

An abstract background painting featuring a central vertical figure, possibly a person's leg or a stylized form, rendered in white and grey tones. The background is composed of large, textured blocks of color: a bright orange on the left, a deep purple on the right, and a teal section at the bottom left. The overall style is expressive and modern.

# SURGE

The Lowcountry Climate Magazine  
Issue 2

# editorial staff



**Belvin Olasov**  
Co-Editor in Chief

Belvin helped found the Charleston Climate Coalition when he saw empty space where a Lowcountry climate movement should be. Today, he serves as CCC co-director. He comes from a background in creative writing and tries to bring that vision-making to climate work. He grew up on the Isle of Palms, and looks forward to the day when he no longer fears for the future of the beach.



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Co-Editor in Chief

Sydney Bollinger (she/her) is a Charleston-based arts & entertainment and climate writer. She has written for *Charleston City Paper*, *INTO*, *Film Cred*, *Filmmakers Without Cameras*, and other places. Her creative work can be found in *HASH Journal*, *Dunes Review*, among other literary outlets. Find her online @sydboll.



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Camela Guevara (she/her) is a multidisciplinary artist and designer living and working in Charleston. She creates handmade monuments to unsung labor. Her practice explores the intersection of art, craft, and fashion, and her work embodies a sense of pleasure and reverence for the labor of sewing. She offers a joyful alternative path of homemade fashion that honors the many skilled hands that clothe us. See her work @camelaguevara.

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# a note from the editors

If it seems like the climate crisis is at the forefront of our minds, that's because it is. Even since the release of *Surge: The Lowcountry Climate Magazine* (Issue 1), devastation has been on the world stage. From the historic flooding in Yellowstone National Park to record-hot days in June and the European heat wave in July, there's no escaping the havoc the climate crisis is wreaking on our lives day in and day out.

The uptick in disasters has led to more stories about the climate crisis and more people sharing their individual experiences with the impacts of what we're fighting against. Climate change focused documentaries are premiering at Tribeca Film Festival and other massive celebrations of film and art; authors from across the globe are diving into climate fiction and solarpunk; and we're putting this magazine together with folks from the Lowcountry to better understand what's happening and what action we can take in our community.

The first issue of *Surge* was a labor of love — but also a test. We had no idea how the community would react to our magazine and were floored when the magazines became such a hot commodity we had to do a second print run! To us, this means the need for climate communication in the Lowcountry is high — and communication isn't just sharing news and updates about action.

Communication is using stories to build community, to celebrate the wonder of the world through art and poetry, and to find spaces of rest and wellness in the midst of activism's toiling work.

In these pages you'll find more information about Gadsden Creek and the work Friends of Gadsden Creek is doing to save this culturally and environmentally important waterway from being filled and developed over. Phoebe Crouse reminds us that activists need healing and rest, too. We are so grateful to our writers and artists for their work on issue 2 of *Surge*.

**We hope you enjoy the writings and artwork of your Lowcountry community.**

Belvin Olasov & Sydney Bollinger

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## CLIMATE ACTION HUB



1934



# The Saga of Gadsden Creek

Written by Belvin Olasov / Research and Content by Friends of Gadsden Creek

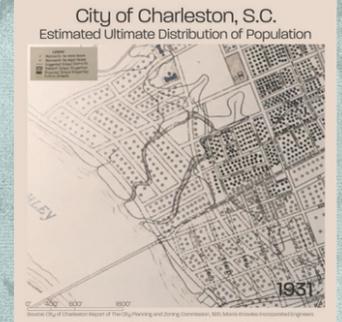
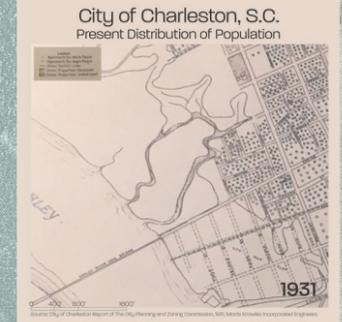
Charleston's history of racial oppression is woven into our landscape – where there once was over 95 acres of marshland, the companion to Charleston's largest and most prosperous Black community, there is now a layer of landfill, a skyline of hotels and condominiums and a police station, and a small tidal saltmarsh named Gadsden Creek. All four acres of the creek wind between a Publix and a Marriott Hotel, boxed in by parking lots, before curving to run along Hagood Ave, opposite the Gadsden Green public housing complex. An ongoing legal and political battle has the Creek's future hanging in the balance – on one side, a coalition of activists led by a band of activists (scholars, educators, artists, and community organizers) called the Friends of Gadsden Creek, and on the other, WestEdge Inc., a public-private partnership, with plans to build over the Creek with hotels and condos.

Over the past five years, the Friends of Gadsden Creek have dived into City records and emerged with a clear story: the City of Charleston systematically destroyed the Black community of Gadsden Green and the wetlands they called home, flouting environmental laws in the process. When the City's Dutch Dialogues calls for the

preservation of all marshland, Gadsden Creek included; when the City's Climate Action Plan calls for protecting wetlands as important carbon sinks; when the City has lost, or pushed out, two-thirds of its Black population in the past 50 years; is now when Charleston will hammer the nail in the coffin and fill in a culturally important and active tidal saltmarsh? Or will a new paradigm of environmental justice win out, with Gadsden Creek saved, beautified, and preserved for the people of Gadsden Green and the rest of the city?

## THE HISTORY

Gadsden Creek used to span over 95 acres, alongside which grew Charleston's largest and most prosperous Black community – the Gadsden Green, or “Back da Green,” community, formerly known as Fiddler's Green. Artisans and industry, butchers and lumberers and markets, bustled on the Peninsula's left shoulder. A cultural-ecological connection blossomed; the people of Gadsden Green fished, swam, bathed, baptized, and were supported and sustained by the Creek.



## THE DESTRUCTION

The City of Charleston, in their 1931 planning document the Knowles Report, commissioned a vision: where Gadsden Creek stood, over 95 new acres of land were to be created by covering the Creek with landfill. The Report was clear on the intended demographics for this new land – white residents. The wetlands that served the City's Black population were to be destroyed for the benefit of white property owners.

Over the next 40 years, Gadsden Creek was filled over with landfill, creating lucrative property for the City. On May 13, 1958, Mayor William McG. Morrison said, “We are now producing through landfill development an average of 15 plus acres per year, when converted into cash means one-half million dollars per year in city assets which, as I have said before, and I say again, is cash in the bank.”

As Gadsden Creek was systematically dismantled, so too was the Black community that prospered alongside it. In the first quarter of the 20th century, Mayor Maybank had been pushing to seize property from Gadsden Green homeowners as part of “slum clearance,” an attempt to convert Black communities into public housing as part of Urban Renewal. In 1938, two tornadoes swept the Charleston peninsula, damaging homes in Gadsden Green. The tornado was used as an opportunity to seize property from Black landowners to access federal New Deal funds.

In a joint letter by Gadsden Green residents, they wrote that “more than 80 percent of the houses are in good repair,” and that “this is the largest group of Colored property owners in any single area in the City of Charleston. If we are forced to give up our homes at this time it will be the greatest tragedy to befall an unfortunate people.” But the land grab went through, resulting in government-controlled, racially-segregated public housing where Black homes once stood.

As for the Creek, a sliver of it remained thanks to the City's legal jeopardy – the Department of Justice threatened to sue Charleston for 13 years of dumping waste and soil in over 95 acres of wetland, violating the federal 1899 Rivers and Harbors Act. In 1971, the U.S Army Corps of Engineers issued an after-the-fact permit to Charleston with explicit instructions to cease all current and future filling.

## THE PRESENT

The City of Charleston was responsible for the systematic displacement and environmental strangulation of Charleston's largest community of Black homeowners – but now, it has agency in the future of Gadsden Creek. Its leaders can begin long overdue reparations in the name of racial equity and environmental justice. Gadsden Creek can once again become an environmental commons for all, all the while continuing to serve its human neighbors by providing restorative recreation and an outdoor classroom for four Title I schools, filtering stormwater pollutants, storing flood waters, affording habitat for juvenile marine animals, and shorebirds, and buffering storm surge.

The City of Charleston's government (City Council and Mayor) has the authority to protect Gadsden Creek as its majority landowner – but as financial partners in the WestEdge project, have, at time of publishing, ruled in favor of the development scheme. WestEdge has proposed installing pumping stations as a flooding mitigation scheme in exchange for being allowed to build three hotels and high end condos where Gadsden Creek now stands. The Friends of Gadsden Creek have mobilized hundreds to City Council meetings in protest, joined now by Charleston Area Justice Ministry, a network of 50+ local faith-based congregations that took up the Gadsden Creek protest as their first environmental justice initiative.

The Friends have partnered with SC Environmental Law Project to oppose DHEC allowance of this development, alleging SCDHEC is in violation of its own regulations prohibiting exactly the kind of tidal wetlands development that WestEdge has proposed, such as: “The creation of commercial and residential lots strictly for private gain is not a legitimate justification for the filling of wetlands,” and “Dredging and filling in wetland areas should be undertaken only if a) that activity is water-dependent and b) there are no feasible alternatives.”

Despite the capital and power structures that have every financial incentive to fill in Gadsden Creek, it has survived. A vision for a better Charleston – one where we reckon openly with our past sins, center green infrastructure, and empower and honor our Black residents – continues to animate a grassroots coalition of activists dedicated to the Creek's protection and restoration. The past is written, but the future is in our hands. ✨

Join the Friends of Gadsden Creek at [www.friendsofgadsden creek.com](http://www.friendsofgadsden creek.com)  
@friendsofgadsden creek on Instagram

# IMAGINE THE WALL



Written by Belvin Olasov

Artwork by One Architecture & DesignWorks

The climate crisis will inevitably thrust us into a different world – the question is how much of that world we’ll get to choose. For Charleston, it’s hard to find that question in a sharper form than the Charleston Sea Wall, a plan by the US Army Corps of Engineers for a concrete wall and series of gates and pumps to protect the Peninsula from hurricane surge waves. For the past few years, the City has been mulling over the Army Corps’ proposal, weighing its potential protective benefits against the price tag and concern over losing Charleston’s connection to the water to ugly, blocky barriers.

An alternative vision was put together by a team working with environmental engineer Keith Bowers, founder of ecological restoration and regenerative design company Biohabitats, in the spring of 2020: Imagine the Wall. The project, a counterproposal of sorts to the Army Corps’, presents a version of the Sea Wall that uses nature-based solutions, allows for adaptation over time, and is grounded in an appreciation for community and place.

Bowers was inspired to jump into the fray when he saw the Army Corps’ initial proposal for a sea wall and found it to be an overly simplistic solution, divorced from environmental and cultural context. He recognized the ways in which the Army Corps were restricted and thought his firm’s experience with nature-based infrastructure could be a useful complement.

“I think what people don’t realize or just don’t know about is when the Corps studies something like this, they have very narrow guidelines and policies that they have to follow,” Bowers said. “Personally, I think a lot of the Corps folks would love to deviate out of that and take into consideration all these other aspects, but because of how legislation is worded, they’re not allowed to.”

The initial seawall proposal came out in early 2020 – the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown had just come in full force, and work had slowed down for Biohabitats, as well as a number of partner firms like Design Works. A casual conversation with Scott Parker of Design Works led to inspiration.

“I said, you know, if you have some idle people sitting around and we have some idle time... why don’t we put out a counterproposal to what the corps is doing? Just to spark people’s imaginations.”

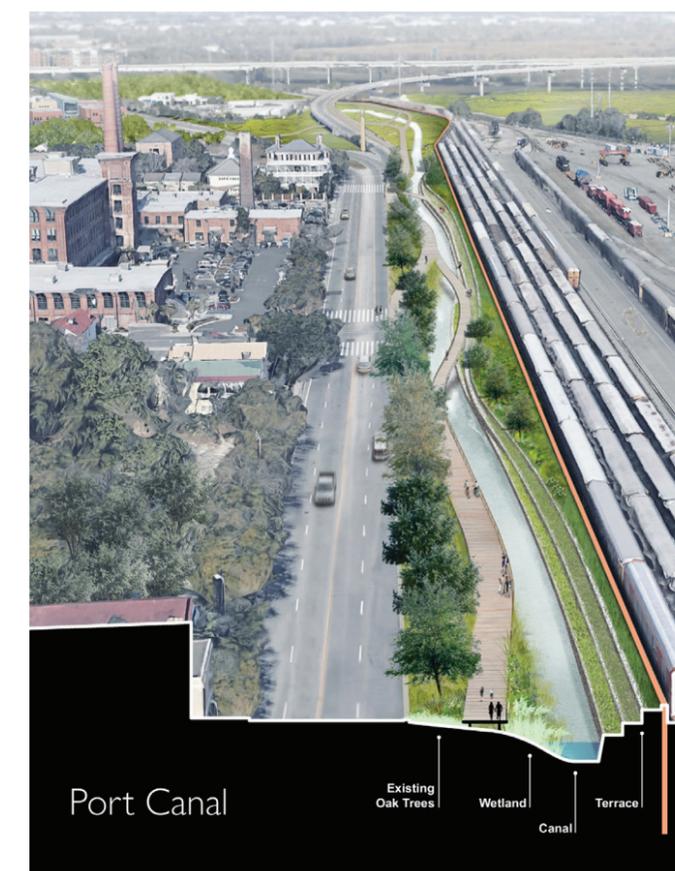
They formed an ad-hoc team of themselves, local coastal engineering firm ATM, and One Architecture, a Dutch firm that made a name for themselves with their coastal protection project for lower Manhattan. One Architecture’s experience designing an urban sea wall (of which there are few) that isn’t monofunctional infrastructure (of which there are even fewer) had taught them how important adaptability, multiple co-benefits, and connection to place and community were to these projects. Creating solutions that were iterative and adaptable was seen as crucial.

“One of the things that is really a challenge for Army Corps projects, once you start to think about climate in general, is that what you designed for now, and what you may have budgeted for now, will need to be adapted at some later stage. Because the climate crisis will not stop,” said Matthjis Bouw, founder of One Architecture. “There’s already so much carbon in the air that we’re stuck with this for the next century or more.”

As they were consciously avoiding the monolithic, one-size-fits-all approach, the team put together custom-tailored approaches for various sea level rise hotspots around the Peninsula. They centered the principles of the Dutch Dialogues – working with water, not against it, and centering natural, livable solutions – and environmental justice. And they gave themselves permission to be creative, proposing big ideas that drew on their shared experience of what works in the field.

“It is a real struggle to get this type of coastal protective system built in an integrated way. They’re sort of a new type of infrastructure – cities and their agencies are not ready for it, and they don’t have practices in place,” Bouw said. “So having that vision and committing to a vision at a very high level is really important, because it spurs everyone to, every day, try their best to come as close to the vision as possible.”

## PORT CANAL



The Army Corps proposal prescribed a series of gates and pumps, but Imagine the Wall’s alternative vision would integrate water management into public amenity, using planted terraces as a wall and a canal with floodable marsh to retain stormwater and alleviate flooding. They saw the East Bay St. location as a potential public good and valuable pedestrian connection to the Ravenel Bridge.

“Some people might think of that area, because it’s right next to the Railyard, that there’s not an opportunity for making space better,” said Mathew Staudt, studio director at One Architecture. “But in fact, when we started looking at it in more detail, there’s some really wonderful oak trees that people really find important there. We just really saw an opportunity to do more of a kind of urban through-way there that could make the experience actually much better.”

MORRISON DRIVE AND BRITTLEBANK PARK HORIZONTAL LEEVE

Making Brittlebank Park into a horizontal levee, inspired by Biohabitats’ proof of concept work in San Francisco Bay, would mean implementing a gradual incline, so when sea level rise starts to kill off the marsh at its edge, the marsh can migrate up and landward. The slope would terminate at an elevated Lockwood Drive – not only would this protect a vital transportation link to the Medical District, but the raised street itself would serve as a perimeter storm surge barrier. Bowers sees a modular approach as key to the idea’s feasibility.

“You can scale that over time,” Bowers said. “You might not need that 12 feet now, you might be able to get away with six feet now. And maybe in 10 years you’ve got to increase it as storm surges begin to happen more, and sea level rise happens, and you can build on it.”



Image credit: DesignWorks

LIVING BREAKWATER ARCHIPELAGO

The Peninsula was first known to early English settlers as Oyster Point, and Imagine the Wall looks to return to those roots with living breakwater, a multifaceted, nature-based approach to reducing wave energy. These structures, mixing the organic and the engineered, would provide shelter for fish, crabs, marsh birds and shorebirds, as well as maintaining oyster reefs. The Living Breakwater Archipelago would also serve as a venue for public enjoyment of birding, nature education, and kayaking, and retain views that more traditional breakwater systems would block.

“The City is already just really tied to the water. Many cities over time have created some distance from the waterfront, and we’re only now in the last few decades rediscovering what it means to be along the waterfront in the city. And there’s something about Charleston where that was never lost,” said Mathew Staudt.

The Imagine the Wall project came out of a lot of expertise and vision, but in a short window. Mattjis said that giv-

en more time and community input, there would be more focus on equity in the proposal. “You don’t want Charleston to become a sort of tale of two cities,” he said.

The Army Corps Sea Wall proposal has come under fire for stopping short of Rosemont and Bridgeview Terrace, neighborhoods with lower-income, Black residents. Locals are concerned that by stopping the wall just before them, they’d take the storm surge that bypassed the rest of the Peninsula. Bowers sees this as systemic racism being built directly into the infrastructure process.

“The proposal the Corps has, the wall actually stops prior to protecting these communities. Their reason being that a cost-benefit analysis doesn’t pan out. Mainly looking at real estate and saying, if the real estate value is low and this wall is going to cost a certain amount of money, then the cost-benefit doesn’t pan out. And by law, they have to reach a certain cost-benefit ratio,” Bowers said. “You could argue that that goes all the way back to redlining and systemic racism. And the reason those property values are low



Living Breakwater Archipelago

Image credit: ONE

is because of some of those policies that were put in place back in the 40s and 50s and 60s or maybe even longer than that, right? And still to this day, when you look at a project like this, and those property values are lower, that type of systemic racism is still continuing. It’s still being perpetuated, I should say.”

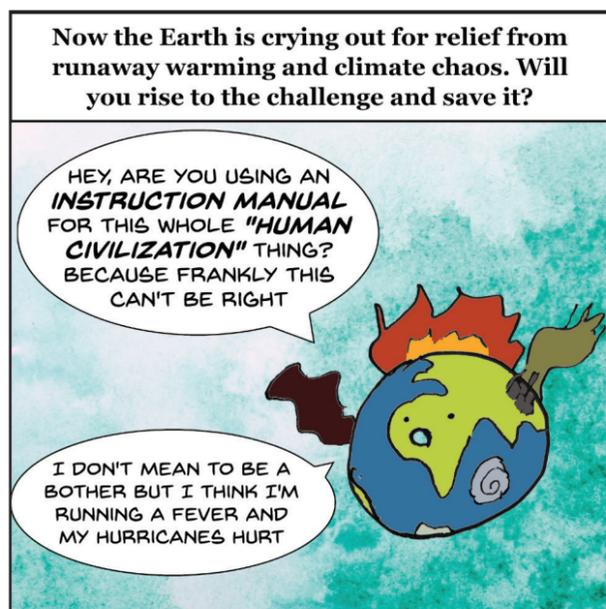
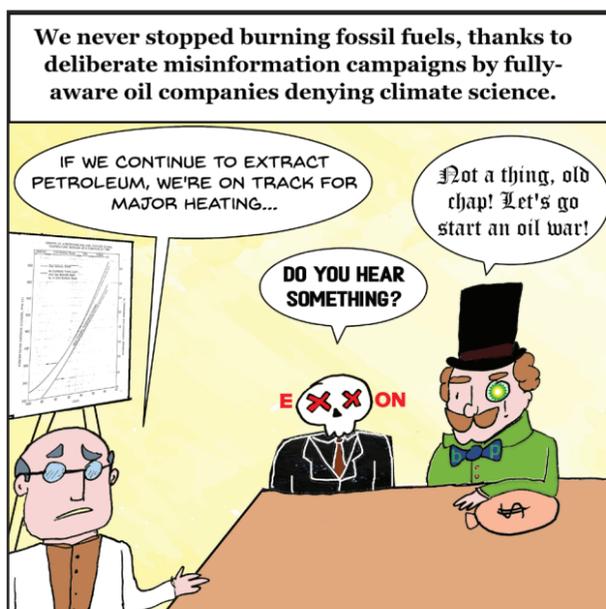
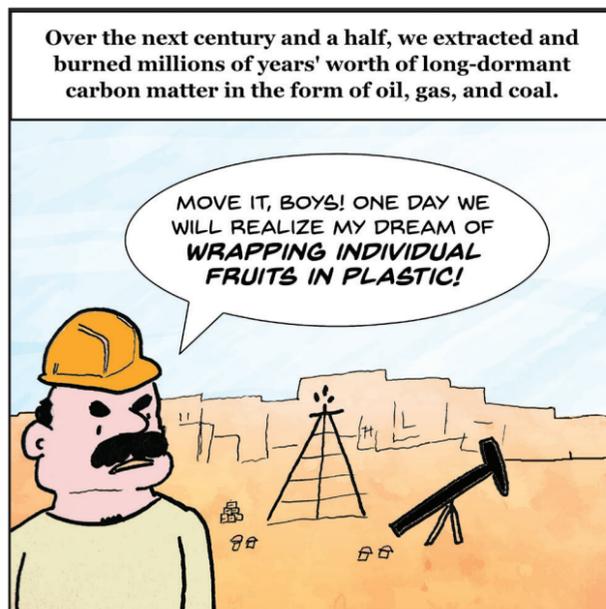
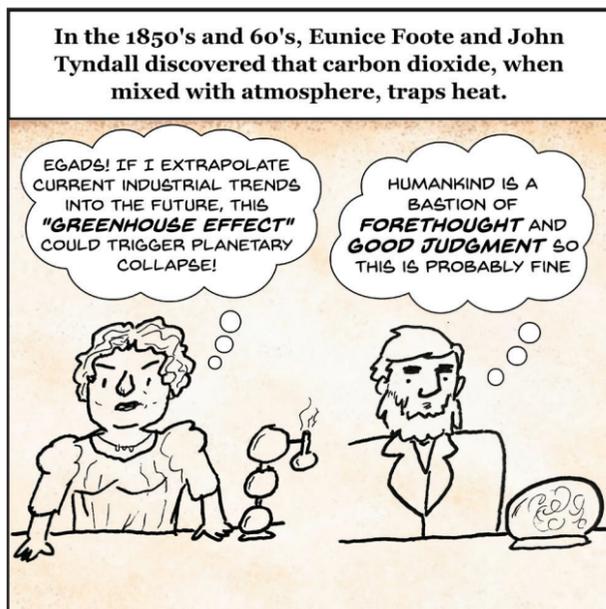
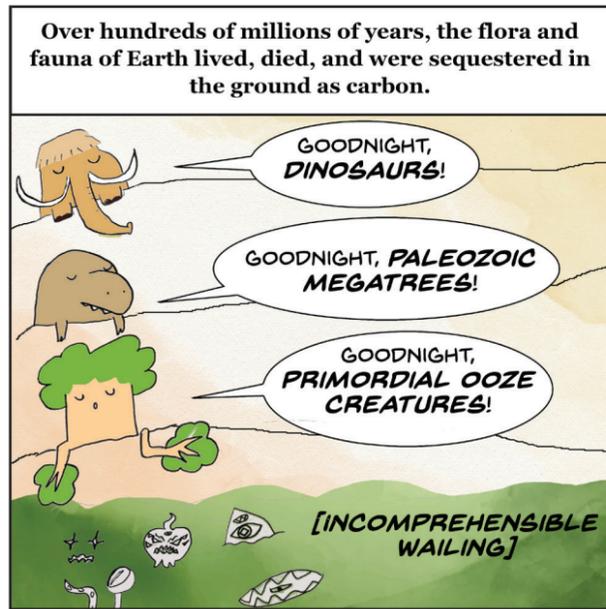
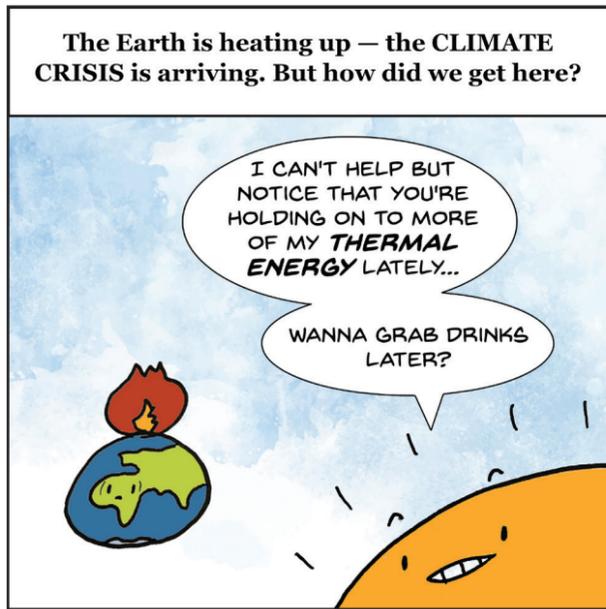
The cost of the Army Corps Sea Wall – \$384.5 million for the City out of \$1.1 billion total, at last count – has been a consistent driver of opposition. Bowers sees the targeted, iterative approach of Imagine the Wall as an affordable way for Charleston to adapt to sea level rise – the projects can start small and be developed five, 10, 20 years down the road as conditions change. He can imagine funding coming from the Corps for the core structural components, transportation funds for the roadway projects, federal and state resiliency funds, commercial private enterprise integration – the list goes on.

Rising to the challenge of the climate crisis and preparing for our future isn’t just a matter of going with old, techno-

cratic solutions, the Imagine the Wall team agreed – it will take a more modern approach.

“The risk is that, because of our radically changing ecology, we will get much bigger division in our society. Ecofascism, ecoapartheid — those are words other people use. The social impacts of these changes in our earth system are just going to be significant,” Bouw said. “So when I hear the word ecofuturism, I think, well, we all need to work really, really hard to make sure that we have a future that is as good as we can make it for everyone. And that will include rebalancing our urban and our natural systems – taking, when we think about physical systems, social systems into account.”

Imagine the Wall posits a Charleston where we don’t have to choose between safety and livability, aesthetic and function, or effectiveness and environmentalism – by building our way towards a green city that embraces its watery sentence, we can take control over our climate future by accepting it. ✨



# FIGHT ECOLOGICAL SIMPLIFICATION WITH NATIVE DIVERSITY!

Written by Max Bisaha  
Artwork by Markelle Evans

To many, walking in a forest elicits a sense of humility and awe at the varying plants, fungi, and animals all interacting in what becomes an ecosystem. The array and complexity of these interactions surpasses the knowledge of human culture's cumulative effort to understand it. Devastatingly, these ancient life-support systems face numerous threats. The forests, oceans, and grasslands we see today are very different from what they were. Over the last few centuries, much has happened to the world we live in: massive logging operations, industrialized agriculture, skyrocketing greenhouse gas concentrations, the creation of the suburban yard, and hundreds of introduced non-native plant, animal, and fungal species that have spread throughout the continent, to name a few. But all of these trends follow the same pattern of intense and systematic environmental (and consequently social) simplification. Forests, farms, and yards have all become less diverse — and as we know, simplification is no recipe for resilience.

Planting native plants, especially perennials, comes with a long list of benefits, such as their ability to: mitigate flooding and return water to the atmosphere; provide cooler microclimates; build healthy soil; provide habitat for a wide variety of insects, animals, microbes, and fungi; control mosquito and wasp populations; provide food; and sequester carbon. There are less tangible reasons to plant native as well, such as the empowerment of being part of the solution to our ecological crises and making a space that allows for a free and private relationship with the more-than-human world.

So why are native plants part of the solution to our problem of ecological simplification? Why not use other more "exotic" species? After all, more plants equals more diversity. But it is not that simple. The key lies in the tremendously long history of coevolution that native plants have gone through to adapt to the land and their fellow insects, microbes, and animals. Native ecosystems are the product of millions of years of organisms interacting both competitively and symbiotically to create a balanced yet dynamic system. They are fine-tuned and highly adapted to each other. But when a plant like a Bradford pear, Mimosa tree, or a Kudzu is introduced, they have little to

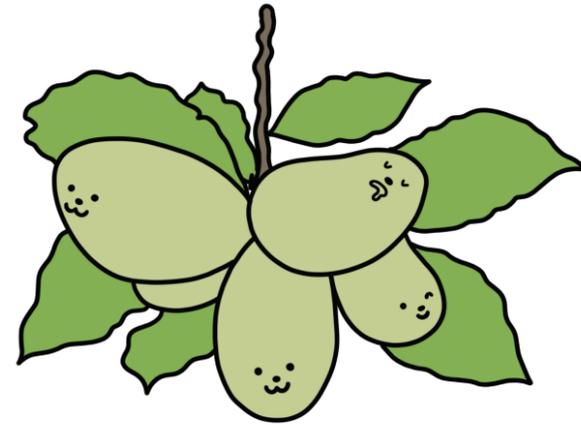
no ecological significance. They have few to no relationships. Because they have no predators to check their population, they can take over whole landscapes. This is why we must landscape better and fight these trends.

## Here are a few tips to diversify your yard:

- 1 Lay down compost, preferably locally-made, which mostly consists of organic matter, the most essential part of healthy soil.
- 2 Plant native keystone species like Longleaf pine, Milkweed, Goldenrod, and Red oaks. Also be sure to incorporate grasses, trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and vines in order to include all stories of a diverse ecosystem.
- 3 Mulch around plants or use low-lying cover plants, which moderate soil temperature, retain moisture, and encourage microbial life. Soil should never lay bare.
- 4 Consider prescribed burning on large areas of land, which has a wide range of benefits for increasingly rare fire resistant forest communities (such as that of southern yellow pines). This practice was used for thousands of years by natives and then by colonial settlers before anti-fire forestry became dominant.
- 5 Leave leaves where they rest as much as you can. Most caterpillars pupate in and under leaves. Leaves are also fertilizer and mulch and make great compost when mixed 2:1 with kitchen waste. No need to worry about smell or animals. Well-maintained compost free of raw meats attracts no animals and does not smell.
- 6 Minimize or cut out white nightlights which devastate insect populations. Insects are near the base of the food chain and so are essential for healthy bird, bat, amphibian, and small mammal populations.
- 7 Don't spray synthetic pesticides, herbicides (particularly glyphosate or Roundup<sup>1</sup>), or fertilizers unless tackling a severe invasive species problem (poison ivy is not an invasive plant). These chemicals leach into the soil and water streams often with harmful effects to human and non-human life. Also, they are extremely energy intensive to make and transport.
- 8 Remove invasive plants. Particularly mimosa, tree of heaven, Chinese privet, autumn olive, English ivy, and asiatic bittersweet, among many others. Severe invasives often engulf whole ecosystems leaving a tangled monoculture. On small properties these can be removed with a bit of labor by pulling or repeatedly cutting.

1 Gillam, Carey. The Guardian. "Disturbing': weed killer ingredient tied to cancer found in 80% of US blood sample." Jul. 2022.

# NATIVE SC PLANTS ILLUSTRATED BY MARKELLE EVANS



**paw paw**

*Asimina triloba*

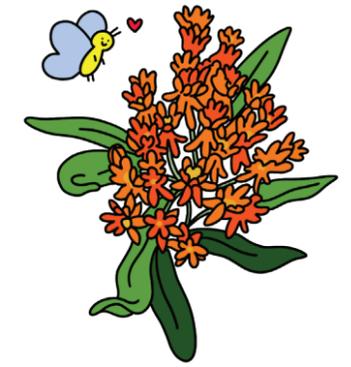
North America's largest edible fruit. Native people used the inner bark for cordage. Burgundy colored flowers come out in early spring.



**american beautyberry**

*Callicarpa americana*

Clusters of iridescent purple berries are loved by wildlife for food and people for dye. Good understory shrub and substitute for boxwood.



**butterfly weed**

*Asclepias tuberosa*

Milkweeds are the only plant that the monarch caterpillar, whose population has been steadily declining for decades, feed on. Snapping their branches yields a white milky liquid.

All of these tactics simply accelerate the way nature already works. Want a cost effective way of rewilding? Don't mow a portion of your lawn (be sure to pull, spray, or burn invasives) and watch it grow into a native plant and animal sanctuary. Additionally, on larger tracts of land. Consider applying for state or federal grants which have cost share programs for burns, invasive removal, and forest thinning.

Discussing native plants causes me to reflect on what makes a people native to a place and what parallels many Native peoples have with native plants. Is it simply a semantic coincidence that both share the same adjective? I don't think so. As a white person who belongs to a culture that has been, and continues to be, oppressive and disdainful toward the people whose land we now stand on, it seems important to consider the relationship between Native people and their environment, and colonizer culture and its connection to the environment.

One of the central themes that I can discern is that Native people have come to understand that they are deeply interwoven into a much larger web of connections and relationships without which they would perish.

Native scholar Gregory Cajete echoes this idea, first acknowledging the diversity of the world's indigenous people but then arguing that "their fundamental way of relating to the natural world is remarkably similar... Native community is about living a so-called symbiotic life in the context of a symbolic culture, which includes the natural world as a vital participant and co-creator of community. That is to say, the life of indigenous community is interdependent with the living communities in the surrounding natural environment."<sup>2</sup>

For instance, it is not in the best interest of the invasive Emerald Ash Borer to wipe out Ash forests, as it is currently doing, because it will soon lose the very species it depends its survival on. In the same way, it does not behoove humans to warm our atmosphere, because we need it to continue maintaining the type of climate that is conducive to our species and all the others we share this planet with. Most native people understand these relationships, as do native plants. In addition to caring for the land, it will require a cultural reckoning in which we as a nation own up to the fact that we have inherited a system that has systematically tried to annihilate Native peoples and their cultural traditions. Perhaps in our effort to cultivate and encourage native plants back on our lands we can move one step forward toward learning what it means to be native to a place and what that will require of us. ✨

<sup>2</sup> Cajete, Gregory. Edited by Melissa Nelson and Dan Shilling. "Traditional Ecological Knowledge; Learning from indigenous practices for environmental sustainability" Cambridge University Press. 2018.

"I CAME TO SEE MYSELF AS GROWING PLANTS. I SAW MY BODY AND MY OF THE ENERGY OF THE PLACE, WHICH

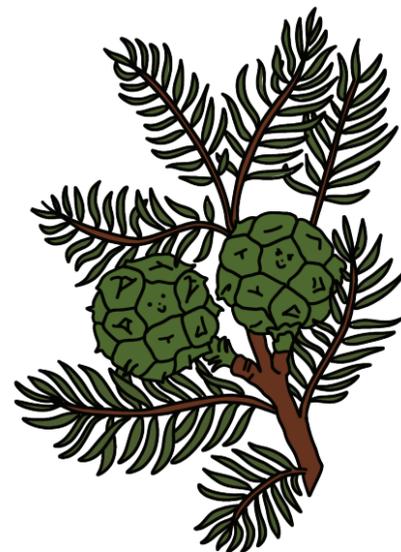
OUT OF THE EARTH LIKE THE OTHER NATIVE ANIMALS AND DAILY MOTIONS AS BRIEF COHERENCES AND ARTICULATIONS WOULD FALL BACK INTO IT LIKE LEAVES IN THE AUTUMN."  
-WENDELL BERRY



**seaside goldenrod**

*Solidago sp.*

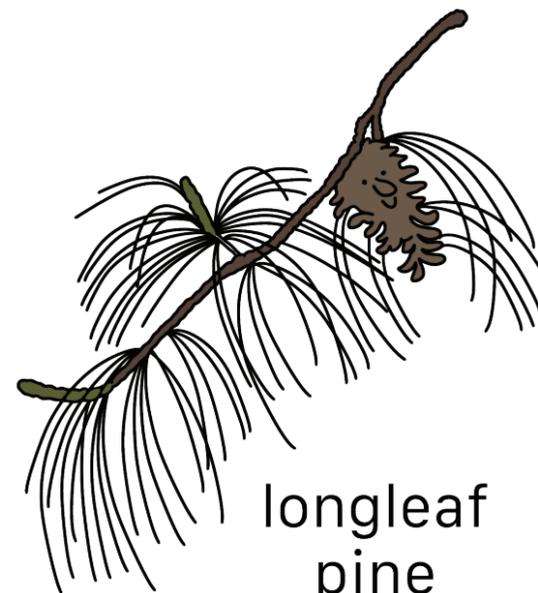
Numerous folk medicine uses. Notable for being a host to numerous pollinator species of wasps, flies, bees, butterflies, and moths.



**bald cypress**

*Taxodium distichum*

Many people associate the terms deciduous and conifer as antonyms. Not so with this tree which loses its needles in the winter. Rot resistant lumber often used as shingling and for boat building.



**longleaf pine**

*Pinus palustris*

Once abundant in the southeast, this tree was heavily tapped and logged for naval stores and lumber. The endangered Red-cockaded woodpecker makes its home in live longleaf pines. This forces the tree to produce large amounts of sap, protecting the nest from predators. Needles are often used for basket weaving.

## LEARN MORE & GET INVOLVED

### READ

*Nature's Best Hope: A New Approach to Conservation That Starts in Your Yard* by Douglas Tallamy  
*Invasive Plant Pest Species of South Carolina* available as a .pdf online

### SUPPORT

South Carolina Native Plant Society  
South Carolina Wildlife Federation  
Plant Conservation Alliance  
Long Leaf Pine Alliance  
The American Chestnut Foundation

# Mind-Body-Spirit: Healing for Activists

Holistic Health & Climate Activism

Written by Phoebe Crouse

## BODY

“OUR HEALTH IS IN DIRECT CORRELATION WITH THE HEALTH OF THE PLANET!”

Kate Counts is not afraid to yell in a yoga class. Even on days when her microphone falters and her carefully crafted playlist wails through the Pour House deck speakers, her words reach ears and trickle all the way down into her students’ subconscious. She taught me that my health - my physical, mental and spiritual health - is related to the health of the planet. At first, this was difficult for me to grasp, but during that fateful Sunday yogi-gospel, a seed was planted.

In the years that followed, my values evolved, and healing became my North Star. When I nourished myself with seasonal, local, whole, foods, my vitality flourished. When I practiced stillness and presence in nature, mental clarity washed over me. Simultaneously, my interest and capacity for activism and justice work peaked, and I began to sense a deep integration of planetary and human health.

Humanity has distanced itself so far from the natural world that we have forgotten that the rain falling from the sky is the water in our blood, the calcium in the shells washed along our shorelines is the same calcium in our bones, and the oxygen and nourishment that fuels our life force is provided by stems, leaves, and roots.

We have created an illusion of separation from nature, and it precipitates the climate crisis and the decline of human health. We are being called to remember that humans are active participants in the great web of life, and to tend to our own health, we must tend to the health of the Earth.

Not convinced?

One of the body’s most important mechanisms of digestion and fuel delivery is akin to the mechanisms of decomposition and regeneration in our soils! Soils are teeming with microorganisms, similar to those that live in your gut lining. These trillions of bacteria, viruses, parasites, and fungi break down your food into bioavailable nutrients. This process helps to support your immune system, produce the majority of your “feel good” neurotransmitters and do so much more to support your overall health. But the biodiversity and resilience of our gut microbiome is at risk because the soils from which we feed our bodies - and our microbes - are being bombarded by antimicrobial chemicals and pesticides.

Challenging the chemical farming industry can seem futile, but it would only take 16 percent of consumers to buy organic or locally grown food to weaken this pernicious system! Voting with your dollar is one of the most influential ways to support healing and sustainable farming practices. When you buy organic and local food that is grown and harvested with soil health as a priority, you are nourishing your body and the climate. In the past 10 years, Charleston has gained considerable momentum in the sustainable food movement with Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs, farmers markets, and locally sourced shops sprouting up in the Lowcountry. Some of my favorites are Spade and Clover Farms, Lowcountry Street Grocery’s CSA delivery service, Veggie Bin on Spring Street, and the Sunday Brunch Farmers Market at the Pour House.

## MIND

Now, we have found ourselves challenged by a mental health epidemic. Due to a compromised foundation of physical health, the demands of modern life, and the uncertainty of humanity’s future on Earth, our minds have lost their ability to adapt and cope with the stressors of these times. People of all ages feel completely overwhelmed when contemplating the nearly insurmountable climate challenges that will unfold in their lifetimes. Despite the urgency of these challenges, many people have a limited capacity for climate action involvement due to poor mental health.

Activism is a rewarding remedy for the powerlessness and existential dread that humanity experiences today. Active citizenship is not only necessary to change the climate; it is also a therapeutic way to focus on the solution instead of the problem. Do not be intimidated by this call to action! Activism takes on many different shapes and sizes. Not everyone’s nervous system is a good fit for the frontlines of political debates and chaotic public protests. Gifts of nurturing, connecting, event coordinating, writing, photographing, filming, drawing, and even creating music are all valuable to the climate movement!

Climate change also intersects with justice work, so if working to support underserved community members resonates with you more, pursue it! Reach out to the Charleston Climate Coalition (CCC) to get involved with climate activism or Charleston Area

Justice Ministries (CAJM) to get involved with justice work. Evaluate how much time you can devote to this work. Whether several hours a week or showing up to one meeting a month, that is enough.

Remember that you are only as strong as your body and mind is strong. Prioritizing your own vitality through clean nourishment and connection to the natural world is crucial. Begin a daily practice of spending time in nature without your phone or watch. Drop into the timelessness of the place and observe how the individuals of the ecosystem interact with one another. If your mind begins to feel restless, use your five senses to come back to the present moment. What does the air taste like? How many shades of green can you see? What is the most subtle noise that you can hear? Now kick off your shoes and try out “Earthing!” When you make direct physical contact with the soil, the earth’s negative electromagnetic charge helps to stabilize the positive charge of the human body. This scientifically proven healing practice is accessible and free, and eases the nervous system, encourages better sleep and reduces inflammation.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Source: Chevalier, Gaétan et al. “Earthing: health implications of reconnecting the human body to the Earth’s surface electrons.” *Journal of environmental and public health* vol. 2012 (2012): 291541. doi:10.1155/2012/291541

## SPIRIT

Tangled in our varied belief systems, traditions, and practices is one common thread of spirituality; the awareness of and reverence for something greater than oneself. Being in good spiritual health allows you to venture beyond the exhausting, protective measures of the egoic mind so that you can be humbled by the sacred - the majesty and mystery of life outside of yourself.

By continuing to harm the planet and one another, we have severed our connection to the sacred in order to avoid the pain we would otherwise experience. Our spirits are being starved as this shadow proliferates over our unconscious minds, and the climate crisis is fed by this spiritual poverty.

“Reality is profoundly sacred,” says Professor Jen Wright, so it’s up to us to choose where we find the sacred in our everyday lives. Perhaps it is the first ray of golden light that touches the trees at sunrise, or the bird’s nest in your backyard, or the air that your lungs receive. Practice communing with the sacred by challenging your instinct to view it as a resource rather than an expression of life that you have been given. Cultivate gratitude for all that you find to be sacred, and perhaps in turn offer a prayer, poem, or moment of deep reverence. Explore a meditation practice to detect the consciousness that exists beyond your identity and is buzzing throughout the universe.

We expand spiritually when we are humbled by our connection with the breathing, the blooming, and the elemental. From this place, our kinship with nature and all living beings is reinforced, and we feel inclined to protect the sacred.

Now is an extraordinary time to be alive. At the intersection of desolation and restoration, humanity has been given an opportunity to transform. We are being invited to radically heal the mind, body and spirit through mending our relationship with the natural world. To do this we must reflect on our plates, our actions, and our values, and innovate the way we nourish the body, mind, and spirit.

If we choose the path of restoration and nourishment, our lives will be enriched with vitality and wholeness. On this path, we may finally experience our birthright unity. This unity, this oneness, is the gift we receive when we know ourselves to be deeply connected with the planet and all of its inhabitants. This knowledge dissolves separation, teaching us that every act of violation harms the violator, and every act of love and healing is circulated back to the healer. This wisdom is the medicine that heals fully and endlessly. This is the medicine we need! In the name of health! Aho! ✨



# CLOTHING SHOPS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Slow fashion: purchasing good quality products, made with clean production that does not harm the environment, and with just wages and labor practices for garment workers.

Written by Belvin Olasov & Alison Craig  
Photos by Maggie Wilcox

We self-express through fashion. Our wardrobe can say what cultures we identify with, our eye for color, and how we want to present to the world. But what we wear also has bigger climate consequences than you might expect – the clothing industry accounts for a whopping 10-14% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The Charleston Climate Coalition has put together an alliance of local clothing retailers that, through reuse practices or sustainable production, are becoming leaders in climate-friendly fashion in the Lowcountry. We kicked off the partnership with the Give Me Green Sustainable Fashion Show in March 2022 to demonstrate how fashion and sustainability can go hand-in-hand.

*Sustain-  
able  
Fashion*



True Lucia takes thrifted clothing and paints them to create beautiful, revitalized outfits. @trueluciabrand



## Clothing facts:

- \* The average American throws away 68 pounds of clothing and textiles annually, and 69% of this clothing waste contains synthetic fibers that hit landfills and take hundreds of years to biodegrade, or are incinerated and send toxic gasses into the environment.
- \* Treatment and dyeing of textile accounts for 20% of global industrial water pollution.
- \* Fast fashion, or cheap mass-produced clothing practices, is swamping the planet – 400% more clothing is purchased today than twenty years ago. Eighty billion new pieces of clothing are produced each year and that number continues to rise.
- \* Laundering synthetic clothes accounts for 35% of microplastics released into the environment.
- \* Synthetic fibers rely on fossil fuels for production and 70 million barrels of oil are used every year to produce polyester.
- \* 70 million trees are cut down every year to make clothing.



*"It's really about what's staying in your closet – keeping what's in your closet."  
- Cassie, Cassie's Shop*



Thrift shops like Billy Thrift Shop, Closet Case Thrift, Farside Vintage, and Open Road Vintage Co. keep the clothing economy circular by giving old items new life.

@billy\_thrift  
@farsidevintage\_

@closetcasethrift  
@openroadvintageco

# ACTION



Cassie's Shop reuses fabrics to create wholly original clothing creations. @cassies\_shop



Riciclare By LIV features sustainably made swimsuits – made to order from plastic waste pulled from the ocean. @riciclarebyliv

*Show  
Fashion*



Local Love CHS is a hub for local & sustainable fashion as well as locally produced products of all kinds. @locallovechs



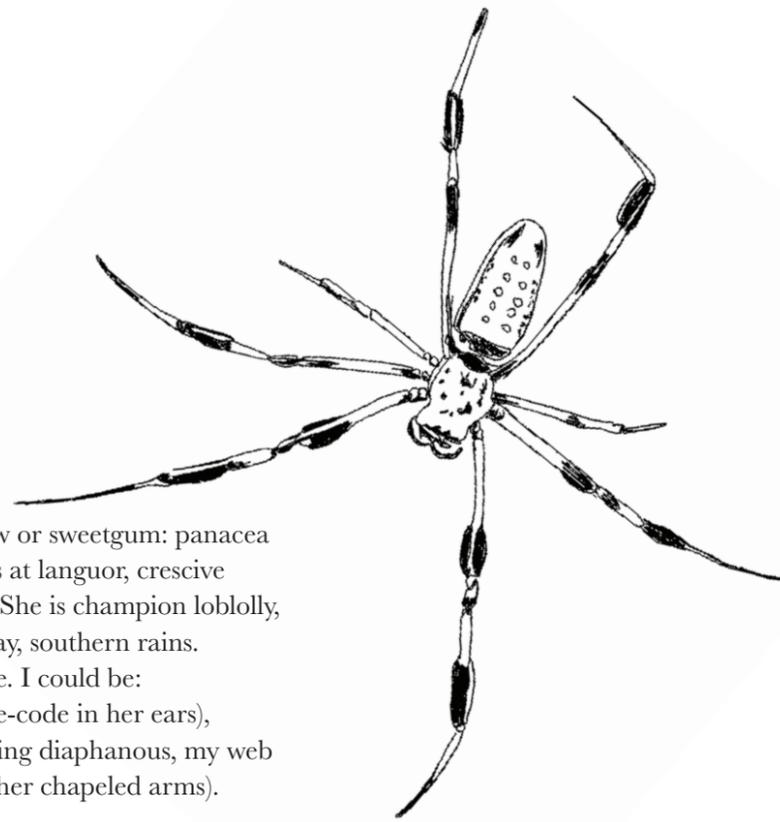
Maude Couture creates ecological, elegant dresses through climate-friendly materials like hemp silk. @maudecoutureclothing

## Ways to dress more sustainably:

- Repair or reuse clothing instead of throwing it away.
- Limit consumption and buy secondhand.
- Get quality, eco-friendly materials like organic cotton, hemp bamboo, or linen.
- Participate in clothing swaps.

# CONGAREE CRUSH

Written by Hailey Williams  
Artwork by Camela Guevara



She is like possumhaw or sweetgum: panacea  
in concealment, plays at languor, crescive  
even in black waters. She is champion loblolly,  
300 years, tucked away, southern rains.  
She is unconscionable. I could be:  
lightening bug (Morse-code in her ears),  
banana spider (on string diaphanous, my web  
floodplained glass in her chapeled arms).

To see her as she is, you need wings. I want to

water-stride aloft meniscuses  
rising round roots. I am neither bat  
snug on her throat nor lissome zephyr  
nursing curls of hair. Not toe-pink salamander,  
not oxbow lake. I am no great occlusion and  
cannot fathom what it is to be a warbler  
housed in her knees each spring. I can only say  
as she breathes the same sky,

this moment I hold her in my lungs.

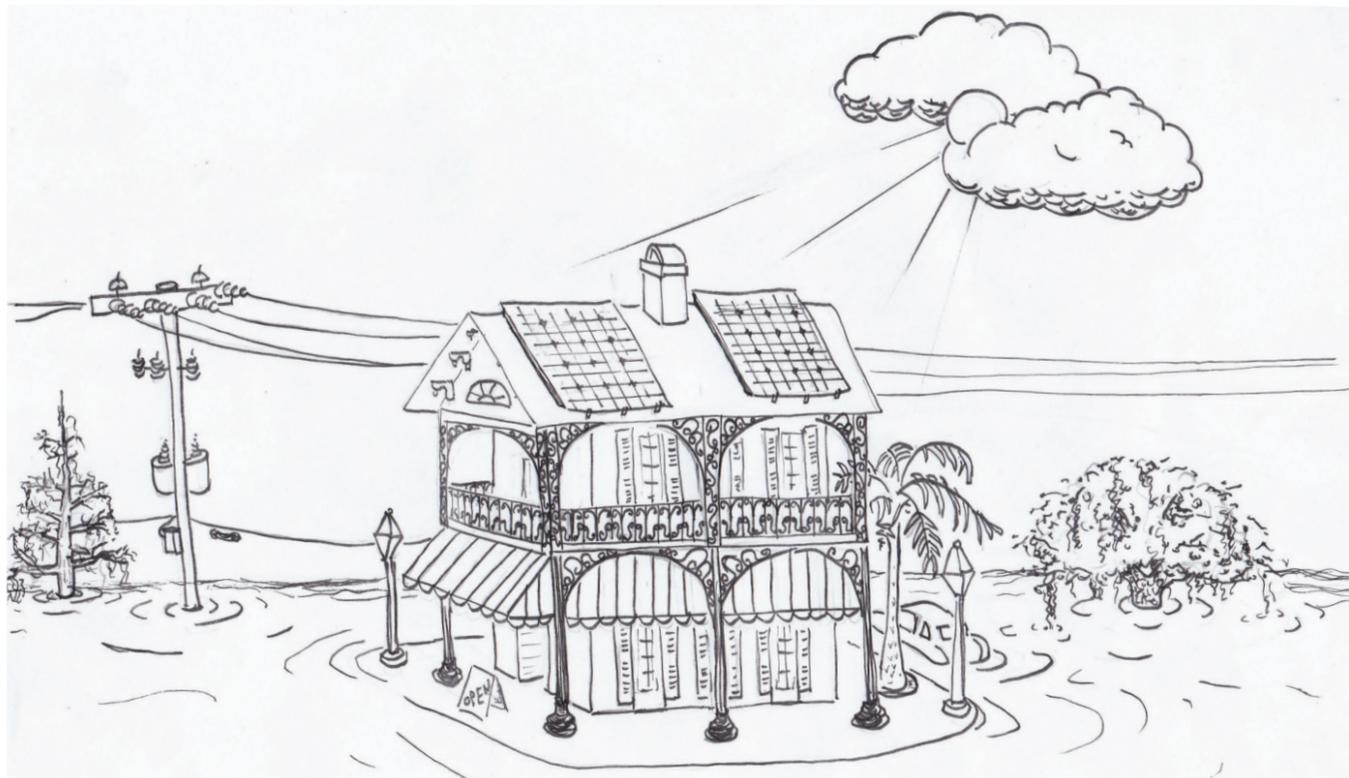
# Calypso's Five Decade Soak

Written By Hailey Williams  
Artwork by Camela Guevara



1.  
Soap suds storm porcelain edges  
of the Gulf of Mexico,  
making landfall at record speeds.  
We leave the water on, think  
she'll turn it off herself.
2.  
Freckled & bruised, a soft island –  
Calypso's breast emergent in the wide bath.  
Reef-ribbed, polyp-pored, kelp-curved,  
skin flakes off in salts and sands.  
How long can she hold her breath?
3.  
When our tub overflows  
her sand-bar knees submerge.  
Next the fortified elbows,  
her lighthouse nose,  
colorful Keys adorning her toes.
4.  
Plastic baubles swirl  
& organs bleach,  
skin peels off in scutes,  
her hard-bright room sings  
like a wine glass as the waters rise.
5.  
An inch a year, soon a foot,  
a meter, three. Our Calypso  
lulled by heat, drowns.  
Her heart? Brined in its own salts.  
Still we do not stop the faucet.





# Bespoke Community Resiliency in the Face of Climate Change

## Interview with Get Lit, Stay Lit Founder Devin de Wulf

Written by Tim Cohen  
Artwork by David Petitpain

In late August 2021, Hurricane Ida descended upon Southeastern Louisiana devastating many smaller communities and pummeling New Orleans. While the levees rebuilt in the wake of Hurricane Katrina held up against Hurricane Ida's onslaught, the city lost power for more than a week as temperatures soared, leaving residents exposed to the elements.

In one neighborhood, however, New Orleans-based artist and community organizer, Devin de Wulf, who is himself a native of Charleston, was prepared for the moment, having previously installed solar panels and two batteries at his home in Bywater. As a result, neighbors were able to charge cell phones, plug in refrigerators, and power oxygen tanks while others died of heat exhaustion or struggled to find adequate supplies of food across the city.

Out of this crisis, an idea was born. What if, instead of single houses, a network of businesses, especially restaurants, were outfitted with solar panels and batteries across the city? That idea grew into an initiative that de Wulf and fellow organizers called "Get Lit, Stay Lit." This de-centralized network of solar-powered resilient restaurants, or "Stay Lits" as they refer to them, will be first responders for vulnerable communities increasingly affected by climate change.

**Tim Cohen: How would you describe the Get Lit, Stay Lit initiative to someone who has never heard of it previously?**

Devin de Wulf: The idea is to get solar panels and batteries for local restaurants — so that a restaurant can become the first-responder for their community in the aftermath of a major hurricane. Instead of losing thousands of dollars in food-waste because the power is out (which creates methane). If the restaurant has solar and batteries it becomes a micro-grid. The restaurant can then feed their community. They can become cooling centers, cell-phone charging stations, food centers, and much more for their neighborhood. This helps with supply chains, job interruptions, saves methane, saves money. One restaurant can have a big impact on their neighbors. Now imagine 100 of those around a city...or 200...or 500. That's a solution for the next hurricane (because we know they are coming).

**What is your vision for the Get Lit, Stay Lit campaign in the near, medium, and long term?**

I am trying to get the idea out into the world now. Soon we will install our first "Stay Lit." We will keep working to raise funds and awareness to create more "Stay Lits" and share the idea. Long term, this is something that a local, state, or federal government should fund.

**In an ideal world, what would you view to be a "success" for the campaign?**

We know hurricanes are coming — and getting stronger. And we basically know what items and services are needed immediately after a hurricane: food, ice, cell phone charging stations, tarps, debris removal. A "Stay Lit" restaurant would solve three of these five problems. So to me, success would be getting these all over the place — wherever there are hurricanes. This would also help each community become more resilient and really help locals lead recovery efforts. The truth is no one cares about your community as much as you do!

**How does funding work for the campaign?**

I think to start, it takes grassroots fundraising. That's what we are doing in NOLA (New Orleans, Louisiana) with my non-profit, Feed The Second Line. We will also start recruiting restaurants to create round-up campaigns that

could generate small amounts that could quickly add up. Each restaurant will cost around \$60,000 — 24% of that gets immediately paid back in the form of a federal tax credit for solar. That would be around \$14,000 for the next project. Then we ask restaurants with solar to contribute \$200 a month, which comes from their energy savings, back into the program. This isn't a big deal with one restaurant, but with 300 restaurants that could create enough funding for a new project each month.

**What about strategy for community education?**

Each restaurant could also become a great place to advertise the program — educating the community.

**What lessons have you learned about leading this initiative? I'd be very curious to know more about response — how have people responded?**

People are interested in the idea - the hard part is actually doing it! Things move slowly, but you have to start somewhere and just try your best I believe. Even getting the idea out in the air is good.

**What has surprised you the most while creating and launching this initiative?**

Many people don't understand the potential of solar panels + batteries. They are so much better than relying on a gas-powered generator (which can often kill people). It is a cost up front for sure - but something that will last years and save communities from other costs: all the wasted food, bringing in ice and food from afar, having to evacuate elders after a major storm, etc. We don't really consider all the potential savings - which make solar and batteries a smart choice for coastal living.

**What similarities do you see between New Orleans and Charleston? Do you have any advice for other activists looking to create their own climate resilience initiatives in Charleston or other areas of the Lowcountry based upon your experience?**

Both cities have a very strong restaurant scene. Residents working with local restaurants could easily fund this idea. It just takes work organizing it and recruiting small donors.

But no one will do it for us. Gotta start somewhere. ✨



## Should CofC be the leader on climate?

Written by David Quick  
Artwork by Luka Romanova

We can thank scientists and other great minds in academia for our knowledge about climate change and its impact on our atmosphere, oceans, land, weather patterns and accelerated species extinction.

So it's not too far a stretch — considering the severity and urgency of our existential crisis — to expect the institutions where this knowledge stems to serve as models and incubators of what humans must do to mitigate our carbon and methane footprints.

In the Lowcountry, that would arguably be the oldest and largest liberal arts university: the College of Charleston.

### How's it doing?

While some promising work and initiatives have taken place or are underway, some recent graduates and current students say not enough has been done nor that it is happening fast enough.

Projects underway include Darcy Everett's, the college's sustainability director, work on a Climate Action Plan with a team of faculty and staff and an "energy savings performance" plan with Siemens, the latter of which she estimates could reduce the college's total emissions by about 13 percent. Also, the Board of Trustees approved a "sustainability action plan" in May 2021.

Additional tangible projects of note in the past school year included a pilot food waste recovery program at Warren Residence Hall (an estimated 39 percent of waste from residence halls is "organic") and the college's first solar project, a solar pavilion.

As for the latter, "While very much a demonstration project, this will help us pave the way to introducing more renewable energy on campus in the future," says Everett.

### Obstacles to Culture

Recent graduate Rachel Weidman, who worked as an intern at the college's Center for Sustainable Development, describes much of the college's work, to date, as "very performative" and that she has met with college President Andrew Hsu to underscore that the school is not doing enough.

As an example, Weidman points to the college's Cougar Changemaker program, which collects money through a \$10 "green fee" per student each semester to fund sustainability projects (The fee raised \$18,000 and \$20,000 during the fall and spring semesters this past school year).

Worthy projects, such as efforts to put appropriate stickers on building windows to prevent bird strikes or a free condom dispensing machine in dorms, often get discarded due to the extensive bureaucracy required for approval.

"There are too many people who have to approve to get anything done," says Weidman. "We (the college) are really afraid of fucking anything up and failing. A lot of these projects are uncharted territory and we have to be open to that (failing)."

Weidman and rising sophomore Savannah Lominac, a business administration and sustainability major, also note the culture of the college needs to change as well.

Lominac says, "The reason I chose (to attend) the college was that it had a direct link between business and sustainability. I was under the impression that sustainability was a big deal here, but what I found this past year was only a tight niche group, composed primarily of APE (Alliance for Planet Earth), vegan club and the sustainable fashion club."

Both Lominac and Weidman agree that most students are interested in "physical appearance, fraternity and sorority life, shopping and partying."

Changing that culture to one that places climate and sustainability as a top priority, they add, will require as much from the president and faculty as it will the student body.

### Greening Food service?

One of the biggest challenges for the college is working with its institutional food service provider, Aramark, a multinational corporation that serves not only universities, but also hospitals and prison systems and trades on the New York Stock Exchange.

The college can, and has, negotiated some level of sustainability in its contract with Aramark, including a position for a sustainability coordinator and attempting to source 20 percent of its food locally. Weidman says the contract with Aramark prohibits clubs, such as the vegan club, from using any club money on local vendors, such as food trucks.

Robert Russo, who graduated from the college in 2021, has served as Aramark's first sustainability coordinator for the college, but plans to leave the post soon. While promising, Russo called the job challenging with little opportunity to advance. He hopes future contracts will call for even more sustainability efforts with Aramark.

## Divestment to Travel

Before Russo joined Aramark, the political science major attempted an unsuccessful effort to get the College of Charleston Foundation to divest its holdings in Big Oil from its endowment. He convinced the student government to pass a non-binding resolution to do just that, but says the Foundation "freaked out" and felt "blind-sided" by the initiative.

But that's hardly daunting compared to another carbon bomb that most colleges will face: the carbon footprint of travel.

College athletic teams often travel by air or bus to competitions. Professors go to conferences to deliver 20 minute lectures. Students travel overseas to study abroad. Off-campus students often have to drive to school as well.

Everett says commuting and travel are one of the largest sectors of higher ed's carbon footprint but that "the college has limited control over these areas."

### The Ultimate buzzer beater

Todd Jared LeVasseur, a visiting assistant professor and Quality Enhancement Plan director at the college, has focused much of his career on sustainability and says "the Academy, as a whole," must start making bold decisions regarding climate change.

These run the gamut from curtailing travel to teaching other economic models, focusing on happiness and de-growth, and redesigning the whole curricula and programming around climate adaptation and justice.

"Given the shifts that are just beginning, and how bad it very well could get at 2 degrees centigrade and beyond, the Academy as a whole, and every institute in it, has failed," says LeVasseur.

"We have the brightest humans over the last 30 to 40 years, with access to the most sophisticated communications and computer systems in the history of the species, and the Academy has helped to avert any of this, despite all of that at its fingertips. This is THE pivotal moment of history of our species, and we're not mobilized, at all, as higher education professionals — local, regional, national — to address it, at the urgency needed. Rather, we are actively incentivizing behaviors and world views that are driving climate change in education, and politics, and economics, and technology, et cetera." ✨



# grief is power

Written By Sydney Bollinger  
Artwork by Andie Carver

The world is in neverending house-on-fire-and-we're-sitting-at-the-kitchen-table meme chaos — or it seems so, anyway. News and alerts infiltrate our every being, inescapable even if we try to limit our participation in the fast-moving, click-bait media cycle. I'm not saying this in a mainstream-media-is-turning-everyone-into-communists kind of way. I'm saying this in a seriously-everything-is-shit-all-the-time kind of way.

Whether you're reading Twitter (reactionary), Instagram (performative), Facebook (scary), the New York Times (incendiary — have you seen their Op-Eds?), or just listening to the words of that friend or family member you've tolerated despite their fear-mongering sentiments, life in the present is filled with a constant influx of harrowing news. The planet is dying a rapid death and our finitude can feel like the barrier to change. What can I, one of billions in the world, one of millions in South Carolina, one of thousands in Charleston, actually do? Hasn't all that can be done been done by now?

When we care about the planet, its intricate ecosystems, its diverse people, its movement and personality and spirit, grief is natural. The earth is experiencing loss. We're experiencing loss. We're anticipating loss, mourning for the present and the future of Earth.

Grief, though, is productive — and not in the capitalist sense. When my grandmother died around Christmas in 2020, I thought I would never know happiness again. She was my mentor, inspiration, and lifeline. I never thought I would lose her, and then she took her last breath. In the months that followed, grief took me in waves. I never wanted to feel it, especially when tears escaped my eyes without permission.

Months later, I thought that I shouldn't be sad anymore. A year after her death, I still found myself sobbing. Even now, I sleep with her old quilt every night and write letters to her in a journal.

Processing grief is a continual practice. Our grief for the world will never go away, but that's our power. Acknowledging and understanding our grief for the world can lead to clarity and action. We can grieve what's lost and protect what we have yet to lose. In many ways, our anguish is our power to move forward and seek a just future for all beings. ✨



Written by Sophie Ecklund  
Photos provided

When she officially moved to the United States in 2018, Louise was shocked at the vast difference between here and back home in Denmark. “Denmark is very extreme when it comes to sustainability,” she remarked. “They try to source everything from our wind turbines, from nature.”

She shared how difficult it was in Charleston, specifically, to find any sort of information regarding recycling and compost — there was no main center of information that could be accessed by the community.

“You kind of have to get lucky meeting someone who knows something about something.”

In Charleston, it is extremely difficult to find any information regarding sustainable practices for our waste. Even if we can find this information, it's not easily accessible to the public.

This is what Louise Rakers had in mind when she first began Nordic Cooking, a sustainable food company that offers plant-based meal boxes, vegan and gluten-free foods, and zero plastic, 100% compostable cooking classes

## Bringing Hygge & Sustainability to Charleston: Louise Rakers of Nordic Cooking

and catering events on Daniel Island. Louise says Nordic Cooking's mission “is really spreading awareness, you know, with the food industry, how can we do even more to become more mindful of our environment.”

Her work doesn't just benefit and educate others on environmental sustainability, though. A big part of Nordic was founded on the Danish idea of Hygge (hue-guh). Louise explains how this cannot be directly translated (the closest being “cozy”) but it is instead much deeper than that- “Hygge is a feeling that's created inside of you,” she emphasizes.

She talked about her family's traditions to produce this feeling of Hygge, which centered around cooking and eating together at the dinner table — the most important piece of furniture in a Danish home. Eating together can bring a sense of internal peace, especially when surrounded by the people we love most.

Louise hopes to achieve these feelings of peace and familial love through her Nordic Cooking, especially with her cooking classes. She says oftentimes families will come in together for a class and they come back and express how much it has helped strengthen their bond. “They talk together more, they eat together around the dining table more, they feel affection with each other, and the children feel like they can open up more and talk to each other at the end of the day. That's the ultimate goal, right?”

Hygge and the feeling it produces connects to a part of sustainability that most don't often think about: personal sustainability. Sustainability of the self. Making sure that you're mentally happy and at peace with your world.



HYGGE - Continued from page 22



The fact that Louise uses Hygge to address all aspects of sustainability illustrates just how important her work is.

“One thing I’m really really big on is the different levels of sustainability because there’s so many circles of it... we have the financial sustainability, we have the environment, we have family, we have so many different dynamics and circles in our lives. I believe that everything has to be as sustainable as possible. And if we can manage to do that, then we can manage to do a lot.”

Hygge isn’t just fostered through family — it can be found within communities too. This is exhibited through Nordic Cooking’s monthly newsletter, which is free to anyone and offers information regarding sustainability and shares various resources, such as their favorite podcasts and products related to sustainability.

As for anyone starting out in the sustainable food industry, Louise has some advice:

“Don’t subtract, add. Start small with what is right in front of you. Don’t try to do everything on the first day. Then slowly start phasing out the things that aren’t good for you and then for the environment...one thing you can do immediately is start trying to get things more locally.”

Overall, Nordic Cooking does a lot more than just sell gluten-free, vegan food in compostable packaging. While combating the lack of accessibility to resources in Charleston, Louise is also fostering a community full of people becoming more knowledgeable about sustainable practices and becoming informed on where their food is coming from. This is also showing people that the battle against climate change doesn’t have to be fought alone or be a dramatic change; it can be as simple as learning more about eating sustainably and creating your own sense of Hygge within the world. ✨

# CLIMATE

## WORDS FROM LGBTQ+

Written by Sydney Bollinger

The climate crisis is this big overarching issue, putting tension on our frail system and disproportionately compounding its effects on the most marginalized communities. To solve a problem as interconnected as climate change, we have to aim for environmental justice and systems change — this includes queer liberation.

Queer people are harshly facing the disasters of the climate crisis because, like many other historically marginalized communities, they have long been recipients of patriarchal and capitalist violence.

It’s no surprise that almost 22% of queer people in the U.S. lives in poverty<sup>1</sup>. When looking at just transgender people or just Black LGBTQ+, the rate of poverty shoots up to around 30% for both groups<sup>2</sup>.

Transgender people, in particular, are unprotected and harmed by the flood of laws “protecting” women’s sports and saving children from “experimentation.” In May 2022, the S.C. State legislature and Governor McMaster banned transgender youth from participating in sports teams consistent with their gender identity.

These laws aren’t far from home and LGBTQ+ folks are facing further danger with the Supreme Court’s recent ruling overturning Roe vs. Wade, and thus the right to privacy guaranteed by that case over 50 years ago. As Justice Clarence Thomas suggested in his opinion, the horrific ruling could lead to the rollback of LGBTQ+ rights. Yet, we still have hope for a just and equitable future.

Of course, it’s not easy — but we can still form communities, share our stories, and most importantly, act on the severe environmental injustices in our area.

Let the following words from LGBTQ+ climate activists in the Lowcountry inspire you to keep going.

<sup>1</sup> LGBT Poverty in the United States: A study of differences between sexual orientation and gender identity groups. UCLA School of Law Williams Institute. October 2019.

<sup>2</sup> See above.

# ACTIVISM IS QUEER

## CLIMATE ACTIVISTS IN THE LOWCOUNTRY

### Elizabeth

Elizabeth, a graduate of Oberlin College, became involved in climate activism after joining a local chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby (CCL) during her time in college. Inspired by theory, Elizabeth sees the interconnectedness of everything.

The thing that most people don’t realize about environmentalism is that a lot of the actions that we’re trying to do to make the world a greener place simultaneously make it better in other ways — like directly helping people.

If we’re fighting for environmental justice, if we’re trying to decrease the pollution in an area, we’re also fighting people getting sick or having health issues.

As a queer person it’s your job to fight for everyone under the queer umbrella and recognize the intersectionality of it all. By being a climate activist, you’re recognizing that.

### Autumn

As one of the organizer’s for Charleston’s chapter of Sunrise Movement, Autumn has been at the forefront of climate activism in the Lowcountry for the past five years. She uses anger as a motivator to make the Lowcountry — and South Carolina — better for all.

I started thinking about what needs to happen to actually make a difference and then I found...climate activism, which seems like a really holistic way of looking at things — social justice and environmental justice and how capitalism plays into that.

Our own made up social hierarchy is changing the way that people can even make a difference or how they’re affected. It doesn’t really matter if everybody in the world is recycling, it’s much more. It takes looking at systems, especially large businesses...

I feel like that’s something that made a lot of sense to me and why I shifted into putting more energy into climate activism. It seemed to encompass more of a foundational shift in thinking about what the problems even are, what’s causing them, and what kind of solutions we need to explore.

### Seb

Seb is a Korean-American genderfluid architectural researcher and community organizer. During their day job, they work on issues of radical accessibility and design — and spend the rest of their time organizing. In Charleston, Seb works with Friends of Gadsden Creek, an ongoing environmental justice battle against the City of Charleston and WestEdge Development.

When you’re looking at a social movement work and activist work through an intersectional lens, you realize that, really, the most marginalized groups are never in silos and if they’ve been put in silos and put in competition with each, that stuff is very intentionally instrumentalized to create conflict, when really there should be solidarity.

So, I think when you have climate change, the first people to be affected are the most marginalized. You know, we oftentimes look at the working class and we look at racial minorities. I don’t think it would be too much of a stretch to say that queer folks and trans folks are also part of that minority. In so many intersections of race, class, and gender and sexuality, I feel like it only makes sense for both sides to want to collaborate and work in solidarity from one another...there’s a lot to learn, from each side of the coin and just how you can apply these things to your own organizing practices.

# CLIMATE ACTION HUB

## Want to get involved? Here's what you can do:

1. First, **find the City Council person that is in your district.** If you don't have one, find one that is close by. If there is more than one person in a group, find out how many people would like to meet with their City Council member. Usually small groups are best (3 max).
2. **Research** and find out more about the background of the city council member you want to reach out to. For example, what is their relationship if any to environmental causes and stewardship? Look for points of common ground to build rapport (maybe you went to the same high school with them, college, etc).
3. After you have some background information, **reach out to your city council member** through email or through their office. The key here at this point would be to present yourself as a constituent who wants to listen to and understand the City Council members position on funding for goals we want to achieve with the Charleston Climate Action Plan. Are they in opposition to increased funding because they have other priorities they want to fund? How important is climate change as an issue to them?
4. **Tailor your ask** based on their answers. If they are more fiscally conservative, explain how funding our priorities would save money and lives long-term (climate change effects as we have seen are both expensive and deadly) or generate new funding opportunities (for example the grant-writer position). Possibly link to increased tourism opportunities for the city.
5. At the end, **ask for a follow up meeting** to continue the conversation in the future.
6. **Report back to CCC** with your findings and plan next steps.

We have a great roadmap in the Charleston Climate Action Plan, an agenda for local decarbonization that was passed in May 2021 – but great action items don't mean much if they're not implemented, due to lack of staff or funds. We need to make sure the Charleston CAP is fully funded by pushing for more staff and more implementation money in the next City budget – and we'll only get it if we can mobilize a grassroots wave of folks reaching out to the Mayor and Council about how important it is to fund climate action!

### Examples of funding needs:

- \$70,000 to upgrade and expand EV charging at City parking facilities
- \$60,000 annually for sustainability grant writer
- \$1 million for weatherization and critical home repair

Stay connected with the ongoing campaign at [www.charlestonclimatecoalition.com/fundthecap](http://www.charlestonclimatecoalition.com/fundthecap)



"We are all in the Same Boat" by Sue Coe

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