars, such as electric vehicles, or greener forms of meat consumption, which might include things like eating less meat, and maybe even focusing on more sustainably produced meat.

[00:24:29] **Kimberly Nicholas:** There was a study in Sweden on what would a 1.5 degree world look like? There was a budget for flying in there. It was something like a flight between Sweden and Spain, which I'm not exactly sure about. I think that'd be four hours total, like a two hour each way flight, once every seven years. That was the sustainable flight budget. A sustainable driving budget is around 20 kilometers per day, even with a fossil free car.

[00:24:59] **Kimberly Nicholas:** And a sustainable meat budget, I am thinking of the Eat Lancet Report, which found that a healthy and sustainable diet would be about 80% less meat than what is eaten in the North American diet today. It works out to about two hamburgers per month, a couple of servings per week of chicken and fish, a couple of eggs per week, and dairy equivalent to a glass of milk or a piece of cheese the size of your thumb per day. That's the framework for not completely cutting those cars, planes, and meat out of your diet, but aiming for that level would be compatible with a stable climate within the *Paris Agreement*.

[00:25:46] **Peter Andrée:** That's really interesting Ryan, to hear the way that Kim breaks down that very specifically, in a Swedish context. I'm hearing a few threads here. One is the need for eco-citizens to have good information and climate literacy in order to act appropriately. The other is about the need to make collective scale changes, to make it easier to change social behaviors on a mass scale. This is like transportation infrastructure and an electricity grid that's not based on fossil fuels. And then there's the role for some specific individuals to change their own personal behavior, especially the more affluent who are the bigger emitters.

[00:26:28] **Peter Andrée:** I'm curious, did Kim talk about the relationship between personal action and collective action? How are they connected?

[00:26:36] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** I asked Kim whether some forms of individual action are actually necessary for collective scale changes that take place. She talked about some of her work looking at how individuals who take steps to reduce flying have actually led to broader movement and successful movement in society.

[00:26:58] **Kimberly Nicholas:** So, for all these reasons, there has been this social movement led by individuals that has gained a lot of traction. It's gotten media coverage, it's gotten celebrities on board, there's been a really lively debate in the op-ed sections here. I actually

lead a research project called *The Takeoff of Staying On The Ground*, which is studying this phenomenon as what I hope is an early case of these kinds of both individual and social collective changes.

[00:27:25] **Kimberly Nicholas:** One thing that I was really happy to see is that Veronica Sandra Karin Maggio who is a huge star in Sweden, she's a singer, just released a song about staying on the ground and it's actually in collaboration with the national rail agency here. So it would be like if Amtrak or Via Rail had Pink, or some huge star, writing a song about not flying and staying on the ground and traveling by train instead of by plane. Things like that do make a difference and I think create space for politicians to take bolder action.

[00:28:02] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Okay, Peter. So we've heard quite a bit from my interview with Kim. I'm curious to know how Manvi thought about the interrelationships between personal and collective action, and eco-citizenship. I know you were going to ask her about that, what direction did your conversation take?

[00:28:21] **Peter André:** Well, Manvi kept bringing our discussion back to this theme of equity. As an example, she talked about how people in various communities get engaged as climate activists. Then, she was talking about the relationship between individual actions and collective action, and she really brought all of that together in this concept of equity.

[00:28:43] **Manvi Bhalla:** My research is surrounding motivation and values and how people care about the climate crisis. What's interesting is that there are so many different reasons why people feel an emotional connection to the climate crisis. For some people, their avenue into this might be animal rights and veganism. For some people, it might be active transportation and having access to a free, active environment for outdoor activities or childhood experiences of being able to be outside and that translating to wanting to protect and work in conservation. There are so many different ways that our individual choices and values can lead to increasing this intrinsic motivation for action.

[00:29:30] **Manvi Bhalla:** I do see each of those individual acts is as important as I mentioned to you. But for me, I do still recognize that the term carbon footprint was a marketing campaign by oil companies to blame us as individual consumers. I don't see it being the individual consumer's fault when there aren't that many options out there that are affordable for many people. One example is the plastic water ban when we have so many first nations on drinking water advisories, I just don't see that as climate justice. It needs to be that all of us together are able to make these healthy choices for our environment, but it isn't always possible for every community or group.

[00:30:12] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** It sounds like she's fundamentally saying it's fine for citizens to pursue green options as an individual, but ultimately it's the system that determines whether people can even make that choice.

[00:30:26] **Peter André:** Yeah, I think that's a fair way of putting it, Ryan. This perspective also shapes how Manvi sees collective action, which is about the coming together of

individuals, but crucially in a way that's open and inclusive to diverse sets of people and backgrounds and motives.

[00:30:43] **Manvi Bhalla:** What it looks like is every single individual working in all of these different areas, having the mindset that we need to work together to solve this issue. Not having the mindset that any individual with a certain qualification knows the answer alone, or one way of knowing, one epistemological way of knowing, is going to be the solution. It's going to be a combination of everything, and it's going to require us all to work together.

[00:31:07] **Peter André:** What she's really getting at here is that understanding the idea of intersectionality is about the benefits that this brings to movements, when different sets of experience and knowledge are brought together. This idea also came out when I asked Manvi about whether she sees her positionality as a woman of color shaping her work as an eco-citizen, and she brought this back to the same idea.

[00:31:32] **Manvi Bhalla:** I think it is an important aspect because I believe that, and this is backed by the literature on risk perception of climate change, women and people of color, racialized communities, indigenous communities, we all do see a greater risk to our health and wellbeing and the health and wellbeing of others when we think about the climate change crisis.

[00:31:52] **Manvi Bhalla:** In that context, I think, the quick answer is yes. Inherently we do see a greater risk and this is likely due to historical precedent. You know, we have been in more precarious situations and have had a difficult time in society. It's not always favored for us.

[00:32:10] **Manvi Bhalla:** Having said that, taking the intersectional perspective towards this issue, being a woman of color, I can really see myself in different situations. I was a person who, when we immigrated to Canada, we had no money. We were living in one of the poorest parts of Toronto, where there's a high concentration of new immigrants. Having those lived experiences, I'm really able to remember that I wasn't thinking about the environment at that time. This was not something that was on my radar. So for me to say, that people don't care about it right now. It's not that people don't care, they just don't have the ability or the capacity. They're just trying to live their life. And that's really important as well.

[00:32:47] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** That's really interesting. She makes a really strong case for why inclusion and equity really are fundamental to consider a new environmental movement doesn't she?

[00:32:57] **Peter André:** Yeah, I think she does. And I'll play you another clip along these lines. We talked about the lack of representation of women, and people of color in particular, in the environmental movement and environmental governance, decision-making spaces, in which environmental NGOs, academia, industry or whatever, are all engaging. What's so interesting or troubling is that when it comes to policy, Manvi says that the lack of representation in environmental policy spaces is not only detrimental, but it's inefficient. In

a way she's saying, look, this climate problem is so urgent we don't have the time not to consider intersectionality from the get-go.

[00:33:40] **Manvi Bhalla:** What we're seeing is a lot of people making decisions and they say that they consulted stakeholders or something, but they're not designing policies from the beginning to the end with the idea that everybody should be included in that this policy should work for everyone.

[00:33:54] **Manvi Bhalla:** They're just designing it with their viewpoint and what western colonial literature and academia tells them is most appropriate, which isn't always the most inclusive or historically well-represented perspective for many groups.

[00:34:08] **Manvi Bhalla:** This is short-sighted policy planning because you're spending so much energy with activists constantly saying this is not going to work for the community. I am a part of the community, or I work with the community, and I know this is not going to work. We're having this immense back and forth during a time in which we need to be collectively solving the issue, which is very time sensitive, you know? Health outcomes correspond directly to how quickly we are able to respond to this issue. The amount of energy and resources we are wasting by not being intersectional from the get-go is very detrimental to the survival of the human species.

[00:34:46] **Peter André:** I really appreciate what Manvi is saying here about the wide ranging value of intersectionality in the climate and environmental movements, and how those movements really have to be paying attention to this.

[00:34:59] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Agreed, very interesting to hear what she has to say about that. Peter, both for our guests, discussed how they see it as the responsibility of everyday individuals to become eco-citizens, but what does it actually mean in practice? How do people get involved as eco-citizens?

[00:35:24] **Peter André:** Well, I asked Manvi about the first steps of how one goes about getting involved in this kind of work she does. What I found really interesting is that her perspective was really about building skills to be a community organizer.

[00:35:39] **Manvi Bhalla:** I do think that anyone that's interested to just start small, look into your own community, what can you do to help people? Really using empathy, informed leadership, trying to center the human experience in everything you do and realizing that the work we're doing is really important, but people have lives. We have to live quality lives. We want to measure success by impact, not influence. We want to measure success by community initiatives, by how much the community that's impacted was involved in the process.

[00:36:13] **Manvi Bhalla:** These sorts of things you will only gain experience by doing, and it can happen in any field, any topic. Maybe you're passionate about feminist work, that's

where a lot of my experience is from, and a lot of my intersectional thinking comes from the feminist work that I did in anti-poverty spaces and anti-racism spaces when I was younger.

[00:36:31] **Manvi Bhalla:** In those contexts, the work that I was doing was climate adjacent, I didn't know at the time that it was connected to climate justice, but what was interesting was that the skills were really transferable. The skills of active learning, empathy and informed leadership, and community building, those just come from doing. Anyone can gain any experience, it's very accessible to gain experience just by getting involved, however you can.

[00:36:55] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** There you have it. Start small, look at your own community, and go from there. Peter, did you ask Manvi about how our listeners can get involved in the organizations that she's involved in specifically?

[00:37:07] **Peter Andr e:** Yeah, she's about to start her PhD at UBC, but she plans to continue her work in *Shake Up the Establishment* and she invited our listeners to get involved.

[00:37:17] **Manvi Bhalla:** *Shake Up the Establishment* is an organization that is led by young people. We are a climate justice and political advocacy centered organization that is non-partisan, and pretty much all of the work that we do is around issues that we think are really important. It all connects back to social, economic, and political issues, impacts on humans that are exacerbated by the climate crisis.

[00:37:46] **Manvi Bhalla:** We really work to take that community centered approach that I was talking about and use it to inform the best campaigns we can, to support communities, to really inform policies we support, and generally just working in the environmental advocacy space to try to make a positive change that's led by young people.

[00:38:06] **Peter Andr e:** How about you, Ryan? What did Kimberly say about how to get involved as an eco-citizen?

[00:38:13] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** I didn't quite ask how to get involved per se, but rather what kinds of civic actions we ought to pursue as eco-citizens.

[00:38:22] **Kimberly Nicholas:** One really critical one is to vote, and to vote for politicians who have strong climate policies who get good scores from organizations, like in the U.S it is the the *League of Conservation Voters* that assesses politicians on their environmental record. Studies have shown that politicians who get good scores there actually do have a significant impact in reducing emissions.

[00:38:45] **Kimberly Nicholas:** One of my favorite studies showed that electing women is a really powerful climate action. That having more women in parliament, actually caused CO2 emissions to go down. Whatever group you're a part of, and it could also be your school, your organization; those are really important places to be active and to start these conversations and start convening, getting people together and talking about, okay, how can

we make our university, our workplace, our city, our neighborhood? What are the things that are standing in our way? What are the things that are standing in our way of taking these climate actions, becoming fossil free, and how can we address them?

[00:39:23] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** There are some more tidbits on how to be an eco-citizen, Peter, from being engaged civically in the democratic process, to even supporting an active level of women's participation in the political process itself.

[00:39:38] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** To what Kim was saying in the very opening clip of this episode, which is about actively starting conversations about climate change in the various groups and communities we are a part of. Is there anything you'd add Peter to what it means to be a good eco-citizen, before we wrap up the episode?

[00:39:56] **Peter Andr e:** Those are all great points, Ryan, and I think we'd also have to add a couple of other things that we've heard in these conversations. Including how changes to consumption habits are important, especially for those in the wealthier 10% of the world, which includes a lot of us. I also really want to emphasize what I learned from Manvi, which is that being an eco-citizen is not just about getting your own voice heard when you engage politically, but also about developing the skills to work alongside those in your communities, especially in marginalized communities, who may be very affected by a range of environmental issues that may not have the time and skills themselves to get involved and have their voices heard. That is another important thing you can do as an eco-citizen.

[00:40:47] **Peter Andr e:** Ryan, I guess that wraps up our first episode. You want to roll the credits?

[00:40:51] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** Sure. Well, first off, a big thanks to our guests for this week: Kimberly Nicholas and Manvi Bhalla. To our listeners, make sure to follow us on Twitter, we're @EcoPoliticsP. That's ecopolitics with a capital P, and check out all of the incredible artwork and additional resources that we've put on our website.

[00:41:11] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** We have transcripts, we have video versions of each of these podcasts, we have pedagogical materials, and they're available at ecopoliticspodcast.ca. And we'd love it if you share our content, share our work with others, use it in the classroom, use it in your assignments. and tell others about it. And get in touch, let us know what you think of the show.

[00:41:36] **Ryan Katz-Rosene:** The Ecopolitics Podcast is produced by Nicole Bedford, support with transcription and captioning for season three is provided by Ashley Fearnall, and Adam Gibbard helps us with artistic design and digital support. The podcast is made available under Creative Commons License 2.0 Canada. Thanks for listening and see you next episode.