

***Change or else: Rallying for action on the world's climate crisis***

Transcript (October 2019)

**Music**

**Cass Callow (C.C.)**

Hi name is Cass Callow. I'm a third-year undergraduate student in the Bachelor of Information Technology program, in the Information Resource Management Stream. I also have a minor in Women's and Gender Studies and I work in the Research Support Services department in the Carleton Library.

**Colin Harkness (C.H.)**

Hello. My name is Colin Harkness. I'm the Gifts Support Coordinator at the MacOdrum Library. I've been working here for seventeen years. I came here to Carleton as a student in 1987 and I've been here every since.

**Music**

**Martha Attridge Bufton (M.A.B.)**

Is climate change an important issue for you two?

**C.C.**

I would say that it's definitely an important issue, if not the most important issue facing us right now. Not only for the younger generation that I guess I'm a part of, but everyone, I think. Especially, it can affect an array of communities in different ways across the world, it's a global issue and I think everyone needs to come together and share their perspectives and have a comprehensive and immediate solution.

**C.H.**

Yes, I think it is important. I have four children, ranging from ages fourteen to twenty-two and I see that it's going to be, if not their responsibility, their children's children's responsibility to fix this. It's ironic that I've been talking about climate before I even know to talk call it climate change. I've been talking about migrations of people being forcing out of their homes all over the world because things have become so catastrophic that they no longer have a choice, they have to move on.

And I think now we're coming to the last chance to recognize that this is an that we have to start dealing with or else.

**Music**

**M.A.B.**

Do you have a personal example of climate change that you have experienced?

**C.C.**

Yeah, I've lived in Ottawa my whole life and I've on the Rideau River and pretty much every year I notice water levels changing, the timing of the seasons changing, and of summer longer, we're lucky a snowy Christmas even sometimes. Only the last few year's really realizing that the severity of the reality of that.

**C.H.**

As a young person, I grew up with parents who worked for CIDA, which is the Canadian International Development Agency. My mother worked specifically in Ethiopia at a time when there was incredible drought. And It went for, it seems to it went on for most of the eighties. That sort of catastrophic event is something that I'm using a sort of benchmark. And now Cape Town, is under water. We're talking about a city of two or three million people that has no water and they're having to truck it in.

This is the sort of thing that I'm starting to hear more and more. We've started talking about California which has very low levels of water and other parts of the U.S. now are suffering under incredible drought. The other sort of events that seem to be happening with more regularity are these weather catastrophes. And in Ottawa last year, we had these tornadoes that went through. Now we've had tornadoes, but we've never had a succession of three to five that went through a number of boroughs.

**Music**

**M.A.B.**

Did you folks go to the climate change rally that was held here in Ottawa last Friday?

**C.C.**

Yes.

**C.H.**

Yes, I did.

**M.A.B.**

Tell us why you decided to go to the rally?

**C.C.**

I think it was an incredibly important sort of display of global unity. People all over the world demonstrated their commitment to addressing the issues. You know, in Ottawa, even though I had class during that time, my Gender Studies professor was very supportive. "Class is cancelled. Go to the Climate Rally for marks. Not just for marks, but the experience was really incredible.

One thing I noticed at the climate rally, a lot of the signs and the chants and the messages were very aligned with anti-capitalism, recognizing that it's more than individual level using plastics level issue or driving your car to work every day issue but on an institutional level, there's forces in society and the economy that are contributing on such a much larger scale to a legitimate emergency. And I that think

we're starting to form our collective consciousness beyond the individual or interpersonal level and recognizing the betrayal of the government and the corporations that control certain governments, coming together to hold the institutions accountable. I thought that was a really a good thing, that people are starting to focus on that which is, what in my opinion, what really matters. And global actually, get these issues solved.

And also, I noticed more centring of Indigenous voices. I was impressed with the speakers at, on Parliament Hill at the end of rally were largely from Indigenous communities across the area and that, that it was important to recognize the unique importance of those forces and how they have been at the forefront of combatting climate change for longer than the appearance of it in recent media.

**C.H.**

In my case, what motivated me the most was to take my children down there. I think that they're starting to become aware of how the world is changing but also that this Greta Thunberg, a young woman, by her herself, without the support of her parents when this began, sat out there with her one sign by herself has now ricocheted around the world. In fact, I don't think she was older than Johan who's fourteen when she started this. So with an idea and a little bit of drive, she's become this viral force. The fact is that a single voice can make a difference.

It's just one thing, to see that there is strength in numbers if you're all moving in the same direction, you gotta, I was absolutely stunned by how many people showed up in Ottawa. It's hard to get this city moving. I was at the front of this march and by the time that we were arriving on Parliament Hill, it was already choked with people and I just thought that whole thing was lovely.

**M.A.B.**

What was the estimate of the number of people who actually showed up at Parliament Hill on Friday?

**C.C.**

I heard it was around fifteen thousand.

**C.H.**

Initially, they were saying five thousand, but it was clearly more than that. When you see the streets clogged and although Parliament is half under barricades, the space filled up. You know, when you've seen the crowds on Canada Day and there are about a hundred thousand people in that downtown core when it's fully open and I think we had a respectable ...

**Music**

**M.A.B.**

Both of you have talked about not being sure about the numbers, the fact that information is so important to "A," understanding the issues, getting behind it, but also understanding how it is important to other people as well. When the two of you go looking other kinds of information about this issue, where do you go to get it?

**C.C.**

As a student at Carleton, I have the privilege of accessing the library's resources. In my intersectional Gender Studies course, we talked about climate change as an intersectional issue, as a gender issue, as a transitions issue, as a class issue, an operationalized issue and the library has some great resources for that.

And beyond that, just in everyday life, I see lots conversations about it on Twitter, which maybe doesn't sound like the most reliable source, but I've seen a lot of social gathering, social organizing happening on Twitter. I think that's a great thing. It sort of gives a voice to the, the less mainstream communities affected by that. They get to, can find, centre their voices and their perspectives and gain momentum that way so I engage with that a fair bit. And just general news outlets, CBC, different current events, articles related.

**C.H.**

I would concur, I mean the resources of the library are mind-blowing. But what I am finding more and more as I get into this, I'm looking at more localized to get the weather different related resources available in different parts of the world because I am finding that reporting is not always entirely balanced in the sense that it's not relevant to Ottawa but maybe it's relevant to South Africa. More and more I am looking at localized data to see what's happening across the globe.

**Music**

**M.A.B.**

Is there any information about this issue that you have trouble getting?

**C.H.**

I think the simple answer is no. I think it's all available. So, if you want to look at climate doubters, it's all there. If you want to look at what people who support my certainty, my opinion, it's certainly there.

**C.C.**

Yeah, I mean it's such a mainstream issue now, which a great thing, that it is so severe and so real, and I think that information is out there. It is pretty accessible, being discussed, being shared, so really there is no excuse to not acknowledge it as an issue.

**C.H.**

I think that there's something daily that happens too. I was reading an article, I think it was in the New York Times this morning, about the vast peat layers that exist in, around the Congo and I'd never read anything about this before, I don't know anything about it, except that peat is an incredible sink for carbon dioxide and so if this was ever to ignite like it has in the Far East, it could release twice as much carbon into the air than a regular forest fire.

So I don't know that much about it, but it's the sort of things we're suddenly thinking about and being more good information about every single day.

## **Music**

### **M.A.B.**

Do you think the fact that both of you are in an academic institution has a significant impact on your access to information?

### **C.H.**

It has to do with intent of the individual looking for the information. So, if I am to be the same person I am, then I will want to find this information. The internet does provide access to a tremendous amount resources. How people interpret that information is up to them. When I told a number of our colleagues that I was going to go to this march, I was actually laughed at by a couple of people. "Why would you want to do that?" was the response.

So, I don't think it matters where you are. If you have interest, you'll find the information. If you're driven by that, you'll actually care, you'll take part. But your desire has to be there as well to go and find it.

### **C.C.**

I would say that my privilege of being in an academic institution definitely improves my access to literature that contextualizes the information. You know, I have an access articles from different perspectives on climate change, different voices. There are open data to the whole public about climate change and the information is out there to see what's done on a large scale. Maybe the context of it is sort of a privilege, contextualizing all of that data and explaining what that means in an environment where it is recognized, that it is legitimate, so I think that definitely impacts it.

But sort of what Colin said, it is up to the individual, your desire to care, maybe that can be motivated academic belonging but probably I won't be a socially engaged as I am now if I didn't have access to higher education. But I think then too it's a responsibility of people that, with that privilege to share the fruit of that. And public libraries, they do have services to help the public navigate the information that's out there on climate change. You definitely have the access to, if not the same academic literature, a professional who will be able to contextualize the open data for you.

## **Music**

**C.H.**

But still, people still choose to the direction they want to study. It's not like truth necessarily breeds truth, though in case thanks to this young girl, we are actually starting to see some of that.