

Danielle, GreenThumb Harvest Fair, New York
September 18, 2021

Rachel (00:01):

So, Danielle, will you please tell me your name and where you grew up, where you live, what you do, any information about you that might be interesting. Oh, you know what, can I move this because I don't want it to get into your hair. Actually, could I put it right here on your-

Danielle (00:18):

On my purse?

Rachel (00:19):

On your purse, yeah, if you're going to be wearing it. That's actually perfect.

Danielle (00:22):

Okay.

Rachel (00:22):

Let me put it this way so it doesn't... Yeah. That's perfect.

Danielle (00:26):

Great. Yes. My name is Danielle. I am a New York City native. I grew up in Brooklyn and now I currently live in Harlem, in East Harlem.

Rachel (00:34):

Okay. And the question that I start off asking everybody is, when you think about climate change or global warming, what do you think about and how do you feel?

Danielle (00:45):

I think that it is a very big crisis that people are aware of, but they're not really taking action as quickly as they should be. And it makes me feel guilty for living in the kind of society that we live in. We're very wasteful with our purchasing habits. So I feel a sense of responsibility to partake in reversing climate change.

Rachel (01:12):

And what does it feel like to feel a sense of responsibility? What does it feel like to feel guilty?

Danielle (01:19):

To feel guilty, it makes me feel sad that this is happening and that I am part of the problem as everyone else is. And it makes me sad that not enough people are placing a higher urgency on the issue. And in terms of responsibility, I feel empowered to make this change.

Rachel (01:41):

Danielle, why do you think people aren't making change as fast as they should be? What's going on with that?

Danielle (01:48):

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I think climate change has a much slower effect than other societal issues do, so people don't feel like they... It feels like it can be on the back-burner for people rather than realizing that this is a much bigger issue than it seems.

Rachel (02:07):

The emergency doesn't feel as urgent.

Danielle (02:09):

Right.

Rachel (02:10):

When did you first learn about climate crisis?

Danielle (02:13):

I've been paying attention to it for about the last 10 years or so, but I think in the more recent years, within the last three years, I started noticing climate change and pollution and how we all play a part in it.

Rachel (02:25):

Will you talk to me more about what you notice?

Danielle (02:28):

Yes. I feel even living in New York City, the city's very polluted in the ground and in the air and not enough people are taking responsibility to properly discard their waste. And there's a lot of traffic here, so there's a lot of gas naturally. And it's a suffocating feeling.

Rachel (02:50):

Suffocating.

Danielle (02:51):

Yeah.

Rachel (02:52):

That's an interesting word to use. Talk to me more about that.

Danielle (02:56):

Just the sense that our air is not as clean as it could be and just whenever you leave the city to go to another part of the state or even outside of the state, you notice an immediate difference in the air and how you feel mentally. And then when you come back to the city, it's like, well, for me personally, it's like a sense of gloom that the air isn't as clean as it could be and there's just so much environmental pollution.

Rachel (03:23):

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Have you noticed other changes, since you've lived here your whole life, changes in the weather or... Do you garden? Are you a gardener?

Danielle (03:30):

I'm not.

Rachel (03:31):

Well, have you noticed changes in the weather or your local landscapes or seasons?

Danielle (03:36):

I've noticed that winters have been less harsh as they used to be. I think there was one year where we got snow once. And growing up, we had very severe winter storms. So just noticing that our winters are not as cold as it used to be is a big red flag for me.

Rachel (03:53):

What does it feel like when you notice unseasonable weather?

Danielle (03:56):

What does it feel like?

Rachel (03:57):

Yeah, emotionally.

Danielle (04:00):

It's scary because I know it's a sign of a bigger problem.

Rachel (04:06):

Have you ever taken political action around climate crisis?

Danielle (04:10):

I've signed petitions, but that's really it.

Rachel (04:13):

Why haven't you taken political action?

Danielle (04:16):

I'm not really sure what else I can do.

Rachel (04:19):

Yeah. I hear that from a lot of people. So what you're saying is, it's unclear what else to do?

Danielle (04:30):

Exactly.

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Rachel (04:31):

Yeah. So how does climate crisis affect you on a daily basis?

Danielle (04:37):

Mostly with the air quality and just noticing that link between feeling suffocated. So I feel, mentally, it can be straining.

Rachel (04:46):

Is there a way that climate change affects how you plan for your future?

Danielle (04:52):

Not really. I feel my goals and values are the same, but I am being more mindful of my waste. So just thinking about my purchasing decisions on a very small level.

Rachel (05:05):

What are your goals and values?

Danielle (05:08):

To create change and just leave something behind for this city. I would really love to, since I grew up here, make some kind of positive impact.

Rachel (05:17):

What kinds of things do you want to do?

Danielle (05:19):

Clean our streets. Change the mindset of everyone so that they're more aware of how their litter makes our city dirtier.

Rachel (05:29):

That's really cool. What kinds of conversations are you having with your family or your community about the climate crisis?

Danielle (05:39):

I've posted things on Instagram from other existing organizations and just telling people that they should be more mindful about separating their trash. But aside from that, it's very hard to change someone's habits if they have to also make that realization themselves.

Rachel (05:59):

It really is, it's so hard. It's like you can't actually change people.

Danielle (06:02):

Exactly.

Rachel (06:03):

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Do you have a spiritual, religious, or ethical belief system that helps you navigate this moment or helps you contextualize this moment of change?

Danielle (06:16):

I'm not from religious or spiritual background. I think it just comes down to knowing what's right and what's wrong and how that impacts people.

Rachel (06:26):

How do you know what's right and what's wrong?

Danielle (06:29):

I know it's wrong because our actions as a society in terms of waste has led to extinction and climate change. And that's not something that feels good. And I think what's right is to reverse our damage that we've done.

Rachel (06:47):

What do you fear for the future?

Danielle (06:51):

I fear that climate change will get to a point where it's completely irreversible because of the way our mindset is in terms of how we purchase things and use things. But I'm just scared that we might not take action quickly.

Rachel (07:09):

What do you feel hopeful for?

Danielle (07:12):

I feel hopeful that, on a small level, there can be a change that starts. Just a matter of getting enough people that are passionate about the issue to help change everyone's mindset.

Rachel (07:24):

What are some questions you're asking yourself these days?

Danielle (07:28):

What I can do better or how to help people relate to the issue better?

Rachel (07:36):

Any answer?

Danielle (07:39):

Yes and no. Still thinking about them.

Rachel (07:44):

Danielle, thank you so much for talking with me.

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Danielle (07:46):

Yes. Thank you.

Rachel (07:47):

Yeah. It's so generous of you to sit down and share your thoughts. I really appreciate it.

Danielle (07:51):

Yeah, no problem. This is a great project.

Rachel (07:53):

Thank you.