

Black People and the Green Transition with Rhiana Gunn-Wright 9.21.23

Steve Phillips [00:00:09] Welcome to Democracy in Color with Steve Phillips, a color conscious podcast about politics. I'm your host, Steve Phillips, and I will admit that I'm fairly ignorant about the environmental movement and the climate change movement. I'm still uncertain about what goes in compost and what goes in recycle. I don't have an electric car and I have what are probably a bunch of stupid questions, but I may not be alone. Do solar panels work on a cloudy day? As wind power effective, it's not windy. So these are things that I suspect I'm not alone in not knowing some of these things. I do know that the weather is changing and what seems like potentially catastrophic ways in recent years, recent weeks, months and years. But I have very little clarity from a social change standpoint about what's happening and what we should do. I am glad I was able to play a small part in laying the political groundwork for some of these big changes by supporting Stacey Abrams in the work in Georgia over the past decade that led to the election of Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff and flipping control of the whole U.S. Senate so that we could pass historic climate change legislation. But is that a good thing? What do we do next? In the words of Martha King's last book's title, where do we go from here? And so to give us some insight on where we go, we are joined by one of the most important leaders, the environmental and climate movement. Today, a brilliant thinker and writer. Just one sentence in this piece. She recently wrote a very significant piece in The Hammer at home. She says that, quote, We need to give people concrete experiences of climate policy materially benefiting their lives. And that really resonated with me. So I'm very excited for this conversation. It's my first time meeting my guest. And for this conversation, I'm joined on my co-host, Sharline Chang. Hi, Charlene, How are you? And you want to introduce our guest.

Sharline Chiang [00:02:02] Hey, Steve. Doing great. Looking forward to the fall beginning. It's one of my favorite seasons and I'm really looking forward to talking to our guests today. As a mom, first of all, I know what goes in compost. So I kind of feel like, well, it's sort of feeling like I know some things about environment. I care, I try to follow as much as I can, but I know what you mean. It's also really easy to feel overwhelmed. What I was thinking is, as a mom, I often try to balance between feeling overwhelmed and quite hopeless and, you know, a lot of fear, anxiety and really trying to balance that within instead of just getting reactive from all the scary news and the disconcerting news related to our globe and the environment, trying to balance it with seeking out voices like those of our guest today who have insight into solutions. And from that, gleaning some hope, getting information on what is it that we can do and can fight for and band together for so that we don't just get overwhelmed by the doom and gloom headlines, not to mention, you know, things that are just happening around us in real time regarding living on this planet. And so with that, I am really excited to introduce today. Our guest today is Rihana Gunn, right? She's a leading national voice in the fight for climate justice. She's also an architect of the Green New Deal, which is a be a big deal, be a real big deal, and has been instrumental in shaping the conversation around climate policy in the United States. Rihana is a Rhodes Scholar and a graduate of Yale, and she formerly served as an intern to one first lady, Michelle Obama. In 2019, she was included in Time magazine's list of the top women fighting to end climate change. Welcome, Rihana. So happy to have you here today.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:03:57] Oh, thank you for having me. It's an honor and a pleasure.

Steve Phillips [00:04:02] Thanks so much. Really glad you could be with us. Just looking at a Yale, that was the road not taken. I was trying to decide that was should I go to Yale

or not go to Yale? And it was not as... For a suburban kid, I was more drawn to Palo Alto than to New Haven in terms of just dynamics. So that was part of my reality. So that could be a whole separate conversation some point. So let's let's start with with your your journey and maybe, you know, Yale as part of that, right, in terms of you've been at the forefront of the climate policy work for quite some time. And then in 2019 I was Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. AOC Right. Ask you to help craft what would become to become the Green New Deal. And I guess you're doing that work at the new consensus think tank. So I think it now is talking about, you know, somewhat jokingly, but not her. I'm not that connected to the environmental movement. I don't think it's not a place. There's been a ton of black folks. And so I'm very curious about you kind of your journey, how you got to this place where you focused on it substantively and then you came to play a role. How did you get on AOC's radar as somebody that she would want to have her help craft the craft a Green New Deal?

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:05:26] Yeah. So how I started working on the Green New Deal, how I started working on climate justice are very connected. Not one in the same, but not that far apart. So. So my background, [00:05:44] I grew up on the South Side of Chicago. And what I later found out is a front line community, or at least a community where we have much higher than normal levels of air pollution. So I think I look when I look last, it was something like four times the W.H.O. recommended amount of something called PM 2.5, which is just a kind of particulate matter that is like very harmful in particular to like respiratory systems. And so I didn't know that growing up, no one in my family knew that we didn't live near a factory or anything. So no one, I think, really considered it. And also environmental justice or environmental racism, that was just something that we didn't know about. And so growing up, like asthma was so common that we thought, I grew up thinking it was a childhood disease. I thought people just like got asthma and multiple kids on my block had asthma. I was out of school. I want to say starting like fourth grade to eighth grade. I was out of school for like a week every spring because my asthma would get so bad that I would like end up with a cold that turn into bronchitis. [79.4s] I'd have to be on like a nebulizer, like it was a whole thing and it was like clockwork. And I didn't actually see that as abnormal. And in fact, I felt lucky because I knew kids who had asthma who, like, ended up in the hospital all the time. Right. Days and days out of school. And, you know, I also felt lucky because my mom ran her own nonprofit. And so looking back, she was like a she was a single mother. So was definitely hard. But looking back, you know, I felt lucky because she could take off to take me to the doctor. Right. Like, you know, other kids, their moms might be doing, like retail work or some sort of shift work, and they couldn't get off. Or if they got off, it was like a big deal because they're getting in trouble at work or they're missing checks or whatnot. So I say all that to say that like [00:07:55] environmental injustice, I guess has been part of my story for a long time. But I didn't know that and I didn't know what to call it, and no one around me did. [9.4s] And so I grew up, went to school, went to college, went to Yale in Connecticut, and it was there that I started sort of being interested in public policy. I didn't know policy was a field. I didn't know something you could work in. But I was always really interested in sort of poverty and especially like through high school and getting older, interested in like the reasons why I was seeing the things that I was seeing. And my mom, like I said, had a nonprofit. So I knew that like direct service wasn't enough. Right? [00:08:38] And I remember my mom talking all the time about how she was doing her best, but like, these problems would keep happening. She ran after school like nonprofit. The you know, the gaps in reading and test scores, just like the shape of the schools where she was working, how that would keep happening unless something structural happened. So I got interested in policy, but I was always interested in I always worked in policy around poverty. My first interest was welfare policy. And I have like a strange career trajectory in the sense that I have worked in policy in

some capacity since it was my first job out of college, was at a think tank, and so I've stayed there. But like I said, I did a lot of types of policy, but it wasn't until I started working in Detroit at the Detroit Public Health Department that I actually learned about environmental racism, because for folks who don't know who are listening, Detroit is like a hotbed for environmental racism and injustice. [61.0s] So when I was there, there was like an incinerator in the middle of the city. Flint was still in the midst of being resolved, quote unquote. Right. Like the cover up had been identified, you know, lead levels had been identified. So that was happening. But we were also as a result, people were thinking about lead more. And so that was the same in Detroit. So you're finding like higher levels of lead in housing. [00:10:08] The issue in Detroit is really housing, not so much water. You have like a campaign against blight where the city's demolishing houses, but older housing stock with like asbestos and lead in it and it's going in the air, in the soil, etc.. So all of that was going on and that's when I first learned about environmental injustice. That's when I first learned that in fact there are not supposed to be half of the kids on the block having asthma. That is not natural, but that is the result of pollution. And then from there I ended up working on the Green New Deal. My boss at the time, who ran the health department, Abdul El-Sayed, left, ran for governor. I became his policy director. So I managed our whole portfolio. A big part of that was environmental policy, climate policy, environmental justice. And then, of course, we didn't win. We lost to now Governor Whitmer in the primary. And I was the. To put it inelegantly, I was looking for a job. And some folks that knew consensus reached out to me, which was a new think tank founded by organizers who had come out of justice Democrats. And my boss was endorsed by Justice Democrats. Representative Ocasio-Cortez came out and stump for us. I met her there. They liked our work on the Abdullah campaign. [88.7s] We ran like a Warren campaign in the sense that we did a ton of policy work, put out like over a thousand pages of policy, and they liked my work. And then we went from there. [00:11:50] But the Green New Deal was like my first job that was explicitly about environmental justice and climate change. And the reason why they were actually interested in me was because my background was sort of across policy areas that I was a bit of a generalist, but also that I had a strong background in social policy because the Green New Deal was about climate change of course, but it was also about approaching climate change in a very particular way that was very grounded in like economic policy, industrial policy, and trying to put forward a holistic vision of sort of what is needed across the economy in terms of social safety net to support transition to renewable energy and away from fossil fuels. [49.8s] So people often are like, you've been here for a long time. I think it feels more like I've been here for a long time because I had to talk a lot. [00:12:50] But but the Green New Deal was sort of my first how I got into the climate movement. And I have chosen to stay since. The two are very intertwined. [10.4s]

Sharline Chiang [00:13:02] Let me ask you this. I'm fascinated and I'm so moved and inspired and grateful that somebody like you I mean, I'm sorry that that happened to you as a child, that you and your peers suffered asthma from the circumstances and, you know, the way that where you were living, but where where you have come from that and that you are somebody who is now part of the solution and in positions of leadership to voice the change. You have that lived experience. I'm so grateful. I wanted to ask you, you did touch upon this, but how do you help other people understand the term climate justice? What does it really mean and why is it so important?

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:13:44] [00:13:44] So there's a lot of definitions of climate justice around. But I think to me, the most fundamental definition or the one that I sort of move on is an idea that one, we need to bear the burdens equally of the transition away from fossil fuels, but also try to bear the burden as equitably as possible when it comes to navigating

the changes, the fallout, the sort of consequences of climate change. [33.4s]

[00:14:19] The inverse of climate justice or environmental justice is environmental injustice, which is sort of the status quo that we have here in the U.S., where basically you have a few things happening. You have the worst, most harmful parts of energy production centered in the communities with the least formal power and marginalized black, brown, indigenous communities. And then sort of right next to that, you have, because of systemic injustices, because of racial wealth gap, all sorts of things, histories of colonialism. [36.0s]

The list goes on. [00:14:58] You have people of color, particularly those who are low income or otherwise marginalized, say they're disabled or even just women are disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of like extreme weather and climate events and are going to have the least resources to both recover and to proactively protect themselves or adapt. And you're going to see those communities be far more vulnerable to extreme weather events. And then, you know, and I think the last thing that is sort of emerging and what I kind of talk about in the essay is this other danger that as we shift to low carbon energy and goods that you see the same kind of replication of oppression in these new systems and then these new industries. And then the the sort of like next version of the economy that is supported by that. So I would say that those are all those are, to me, like the three strands of climate injustice that I think about. And so climate justice is essentially the inverse of that. [68.2s]

Steve Phillips [00:16:07] So we're going to get into that in a second. We'll talk a little bit more about the Green New Deal as I was amused about you're talking about running for office in Michigan and having this thousand page plan. So when I I ran for school board San Francisco way, way back in 92. And we, the centerpiece of my campaign was we had a five year plan. It was printed out document and we would give it to people and the multi-page thing so glad to see I was in good company in terms of.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:16:36] Yeah.

Steve Phillips [00:16:36] Nerding out and how you do electoral politics. So in terms of the Green New Deal, can you actually describe a little bit? I know it became like a big boogeyman on the Right and so then it got it got caricatured as well. And so what actually is it both actually, because it was a piece of legislation, but also conceptually is the Green New Deal.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:16:56] So the Green New Deal is it's a multi-prong thing. So I'll talk about like three ways. So the first is a congressional resolution that was introduced in 2019 by Representative Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Markey. A lot of people get confused because it was never an actual bill. There had been Green New Deal bills since introduced. So like the Green New Deal for public housing or the Green New Deal for schools. Right. You'll hear different versions of Green New Deal legislation, municipal state at the federal level, it is in some federal bills, but when we it is a resolution. The second thing that it is, is essentially the resolution was based on a policy proposal that's captured in the resolution. [00:17:46] But the Green New Deal is essentially it started out when we first started when I was hired, the idea was we need an economic mobilization on the scale of WWII to combat climate that at the same time as it moves towards decarbonization, is revitalizing the what some people refer to as the real economy, which is essentially just like you're making, the economy is based on the production of actual goods and services, not financialization. So you're just not making money out of money. So through revitalizing the real economy that is happening also through like public investment and industrial policy. So that was again, that was another shift The Green New Deal proposed, which was when we came out, a lot of people don't remember, but at the time the main thing

people were proposing as like the sort of gold standard climate policy was a carbon tax. So the Green New Deal was essentially arguing that we need a solution that's like a lot less neoliberal. That's about the government taking proactive responsibility for both addressing climate change, but also investing in ways that direct the economy towards the production of renewable and clean energy and low carbon goods, and not just through sort of nudges, but through actual public investment, not just shifts to the tax code only and then the the really central part. So that's sort of like the overall frame. [99.5s] But the other big departure in the Green New Deal was that [00:19:31] we were really focused on pushing forward a nexus of sort of like jobs, justice and the environment. So by that we also the Green New Deal was designed to approach decarbonization in a way that would create millions of jobs and that also had all of the scaffolding. So the Green New Deal talks about like support for unions, increasing wages, federal jobs guarantee. We talked about health care. The idea was that we need to make sure that these jobs are good paying, high quality jobs that are also nestled within the sort of infrastructure that can support the benefits of this shift being shared by all Americans. And also that is that unlike basically every other economic mobilization in U.S. history, actually the Green New Deal argues that we need to do decarbonization in a way that is reparative of systemic injustices and is designed to not repeat those, to change those sort of power relationships or to help change those sort of power relationships, particularly when it comes to economic relationships and the economy, but socially as well. But that that has to be like a guiding principle of how the green transition is shaped. [79.7s] And I think sort of all of that also started a conversation that continues now about what the green transition should do, how it should be structured and like, who should benefit from it and what do those benefits look like. [00:21:10] The idea that we would even have a green transition that's like proactively structured by, you know, public intervention or law or whatever, that was not even in the conversation in 2019 when the resolution came out. So that was another, I think, really big part of the Green New Deal. And then the last thing that it evolved into is a movement, [22.6s] right? So we have the climate movement, sort of the overall climate movement. But even within that, there is a sort of smaller movement for a Green New Deal. So you have like Gulf South for a Green New Deal, you have local there's like a Green New Deal coalition in Illinois, right? There's local groups that have organized around who've been like inspired by the vision of a Green New Deal and have organized to bring that forward. But you also have a lot of the youth climate movement, for instance, also being their vision of like what they want climate policy to do is like deeply shaped by the Green New Deal. [00:22:14] So you also have this movement aspect of it where it's both a proposal that's like shaping movement action and also the like basis of a subsection of the climate movement that is really focused on achieving a Green New Deal. [15.6s]

Steve Phillips [00:22:30] Right. Yeah. And it's fascinating because I think I as my question actually, you mentioned legislation, so I didn't even fully, fully appreciate that it was a resolution in that legislation. And even the way you're talking about it, and I don't think I fully appreciated the model that it offers for the movement in terms of for progressive people that how you can meld the platform that comes with being an elected officials or be a member of Congress. And obviously AOC, as has enormous platform and then use that to lift up a concept and a policy idea without necessarily having all of the legislation and then having that interface with building a movement. You don't see a lot of that within the progressive side. So that, that so those are elements I think of that are actually quite.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:23:17] And the thing that all of that is really important and something that still grinds my gears to this day is that we designed the Green New Deal to do that because one thing that we all sort of working on, the Green New Deal felt strongly about is that policy all starts from like a worldview, some sort of model of what things

should be, what is what constitutes good, what constitutes bad, what. And so [00:23:45] the Green New Deal is really at its core, it was always about creating a new sort of worldview and model that shapes climate policy going forward and sort of and reshapes the narratives, the conversation, and also the movement for climate action. [17.5s] I mean, [00:24:03] even down to a lot of the ways that we talked about and I know in my own work on the Green New Deal was designing the Green New Deal to have or elements of it to have appeal in the context of a recession, which economists were already talking about was in the works. And, you know, so when COVID 19 happened, we didn't obviously know that was going to happen and that was a shape a recession was going to take. But that created the sort of it helped create the foundation for all the talk about a green recovery. And so a lot of that, yeah, was intentional to not just put forward a piece of legislation, but something bigger that would help shape what came next. [43.3s]

Sharline Chiang [00:24:48] Ryan, I just one, thank you so much. I wanted to also sort of pivot a bit, but it's all related to kind of really want people to know about and check out your recently published article that we talked about. Again, there was an essay in Hammer and Hope titled Our Green Transition May Leave Black People Behind. I hope everyone listening will go read it, will put a link to it in our show notes for those who don't know about the publication. So, Steve, did you want to say something?

Steve Phillips [00:25:18] I was just going to say about the publication and you were.

Sharline Chiang [00:25:21] Like, That's.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:25:22] Okay.

Sharline Chiang [00:25:23] I got it. I got it. Yes. For those who don't know about it, [00:25:26] Hammer and Hope is a new magazine, online magazine focused on black politics and culture. And it's really it's excellent. It's founded by Jen Parker, who is a former New York Times opinion editor and also co-founded by scholar and author and activist Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor. [19.3s]

Steve Phillips [00:25:46] Oh, I'm sorry. Can I just say one more thing on the on the Hammer and Hope piece for people to know, because there are often times in life the movements that are people behind the scenes doing really the critical heroic work that then becomes manifested in public. [00:26:00] And so Jen Parker is really one of these people. She was at The New York Times doing the work of trying to get people of color voices on the op ed pages of The New York Times and that she got Tram Nguyen from Virginia, Alejandro Gomez from Lucha got pieces published in The New York Times, Voices that wouldn't normally do that. And that was really her work. And then she went from there to create Hammer and Hope as the next phase of her work around lifting up these kinds of voices. [28.5s] And that's how we got connected to you. We actually reached out to Jen, just like you should get Rhiana.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:26:35] Oh, yeah. I mean, and I'm one of those voices that Jen got published in The New York Times, which I don't know if that would have happened without her. So, yeah, she's brilliant and such a big part of getting these ideas out in ways that just give them more validation and credence.

Sharline Chiang [00:26:54] And it's just a great platform now that like your peers, for example, it's so brilliant, it's so readable. It is. It's long. It's not thousand pages, but it's long and it's it's long and it's meaty, but it's highly readable and your voice is really great. And

so you get into some really, you know, meaty, substantial stuff. But then I really appreciate that in it, you're also like dropping some F-bombs because you're feeling I'm feeling your anger, but it's very authentic. It's very appropriate. And I don't think, you know, there aren't enough platforms out there. We have institutions like The New York Times. They're not going to give you the freedom to do exactly that at all. So I just appreciated that they've created a platform that doesn't exist out there for these voices like yours. In your piece, you talk about the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, also known as the IRA, the Inflation Reduction Act. So for those who are not totally familiar with, it has been called the most significant climate legislation in U.S. history, even though it doesn't have the word climate in it, but it's part of it. Your essay, however, does shed light on how, despite this historic legislation, one step forward, black people are still being left out of the country's green transition. So for that population and others, not exactly a step forward where everybody got to, you know, be brought forward. And I wanted to have you explain to our listeners, what are some of your biggest concerns surrounding the Inflation Reduction Act and what are some ways we as a nation can remedy those issues now?

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:28:27] Yeah, so it's like there are three.

Sharline Chiang [00:28:32] Buckets I'm all about, but a stance. I'm like, you know, like at school I can picture on the chalkboard, I see buckets. So give it give us, give it to us.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:28:46] [00:28:46] I have three more buckets, but also the first one. So the IRA, both in how it was passed and some of the things in it, they have some structural racism built in. So the first is like there were a set of compromises that Senator Manchin extracted in order for him to support the Inflation Reduction Act, which could not have passed without his support. And so among those there, very all of the concessions that he requested, most of which he has gotten, not all of them were very, very focused on like fossil fuels, carving out a place in the Inflation Reduction Act for policies friendly to fossil fuels. [47.2s] Two of these things One is the approval of the Mountain Valley pipeline, which runs from like West Virginia to North Carolina, and is going to disproportionately impact low income, white, black and indigenous communities, including like actually they I think is in North Carolina, one of the compressor stations is actually located likely on purpose because this is that's what fossil fuel industries do. They often locate facilities in low income black and brown communities, long history, lots of evidence of them doing this. So they did it again. And it's like in the one majority black like township, the compressor station. But more than that, the mountain Valley pipeline had been blocked because of the effects that it would have It had been sort of there were few court challenges, but it's going to have some really negative effects on in particular like water quality, soil quality. So that was approved as one of the concessions and the other concession. That to me is one of the sort of most structurally racist was if you're going to hold leases. As for offshore wind, the federal government also has to hold leases for oil and gas drilling, and they reopened areas in the Gulf that have been closed because of local court challenges. And of course, the Gulf is probably the area that faces the most sort of environmental injustice in the country. That's where you have a really, really high concentration of fossil fuel facilities, petrochemical facilities. That's where Cancer Alley is. Right. And so essentially, to get the biggest investment in climate legislation passed, we had to agree to sort of once again sacrifice the Gulf Coast to move that forward. [00:31:21] And then the other part, like there is other ways in which the actual provisions of the IRA have features that make them racist in the sense that they are going to like direct benefits and access to clean energy, largely to middle class white homeowners, and leave a lot of other people out. And so, for instance, like the tax credits for individuals that can be used to electrify homes or to buy low carbon goods for homes like electric stoves or heat

pumps or whatnot. Those are nonrefundable, which means that low income families are cut out. And also, there's no provisions to allow them to be available to renters. So that also means that renters are left out most disproportionately people of color. [48.2s] And so you have things like that that are just built into how the bill works. [00:32:17] That means that black people not only will have far less access to those provisions and thus less money, less support to electrify, but also doesn't sort of the bill doesn't consider some of the extra hurdles that people might hit, that black people in particular might hit. So, you know, things like if a low income homeowner is able to access those credits, where will they get the upfront capital and then or will their home value go up and their property taxes go up and they could be priced out? Right. [36.3s] So these are sort of the things that if you are trying to build a policy that benefits black people or at least is equitable, you would think about that. The IRA doesn't for a number of reasons. [00:33:05] And I would point out and I try to talk about in the piece, it's not an issue of just individual malice or even mostly individual malice. It's a recognition of or sort of a result of the ways that structural racism constrains our systems and sort of the ways that we both imagined policy, but also just shows the ways that racism is still profitable. And one of things that we rely on to move things forward politically in our political process in particular. [32.3s] And so you have that going on. [00:33:41] It's also about just fossil fuels, like fossil fuels are inherently environmentally unjust, though at least the way that the industry has been developed. And so a lot of what you see in the IRA, too, is like a trying to balance a shift to renewable energy, but also to do this sort of what people call all of the above energy policy, which is to also figure out a vision of the transition that allows fossil fuels to still be present and be a player. [27.7s] And that is sort of just a bargain with injustice because of the ways that those industries are structured and the ways that they have been structured to behave. And so then [00:34:20] I think the other two buckets that are related is just like I said, what you see is a result of the systems that we have and the structural racism there. And one of the things that I try to call out in the piece is that like a lot of why we end up in this place is that we still treat racism like as something that only has a cost to black people, but to the greater whole. There is it is a cost worth paying or it doesn't have any sort of like overall detrimental effects. [29.7s] And also sort of the third bucket is that an [00:34:54] actually if when you design climate policy or policy related to like the economic transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy, when you craft that with black people in mind, you actually end up crafting a vision and a green transition that is capable of both benefiting far more people and also generating like the sort of mass political support that climate action requires. [26.9s] So that's the piece in a nutshell, kind of long, But those are both sort of three threads that run throughout.

Steve Phillips [00:35:29] All right. Well, as you say, it's a big challenging issue that we have to deal with. So we are running up against time. But I just wanted to kind of circle back a little bit where I had, you know, started out. A little bit is what can and should people do, right? There's all these different dimensions to this, this movement, the world. Do you think the planet is boiling? I think the phrase that you used. And so what kind of guidance do you give to an average person around what they should? How do they can make a contribution?

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:36:04] Yeah, I mean, to the average person, I would say one individual action is important and good. You know what? You should compost if you care, you should learn how to recycle. That sort of thing is helpful. [00:36:17] Like making decisions that are more sustainable is good. But I would always encourage people to shift some of their focus. And I think sometimes the guilt people feel about it to much more political action. Right. The idea of a carbon footprint, something that oil companies came up with to make you worry about what you do it not, what they do. And so with that in

mind, I think that do those things, but also focus on like make sure that you're voting for people who care about climate change. [34.2s] Right? [00:36:53] Like also a lot of things related to climate change are moving to renewable energy, are happening at the local and state level. So be curious about those issues even in your local elections. The other part that I would say is that like if you can access the IRA benefits to electrify, explore that. Like it's not the peace is not saying that like no one should engage with the IRA. That's not the point. These things will move us forward. It's helpful. So I would say explore that, but at the same time also explore concepts like publicly on renewables. [41.8s] There's different campaigns for publicly owned renewables in different places. There's a big one in Maine, but see if there is like community solar. [00:37:45] Do what you can on an individual level, but move out your scope and really start thinking about climate change as a political issue. [6.2s]

Sharline Chiang [00:37:53] Briana, we're so glad that you were here today and that you're at the table, that you're one of those voices and you're getting out there. And where can people keep up with you?

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:38:02] Yeah, So it's interesting. This piece was I felt like I popped out from nowhere. I had I'm in the midst of my first child. He's one, so I'm a lot less. Thank you. I'm a lot less out there than I was. But you can follow me on Twitter. My handles are guns. I definitely will. I post anything that I write or work on there. So that's probably the best place to keep up with me.

Steve Phillips [00:38:34] All right. Well, thank you so much for joining us for I really appreciate your joining us. Really, the work that you're doing, lifting up these issues and really trying to move this movement forward, We're very, very grateful for.

Rhiana Gunn-Wright [00:38:44] That, Of course. Thanks for having me.

Steve Phillips [00:38:47] That's all the time we have for today. Thank you for listening to Democracy and Color with Steve Phillips. Please help us get the word out about this podcast by subscribing wherever you get your podcasts, sharing with your friends, tweeting at Democracy Color and at Steve Pete tweets and finding us at Democracy in Color on Facebook or Instagram. You can also keep up with all things. Demko by subscribing to our newsletter at Democracy in Color dot com. If you listen to our podcast on iTunes, please leave us a rating and a comment. It helps others to find our show. This podcast is a democracy and color production. Our producer is Olivia Parker. Fola Onifade is our staff writer and associate producer. Sharline Chang is our editor and co-host. Special thanks to April Elkjer for quality check work recorded virtually with the assistance of the podcast video San Francisco. Until next time, Recycle, compost and think about climate. Until next time disappear.