Fighting Back: The Intersection of Environmental Activism, Feminism, and Theater

By

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First Reader: David Bassuk

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Senior Project 2

Statement of Goals and Impact

It is my hope that my senior projects brought both the issues of rape culture and the climate emergency to people's awareness in a way that electrified them to be part of the solution. The first half of my senior project were my roles as *Brandi* and *Kara* in *How to Defend Yourself. How to Defend Yourself* is a new play, written by Lilliana Padilla, in which 2 sorority girls start a women's self defense class after frat boys brutally raped their fellow sorority sister. I played *Brandi,* sorority president, black belt, and the leader of the class. I also played her friend Kara, the vice president of the sorority, a somewhat volatile alcoholic and probable sex addict. The characters were polar opposites and handled the devastating rape of their friend in completely different ways. As I was in *How to Defend Yourself* a full 4 semesters ago, I decided to add another layer to my senior project, which was starting the Environmental Action Group at Purchase. The Environmental Action Group, or EAG, aims to bring students together to mobilize against the current Trump administration's attacks on environmental protections.

It was my intention to depict the fully three dimensional psychological effects and full range of behavioral responses that sexual trauma had on these women in a way that smashed narrow ideas of how a woman is supposed to respond to sexual trauma. There's this idea of the perfect victim in cases of rape. The "perfect victim" is a woman who is seen as weak, vulnerable, morally good, who had done nothing to "deserve" the assault. It's a very gross idea, but one that is insidiously widespread. It keeps women from speaking out, it keeps people from believing

women when they do, and it keeps rapists from getting charged. In reality, this is very rarely how rape cases and the women in them are perceived. In *How to Defend Yourself,* Kara tells Brandi that the kind of rough sex she's been engaging in, she had been telling Susannah about, Susannah being the sorority sister who was raped by frat boys. This suggests to the audience that Susannah had possibly been dabbling in rough sex, which immediately challenges the narrative of the perfect victim.

It forces people to grapple with their own subconscious and internalized beliefs about women who are sexually experimental and provocative, because we as a culture have this narrative that these women are sluts, and sluts are asking for it. But we can clearly see throughout the show that Susannah was in fact not desiring to be raped, and we see the traumatic effect it has had on her friends, and we hear about the physical trauma Susannah herself has gone through. Any time an imperfect victim is represented, it helps other survivors come forward and realize that just because their story doesn't sound "perfect," it doesn't mean they weren't raped. They are just as much a survivor, they are just as valid in their feelings about their trauma, and they are just as deserving of justice.

The two halves of my project may seem unrelated–sexual violence and environmental collapse–but they are deeply connected. Both stem from systems that thrive on domination, dehumanization, and disconnection. The same patriarchal and capitalist structures that normalize rape culture also drive environmental degradation, colonial violence, and systemic racism. These systems condition us to see bodies–especially marginalized bodies, and the body of the Earth itself–as resources to exploit rather than as living beings.

My goals for the Environmental Action Group are to deepen students' connection with the Earth and wildlife. The idea that humans are defending nature as if it is something separate

from ourselves is false. We are nature defending ourselves. We believe that people have been made to feel purposefully disconnected from nature as a result of things like deforestation and factory farming, because it makes us better consumers and workers. We believe if people can be made to remember that we are animals, it will hopefully help awaken a primal survival instinct that can be harnessed and directed into taking direct action against a system that is destroying the Earth. I hope to hold events where we do things like write letters to legislators, have eco justice poetry and literature reading nights, have demonstrations, advocate for sustainable practices on campus like getting a bottle redemption center, going plastic free/becoming a 0 waste campus, partnering with the environmental studies department and the sustainability committee, perhaps having someone from Broadview come and give a talk about how they managed to ban plastic at Broadview, have campus clean ups, plant potting events, teach-ins, and anything else we can think of.

I started the environmental action group because I couldn't continue to do nothing. I had to do something after Trump was reelected. The Trump Administration has been employing a tactic known as shock and awe. The idea is to overwhelm the populus with so much change, so much news and to make themselves look so all powerful that we basically go into shock and become numb and passive. It feels like every day there's a new executive order and it's impossible to keep up with. But that's the point. The Trump Administration wants things to be impossible to keep up with, they want everyone hanging on every single thing they do to keep people in this freeze response, because if we're in freeze we can't fight back. When you realize what they're doing, it becomes obvious that what you need to do is to jump into action. Which is why I'm calling it the Environmental Action Group, because it's about taking real tangible actions to protect the planet.

I had been feeling like I was going crazy because every day I would wake up, look at the news first thing in the morning and I would see things like Trump signing an executive order that would open up 200 million acres of national forests to logging, or Trump signing an executive order that eliminated air quality protections, leaving polluters free to do whatever they want, wherever they want. I've been waking up, seeing these things, and then going about my day and acting like everything is normal. I've had this feeling that nobody wants to talk about what's going on, and it would be like I was breaking some unspoken social rule if I did. This has been making me feel even crazier, and like I'm on the verge of exploding and screaming at any second. Now that I finally have started talking to other people about how I've been feeling, I realized that other people were feeling the exact same way. When I realized that I realized that we should all be getting connected and talking about how we're feeling and brainstorming on what we can do together.

I would also like our group to hopefully join up and collaborate with other environmental groups that are already here at Purchase, like the Purchase Rocket Compost interns, the sustainability interns, and even other activist organizations on campus as well, like RTC/Raise the Consciousness, the Palestinian Rights organization here. All of our struggles are interconnected. The genocide in Gaza, the carbon emissions Israel is producing waging this genocide is having a devastating impact on the entire Earth, besides its obvious devastation of the people, animals, and plant life in Palestine. Our aim is going to be to target the larger political sphere in the whole country and mobilizing against environmental attacks on a governmental level, while organizations like RTC and the sustainability interns focus closer in, on issues specifically at Purchase. Still, EAG can do what we can to help out with issues on campus.

All systems of oppression run on domination, disposability, and extraction. Whether it's the violation of a woman's body, the strip-mining of a mountain, the bombing of Gaza, or the pollution of a river in Flint, Michigan; each is a manifestation of the same sickness. We need intersectional, collective resistance.

Roxane Guyton - von Eck

Senior Project 2

We Care. We Have Power.

There is a persistent and harmful misconception that many people simply do not care about climate change. This belief, widespread in both media narratives and everyday conversation, is not only disheartening- it is deeply misleading. It suggests apathy where there is actually deep concern, and it obscures the true barriers to action. In fact, recent data tells a very different story. According to the People's Climate Vote of 2024- the largest survey of public opinion on climate change ever conducted- an overwhelming 80% of people globally want their governments to take stronger action against climate change. This is not the picture of a disinterested public; it reflects a broad and urgent concern for the health of the planet and a shared desire for a sustainable future. People care. They care deeply. But often, they feel powerless to make a difference. This feeling of powerlessness is by design.

This feeling of helplessness, however, is not an accurate reflection of reality. It is not a natural or inevitable response to the scale of the climate crisis. Instead, it is the product of a carefully cultivated narrative- one that benefits powerful interests: corporations, oil companies, and political leaders whose wealth and influence are tied to the continuation of environmental destruction. These entities profit when the public believes that individual or collective action is futile. They thrive when people are paralyzed by fear, overwhelmed by despair, or divided against one another. When individuals feel isolated and ineffective, they are less likely to resist harmful policies, demand systemic change, or hold those in power accountable. Thus, the sense

of powerlessness is not innate; it is a weapon deployed by the very systems that endanger our future. And importantly, it can be dismantled.

History is filled with examples of individuals who challenged these systems and proved that one voice, amplified by collective action, can change the world. In 1962, Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a groundbreaking book that fundamentally changed the way the world viewed the relationship between human activity and the environment. *Silent Spring* served as a powerful alarm bell, raising awareness about the dangers of a chemical known as DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane). Originally developed during World War II to combat malaria and typhus among soldiers, DDT had quickly found widespread commercial use as a highly effective insecticide for farmers.

Before Carson's work, very little research had been conducted on DDT's long-term environmental impact. Most people, including many scientists and government agencies, had accepted its use without question. However, Rachel Carson meticulously gathered evidence showing that DDT was having devastating effects on ecosystems. She revealed that the chemical accumulated in the food chain, harming not just insects but birds, fish, and mammals- and eventually humans.

Carson titled her book *Silent Spring* to capture the haunting image of springtime without birdsong- a direct consequence of DDT's destruction of bird populations. Many species of birds, including bald eagles and songbirds, were experiencing population declines because DDT caused thinning of their eggshells, leading to widespread reproductive failure.

When excerpts of *Silent Spring* were first published in *The New York Times*, the public response was immediate and intense. The book quickly rose to national acclaim, sparking a

fierce debate that reached the highest levels of government. Despite facing fierce opposition and personal attacks from chemical companies, Carson's careful research and clear, compelling writing captured the public's attention and concern.

Silent Spring directly influenced major changes in American policy. In 1970, partly in response to the growing environmental movement fueled by Carson's work, the United States established the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to oversee environmental protection efforts. By 1972, the EPA had banned the domestic use of DDT, citing the environmental and health risks Carson had brought to light.

Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* is a powerful example of how one individual's voice can change the world. Her courage and determination not only helped save countless species from extinction but also safeguarded human health, as DDT was later linked to serious illnesses, including breast cancer and other diseases. Carson's legacy lives on today in the environmental movement she helped ignite, reminding us of the profound impact that a single book- and a single person- can have on the course of history.

Carson's story reminds us that disempowerment is not inevitable, but manufactured. Under capitalism, people are systematically made to feel isolated, exhausted, and numb. When individuals are forced to work long hours for wages that barely cover basic needs like housing and food, when they are trapped in endless cycles of debt and survival, they have little energy left to question or resist the political and economic systems that exploit them. This is by design, not accident. Consumer culture and the overprescription of pharmaceutical drugs function as tools of mass sedation and distraction. People are inundated with advertisements, entertainment, and social media engineered to overwhelm their senses and pacify their dissatisfaction. We are

told that our suffering- our anxiety, our depression, our exhaustion- is a personal failure, not the inevitable outcome of a system that treats human beings and the planet as disposable.

Rather than being encouraged to confront the inhumanity of the systems that govern our lives, we are urged to internalize our pain as individual pathology. The dominant narrative tells us that our worth is tied to our productivity, that endless labor is a virtue, and that rest, joy, and community are luxuries rather than rights. It teaches us to blame "the other"- immigrants, the poor, foreigners, the unemployed- rather than recognize our shared oppression at the hands of corporate and political elites.

Yet history shows us, again and again, that when people come together, they are far more powerful than any corporation or government. Ordinary individuals, acting in solidarity, have repeatedly forced the hand of those in power. Another extraordinary example is the resistance led by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016. The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was slated to carry crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois, cutting through sacred tribal lands and threatening the water supply for the Standing Rock Sioux and millions downstream along the Missouri River. Despite facing enormous odds- a multibillion-dollar oil company backed by state and federal forces- the tribe, along with thousands of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies, launched one of the most significant environmental movements in recent U.S. history.

The movement began with a small group of youth runners who carried a message of resistance from North Dakota to Washington, D.C., sparking the establishment of the Sacred Stone Camp near the proposed pipeline route. What started as a modest prayer camp grew into a massive gathering of “water protectors,” drawing thousands of people from around the world.

Protesters maintained a constant presence despite brutal conditions: freezing weather, lack of resources, and increasingly violent law enforcement tactics, including the use of attack dogs, rubber bullets, water cannons in subzero temperatures, and mass arrests.

The resistance was not just about a pipeline; it was about Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and a broader fight against corporate domination and systemic racism. The actions at Standing Rock captured global attention, galvanizing a new generation of environmental activists and emphasizing the critical leadership role Indigenous peoples play in protecting the earth. Though the pipeline was eventually completed under the Trump administration, the resistance forced a national conversation about environmental racism, the rights of Indigenous nations, and the urgent need to transition away from fossil fuels. The movement's spirit persists today, influencing legal battles, policy discussions, and ongoing resistance to other destructive energy projects. Standing Rock showed that even when facing militarized force and corporate power, organized grassroots action could ignite global solidarity, shift public consciousness, and lay the foundation for future victories.

Another remarkable example is Julia Butterfly Hill, an environmental activist who undertook a two-year-long tree sit in a thousand-year-old redwood she named Luna in Northern California. Many people are unaware that the ancient redwood forests, some of the oldest living ecosystems on Earth, are not fully protected and have been logged extensively. In the 1990s, the Pacific Lumber Company was engaged in aggressive clear-cutting of the redwoods, leveling entire swathes of forest. Clear-cutting entailed not only felling the trees but also spraying the ground with insecticides and napalm afterward to prevent regrowth, causing massive ecological devastation.

Julia joined Earth First!, a radical environmental group that protested these practices through acts of civil disobedience. In 1997, she volunteered to climb and occupy Luna, a thousand-year-old redwood marked for destruction. Supported by a ground team who delivered food and supplies via a pulley system, Julia lived at the top of the tree for 738 days. During her vigil, she endured brutal harassment from Pacific Lumber employees: they flew helicopters dangerously close to her, damaging nearby branches, and surrounded Luna with floodlights and security guards to try to starve her out. There were constant verbal threats shouted from the ground, and the environment around her was filled with noise and hostility intended to force her down.

The danger was not limited to intimidation. Earth First! activists faced deadly threats; tragically, a logger intentionally felled a tree near a group of protesters, killing 24-year-old activist David Nathan “Gypsy” Chain. Despite these risks and continuous harassment, Julia refused to leave her perch. Even when her food supplies ran critically low, her ground support team orchestrated a daring diversion to resupply her.

Julia's perseverance and unshakable resolve turned Luna into an international symbol of environmental resistance. After two years, the Pacific Lumber Company was finally forced to enter into negotiations. The outcome was a landmark agreement: Luna and a 200-foot buffer zone of surrounding forest were permanently protected from logging. Julia Butterfly Hill’s bravery demonstrated that even in the face of overwhelming corporate power, determined individuals and grassroots communities could succeed against seemingly unstoppable forces and save what seemed destined to be destroyed.

These stories, and countless others like them, reveal a fundamental truth: people are not powerless. The idea that we are powerless is a myth, a deliberate lie told by those who benefit from our silence and compliance. But when people realize that they are not alone in their concern for the Earth, and when they recognize the strength of collective action, they can and do challenge even the most entrenched systems of power.

The future of the planet does not rest solely in the hands of politicians or corporate executives. It depends on us: on our willingness to hope, to resist, to organize, and to act. Change does not begin in boardrooms or governmental chambers. It begins in communities, in acts of resistance, in networks of solidarity built by ordinary people who refuse to accept that exploitation is inevitable. We care. We have power. Every act of resistance, every tree protected, every river defended, every policy fought for, every mind changed is proof that it is not too late. When we act together- with hope, with courage, and with unwavering determination- we can create real, lasting change. The story of climate action is not a story of despair. It is a story still being written by all of us.

History reminds us that systems built on exploitation are not invincible. They are strong only when we are divided, only when we forget that there is more that unites us than separates us. When people come together across boundaries of race, class, nationality, and faith, they become an unstoppable force for transformation. The victories at Standing Rock, in the redwood forests, and in the environmental movements sparked by Rachel Carson were not isolated miracles. They were the result of ordinary people standing shoulder to shoulder, often at great personal cost, refusing to be silent in the face of injustice.

The climate crisis is not a distant threat. It is here. It is wildfires swallowing forests and towns, floods washing away homes, rising seas consuming coastlines. It is droughts and famines, mass migrations, and wars over dwindling resources. It is the collective future of every living being on Earth hanging in the balance. And yet, even now, at this late hour, hope is not foolish. Hope is a choice. It is a discipline. It is a decision we must make every day, sometimes in defiance of all evidence, to believe that another world is possible- and to fight for it.

Roxane Guyton - von Eck

Senior Project 2

Reflection Essay

My senior project is definitely not what I intended it to be at its inception. I've been reading over my initial statements of impact and my goals for the first part of my senior project, which was originally intended to be the only part, which was *How to Defend Yourself,* a play about sorority girls who start a women's self defense class after their sorority sister is brutally raped. I wrote, "Is it possible for me to heal myself while and by doing this play? My research is going to be basically, how will I maintain my mental health while doing this play? I know that this play is going to create a lot of questions for me, it's going to make me think about things that frighten me, anger me, disgust me, and arouse me… I'm going to spend a lot of time thinking about the themes of this play… I am going to try to use this research as a place to come to conclusions and solutions about the problems this show discusses. I think that sitting with the questions this play will bring up and hopefully having a community and open place to discuss them, and being able to focus on them and answer them without any shame blocking my vision will help me to heal my own traumas."

My questions for the initial research paper were as follows;

Do power dynamics in the bedroom extend beyond the bedroom? (Radical feminists think they do, and that women are conditioned to be sexually aroused by oppression and subjugation being enacted upon them. If so, what does this mean about society?) How can we keep these power dynamics in the bedroom?

My second question, is it possible to engage in kinky sex safely?

My last question, how does one heal from sexual trauma?

I was really excited to write that research paper. I had had the idea for that research paper in my head since middle school. But it didn't happen. The healing I had set out to do over the course of *How to Defend Yourself* just didn't happen.

I was struggling hard through the entire process of the play. My experiences of abuse and sexual assault came to the forefront of my mind, and I felt I had to open up and tell my story to the other people working on the show, but I was really terrified to do so. I talked to the assistant director Kat Tobits about it after I broke down crying in the middle of a rehearsal, and told her how I felt I needed to tell my story to some of the people working on the show, and she said no. She told me if I kept feeling that way that I should leave the show. For the record, Kat shared her own story of being harassed/exploited a few rehearsals later, in the middle of rehearsal. I felt like I was in fight or flight, and after that reaction from my AD I didn't feel I had the support I needed. I didn't want to leave the show, because I cared so deeply about it, but I really struggled through the rest of it and did not feel I could focus on what I needed to focus on, nor did I feel at all connected to the people around me. I actually felt worse in some ways after being in the show. On the one hand, being in the show itself was a way to tell my story and hopefully find closure and some kind of acknowledgment for what I'd gone through, but at the time of the rehearsal process, I felt extremely isolated and like I couldn't talk to the people around me, which made me very anxious and made it difficult to feel connected as an actor as well as a person. All this to say, and with the additional fact of my performance in How to Defend Yourself being so long ago, I wanted to add something positive to my senior project, something I would enjoy writing and thinking about, rather than something that would force me to parse through and relive a

painful experience. So my research paper and the bulk of these papers have been about environmentalism and environmental activism, as I created EAG, the Environmental Action Group at Purchase.

To me, defending the Earth is very much tied to defending women. The inherent lack of care and empathy for the Earth, the mistreatment and violation of the Earth, which takes care of us and gives us life- runs parallel to the abuse and mistreatment women have suffered at the hands of men arguably since the dawn of time, or at least the dawn of civilization. The fossil fuel industry is violating and raping the Earth. Slashing and burning its forests, fracking, polluting. The Earth needs to be defended. It's a very emotionally charged issue for me, as I see the Earth as a living and feeling entity that is suffering, as are what I think of as her children, the plants and animals. While I often wish environmental activists could "go on the offensive" as Brandi states is sometimes necessary- defensive actions in response to threats, like tree sits, suing corporations that are killing the Earth, and holding politicians accountable, are the same thing as kicking and punching to fight off an attacker.

There's also a massive body of data that shows that ecocide is tied to femicide, and that ecocide has a larger negative impact on women and girls than it does on men. This happens through several different avenues. Things like mining, logging, and other work sites produce what are called "man camps" which have been shown to increase rates of male violence against women, as further explained here in an article about ecocide and femicide in Guatemala, "The large influx of male workers into the mining region results in "increased levels of precarious sex work, intimate partner violence, sexually transmitted illnesses, and gendered discrimination as social relations are restructured to cater to predominantly male consumers."[15] This catering to man-camp consumers makes local women easy targets because the community discourages them

from complaining for fear of losing business." Additionally, when ecocide ravages a community's ecosystem, it also often destroys that communities ability to prosper financially, and when a community is forced into poverty, rates of male violence against women and male exploitation of women go up. In countries where there are very few legal repercussions against male perpetrators of violence against women, there are also rarely any legal consequences for companies that engage in ecocide.

I believe that misogyny and the mistreatment of the Earth are inherently linked. If we had gender equality, I believe we would also begin a new way of living in harmony and balance with the Earth, and I believe if we begin to live in balance and harmony with the Earth, we would naturally also create a path towards gender equality.

I pivoted to starting the environmental action group because it felt like something that I was really passionate about, am really passionate about, and it would be something positive for me to spend my time thinking about and putting my energy into. Something that would make me feel accomplished, like I had done something that mattered. The biggest thing that my group undertook was probably the letter writing to legislators campaign we held. We printed out a script for people to write out, that urged Governor Kathy Hochul to support getting the NY Heat Act and the Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act included in the final budget for New York this year. The NY Heat Act would help buildings in New York to transition away from using fossil fuels in their heating and cooling systems, and towards clean, renewable energy sources. The Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act would take back 330 million dollars from the 1.6 billion New York currently gives to the fossil fuel industry in the form of tax cuts, and put that 330 million back into the hands of New Yorkers.

We collected about 40 letters and talked to a lot of people, and I felt the event was really successful. We mailed the letters out about a week after we got them, as we had to do the work of putting the letters in envelopes, addressing them, buying stamps etc. The thing was, we didn't realize when exactly the budget was set to be finalized. It was pretty confusing, and our research was turning up either no information or contradictory information. Some sources said the budget had already been finalized, others were from other activist organizations asking people to come and lobby for the Acts weeks in the future. Through instagram I got in contact with someone from the organization AGREE NY, or the Alliance for a Green Economy. They've been working on getting the NY Heat Act in the budget as well, and one day after we had mailed out the letters, someone from AGREE NY messaged me and let me know that the budget had been finalized, and that the NY Heat Act wasn't included. They weren't sure about the Stop Climate Polluters Handouts Act, and I've yet to hear back from them.

I was pretty upset. I knew it had been a long shot for the Act to make it into the budget. I was and am mainly upset because I think the budget was finalized before our letters even got to the Governor. I felt foolish for not realizing that there was a deadline. However, according to AGREE NY, the senate and the assembly still have a month to pass the NY Heat Act before the end of session. So there's still hope, and our letters might still be helpful after all. I'm going to keep paying attention, but still, it felt pretty unrewarding. The thing about activism is that it opens your eyes to how fucked up everything is. It seems like nothing really changes in a substantial way when you start trying to get involved, and you start to wonder what you even did. But I got people together. I learned a lot more about environmentalism and environmental justice and the politics of environmentalism and how to affect change. I got connected to other organizations. It was a learning experience. It's like I was putting on my first play. It was never

going to be perfect. I made mistakes, and I've learned from them. And now I know better, and I'll continue to advocate for the Earth, and for womyn.

By the end of the semester, although there were other people in our group's group chat and about 250 people following us on instagram, there were about five other people in EAG who were really doing the legwork with me to keep the group running. It felt meaningful that I had connected these people to each other, and to me. These people, who cared so deeply about the environment, who were alone with their worries, their passion, and their rage, were now all connected. I gave us a place to join together and share ideas. We gave people information on how to reach out to their representatives, we raised their consciousness about the urgency of the climate emergency and just how many attacks the Earth is facing right now, we shared knowledge and learned from each other, and we helped the sustainability committee get more signatures for the Purchase Nature Preserve. One of the girls in my group told me that my starting the group had inspired her. She used to be afraid to go to protests, and she's not afraid anymore. We went with her to her first protest. That meant a lot to me.I brought these five people together, and maybe they'll go out and they'll bring another five people together, and then we'll have 25 people, and all of those people will touch another five people, and it'll keep growing and growing until it's everyone. And that matters.

Tanem, Jessica Arleen. *Ecocide and Femicide in Guatemala: Paper Laws Afford No Protection " World without Genocide - Making It Our Legacy*, worldwithoutgenocide.org/genocides-and-conflicts/guatemala/ecocide-and-femicide-in-guatemala-paper-laws-afford-no-protection.

https://www.purchasenews.org/post/students-rally-for-the-ny-heat-act

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May 2 · 2 min read

Students Rally for the NY Heat Act

By Shaya Silberstein

Students from the Environmental Action group aimed to get letters written to the district in support of the NY Heat Act.

“We are writing letters to our district representative, Chris Burdick, to support the NY Heat Act,” said Roxane Guyton-Von Eck, a theater and performance major. “The New York Heat Act is an initiative that aims t move every building in New York away from fossil fuels and into renewable energy sources.” Guyton-Von Eck also mentioned that this would lower energy costs for low-income families by around $136.

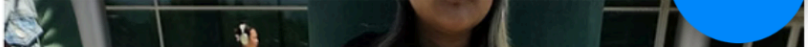

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Table set up for the letter signing for NY Heat Act by Shaya Silberstein)

Guyton-Von Eck plans on gathering 40 letters from students addressed to Governor Kathy Hochul to encourage her to back the NY Heat Act and the Stop Climate Polluter Handouts Act.

Elijah Silver, an environmental stu
major, highlighted the issue of housing

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Elijah Silver, an environmental studies major, highlighted the issue of housing insulation near gas mains, "It would also stop the expansion. Currently, there's a law called the Public Service Law, which states that any house within 100 feet of a gas main means the gas company must provide them with free insulation."

Silver further explained that passing this act would help reduce monthly expenses for residents, as taxpayer money covers the free insulation provided to homes close to gas mains.

Students shared their thoughts on the importance of this act. Rosario Pastrana-Palmer, a sociology major and art management minor, expressed concerns about fossil fuels, stating, “I’m not completely familiar with the subject, but isn’t fossil fuel really flammable?" She also suggested alternatives for people living near lines. "You know how there are

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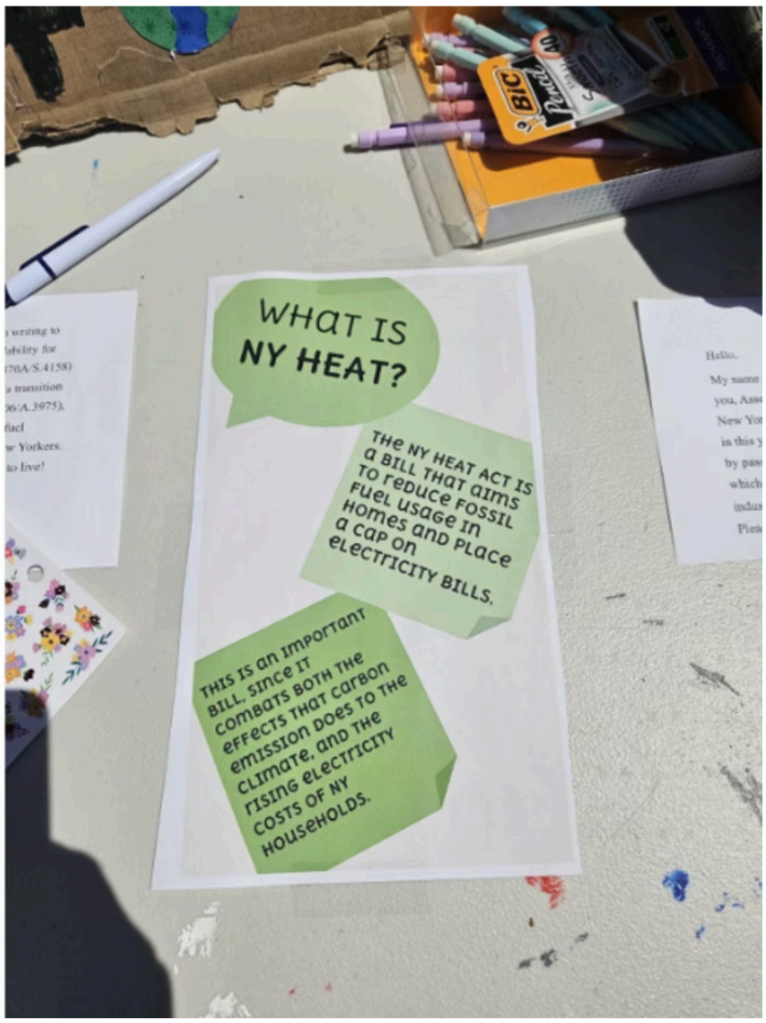
lines. "You know how there are abandoned malls? I think those types of buildings could be redeveloped and renovated to make them livable."



Graphic explaining what the New York Heat act is

(Photo by Shaya Silberstein)

Silver hopes for a response from the

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Instagram

(Photo by Shaya Silberstein)

Silver hopes for a response from the district, "It's definitely possible. I know writing letters is the most effective way. I believe that many of us, especially younger people, can make a difference."

"The trees and the animals have no voice, so we have to be their voice," said Guyton-Von Eck.

Guyton-Von Eck continued, "We can't wait around for someone to come and save us, we are the ones who are going to save us and the planet."

https://youtu.be/kW3W54k4pxU?feature=shared