



From Invisible to Visible

Michelle Dilhara, Earth Day Network Ambassador
Sri Lanka

☀️ Call to Action

The Earth Day Network's global map of climate activists in 17 countries is ever-expanding: www.earthday.org. Follow Michelle on Facebook (@mishdilhara), & Instagram (@michelledilhara).

☀️ Values

- Community Service
- Generosity
- Social Justice
- Environmentalism

☀️ Lessons Learned

If you bring to light to those who are in the shadows of society, you may change the world.

Everything is connected: the existential threats to those ignored by society will become threats to everyone in the world unless we begin to work for change.

Michelle Dilhara is a well-known television actress in Sri Lanka

But even before she became famous, she was an activist for social rights and the environment. Now she uses both her influence and her income to mobilize others to join the fight for social justice and environmental protection. In 2020 she was named the Earth Day Ambassador for Sri Lanka. "We have a responsibility for the future of the children," she says. "What I always tell everybody is that one small contribution from each of us can make a huge change."

☀️ Language Arts

Write a research essay about the link between climate change, poverty, and increased mortality in vulnerable populations. In other words: how and why does climate change affect poor people more harshly?

Choose your own sustainability adventure! For this activity, each student will need to create a [Twitter](#)¹ account (they should not use their own accounts, if they have them), and then familiarize themselves with [Twitter Polls](#)². After each student has created their own account, the members of the class will follow each other. Using the Twitter accounts created for this purpose, each student creates a narrative about a sustainability adventure of their choice: a young leader who is trying to tackle an environmental problem of their choice. Each student creates their own narrative, which will be published in chunks, as a tweet, and each narrative must have at least three turning points (three "cliffhanger" moments). The narrative will be shared as a series of tweets with the rest of the class. When a turning point is reached, the student who is creating the narrative will create a Twitter poll in which the rest of the class will vote to decide what happens next. The poll should have at least three sce-

narios to explore for each turning point. In the end, each student will have their own narrative or short story which will have been developed with the help of the rest of the class (by voting on the Twitter polls on what the hero should do next). After the voting is done, students will share their stories with the rest of the class, and reflect on what did and didn't work about the ideas they shared with each other.

Using [FlipGrid](#)³ (your teacher will set this up beforehand), record a message for people like you, in which you invite them to be agents of change to deal with climate change. Your message should be between one and three minutes long, and it should contain a call to action for a specific cause, and a concrete plan (for example, meeting at a park to clean up trash, collecting electronics for recycling at your school, etc). After you record your message, respond to two of your classmates' videos. Your response must include an explanation as to why you found their submissions interesting, and additional ideas about how to implement their solutions.

STEM Activities

Climate change and extreme weather affects Sri Lanka at large, but farmers and agricultural workers face the worst impacts of it. Research agricultural industries in Sri Lanka and learn how climate change is impacting it. How might the success or failure of these agricultural businesses affect the overall economy?

Identify a project in your area that can help reduce sources of climate change like Michelle did (park/beach/street cleanup, recycling program, etc.), and plan how you would carry it out. Optionally, connect with your school administration or local government to expand the effort.

Sri Lanka is one of the biodiversity hotspots in the world, but its environmental ecosystems are being threatened by climate change. Research a species or type of ecosystem present in Sri Lanka, and learn how climate change is affecting it. Are there any Sri Lankan policies that are helping to mitigate the impact? If not, what are some policies the government could implement to reduce the impact climate change is having on the species or ecosystem?

Sustainability Innovations

Michelle began her career in television, but she has made a greater impact by using her influence for sustainable causes. These actors have also grown their influence over time, and used it to make an impact on the environment:

- **Rosario Dawson:** As an actor and political activist, she has used her influence to develop *Voz*. [Voz](#)⁴ helps to mold the concepts of sustainable fashion and indigenous craft/art.
- **Mark Ruffalo:** The Avengers actor is known for his roles on the screen. He supports The Solutions Project, which supports grassroots campaigns with climate changemakers and innovators.

In this 2019 [GreenBiz Article](#)⁵, companies' use of social media for sustainability marketing is addressed and analyzed. How has social media helped to promote sustainability movements? Are there any sustainability-focused companies that have grown through the use of social media?

In addition to the influence of actors, TikTok and current social media trends are driving sustainability-focused action among Gen Z. This [article](#)⁶ addresses the trend created via TikTok and explains how social media has changed from promotional to active work within the climate change movement.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Actor. As Michelle notes, along with acting in inspiring movies and TV shows, actors can use their platforms to encourage others to live more sustainably and even -- through programs like [Green is Universa⁷](#) -- help studios to produce movies in ways that are more environmentally responsible. This, of course, is not an easy profession to succeed in, but if you want to become an actor, [start here⁸](#).

Teacher. One of the first ways Michelle helped her community was to teach children English. Often people who want to help save the planet think about teaching environmental studies or science. But any subject can incorporate sustainability education--whether instruction in English or other languages, history, social studies, even meditation, like Michelle taught. Teaching is a noble profession, and there are never enough passionate teachers. Already convinced this is the path for you? [Here's a good guide on becoming a teacher⁹](#). Want to weigh the pros and cons? [Start here¹⁰](#).

Extension Agent. Farmers have long been supported by governmental (and nongovernmental) agricultural extension offices ([actually for about 2,800 years in China¹¹](#)). Extension agents support farmers in their service area, helping them to improve crop yields and practices--and even helping them adapt to a changing climate. They may also play a role in cultivating the next generation of farmers, for example, through support of youth agriculture groups like 4H. If this sounds like the job for you, [learn more here¹²](#).

1 <https://twitter.com/>

2 <https://help.twitter.com/en/using-twitter/twitter-polls>

3 <https://info.flipgrid.com/>

4 <https://madebyvoz.com/pages/sustainability-people>

5 <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/here-are-companies-use-social-media-best-sustainability-marketing#:~:text=We%20observed%20that%20most%20companies,platform%20for%20corporate%20sustainability%20teams>

6 <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/09/10029101/tiktok-sustainable-fashion-cottagecore-clothes>

7 <https://www.nbcuniversal.com/article/our-productions>

8 <https://www.careersinfilm.com/actor/>

9 <https://www.teachercertificationdegrees.com/become/>

10 <https://medium.com/teachers-on-fire/so-youre-thinking-of-becoming-a-teacher-818cb87cceb9>

11 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agricultural_extension

12 <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/agricultural-extension-agent-125871>

