



Interview with Dayna Reggero
Founder and Director
[Climate Listening Project](#)
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The Climate Listening Project explores the connections that are important to each of us: family, faith, business, community; and weaves together the latest science with inspiring stories from around the globe.

You can find the full recording of my conversation with Dayna [here](#).

Can you tell us a little bit about the Climate Listening Project?

I started the Climate Listening Project three years ago. It is a storytelling platform that is not only about following the stories of impact from the fossil fuel industry and climate change, but also the solutions.

We look at people who are working together, the people who are taking action. The hopeful stories. It's about the little things that connect us in our communities—the bird that we love, the food that we eat, the things we love, the things we need.

A big part of the Climate Listening Project is collaboration. I've had a chance to work with the Audubon Society and the Belize Audubon Society. I went with local Audubon Society chapters in North Carolina to follow a bird (a Wood Thrush) to Belize, listening to stories along the way. I've had a chance to listen to farmers and faith leaders. I've collaborated with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). I've also worked with the Green Chalice and different interfaith and creation care groups.

Most recently, I collaborated with the Moms Clean Air Force, traveling across America to eight states where I listened to women and moms—parents—who are connected by their care for their children. I recently released a new video, *Dear Tomorrow*, that I did in collaboration with Moms Clean Air Force. It includes letters to the future, from moms to their children, from parents to their children, telling them we tried. We tried.

I also just released a new documentary series, a five part series called *The Story We Want*. It features women across America who are working together and, in my mind, are creating hope. I worked with amazing filmmakers, Adams Wood and Francine Cavanaugh, who made the film *On Coal River*. The series shows women working together. It shows them winning. So, any woman, any parent could watch these stories. This is the most broad audience that I've targeted. Hopefully they will inspire others to share their stories as well.

What was the problem that you saw that made you think, *I am going to do something about this?*



I think that from a young age I was confused by the way that we treated each other and treated animals. I was always questioning everything. I was always curious. I became a vegetarian at a young age because I was questioning where all my food came from.

In college, I started volunteering with different groups and getting involved with meeting people, networking. Having the opportunity to connect and talk with people about the things that I cared about was meaningful to me. I went on TV a lot, bringing animals on TV. Talking to people. I was going out into the community and talking with people, giving speeches and talking with people.

Years down the road, I said to myself, I don't feel comfortable working with one group that is pushing this one thing. How could I work nationally? How could I work internationally with everybody? The Climate Listening Project is this. It is what I want to do using the tools I want to use. It is how I can work with different groups on these issues.

A lot of people think they have to have a very clear cut idea of how it's going to go when they start a project but it doesn't usually go that way.

Right. When I started this it was a collaboration with a local group, Mountain True. At the time, I was working with my friend, Anna Jane Joyner, on the *Years of Living Dangerously*. I saw that folks wanted to listen and wanted to see what climate impacts were being seen locally.

I decided I wanted to film stories and so I just sort of started. Then, different groups approached me and said, "hey, follow this story now." I've felt really lucky in that.

I really enjoy collaboration, I really enjoy being able to follow the stories. The Climate Listening Project has given me the opportunity to do that. It's been fun, it's been really nice because it's brought me in connection with different types of people, and has allowed me to connect them with each other. It's not just one type of person that's impacted by climate change. It's all of us. It's in your backyard, it comes home, it comes to your children, to the bird that you love to see and listen to every spring. It comes to the food that you eat or that you grow. It's comes to the farmers that want to be able to hand their farms down to their children and future generations. It's everybody. It's all of us.

It's been an honor to listen to these folks. It's been an honor to meet all these people. My whole world has been opened up. I've learned a lot. I'm listening. I'm learning. I hope that is what folks do when they see these stories, when they watch the Climate Listening Project videos. All I ask is that folks listen. Just listen.

You are obviously offering something people want. You're getting a lot of response.



People are talking about climate change, even though we are not seeing as much in the news and we are still arguing over some things, for different reasons. We have to keep forward progress going. Hopefully these stories can be my contribution.

I think we need helpful conversations. I think we need collaboration. And I think everybody knows that. But, when you're working in a certain system, sometimes you don't even know what you want. I think we are seeing a lot more of different folks figuring out different ways to work together and to collaborate, to tell stories. We have access more than ever to tools to tell our own stories.

We decided to put the new five part series (The Story We Want) online so anybody can watch these films on Facebook. It's not behind a paywall. I feel really good about the fact that anybody can have access to the stories for free. If folks want to host screenings in their own community, they can do that. I think it's important to have it everywhere. In whatever way people want to receive their information. Having things on television is good. Having things on the news is good. Having things on Netflix and Hulu, every single platform, apps—Snapchat, Discover, everything.

You are also taking these stories into communities, right?

Generally we are really trying to target the right people and get these videos in the right hands. We are showing these videos to conventional farmers and conservative groups. Because it's folks like that in the videos. So, they if they see somebody like them, maybe it's more likely that they will be able to start that conversation locally or accelerate that conversation.

Who am I, right? I'm just the connector. By showing them folks that are like them it just makes the conversation open up a little bit more.

I've been really lucky to have people want to share their stories with me. Folks say that I am a good listener. That is something that I've tried to learn. I think it's because I am curious. Folks will talk with me and so some of the videos I've done are more compilation pieces where I am able to show all these different voices and say, look at all these different people. Then some videos we really dig down into more of the facts and information and weave together the science with the stories.

I haven't done this project as a study. I've done it as a listening project. I do not have a set list of questions that I ask people. I ask a question and then based on the answer that they give me, I ask the next question. So, it becomes more of a conversation.

If you think back three years ago when you thought, *maybe I should do this thing, I should do something*. How did you know the first steps to take? What was your process, how did you figure that out?



I knew that I wanted to take folks on the journey with me because people kept asking me to take them on the journey with me. And I had been a kind of connector throughout my career. So, when the first bit of Climate Listening Project started, I reached out to my networks to find sponsors, and farmers, food producers—all these organic and biodynamic folks—to interview. I got the equipment together and I did it myself. That was before I had any idea of how to manage a whole tour.

So you started with the skills and what you already knew how to do and asked, “How can I use what I already know how to do to make my vision come alive?”

I'd been the voice for other people for many years. I put people in front of the camera all the time. I loved doing that. Or I would be in front of the camera. The camera was always around.

When I was working on the *Years of Living Dangerously* project, we were going out and listening to stories. I was like, *I want to film them*. I had my own little camera and filmed it myself. Not that I knew what I was doing. I didn't have the right sound equipment and I didn't have the right anything. But, I just wanted to do it. And so I did it.

And then my friend, using the first films as example, asked people to give me money to keep going. NRDC stepped in as the first sponsor and gave me a little bit of money. I traveled around the southeast and kept filming. Then they gave me some more money. I hired filmmakers. You keep growing and connecting. When I went to the Green Festival, I met so many people. You kind of see who you meet, what's going to happen. You never know. Then the next thing happens from there and you try to build it based on the new resources that are available. You try to work with new people, while maintaining that base of support and collaboration that already exists. The Climate Listening Project is a growing, living thing.

Starting a new initiative or a new business is like rolling a rock on rolling hills. You go up and it's really hard and you gain some momentum going down, and then it's another hill. It's never ending but it's a fun experience.

Yes. If I were to give advice to somebody, I think that right now, people can do whatever they want. So, if you have an idea, do something. Get it together, know what it is. All people can do is say no. Just keep pitching.

I have five and ten year goals. I know what I want to do. But I don't know what it's going to look like. I don't know what it's going to be but I know who I want to be and how I want to contribute. Or at least I know that I want to contribute. I think right now, it's all so open. It's all so open and being out of the box, creative, is almost better now.

It's a good time. There's just so much going on. So many people are getting that call to action. Whatever that action is. It can be something as small as just doing a little photo project in your church. It can be anything.



We don't know what's going to work. So, it's good to try different things. There's no success. I don't know what success looks like anymore. Just because I've had a viral video or I've had a big news hit, or I've been interviewed by CNN or I've done these different things, I remember going to Belize or working with a big celebrity and thinking this is cool! This is the thing! But this never is because it's really more about the impact. I'm not going to change the world but I can try. I can say yes to the things I think are going to help, no matter what the money is. Or try to, if I do have big money, do something impactful with it. Give it out. Use it right. I don't think we know what is going to work right now, but I know that we are trying to not only make progress but keep the progress that we've made.

More than ever in the decades that I've been alive, now is a scary time. I think people are more likely to listen. It's like - "Come on! What are we going to do???"

What have you learned about yourself in this whole process?

I've learned that it's really about being on the journey every day. I feel like I've done all the things I've wanted to do and I am really glad that I got a chance to do them. And I've learned what I don't want to do. I've learned how I want to live my life. I know that I need to be traveling, meeting people, listening to people. I know that I need time alone. I know that I need time to be napping and eating chocolate. Having space to be creative. I'm OK with being alone now. I'm OK with being with groups now. And neither of those were comfortable for me before. I've learned that I can be myself and that's just all that it really is. I think that as we get older, we learn to try to use our voices and contribute without worrying about what others are going to say. I've learned that for me, it's more measured on the impact that I made than on the big peaks that are really illusions. You've got to continuously do the work every day. Even if it's a little bit on one thing. Usually it's the little things that end up being the big things anyway.

Your work is really unique and it's a model for a lot of other people who want to do a race listening project, or anything in their community. It could be as simple as having people in their community talk and learn about each other so that they can come together.

I love that! I hope someone does that!