

CCR 77 Bearing Witness and Speaking Up: Julio Cochoy and Anne Therese Gennari

Full Transcript

Peterson Toscano 0:00

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 77 of Citizens Climate Radio, a project of Citizens Climate Education. This episode is airing on Friday, October 28 2022.

Anne Therese Gennari 0:25

As a model, you're not really asked to speak up about things. You actually ask to be quiet standing your corner, do what you're told, show up on time, and definitely do not have any strong opinions about things because that will may not sit well with the brand, right?

Peterson Toscano 0:40

That's Anne Therese Gennari, a Swedish fashion model passionate about taking on climate change. She shares advice for building a social media platform and on how to be an effective influencer. We have good news about an absolute fortune going towards funding climate change initiatives. And Tamra Staton is back for the Resilience Corner. This month she helps us identify our needs. Pero primero hablo con un Guatemalteco. But first I speak with Julio Victor Cochoy Alba from Guatemala.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 1:17

I am from a little community in Guatemala which is called Santa Lucia Santa Lucía Utatlán in the highlands of Guatemala.

Peterson Toscano 1:26

Julio Speaks about his mountain village with great affection. It's a place of amazing beauty. And it also continues to be a site of deep trauma. In fact, you are going to hear details about the war Julio witnessed as a boy, this content may not be suitable for all audiences.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 1:47

(speaking Mayan) That's my Mayan language. So we live in the Mayan community. The most important part of my life was when I was a little boy, I was living in a community in a family where the principles of love, compassion, tenderness, respect for the elders, but above all, respect for Mother Earth was so important was so deep, profound in our being. I am so happy that I live in this little community. We are 9000 feet above the ocean level. It's cold, but it's warm in terms of our relationship. It was a community where solidarity, love and compassion was part of our life.

Peterson Toscano 2:39

These mountainous communities have often been hidden away. Many times you could only reach them through narrow mountain trails on a horseback. As a result, Julio was shielded from a major conflict happening in Guatemala, a civil war broke out five years before he was born.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 3:00

It wasn't when I was 14 years old, when I learned when I started to see what was going on in Guatemala. I think the first seven that showed me that we were living through a really bad time, I didn't call the other time Civil War. It was when my dad took me to from Santa Lucia to the to the capital city. We took a bus, like public bus, and one point of the highway, we started to see bodies of I didn't know at that point, but they were dead people. The impact of seeing those bodies still today remains in my brain and my feelings. And for me, it was so sad when I went to see dead bodies of little girls, little boys, elders, women and men. That that really impacted

my life because I was full of joy full of compassion, full of love. And when I see that, it was a new paradigm, how that was possible.

Peterson Toscano 4:04

The Guatemalan Civil War lasted 36 years, forces within the country aided by supporters and influences outside the country, waged war. By the war's end in 1996, between 140,000 to 200,000 people were killed or disappeared. Most of them were members of indigenous groups. These indigenous people were targeted by the army and right wing paramilitaries, who accused the villagers of supporting left wing guerrillas. In addition, government soldiers routinely raped Indigenous women and girls. In January of this year, a handful of these ex soldiers were convicted of these crimes. According to the BBC, "Guatemala's highest court sentenced five former paramilitaries to 30 years in prison for raping dozens of indigenous Maya women during the country's civil war in the 1980s, the men were members of so called civil self defence patrols armed groups formed and supported by the military. The 36 victims were aged 12 to 52. When the crimes happened, prosecutor said and quote War brings destruction affecting people, property, and community."

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 5:36

I really loved to go to the mountains. But my job when I was a little boy was to pick the wood because my mom was cooking with the leña. But at that time, I couldn't do that. I couldn't do that. Because if I go to the mountains with my tools, they will think that I was real, and they will kill me. So I had to stop I have to stop my own energy my own needs. So then I have to think of what to do what to do to have within my house to cook my food. That's my case. But there are many other cases like people in the rural area when a man is sometimes Yeah, they were used to go to the fields at five o'clock to start the war to start to work in in the preparation of land, but they did not they have to, they have to think twice if they have to go. So the impact was in our conscience, they stopped us to be who we were. This is my case. But if you add the case of one four community, then the impact isn't social. And if you're not free, you stop doing what what you do usually. In Español it would be, Esos interrumparon los ciclos normales de agricultura.

Peterson Toscano 6:46

The attacks by the military interrupted the normal cycle of farming, the terror and the disruptions also led to a great displacement of people.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 6:55

They started to escape from the violence escape to save their lives. There were two big movements. The first one was people organising community. They were looking for the mountains, the deep virgin mountains. And they went to live on the mountain. They were surviving on the mountains. But then all the people organising, organised in groups, they decided to keep going and go to Mexico. So they cross the borders. And they were they became refugees en Mexico. The third level of immigration was the people, the academics or middle class people who were involved in the guerrillas or in the revolution groups. So they were so scared that they were they were cut by the army. So they were going to be killed. But because they have connections, so they have applications, they went to ask to the embassies to give them asilo político or they just went to the United States or they just went to Canada.

Peterson Toscano 7:57

Most of the people directly affected by the war did not have the means to pursue political asylum in the US and Canada. Civil War devastated and displaced families and whole communities. And even after war ended in 1996, the impacts reverberated added to these has been another disruption I forced changing the weather and seasons that had been stable for so long.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 8:24

When I was a little boy, I thought everything was synchronised. January we know that every morning was a little bit conversating nublado. Cloudy, cloudy, mucha nublada so we know that there's going to be also sunny during the day after the clouds and still dry. And then we know that February is going to be crazy. Wind cold some sun and stay dry. And then March everyone March and April everyone is ready to go to the fields because we have to plant our corn or our vegetable will whatever we need. And then we were waiting the first rain was suspected to be May first. Everyone know that May First is going to be different right? Probably I remember like a little boy he was through May 1 We have the beautiful big rain and then we were expected to have this normal rain from May to September the end of September.

Peterson Toscano 9:27

Every year in the midst of the rainy season they experienced a two week long lull. The rain stopped for two weeks and then carried on.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 9:36

Which we call Canícula and it happened always. It was raining and raining and then two weeks of nothing. It was so nice to enjoy the sun and beautiful day and then normally will be in September would be the end of the rain. We were ready to harvest. Everyone knows that October is the most beautiful month because we have blue skies. There's nothing in the horizon, no clouds, more rain, beautiful land because everything's still is green.

Peterson Toscano 10:08

In November and December, they harvested the crops.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 10:12

But not I'm fifty-three. Nothing is like a cycle. When it's raining from May to September. Now this Canícula, we call two weeks of no rain, it can be one month, it can be even six weeks. So it's changing a lot. And then we were not expecting rain in November. Now we have rain in November destroying our corn because the corn is ready to be picked up but with rain, it will destroy. We don't expect rain also in like in April or March and we have it everything is changing.

Peterson Toscano 10:49

Julio reflected on the similarities and differences between the impacts of the Guatemalan Civil War and the changes brought about by global warming.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 10:59

They are similar because they create destruction, destruction, but there is some difference there. When like, big rain, and then como se dice, mudslide. When it happened in this way community, the resignation of the people, that's okay. We accepted like like as a natural thing. And of course, people are sad, they lose their houses, lives, members of the family. It's a big trauma. But the destruction from a civil war like we have in what Guatemala the big differences that people are sometimes our own people came to do. So the resentment the hate against the perpetrators. Because the because the trauma they create is so big, similarity destruction, but what is different is the need to heal. In both cases you need to heal. But when a civil war destroy your family, there is something else we need is healing and reconciliation. But also, we need justice, because if nobody's paying for what they did, this our society, I feel like our society doesn't evolve. We stay in a situation where hate denying and just bad energies around us, doesn't allow us to grow up as a society.

Peterson Toscano 12:27

When it comes to climate change, who is the enemy? Who do we resist? How do we make peace and pursue justice?

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 12:37

Who's creating this destruction of our our mother? Why why we have now instead of two weeks of Canícula why we have one month of Canícula. So some somebody or a big company or somebody in somewhere is creating this restriction. But because we don't see them and ignorancy doesn't allow us to take actions. We don't know about them. So probably the most important part then in this moment, it will be to know about that to have more information. And to let people know where is this destruction coming from.

Peterson Toscano 13:13

As a child, Julio was shielded from the war until he became an eyewitness.

Julio Victor Cochoy Alba 13:18

Yeah, we can do that in terms of our the destruction of our mother, because somebody's doing it. And we have to know, the big, let's let's call them the perpetrators of destroying our mother. I think they know that we people are ignorant about that. So they are okay with that. But I think what is going to be a big change is if we know if we have the information and we are going to demand justice, according to the I mean, if I don't know about the legal situation in each country, but I'm talking about justice in terms of what they destroying what they can do to repair to, to fix what they create, or stopping what are they doing.

Peterson Toscano 14:07

As a witness to the impacts of climate change, Julio sought to assist his community through ecotourism, building projects, and opportunities for foreigners to sponsor indigenous Guatemalan students. 10 years ago, he and his partner Doris Kizina began world pilgrim global education. Though the COVID 19 pandemic interrupted tourists to Guatemala. They will resume in February 2023 To learn how you and your family can visit Julio his village and how you can learn more about the village today. Visit worldpilgrim.ca That's world pilgrim.ca.

Now it is time for the arthouse

Anne Therese Gennari 15:03

I was just really battling with wanting to speak to the world and wanting to have an impact and an influence but being a nobody, because no one cared about who I was or I had zero following on Instagram and stuff like that. So I was just thinking to myself, like, how can I gain this platform? How can I somehow be given a spotlight where people suddenly would actually care about what I have to say? And one of the things that came to me was modelling because it was an old dream of mine, I never really looked into too much because I thought that could never be part of my life. But as I moved to New York, suddenly I had this like, well, anything can happen, you know, because New York does that you

Peterson Toscano 15:39

Originally from Sweden, Anne Therese generi came to New York City to speak up about the issues that moved her her first step, become a fashion model.

Anne Therese Gennari 15:49

One day, this one agency said, Sure, I we'll sign you on those kind of hard to believe it even happened to be honest, because I'm like, All right, I knew I wanted this. And part of me thought it could happen. But really, like, I'm now assigned model in New York City. So that was a big moment. And I thought this was it. Like, you know, I made it become a model I'm calling superstar and like, suddenly, the world is gonna listen to me. And that just didn't happen.

Peterson Toscano 16:13

The model agencies wanted her to keep her mouth shut; she was there to represent the brand, not speak her truth.

Anne Therese Gennari 16:21

So there was a huge disconnect in what I thought modelling would do to me, and what I was suddenly just thrown into this world of like, competition. And, you know, I was I just felt like I was stripped on my voice and my power even further.

Peterson Toscano 16:36

Then she had a big awakening and began to ask herself questions.

Anne Therese Gennari 16:41

What are you here to do? You live in New York City, you know, the city of your, your dreams? You're doing a lot of things you always said you want to do? Like you're working in marketing, you go to school for the same thing, working as model like, what else can you want? But there was, you know, this one thing missing, which was I wanted to help the planet and I wasn't doing that.

Peterson Toscano 17:01

From a young age, Anne Therese Generi felt connected to the natural world.

Anne Therese Gennari 17:06

I grew up in Sweden, just being very embraced in nature and always felt like I always is eco warrior, since a very early age, I was the composting queen and like would tell other people how to compost correctly, even my own parents and stuff. So I was sort of that person that people hated slashed loved. Was it a little bit annoying, but I was kind of like in people's face, like, we need to do something about the planet. And I thought I was super conscious about everything I was doing. I was biking, and you know, trying my best to be a positive impact and not a negative one.

Peterson Toscano 17:40

She carried this passion for sustainability and caring for the planet into her adulthood. She realised if she wanted to speak out as a model, she needed to create a new kind of model agency.

Anne Therese Gennari 17:53

Because I thought there must be other models out there that feel the same way who are like dying to use their voices and their platforms to speak up about things they care about. And they also want to be empowered to do that. How we do that is that we are seeking talents who are on some sort of mission to empower, educate or speak up about these issues. I mean, not saying they have to be one way or another. Like, it doesn't mean like, oh, to sign with us, you have to be vegan, or you have to do that you have to think this way, like everyone has their own free will. But we do want to see that aspect of okay, you're gorgeous. You really cool, you know, like you have the looks you can model. But what do you want to do with that? Like, how do you want to use that to inspire and empower other people.

Peterson Toscano 18:32

Anne Therese recognises the power of social media platforms and the problems they can create for influencers,

Anne Therese Gennari 18:41

Social media, first of all, it's like this double edged sword where it can both have this incredible power to inspire others and shift the world and make new norms. But at the same time, if you're not intentional with it, it can be very harmful in many ways. And if anyone's seen the

Social Dilemma on Netflix, you know what I'm talking about. There are days when I absolutely hate it. And I wish I could just let it go forever. But it's part of my profession. And the one thing I always tell myself is authenticity. That's something that we should all try to embrace more. And it's hard sometimes. Even when it comes down to greenwashing as a company, for example, or a brand. Don't say that you are something that you not because you will be called out on it, right? We can't be too afraid of speaking up about things. I think right now there's a stigma of if you don't speak up, your your silence is almost speaking for you and your for you. Or if you do say something maybe didn't say right, right, or you're not educated enough, or there's always something to pick on. And it's like, Come on, guys. We need to speak up, like don't hate on people for trying and I know that's hard and it's harsh in many ways. But I think bottom line is we do need to feel more okay with talking about things and to make it the norm to talk about very important topics.

Peterson Toscano 19:53

In order to speak out Anne Therese has taken a big leap. She now produces a regular newsletter called The Climate Optimist, I find it an excellent resource because of how she switches the perspective.

Anne Therese Gennari 20:06

A big misconception we have today is that we need to show up and dwell on all the negativity, right? It's like, how can you not be angry with the world when there's so much darkness going on, like we have racial injustice, and we have climate change, and this pandemic and governments are not working. So like, there's so many things that we could be pay attention to. And it's almost like the world is asking you to be upset all the time. Because if you if you're not upset, you're not caring enough. Sometimes it's really hard to even feel okay with being optimistic, and to talk about good things. Giving just allowing people to feel optimistic, which is my big thing with being a climate optimist, that's when you turn that switch on and you see, a complete transformation suddenly disappears within this person, it's pretty incredible to see.

Peterson Toscano 20:54

In addition to the newsletter Anne Therese Gennari is the author of the soon to be released book, the Climate Optimist, how to shift the narrative on climate change, and find the courage to choose Change, and to raise agree to read an excerpt from the book.

Anne Therese Gennari 21:09

We tend to worry because we don't know what the future will look like. We fear change, because we don't know what that change will bring. But we also know that everything we've ever built, invented or created, has come from an ability to look beyond what we know now sparked by curiosity to find something different. Humans have birth new ideas throughout history, from crazy wild and courageous hearts. When it comes to climate change, and all the other chaos we face at the moment. We have to tap back into that curiosity. We must expand our hearts and minds, question everything, and dare to dream, because maybe change isn't so bad. Maybe change means that things can get even better, better in the most unimaginable ways. The renowned American architect William McDonough famously said the Stone Age did not end because humans ran out of stone. It ended because it was time for a rethink about how we live. We're there right now, at the bridge to a new era. A you get to help read the script, or what's next to come.

Peterson Toscano 22:20

Learn more about Anne Therese Gennari and her book and sign up for her monthly climate optimist newsletter, visit the climate optimist.com That's the climate optimist.com. If you have an idea for the art house, feel free to contact me radio at citizens climate.org.

Promo Presenter 22:42

The November elections are one of the most critical times for our little blue dot. That's when we'll vote to seriously address climate change. Or we'll put it off for two more years. For many people and species, the latter is not an option. So this October celebrate Earth Day 2.0. But bringing climate to the election conversation, let's get every candidate on the record for climate action. Let's get every citizen to vote like the Earth depends on it. Let's put people in office who will choose planet over party, people over power and long term prosperity over short term gains. You are Earth's voice. Let's make sure you're heard.

Tamara Staton 23:26

Hi, I'm Tamra Staton, CCL education and resilience coordinator. And this is the resilience corner. I want to do everything that I can to see that you have what you need to stay strong and steady in the important climate work that you're doing. Last month in the corner, we highlighted five key steps to deepening resilience: noticing, accepting, seeking help practising and repeating that process regularly. Today, we're going to take a deeper look at the first step noticing.

Noticing one's current experience might seem pretty straightforward. However, many of us tend to overlook or ignore or even feel confused by what's actually happening for us in any particular moment. So how can we integrate more noticing and self awareness into our lives? One way is to ask yourself, what do I need right now? How am I feeling? My hungry? Thirsty? Do I need sleep or a break? Would a change of scenery helped me right now? Do I feel heard and understood? Do I need more time with friends and family perhaps? In addition to checking in with ourselves, we can also notice how we answer when someone else asks us how you doing? Are we really answering the question or just responding politely? While it may feel easier or more comfortable to answer with I'm fine. I'm good. I'm doingokay. It may not be completely honest, especially when I'm feeling pretty tired or overwhelmed or even extra excited.

These authentic responses help us notice what's happening inside. They also make room for connecting with others, which for many of us is a big bonus. Sometimes, regardless of who's asking, the answer is quite obvious. It's clear that we're tired or that we're hungry with too much to do and far too much stress about wildfires or our relationship with someone we love.

But sometimes the answer is harder to identify. It might be jumbled or hidden. When I can't quite figure out how I'm feeling, I sometimes go outside or I just get up and walk around the house. You might try turning on your favourite music or calling a friend or drawing or writing, maybe grabbing a snack or a healthy drink. mixing things up might help you feel better. But most importantly for this first step, it can help you hone your awareness on what you're needing or feeling in the moment. As we grow more intentional about asking and listening, the noticing step becomes much easier. And once you're tuned in to your internal experience, it's time to move on to step two. Accepting specifically accepting what you need is what you need.

Next month, we'll explore this idea of accepting and consider how to make more space for your authentic experience. But for now, see what you can do to really notice yourself in all your glory, the good, the bad, the ugly, because, as I like to say, we need you and your deep commitment to a livable planet Earth.

I'm Tamara Staton with resilience corner to learn more about tools, trainings and resources for deepening resilience, check out CCL resilience hub at [CCL usa.org/resilience](https://www.ccl.usa.org/resilience). You might also consider connecting with CCL resilience building action team on that same page. And until next month, remember this, you are strong, you are resilient, and you've got what it takes to make good things happen.

Peterson Toscano 27:29

Thank you, Tamra. I am loving this series. The resilience corner is made possible through a collaboration with Tamara Staton, education and resilience coordinator for Citizens Climate Education. The resilience Hub website is CCL.usa.org/resilience.

Our good news story today first came to me through Trevor Noah and The Daily Show,

News Reporter 27:54

an extraordinary act of charity, the founder of the outdoor gear and clothing brand Patagonia has given away his \$3 billion company ownership has now been transferred to a specially created trust that is going to use any profits not reinvested in the business to fight climate change. That's expected to be roughly \$100 million a year. 83 year old Yvon Chouinard, who started Patagonia roughly a half century ago said quote, we are making Earth our only shareholder.

Trevor Noah 28:27

Wow. The founder of Patagonia decided being a billionaire was too much balling for any one person and so he's decided to give all the money away.

Peterson Toscano 28:45

After seeing that clip on YouTube, I was smiling for the rest of the day. What great news. Now if you have good news you want to share on our show, email me radio at citizensclimate.org That's radio at citizensclimate.org.

Thank you for joining me on Citizens Climate radio for episode 77. Next month, you will hear an original story fresh from the CLI Fi Imaginarium it stars abadger Special thanks to the members of our new Advisory Board, Tamara Staton, Maggie Stenbeck, Katie Sarah Bagatelle Kelly Roach, so let me add Mendez, Hannah Rogers, Shawn, Dag and Brett sees 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 Hunt-Mortorano, Flannery Winchester, Katie Zakrzewski, Finley Hungerford, and Steve Valk. Moral support from Madeline Para. To see our show notes find links to our guest and much more visit CitizensClimate.org under the blog option, just look for climate change radio. Citizens Climate radio is a project of Citizens Climate Education

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