

Ep 49 Unleashing the Power of our Imaginations-2

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SPEAKERS

Sean Dague, Jennie Carlisle, Various Speakers, Peterson Toscano, Hannah Pickard, Dr. Natasha DeJarnett, Laura England

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Peterson Toscano 00:00

Welcome to Citizens Climate Radio. In this show, we highlight people's stories we celebrate your successes, and together we share strategies for talking about climate change. I'm your host Peterson Toscano. Welcome to Episode 49 of Citizens Climate radio, a project of Citizens Climate Education. This episode is airing on Friday, June 26 2020. In today's show, we look at the power of imagination something absolutely essential when addressing climate change. Sean Dague, Citizens Climate volunteer in New York State helps us to engage our imagination. He has a thought exercise that will give you a chance to travel to the future. From Appalachian State University in the USA two professors talk about climate stories collaborative. They tell us about the learning process of creating climate art. They also reveal how the Coronavirus lockdown gave them a chance to model resiliency. Dr. Natasha DeJarnett, a leading environmental health researcher will share her vision of the future.

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Peterson Toscano 01:07

But first, a climate change communications expert updates us about what has happened since the last time she was on the show. Now when it comes to creative climate communications, no other episode has influenced me more than Episode 39, envisioning and communicating climate successes. In that episode I shared a mind expanding future imaging thought exercise conducted by Sean Dague. We also featured Blair Bazdarich from the San Francisco Zoo and Hannah Picard at Boston's New England Aquarium. They are both part of a group called NNOCCI, the National Network of Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation. Blair and Hannah stressed we need to pivot away from gloom and doom climate stories. Instead, we need to shift the conversation to the future, especially to the impacts of climate solutions. First, though, Hannah stresses effective climate communication begins with messages that are formed around our values, shares to values that have been proven to move people to action,

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Hannah Pickard 02:17

protecting the people and the places that we love, and or responsibly managing our resources. Those are two values that are very strong within American culture. When I say American culture, I mean really broadly, it gets reinforced in a lot of different ways, protecting the people and the places that we love, and or responsibly managing our resources. Those two values also allow us to align climate action with other social issues. And the more we can align with and connect social issues together, the better we're going to be in the better, we're going to find solutions that actually work for everybody. You don't go from why it matters to a laundry list of the things we're about to experience, or are experiencing, because that becomes really overwhelming. We need to shift as climate communicators as like a field to painting the picture of what this looks like, when we've achieved our goals, because it's so much easier to sustain long term action when you know what your what you're trying to achieve, as opposed to what you're trying to avoid. How we center climate communications around the vision for the future. That's not just one of survival, but is one where we would be excited to live in that. Oh, I actually want my city to, yes be climate resilient. I'm not sure what that means. But then when somebody starts telling me, oh, that within five minutes of every, every person who lives in Boston, they'll have walking access to a park. That's the city I want to live in. Yes, I want faster public transportation, that's a city that I would want to make sure I stay in. The way I refer to it, when it happened to me was that it like activated these kinds of civic muscles that I didn't know that I had or like that were just late. And that just breeds more and more hope, which is what we need and more and more community. It's our responsibility as climate communicators to be spreading climate hope, because otherwise, we're in trouble.

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Peterson Toscano 04:26

More and more research confirms that have focused on a hopeful future based on solutions works. Anna told me about some of the findings out of Yale climate communications.

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Hannah Pickard 04:37

According to them, hopeful Americans are more likely to talk with their friends and family. They're more likely to support transitions to renewable sources of energy and act civically for change. That's what we want to be seen.

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Peterson Toscano 04:52

Hannah reveals another important reason for us to focus on a helpful future, especially for those of us doing climate. work.

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Hannah Pickard 05:01

Thinking about climate change, you can think about it regularly is really difficult. And we want to invite more and more people into space, or we're talking about climate change. But that also brings some mental health risks, that we're inviting people into a space into a community that's suffering. We're seeing the effects of climate all around us, and we can't escape it. So being able to be in community be hopeful, find ways to support each other. These are all things that help build resilience to those mental health impacts.

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Peterson Toscano 05:33

At NNOCCI, the National Network of Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation, they realize they need to do more than train people on how to be effective climate communicators. They need to build a supportive community.

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Hannah Pickard 05:45

Socially and emotionally supporting each other has always been very critical, especially to our training process. But in the last two and a half years, we've really turned the light on that as a focus for why we exist as a member organization, because it's not just this kind of evangelist, like, we're going to train you, you're going to be the best communicator, you're going to know how to tell a story. It's really hard because I don't think we're good at talking about mental health or about the benefits of being with each other in this. That's new. That's been since I think January, kind of my newest push beyond just we need to give people a vision for the future. It's like, we need to start being really vocal about how hard this work is, and the good things we get out of it personally in order to refuel ourselves. Otherwise, we're not modeling that for this, these new folks who are coming into the fold and have no idea how to handle it.

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Peterson Toscano 06:45

To learn about the work of gnocchi and their excellent online training programs, visit climateinterpreter.org. I also have links to NNOCCI, the National Network of Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation in our show notes. Sean Dague is a software engineer. He's also the group leader for the mid Hudson South chapter of Citizens Climate Lobby, and he has a superpower, Sean helps us unlock our imaginations. We featured him back in episode 39, along with Hannah Pickard. Sean had us imagine a world without fossil fuels. For Hannah. This experiment had a deep impact.

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Hannah Pickard 07:24

And really changed how I help other people come to the table and like I instruct people to listen, not even to me on the podcast, but the last 10 minutes. Because to me, that was a really important moment

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Peterson Toscano 07:37

Dr. Natasha DeJarnett. Net also found the exercise very helpful. A frequent guest on the show, Dr. DeJarnette has spoken about environmental racism and justice, the health risk for coal miners and much more. In order to imagine a better world, we need to see the trouble we are currently in and to see it with clear eyes.

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Dr. Natasha DeJarnett 07:59

I want to acknowledge our brothers and sisters who are calling for justice in the loss of countless African Americans. I once again definitely want to acknowledge our frontline workers, our essential workers those who are working to help mitigate against COVID Those who are ensuring that everyone's needs are met during this time.

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Peterson Toscano 08:23

When it comes to the current state of our world. Dr. DeJarnette hears it captured in a song.

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Dr. Natasha DeJarnett 08:29

Marvin Gaye's "What's Going On" album keeps echoing in my head and from what's going on. To some words are standing out to me Brother, brother, brother, there's far too many of us dying. picket lines and picket signs. Don't punish me with brutality. And then from his son and mercy Mercy Me Where did all the blue skies go? Poison is the wind that flows from the north and the south and east. This is this is standing out to me is the current soundtrack. And these are beautiful songs, but they're capturing some heartbreaking times and still as relevant as when they were written as as they are right now.

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Peterson Toscano 09:13

My breakout group at the recent Citizens Climate virtual conference, I had the nearly 500 participants open up their imaginations as they walk through Sean's experiment. They got to travel to another time to envision a whole new world. So I invite you to take the next three minutes to let your creative mind wander, imagine and dream. I share with you Sean's experiment. What will the world be like without fossil fuels? Then you will hear people reading some of the hundreds of responses I've received from the participants in the online breakout session.

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Sean Dague 09:53

When we talk about what the future looks like and climate change we often talk about out all the bad things that happen. And that's important. That's an important part of the story. But it's important to think about how the world would just change. And a lot of these are good changes and really like, think through kind of all of our senses about what that would be like. Just imagine this whole new world. You walk out your front door, what would actually look different? In a world where we've gotten off of fossil fuels? Like as you look around, as you look at homes, what's different about them?

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Sean Dague 10:44

How are they different than they are today? What's in your driveway? How's that different? How do you get around? What do you see in the world that you didn't before?

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Sean Dague 11:04

And what's missing? And not just what you see. But engage your other senses? What does the world smell like? What smells are missing? That were there before? What do you what do you smell that you never could before? Because it was covered over and pollution? Was the world sound like? What is your streets sound? Like? How is that different than it was before? What new things are you hearing? in your yard? On your front door? in your neighborhood? You know, what do things feel like? Like when you touch them? Right? We used to have light bulbs that changing a light bulb would burn your hands and we don't anymore? Just everyday objects in our in our homes outside? How do they feel different? How does just walking along the street feel different? And how does that make you feel? What are the things that that we have gained? What are the things that we have lost? Just imagine this whole new world because if we can't imagine this world we can't create.

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Peterson Toscano 12:51

As we did the breakout session, people in the chat section of zoom, typed in what they imagined would be in the world and what would be missing. You won't hear those loud lawnmowers and leaf blowers waking you up when you want to sleep in. You won't see or smell the exhaust from cars, trucks and buses burning fossil fuels. You won't feel it burn your throat and lungs or constrict your breathing. Parking lots will be cleaner to without all those oil and grease stains. More importantly though, a world without fossil fuels is full of wonderful things.

V

Various Speakers 13:31

Family and friends outside together. Eerie mountains that were once invisible behind the smog. Bike lanes in every city in town. Clear blue sky. Clearn Blue Skies. clear blue sky. Children running and playing without asthma. Rich loamy soil that sequestered carbon. Reliable and clean public transportation. Windmills, open window. people walking, and solar panels on every roof. Bird, stars, fresh, air bees, bicycles, fresh air, bicycle doors, fresh airs, stars, bees, children running and playing without asthma, stars, fresh air, bee.

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Peterson Toscano 16:03

And for Dr. Natasha DeJarnett, what does the future look like? Smell like? What does it sound like?

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Dr. Natasha DeJarnett 16:11

In short, what I want you to see is a more beautiful world. But not just that. I also see a healthier world I see a world with less asthma, less heart disease, less complications with psychotropic medications and heat, less injuries, less destruction in the places where we live, work, learn, play and pray. That's what the world looks like to me. It sounds like Louis Armstrong's what a wonderful world. I see trees of green red roses to I see the bloom for me and you and I think to myself, what a wonderful world. That's what I hear. But more tangibly, I hear the sound of children playing outside laughing, free from environmental induced asthma,

running around with Medicare in the world healthy. What does it smell like? It smells like fresh air. It smells like no toxic industrial fumes in our neighborhood. To me that smells like possibility. We can't address climate change without addressing inequities. So 100 years from now I see a more just world. I see our most vulnerable populations with enhanced quality of life. I see children, older adults, people of color, people who live in low lower income communities. I see them having better quality of life, because they are at the center of the decision making when it comes to addressing climate change. I see our frontline communities, no longer living on the fence mine of polluters. I see our coastal communities no longer displaced by sea level rise. I see former coal mine communities thriving with new well paying industry. I see communities that were formed are burdened with injustice now achieving equity. Communities that utilize health and all policies framework and emphasize health equity for all these societies will have policies that ensure I'm action protects health and protects equity. All Policies protect health and equity and it protects our most vulnerable and I see this underscored by Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King's wise words. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere so I see that be what underscores how we move forward.

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Peterson Toscano 19:53

And what about you? What did this experiment stir up in your imagination? I want to hear from You feel free to email radio at citizens climate.org or leave a voicemail of three minutes or less at 518-595-9414 plus one if calling from outside the USA. That number again is 518595941 for many thanks to the folks who read the responses about the future. These include Liz and Petra and Piper Tammy Simpson, Sally Stewart, Christine Robinson, Kathy hoppier, Phillip Davis, Charlie Sullivan, Sharon Elliott and Evans, Douglas Aleve. Ellen wages wisely Jacobs, Wendy slaughter, Bach, John Kelly Worrell, Carol Bates, Alice Jones, Steve Riga, Mike Cooper and Kathy muscles. Now it is time for the Art House.

J

Jennie Carlisle 20:56

A lot of what I do involve bringing communities together to think about the meaningfulness of art objects and to create a sense of community around those art objects.

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Peterson Toscano 21:09

That's Jennie Carlisle , Curator director of the Smith gallery at Appalachian State University in North Carolina. Building community is important and so difficult during this time of Coronavirus, Jenny and her colleague, Laura England, a Senior Lecturer told me that their campus is situated in a perfect spot, something they especially appreciate during this time of Coronavirus lockdown,

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Laura England 21:35

Being outside and surrounded by things that are growing and recognizing that though my human community is very much separate for me and tangible physical ways. The rest of the community of life that I'm a part of is here as ever, and that part hasn't changed. And that's

been some solace for me and the roller coaster of emotions that we all have during the Coronavirus pandemic.

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Peterson Toscano 22:01

Jenny and Laura are part of the climate stories collaborative.

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Laura England 22:05

This project was envisioned as a learning community made up of students and faculty from all over campus in which we are together learning how to be better climate communicators. Using all forms of creative expression, we use the word story as a an umbrella term for all forms of creative expression to better engage the broader public to communicate in a way that is more personal and accessible and relatable, when trying to reach members of our community and beyond to aren't necessarily going to get excited about the science and the policy and the Politics of Climate Change. We went from a small group of faculty, probably seven or so of us sat around the first table and visioned the climate stories collaborative, to over 75. Now, including faculty members in the College of Education, the College of Business, the College of Fine and Applied Arts, the College of Arts and Sciences really were represented all over campus.

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Peterson Toscano 23:03

While many of the students and each cycle with completed pieces of art, Jenny explains that the process needed to produce the art is the primary goal.

J

Jennie Carlisle 23:13

The things that people are making through the project are really an extension of that learning. And the thing that we're most interested in through climate stories is the learning itself, the ways that students can think about climate change, to find ways to be with its kind of more abstract dimensions, to think about ways to process that on a personal and and an internal level is really the most important part of the project. The one of the things that's been interesting has been to think about what they're getting out of participating in these assignments, because they are from many different backgrounds. These are not students necessarily that are in the sciences. Although we do have some students who are in the sciences, it's a way for them to process what these issues are to make them less abstract, make them more personal. All of that seems to be what they get out of it the most.

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Peterson Toscano 24:10

At the end of each school year, the climate stories collaborative hosts a showcase for student artists.

J Jennie Carlisle 24:15

This year, we've had 35 classes that have produced work for this annual showcase that we do with over 100 students being involved in the production of projects that were featured through the showcase.

P Peterson Toscano 24:30

This provides them an opportunity to communicate to the wider public and a large gallery space. Laura explains that in the past students, faculty and community members mingled in the gallery to view the art and to see performances.

L Laura England 24:45

In previous years we've held the event on First Friday, which in our town in Boone First Friday is an art crawl. members of our community who are already traveling from gallery to another art location stopped in the

P Peterson Toscano 25:02

Because of Coronavirus, the school closed and they also had to cancel the showcase. But like so many others, they adapted and took the showcase online.

L Laura England 25:12

One thing that's wonderful about having a digital exhibition is that the audience is not geographically bounded. We quickly pivoted and moved to this online format on Instagram.

P Peterson Toscano 25:24

As a curator, Jenny initially worried about creating a virtual showcase, but quickly saw multiple benefits.

J Jennie Carlisle 25:31

I've been really impressed by how well this work is translated to a digital environment, it's cleaner than I would have guessed, through having these projects featured, I was really reminded that community is so important to the work we do. And that even though we couldn't physically gather this project, moving it online was important for having our community be able to still have like a gathering place together, I have complicated feelings about it, because of the way that it's actually a corporate platform that we're using for educational purposes. At the same time, we're able to like meet the members of our community, kind of where they are in their own homes and their daily lives. The presence of that community through the platform has just tripled through just this past year, that the ways that people are posting on each

other's projects, and giving these like moments of encouragement and appreciation, the way that as they're looking at the projects, through this feed, you're really like focused on what's happening in these individual works in a way that sometimes when you're at a reception, you're kind of overwhelmed by the numbers of things that you're saying. It becomes very, very social in that context. There's actually something that feels more directed, more intimate about the ways that people are engaging in this work. It's been really lovely.

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Peterson Toscano 27:07

Taking this step to go virtual also models an essential part of climate action, resiliency,

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Jennie Carlisle 27:14

and the ways that we're called on in this moment to adapt and adjust the way that we think about these issues that it's really important for us to be able to pivot more quickly and to be in a more responsive mode as conditions around us are changing all the time. It gave me a lot of confidence and gave me a sense of like hope for our capacity to make the changes that we need. Because of the way that I saw my own community. Rally so quickly and adjust so quickly to the new conditions that we had to work with.

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Peterson Toscano 27:49

Jenny Carlisle and Laura England are both part of the climate stories collaborative at Appalachian State University in the US state of North Carolina. To learn more, visit their site [climatestories dot app state.edu](https://climatestories.appstate.edu) That's climate stories dot app. state.edu. And definitely check out their Instagram, where they're now hosting the virtual climate story showcase. Find them at ASU climate stories that's at ASU climate stories. I will have all these links in our show notes. If you have an idea for the arthouse, please feel free to contact me radio at [citizens climate.org](https://citizensclimate.org) That's radio at citizens climate.org

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Peterson Toscano 28:33

We've come to the end of our program I hope your imaginations have been stirred and you feel more determined than ever to fight for a much better world. Citizens Climate radio is written and produced by me Peterson Toscano other technical support from Ricky Bradley and Brett cease social media assistance from Ashley hotline Toronto Flannery Winchester and Steve Falk moral support for metal and para all of the music we use on the show is licensed unless otherwise specified. Be sure to share Citizens Climate radio with your friends. You can find us where ever you listen to podcasts which includes Apple podcast, Spotify, pod bean, SoundCloud, tune in and Stitcher Radio. You can also listen at Northern spirit radio.org During the discussion at our Facebook group, page [facebook.com/groups/citizens Climate radio](https://facebook.com/groups/citizensclimateradio) and you can follow us on Twitter at Citizens C radio that's citizens the letter C radio citizens C radio and feel free to tweet at me directly at P two sun. The letter P the number two s o n visit [Citizens Climate lobby.org/blog](https://CitizensClimatelobby.org/blog) to see info about our puzzler and find links to our guests. Citizens Climate radio is a project of Citizens Climate Education

