

# New Haven/León Sister City Project

*Summer 2015 Newsletter*



## From Hurricane Mitch to goNewHavengo?

On July 6th, Mayor Harp and the City of New Haven launched goNewHavengo, a new active and sustainable transportation resource. The launch received lots of media attention, and the Chamber of Commerce, YNHH, and Alexion all signed up to support this effort to reduce car use and greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health. But what was not mentioned at the press conference was that this hot new sustainable transportation effort has its roots in Hurricane Mitch and its destruction of the rural community of Goyena, Nicaragua in 1998. The timeline of this birth is below.

1998 - Hurricane Mitch dumps massive amounts of rain on Honduras and Nicaragua flooding out the community of Goyena, Nicaragua. 1998 was one of the hottest years on record, adding extra energy to that storm.

2003 - Leon government invites NHLSCP to begin to work with resettled Goyena community. NHLSCP encounters more environmental issues this rural farming community was facing such as water pollution, smoke



Nubia Quiroz showing what happened when Hurricane Mitch displaced Goyena in 1998.

and agri-chemical pollution from the nearby sugar cane plantation.

2009 - Climate change a growing concern, and especially its impact on marginalized communities around the world;



NHLSCP starts public education

campaign with One World House and later the WalkBikeTransit Campaign to promote healthier transportation choices in New Haven that also decrease greenhouse gas pollution.

2012 - NHLSCP sends out letter inviting organizations to do more on climate change which sparks the creation of the Healthy City/Healthy Climate Challenge (HCC) coalition in 2013 and its five point Pledge for cutting greenhouse gases and creating a healthier New Haven.

2014 - The HCC coalition (Neighborhood Housing Services, CT Fund for Environment, Yale Office of Sustainability, New Haven Bioregional Group and NHLSCP) organizes pilot of goNewHavengo for July 2014 to focus on the transportation pledge, mostly involving nonprofit organizations in the one month alternative transportation challenge.

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*Mural above: Rivas, Nicaragua town mural shows first encounter between Spanish colonizers and indigenous tribe on Lake Nicaragua.*



Mayor Harp, Matt Feiner of Devils Gear Bike Shop, Doug Haslauden, Director TTP, NHLSCP's Chris Schweitzer listen corporate goNHgo supporter Nick Phillips of Alexion at the goNHewHavengo launch.

Fall 2014 - NHLSCP organizes meetings with City Department of Transportation, Traffic and Parking, CTrides, CTTransit and Yale

Transportation Options to begin the bigger goNHgo effort.

Spring 2015 - New website and other tools created through this collaboration, with

the expressed goal that goNHgo will eventually be a City-lead effort.

Present - Lead organizations continue to work hard to improve website tools and to organize the September goNHgo active transportation month with special events and an active transportation contest.



# Simple: Less Cows, Cars, Coal and Planes!

by Megan Ratcliffe

Climate Change is really beating us down, isn't it? What with rising sea levels, frightening droughts, and costly, severe storms, the climate as we knew it is suddenly pretty angry with us. And it's looking to throw one heck of a temper tantrum; one that may last for many generations to come.

So how do we combat it? How do we fight Climate Change, a process so momentous that almost any individual action seems futile. Don't get me wrong – although taking shorter showers may feel like progress, it simply does not do enough for our planet to acknowledge. Thus, we need to distinguish the *greatest* sources of pollution that our individual selves can reduce. The trick is discerning which those might be.

Luckily, we have your answer. The best way to combat climate change on an individual basis is...(insert drum roll here): Less Cows, Cars, Coal, and Planes!

Less cows, cars, coal, and planes, you ask? But what are *cows* doing to our environment – and cars are basically a necessity, right? Wait, what – did you add planes too? Yes we did.

You see, all four of these emitters have caused tremendous impacts to our global climate, emitting poisonous gases into the atmosphere, and numerous bodies of water. For example, just half a pound of beef produced in today's agribusiness releases 9.5 pounds of carbon dioxide into the air! And since the United States alone consumes 25 billion pounds of beef per year, you can imagine the toll that takes on our environment.

By the way, that's just one of our four top emitters. It gets better.

The transportation sector – including cars and planes – accounts for 28% of the U.S. greenhouse gas emissions alone; and coal plants account for a large majority of another 31% of

emissions in the electricity division (EPA).

Globally, the number of cars produced has surpassed 1.5 billion (Worldometers); 2300 coal-fired power plants (World Coal Association; IATA) litter the worldwide landscape and an average of 8 million people fly on any given day. However, our natural resources and the earth we live on have not grown in the same way! In fact, in most cases, we are depleting our planet of everything it has – and slowing that reduction has proved challenging.

Our launch of the Cows, Cars, Coal, and Planes one-month campaign on June 24<sup>th</sup> consisted of speeches (and an exciting CCCP music video!) that were focused on the dangers of each polluter while presenting solid alternatives to all of them, including:

- The production of beef associated with industrial agribusiness results in deforestation, greenhouse gas emissions, and pollution in nearby land, air, and water; eating red meat twice a week or less is a great way to lessen those impacts.
- Cars have been increasing local air pollution, so taking public transit at least once a month will help reduce the pollution in many of your nearby communities.
- Thirdly, energy from coal produces significant air pollution, lowering life expectancy. Checking a Renewable Energy box on your electricity provider's website – e.g. ConEdison Solutions or Community Energy, Inc. – will immediately transfer your electricity into becoming both possibly cheaper for you and better for the environment.
- Lastly, plane emissions have recently been cited by the EPA as being harmful to human health, specifically causing respiratory illnesses among even the richest or youngest of our populations. Thus, Skyping your friend, family, and co-workers when possible can greatly diminish your individual carbon emissions. Moreover, you can even offset your emissions by logging onto our webpage



**COWS, CARS, COAL, AND PLANES:**  
THE FOUR DON'TS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



Above, Intern Ceyda Durmaz Dogan speaks at CCCP launch in June; poster from CCCP campaign that includes art and a new fun and educational video. The CCCP paper mache art was created with students from the Educational Center for the Arts, Co-op High School, and Hamden High School.

([www.newhavenleon.org](http://www.newhavenleon.org)) and trying out our Carbon Offset Calculator. This calculator will determine a suitable donation for the Nicaraguan Carbon Offset Fund – equivalent to the volume of your emissions – that will be used to develop clean cookstove programs in Goyena, Nicaragua.

In sum, following the lessons learned from our Cows, Cars, Coal, and Planes campaign will be your best bet if you wish to reduce your greenhouse gas emissions. Changing the world is never easy, especially considering that climate change may seem like a distant villain. But changing your individual lifestyle to be both healthier for yourself, for the population, and for the planet – while encouraging policymakers and businesses to do so too – will foster our movement, and the world will change with us.

*Megan Ratcliffe is a summer intern and rising senior at Connecticut College in New London. She also produced new videos on climate change and NCOF.*



## A Smoke Revolution?

By Charles Allison-Godfrey

Doña María Eugenia gives her stove a once over, then looks back at me. "I want more people in the community to have their own stove." I'm in León for the summer developing the Nicaragua Carbon Offset Fund (NCOF), the objective of which is to make Doña María's wish a reality. Working with NHLSCP staff and community leaders, our goal is to help as many families as possible buy stoves and to help develop community infrastructure that can continue this work in the future.

One of the goals of the New Haven/León Sister City Project is to raise the quality of life in Goyena. To that end, the stoves are a significant improvement. A family who receives a stove benefits in a number of ways.

Doña María Eugenia was one of the first women I met after arriving in Nicaragua. She has spent time serving as the elected leader of her neighborhood, and as I met her I could see why. Doña María's word is a powerful and persuasive force in the community, and this was one of the reasons she was selected to be a member of our pilot program that began last November.

After receiving a stove, she immediately began to notice a difference. Doña María said, "Before, the smoke used to affect me. It affected my health. But now, thanks to God, truly, I feel better than I used to feel. There was a black phlegm that I had from the smoke. The smoke also used to hurt my eyes and affect my vision."

It's difficult to measure the effects the new stove has had on her family's health, but the economic benefits are apparent. She used to spend 30 córdobas [US \$1.10] a day on wood to cook for her family of 8; she now spends only 10 cordabas. Though



Charles in León stove plant with community member Don Jose Antonio Salazar and the plant owner.

saving 20 córdobas [US \$0.73] a day may not seem like much to us, this is a windfall in Goyena. It means that the initial cost of the stove – 50% subsidized by NCOF – is paid for by saved wood costs in a matter of months. It also means that after the stove is paid for, the family will have more disposable income. Finally, her food tastes better, because ash and sawdust don't find their way into her rice.

It's amazing to see how such a small investment, by U.S. standards, can make such a massive impact on a family. I've been in León for a month, and most of my time in Goyena has been spent working on expanding stove distribution. We currently have seven families who are interested in acquiring a stove.

Although buying a stove seems like the easy choice from my perspective, getting people on board hasn't been easy. The statistics are all there. But one thing I quickly learned is that statistics hold less value here. More important to citizens in Goyena, not unlike the United States, are the words of their friends and neighbors. I believe as the number of stoves in the community grows, there will be a corresponding growth in the number of people interested the benefits become more readily apparent.

The financial support of the Nicaragua Carbon Offset Fund is essential as these families would have little chance of acquiring the costly stoves otherwise. Using donations to the Fund, New Haven/León SCP's NCOF subsidizes one half of a sustainable stove in Goyena. The family that will receive the stove pay the other half.

Besides the benefits in Nicaragua, there are also benefits for folks in New Haven in the form of carbon offsets. Since the NCOF decreases the amount of wood used in cooking, there is a corresponding decrease in the amount of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere. Therefore, each donation can be used to offset carbon emissions in New Haven. A donation of \$20 to the NCOF reduces your carbon footprint by one ton! As the average U.S. citizen produces over 17 tons of carbon dioxide annually versus 0.8 tons for a typical Nicaraguan, NCOF helps people in New Haven take responsibility for greenhouse gas pollution and help limit climate change impacts everywhere.

Given everything I've stated above, I firmly believe the Nicaragua Carbon Offset Fund is one of those rare projects that does the greatest good for the greatest number of people. It's why I volunteered to work with the New Haven/León Sister City Project this summer.

*Charles Allison-Godfrey, a graduate of Colorado College, is spending the summer in Leon expanding the NCOF. He previously volunteered in the New Haven office to help develop goNHgo.*



### Farmington Student Raises \$600 for NCOF

Kate Alperin (holding banner above), a senior at Farmington High School, brought NHLSCP's One World House to her school library this winter to raise awareness about climate change and raise funds for the stove project in Nicaragua. Her efforts helped raise enough funds to get 10 stoves into family homes in Goyena.

## Watching the House Burn: A 14 Year Old's Call for Action

By Elsa Rose Farnam

I've grown up with nature as a big part of my life. Every summer, I spend the weekends on green farmland in Wallingford, near mossy forests and grassy meadows. This beautiful place is my second home, and it is where I learned to swim, to build a fire, and to identify birds. Spending so much time around trees and wild animals is what has made me appreciate the beauty of our natural world and is what makes me feel invested in our planet's future. And, unless we work quickly, we will lose what makes the earth such an amazing home.

Climate change is impacting the planet at a faster rate than many people realize. The global temperature has risen 1.4 degrees Fahrenheit since 1880, and 2014 was the hottest year on record. In 2013, carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere reached 400 parts per million for the first time in human history, and the effect has been drastic. In fact, researchers at Stanford have recently declared that we have entered the world's sixth mass extinction phase.

No doubt you have heard these facts before. Everyone has -- they are the constant refrain of environmentalists. But this nonstop theme of urgency has little effect on public opinion. Climate change is such a vague, distant threat, and most people are more worried about their day to day lives than the rising global temperatures. Getting food on the table, working jobs, taking care of family -- these are the priorities of

American families. Saving the polar bears is not one of them.

Even by focusing this discussion on the victims of climate change the problem seems distant. Most of the people immediately affected by climate change's heat waves, hurricanes, and floods live in developing countries, giving us the feeling that global warming can not reach us here in the United States. But we need to wake up. The earth is our home -- we've only got the one -- but we are in the process of destroying it. If your house was burning down, I don't imagine you would watch it burn. As much as we try to ignore it, climate change is here -- and it will affect everyone of us here in New Haven. We don't need to work against climate change only to save the earth, we must do it save ourselves. We need to pull together as a global community and work quickly, before it is too late.

The children being born today will be forced, fifty years from now, to live with their parents' mistake of not taking action. As a relatively young person, I am deeply dismayed at the thought of an uninhabitable, harsh earth. So what can we do to prevent it? We need to change our individual habits, but more even important, there needs to be a systemic change. We must campaign to have our local governments enact earth-conscious laws, and in our own homes, we need to find creative ways to save energy and waste less. Our society is built around a culture of excess (Americans consume almost a quarter of the world's energy), and this needs to change.

We can never do too much for the earth, and as of now, we are not doing enough. An environmental revolution needs to happen soon if we do not want to face a formidable future. Modifying your lifestyle is your chance to make a difference. I care about my home. I want it to remain the beautiful place that it is. But the only way to save it is to alter the way we live.

*Elsa Rose Farnam is an intern this summer and a rising sophomore at Choate.*

## Art in Action



Photos above from top: **1)** Planetary Boundaries Banners opening in New Haven in April on Earth Day. Banners made by Yale OISS ISPY, Sound School, Yale Physics Students, Unidad Latina en Accion, Barnard School, Fossil Free Yale, Celentano School Cooperative, Arts and Humanities High School, New Haven/Leon SCP, Yale Traditional Chinese Painting Group; **2)** NHLSCP-made Fossil Fuel Dragon chasing Mother Earth at 500 person strong Hartford Climate March May 31; **3)** Ceyda Durmaz Dogan speaking in front of YNHH at New Haven march calling for stronger leadership on climate change from local institutions.



Taking the family cow to the butcher? No, intern Elsa Rose Farnam is bringing CCCP art to Orange Street for CCCP outreach in June.

# Give Monthly



Give a [Recurring Donation](#) for a greater ongoing impact.



## Excerpts from Papal Encyclical on Climate Change

- "In the words of this beautiful canticle, Saint Francis of Assisi reminds us that our common home is like a sister with whom we share our life and a beautiful mother who opens her arms to embrace us.... This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she "groans in travail" (Rom 8:22). We have forgotten that we ourselves are dust of the earth (cf. Gen 2:7); our very bodies are made up (1Canticle of the Creatures, in Francis of Assisi: Early Documents, vol. 1, New York-London-Manila, 1999, 113-114.4) of her elements, we breathe her air and we receive life and refreshment from her waters."
- "Climate change is a global problem with grave implications: environmental, social, economic, political and for the distribution of goods. It represents one of the principal challenges facing humanity in our day. Its worst impact will probably be felt by developing countries in coming decades."
- "In different ways, developing countries, where the most important reserves of the biosphere are found, continue to fuel the development of richer countries at the cost of their own present and future."

## Forum Theater Activism in Connecticut

By Megan Fountain

In February this year, we brought together five Connecticut youth organizations for a Forum Theater Workshop in Bridgeport. Can you guess what kinds of oppression they tackled on stage?

Using the worldwide Theatre of the Oppressed technique, we always begin with theater games that require people to "think outside the box." These physical and playful exercises spark serious discussion about the ways that we are "programmed" by society to follow rules and norms. The exercises "demechanize" our minds and bodies so that we question what is "normal" and we imagine alternatives to the status quo.

### Stories from real life

The Connecticut teenagers finished the workshop by creating theatrical skits about real injustices in their own lives. Surprisingly, they chose gender discrimination as one of the most pressing issues in their lives.

One skit dealt with a young woman who experienced sexual discrimination and harassment in the workplace. She was denied the "employee of the month" award, even though her sales were higher than her male co-workers. When she approached her boss to complain, the boss offered to give her better employee ratings if she would go out with him.

Another skit dealt with a young person who felt trapped by gender



roles. The main character was a young woman who wanted to study engineering and construction, but her grandparents thought that was not a career for a young lady, so they refused to pay for her college education. To make matters worse, her best friend did not understand why she dressed "like a boy" and did not act more "feminine."

Afterwards, the participants were enthusiastic about continuing to use forum theater after the training:

"This workshop made me hopeful and showed me that everyone has the power to express themselves. The workshop also challenged me to think about how I may participate in oppression, as a mom, at my job, etcetera." -- Rikkia, staff, Marrakech, Inc.

"I love the way forum theater works. I like how the play does not have a happy ending, because if there were a happy ending, there would be no reason for people to take action and make change. Instead of a happy ending, you tell the audience that this is just a beginning." -- Zach, youth, Writer's Block INK


"I teach dance and I want to use these exercises with my dance students, so they can explore social issues through movement." -- Tim Fountain, dance instructor, Neighborhood Studios

"I was surprised that the issues were serious, but we were laughing a lot." -- Maritza, youth, Neighborhood Studios

*Megan Fountain is a NHLSCP staff member. Contact her at [mfountain@newhavenleon.org](mailto:mfountain@newhavenleon.org) if you want to get involved with women's rights, theater, or youth activism, in Connecticut or Leon.*



*NH/LSCP supports education and sustainable development in Nicaragua and New Haven.*

Paper: Environment PC 100.  
Post consumer 100% 

### Upcoming:

Talk on León Women's Rights - September

Fair Trade/ Craft Sale in December

Fall Climate Change Actions

Youth Climate Delegation - Spring 2016



### Wishing to Get in Deep?

Intern in Nicaragua

Lead a Delegation

More info: contact Chris at [nh@newhavenleon.org](mailto:nh@newhavenleon.org) or go to [newhavenleon.org](http://newhavenleon.org)



## Theater activism coming to León & Connecticut from all over the hemisphere

In a few months, theater artists and activists from all over Latin America will converge in Leon for the the fourth annual Latin American Theatre of the



Oppressed Conference (1/15 2016 to 1/25/2016). **Do you want to travel to Leon, see artists in action, and learn about our women's rights program in Goyena?**

If you don't want to travel, you are in luck, because **Theatre of the Oppressed or "TO" is happening in Connecticut** as well, and we would be happy to do a workshop for adults or teens at your school or organization.

Go to NHLSCP Theater web page or contact Megan at [mfountain@newhavenleon.org](mailto:mfountain@newhavenleon.org) for more information on training and the upcoming delegation women/theater.