

Teenager at Thomas Greene Park, Gowanus, Brooklyn
June 26, 2021

Rachel (00:00):

So, I'll ask you that first question. When you think about climate change, what do you think about? And how do you feel?

Teenager (00:19):

I don't know too much about it but it would be something that I would want to learn more about. But not knowing where to look is the issue. What was that? The question?

Rachel (00:34):

How do you feel when you think about climate change?

Teenager (00:40):

Certain things that I've seen are sad or whatever, with the whole... I don't know if you want to compare the two, with global warming and all the ice melting and stuff, with the polar bears and stuff. That's sad because where are they going to go? But I don't know.

Rachel (00:58):

Do you feel like you have experienced global warming here in New York? In your neighborhood?

Teenager (01:11):

Possibly, but I might not have paid attention to it. Yeah, probably.

Rachel (01:19):

Where do you feel like you've experienced that? Or where do you think you might have? You're 16 too so... I talk to people who are 50 and they've experienced a lot of change. And I think, for teenagers, you've been living within a certain... If you might have experienced less change over the course of your lifetime here.

Teenager (01:50):

Maybe around where I live. In that area, overall.

Rachel (02:03):

Are you having conversations with people who you know about climate change? The global warming?

Teenager (02:07):

The last time was when I was in school but it wasn't what we were talking about. It just came up in the conversation that we were having. But that was in the beginning of the school year so I don't really remember.

Rachel (02:23):

Okay. And what do you feel hopeful for the future?

Teenager (02:33):

Besides for things to change?

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Rachel (02:35):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teenager (02:39):

It all starts with the people. They have to try and work together but that doesn't seem like that's going to happen. But there's hope.

Rachel (02:51):

You sound like a reticent optimist. You sound like you're a hesitant optimist. Like, "I have hope but I don't think it's really going to actually happen."

Teenager (03:08):

I do. I definitely do. But you never know. It could happen but then at the same time it could all go back to the way it was. Well, the way it is now.

Rachel (03:17):

What kinds of things do you want to see change in the future?

Teenager (03:21):

Specifically talking about what?

Rachel (03:25):

Issues that you're concerned about. Things that you're concerned about that you'd like to see change and get better.

Teenager (03:33):

That's a lot.

Rachel (03:34):

It's a lot, I know.

Teenager (03:35):

Yeah.

Rachel (03:36):

I know.

Teenager (03:43):

Well, besides racism and all of that? Are you... I don't know.

Rachel (03:59):

Racism is a big... That's a big, big thing.

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Teenager (04:13):

Oh, one thing. You see all of this stuff on the floor?

Rachel (04:16):

Yeah.

Teenager (04:17):

Keeping areas clean and all of that, that's a problem.

Rachel (04:25):

Yeah. There's a lot of confetti here.

Teenager (04:28):

And where I live, I live up there. You see those buildings over there?

Rachel (04:30):

Yeah.

Teenager (04:30):

I live over there. And in front of my building, there's really big garbage bags and there be bugs and stuff there. That's so nasty. I feel like the housing people should do better with throwing the garbage out. And then behind my building... Well, not really behind it, but in front of my building, there's this big thing full of garbage bags that the housing workers collect and they put it there and it stinks.

Rachel (04:58):

And it doesn't go anywhere?

Teenager (05:00):

It stays there for a while.

Rachel (05:02):

So how does it feel to see garbage around where you live?

Teenager (05:09):

Not that it's completely affecting me, but then again I don't like it. But then again there's nothing I can really do about it because it's not my job. But I don't like it. I just feel like with that garbage being there, it makes the neighborhood look dirty. Not saying that it is, but it makes it look dirty.

Rachel (05:37):

So you're 16, what do you hope for for your future? This will be the last question I ask you.

Teenager (05:45):

Well, one, to graduate on time. To get my dream job, definitely.

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Rachel (05:50):

Which is what?

Teenager (05:53):

Do you know what an anesthesiologist is?

Rachel (05:55):

Yeah.

Teenager (05:59):

They don't do the surgery, but you know the person that usually sits there?

Rachel (05:59):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Teenager (06:02):

I want to do that. Also not only because of the money, because they're one of the highest paid, I don't want to call them doctors, but doctors. But mainly because ever since I was younger I used to always be obsessed with them. But I used to always want to be a surgeon, but I don't want to be the one cutting people open. I don't want to do that.

So I'd rather just sit there. Well, not necessarily sit there, but I'd rather be the one not doing it. But I would want to be there. But getting my first apartment by the time I turn 20, 21, because I graduate in two years because I'm in the 10th grade. Well, going into the 11th grade. I graduate in basically like a year-ish. But definitely I want to get mainly focused on getting my first apartment. I want to move.

Rachel (07:00):

[Danny 00:07:00], having your own apartment is really nice. It's a really exciting thing to have.

Teenager (07:04):

I plan to move with my best friend. She lives across the street from me, but I've known her since we were younger-ish. But we were going to get our first apartment together. And then once we both graduated college and all of that, we were going to move to Jersey and get our first house.

Rachel (07:24):

Cool. That sounds great. That's a lot to look forward to.

Teenager (07:28):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). But the main thing as of right now is my grades, getting good grades and all of that and graduating on time.

Rachel (07:38):

Yeah. Really important. Not always easy.

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Teenager (07:42):

Trust me.

Rachel (07:43):

Yeah.

Teenager (07:44):

I did really bad this year.

Rachel (07:45):

It was a hard year, right?

Teenager (07:47):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Rachel (07:47):

Were you remote mostly?

Teenager (07:49):

I wasn't allowed to go to the school.

Rachel (07:52):

Oh, man. I have friends who are teachers, so I have friends on the other end. I can't imagine doing school online. It must have been horrible?

Teenager (08:03):

It definitely was. I was home all day, all the time. I'm not that type of person that goes outside. So I go outside like once a week, once every two weeks. And then I stay in the house for like a month and then I go back outside. And then it wasn't like I was in trouble, but whenever I did used to get in trouble, obviously I wasn't allowed to go outside. So it made me feel like I was in trouble even though I wasn't in trouble. And then being that I said I did really bad was mainly because I'm in my bed. So I want to sleep all day.

Rachel (08:38):

Yeah. How can you possibly be focusing on schoolwork when you're in your home? In a place where it's...

Teenager (08:45):

I'm comfortable.

Rachel (08:46):

Yeah. Any other questions I haven't asked you that you wish that I would ask you? Or questions that you're asking yourself?

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Teenager (09:00):

What made you want to do all of this? What made you worried about... I don't know how to...

Rachel (09:07):

Worried about climate change and global warming?

Teenager (09:11):

Yeah.

Rachel (09:11):

I've been worried about global warming for longer than anybody I know. I'm 36, I've been worried about climate change I think since I was in high school.

Teenager (09:11):

You look like you're in your twenties.

Rachel (09:11):

What?

Teenager (09:28):

I said, you look like you are in your twenties.

Rachel (09:29):

Oh, well, thank you very much. Yeah, no, I've been worried about it for a long time and I've been making art about it. You can have this book if you'd like, which is part of a different project that I'm doing for an audio piece. There's a link to an audio piece that you can listen to that accompanies the book. But I've been making art about this for many years. And this project is... I'm trying to talk to other people about how they feel about the issue. Something that I've been privately feeling anxiety around.

Teenager (10:09):

This is nice.

Rachel (10:11):

Thanks. That's not my work. The illustrations are another artist's who I think is really awesome. But, yeah, you can have that. You can also have... I'll stop the recording unless you have anything else to talk about.