



*All Hands on Deck: This is Zero Hour*

**Jamie Margolin**

**Seattle, Washington**

In West Seattle, there is an urban sanctuary called Lincoln Park. With its many unique natural features, it's as impressive as any in the Pacific Northwest. From its old growth trees. Winding footpaths. Expansive views of Puget Sound. Sandy beaches dotted with glacial rocks and footprints.

It's here, in this serene setting, that Jamie Margolin likes to connect with nature, which she does often. But one day, when she was walking on the beach, she saw a sign literally - that set her on her journey as a climate justice activist. "There was a sign that read, 'Please don't feed the seal pups.' I don't know why, but the message struck me as odd. In all the times I'd visited, I'd never seen any seal pups."

Jamie knew something wasn't adding up. But like the rest of her concerns about the climate situation, she pushed it deep down. Hoping to forget, to move on. So she kept walking. Further along the beach, another sign read, "These are the whales and porpoises that you'll commonly see around this bay."

"It was just like before. I'd never seen any whales or porpoises here. None of my friends had either. That's when I realized there's a disconnect in our way of thinking," admits Jamie. "We see what we want to see, not what we need to see." She continues, "Of course, these animals were here once, when the indigenous peoples who cared for the land lived in this region. This really got me thinking deeply about my own culture and the environment for the first time."

Jamie might have become a devoted climate justice activist that day, at age 14. But the groundwork for her activism had started long before that. Jamie's father is a bookish man, a Reform Jewish thinker who always listens to the news. "Politics is a constant in my life," she says. "My dad is to thank for that. Believe it or not, I didn't grow up watching *Hannah Montana*. Nothing like that. For fun, we watched *The Colbert Report*. Or *The Daily Show*. Or just the plain old news," Jamie says smiling. "This really helped shape my perspective."

Jamie's mother also had a huge impact on her world view. An immigrant from Columbia, she had grown up in poverty with six siblings, and a single mother. It was a tough life. She instilled in Jamie a sense of caring about the world. Jamie credits her own resilience to the lessons her mother taught her. "It's what made me the activist I am today."

Next on a trip to Columbia to visit her cousins, Jamie had another formative experience. Her family lives near a fracking site. There, she saw rivers with dead fish in them, and polluted streams. In the city, she felt the burn of fossil fuels in the air. She knew this sort of thing was happening in the United States. But she didn't know it was also happening in Columbia too. She started to see that the environment was suffering everywhere. "And our leaders weren't doing anything about it," she says.

When the night of the 2016 election came, everything changed for Jamie. "It shattered my ideal, that the good guys would always win. I decided I wasn't going to rely on party leaders to make a difference. I was going to be the one that fought for the good guys." That was the turning point that moved Jamie from thought to action.

"I started small," explains Jamie. "First, I got involved with Plant for the Planet – which was great introduction to the world of climate change advocacy. After that, I started community organizing. I talked to legislators and politicians, and I helped put on lobbying events for environmental legislation, from Seattle to Olympia." Jamie's journey wasn't always easy. Her rise to prominence wasn't always steady. Many times she met forceful resistance.

"In January 2017, I had my first meeting with a Republican legislator. He was quite hostile," Jamie says. "The PTA was having a rally at the same time, so it was very tense. When it came time for me to talk, the legislator cut me off and said, 'You see these people? They want money too.'

"He was not there to actually listen," clarifies Jamie. "If he was, he would've known that I wasn't looking for money. Still, he carried on. He pulled out a brochure on homelessness and said, 'The money you want for climate justice could be helping these kids.'"

*But this is all intersectional,* Jamie thought. *How come he doesn't understand?* The climate crisis makes homelessness worse. It's not an isolated issue. Jamie sighs. "I had many experiences like this, where I was just shrugged off." What was even more frustrating is that there wasn't a single media article about the fight for climate justice. People weren't paying attention. So Jamie decided, you know what? "Enough is enough!"

In July 2017, Jamie decided to start a National Youth Climate March to really get people to listen. She was ready to grow from being a local organizer to being the leader of an international movement. Jamie posted her idea for the March on social media, with an ambitious one-year timeline. At first slowly, then rapidly, the number of people who signed up from around the country grew. One year later, as promised - on July 21, 2018 - Jamie led the first Youth Climate March in Washington D.C.. Thousands of young people marched on the National Mall, advocating for their right to a safe and livable future. Sister marches went on in New York City, Indianapolis, Seattle, Las Vegas, and even in Melbourne, Australia, and London, U.K. Jamie was especially grateful that the March was endorsed by such varying groups as the Peoples Climate Movement, The Climate Group, Alliance for Climate Education, Citizens' Climate Lobby, Indigenous Environmental Network, Sierra Club, Sunrise, and the Women's March Youth Empower.

By July 2019, Jamie's efforts expanded in a big way. Then she upped her game with the launch of Zero Hour. Its mission: to increase the voices of diverse youth in the conversation around climate and environmental justice. She organized the first Youth Climate Summit, a three-day climate justice event in Miami, Florida. All in all, the Summit trained more than 350 youth and older allies in climate justice activism and organizing. Jamie is supporting these newly trained climate advocates to use Zero Hour's Getting to the Roots of Climate Change platform. Now newly trained allies serve as ambassadors, and educate their local communities about the climate movement.

For youth who want to get further involved in a community, Jamie's message is kind, and encouraging. "Growing up is hard," she says. "Sometimes, it's hard to know your place in the world. So take something you are passionate about - whether that is art, performing, cooking, or robotics - and apply that same passion to a movement."

"It doesn't need to be climate justice," she adds. "Just get involved, and get informed. Use your skills and knowledge to create the change you want to see," she says adding, "Never be afraid to use your voice. You are never too young, or too weak."

According to Jamie, this is especially true for marginalized people, who are not used to having their voices heard. "Young women. Women of color. Queer people. It's hard out there. So let's use the tools we have to come together

for a common cause," she explains. "Social media can bring us together like never before," she exclaims. "Zero Hour and the Youth Climate Movement wouldn't have been possible without it. You *can* change the world. We did!"

For adults, Jamie's advice is simple. "Stop pinning your responsibility on children. The climate crisis can't wait for my generation to fight it. By the time I'm old enough to be in a position of power, it'll be too late. The world will be on fire. 'Business as usual' isn't going to cut it this time. And words won't either. We need action. We need a major systems overhaul. And we need adults and children working together towards that goal."

Jamie pauses, and lets out a heavy sigh. After a silence, she continues, "You need to be able to look your children in the eye and say, 'I did all I could to protect your future. I fought the battle against climate change. I turned over every stone I possibly could.' Adults need to ask themselves--and be honest--'Have I done all that I can for climate justice?'"

It's a big ask. But according to Jamie, it's a necessary one. "We can't just ignore it - and hope someone else will deal with it. Ensuring climate justice for future generations is an enormous task. As a country, we must all come together. As brothers and sisters together, we must have an answer to that big question. 'Have we done all that we can for climate justice?'" Jamie Margolin is counting on everyone to stand up and be counted.

*To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is  
our only legitimate hope of survival.*

Wendell Berry

**Call to Action:** Join the Zero Hour movement to demand climate action *now!* <http://thisiszerohour.org>

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