

Oral Histories of Tompkins County

Archival Finding Aid

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2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole

The Warmest Years on Record (2018-ongoing) is an oral history project by performance artist Rachel Garber Cole that captured audio recorded interviews investigating the sensorial, emotional, and psychological effects of living in a climate crisis. Per her project description “These conversations in these early warm years are both an archive for the future and a way to build language around this unprecedented moment - a model for how we can productively talk about change in the present. As of 2019 the project was on-going and focusing on New York City and New York State. Details on the project as a whole can be found at www.rachelgarbercole.com/the-warmest-years-on-record.

Sixteen interviews with Tompkins County residents were recorded for the project in Ithaca NY from June 24th-July 1st 2019. Interviews were pursued with environmentally passionate activists, educators, professionals in environmental solutions fields, politicians, and farmers. The majority of interviews are structured around a set of questions that Garber-Cole asks in each interview:

- What’s the weather like outside today?
- When did you become aware of climate change?
- Did you experience unseasonable weather as a child?
- Are there seasonal rhythms that help you mark time?
- What are the ways the climate crisis asks us to step up now?
- Is there a way that climate change affects the way you’re planning for your future?
- When you think about climate change, what do you think about and how do you feel?

Donation of the interviews recorded in Tompkins County to The History Center was coordinated by Executive Director Rod Howe and History Center staff Julia Taylor.

Trigger Warnings: discussion of climate change, discussion of social collapse, discussion of climate anxiety and distress

Interviews with:

Peter Bardaglio (01:11:11)

Peter Bardaglio, founder of Seneca Strategic Consulting, LLC, reflects on climate justice activism and the importance of community involvement in creating change. From co-founding organizations such as Tompkins County Climate Protection Initiative, Groundswell, New Roots Charter School, and Ithaca 2030,

Bardaglio discusses past and current initiatives, future hopes, and emotional responses to climate change.

- *Recorded 06/27/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-27_Bardaglio-Peter*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-27_Bardaglio-Peter_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
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Krys Cail (01:25:38)

Krys Cail is a consultant working with food production and distribution enterprises, particularly smaller scale cooperative ventures. Having spent most of her life in upstate New York, she reflects on the environmental changes she has witnessed over the past few decades. She talks about her frustration with the individualist consumer-oriented responses to ecological crises, and emphasizes the need for collective and political action.

- *Recorded 06/25/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Cail-Krys*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Cail-Krys_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole*

Rich DePaolo (01:03:06)

Rich DePaolo, Deputy Supervisor for the Town of Ithaca, discusses the intersections between climate change, politics, and American values. DePaolo considers the influences of our understanding of climate change at a local level: flooding, green initiatives, such as the Lake Source Cooling project, and individual energy conservation; as well as at a national level: suburbia, fossil fuel lobbies and capitalism.

- *Recorded 06/28/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-28_DePaolo-Rich*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-28_DePaolo-Rich_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole*

Jeremy Jimenez (01:09:41)

Jeremy Jimenez is an Assistant Professor at SUNY Cortland where he teaches on the subjects of race, class, and gender in the context of education. Here he talks about the emotional and intellectual changes he experienced following half a year of climate change research at Stanford University. He speaks to the personal challenge of working through feelings of hopelessness, fear, and despair, and the difficulties these pose in spurring him, and others, to collective action.

- *Recorded 06/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Jimenez-Jeremy*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Jimenez-Jeremy_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
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Anna Kelles (01:36:09)

Anna Kelles, Tompkins County Legislator, approaches the climate crisis from a local government perspective. Considering climate-related anxiety and trauma, the realities of different generations, and the intersection of housing policy, human rights and the environment, Kelles highlights the complexity of climate change and suggests a progress-focused mindset.

Trigger Warning(s): discussion of Holocaust

- *Recorded 06/29/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-29_Kelles-Anna*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-29_Kelles-Anna_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole*

Marie McRae (01:10:07)

Marie McRae, farmer and Dryden local, discusses adapting farming methods in reaction to the changing climate; banning fracking in New York with the Dryden Resource Awareness Coalition; and advocating for solar panels and carbon farming in Tompkins County. McRae emphasizes the need for collective action under strong leadership to effectively fight climate change.

- *Recorded 06/26/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-26_McRae-Marie*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-26_McRae-Marie_Transcript*

- *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole*

Alexandra Moore (01:49:23)

Alexandra Moore discusses reforestation in Hawai'i with undergraduate students while teaching at Cornell; addressing the climate crisis step-by-step; and focusing on climate education at a young age. Moore reflects on past and current climate movements in Tompkins County and emphasizes community and education as critical components in the fight against climate change.

- *Recorded 06/28/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-28_Moore-Alexandra*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-28_Moore-Alexandra_Transcript*
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Mike Moritz (01:07:41)

Mike Moritz discusses founding the Sunrise Movement in Ithaca, local and national climate legislation, and understanding the climate crisis as a young activist. Moritz speaks on the beginning of Sunrise Movement Ithaca in 2019, the Movement's relationship with Ithaca, and their strategies to fight climate change.

Trigger Warning(s): use of swear words

- *Recorded 06/30/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-30_Moritz-Mike*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-30_Moritz-Mike_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
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Gay Nicholson (01:14:00)

Gay Nicholson, founder and president of Sustainable Tompkins, reflects on fighting the climate crisis in Tompkins County since the 1980s. From connecting environmental and psychology studies as Cornell graduate student to leading initiatives with Sustainable Tompkins, Nicholson discusses the climate crisis from the perspective of human behavior: resiliency, grief, sacrifice, tradition, and societal breakdown.

- *Recorded 06/28/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*

- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-28_Nicholson-Gay*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-28_Nicholson-Gay_Transcript*
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Anne Rhodes (01:47:46)

Anne Rhodes discusses the climate crisis from a spiritual perspective. Working with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County, Rhodes talks about the importance of self-sustaining, strengthening community bonds, challenging American social structures, and breaking through indifference.

Trigger Warning(s): Holocaust reference

- *Recorded 07/01/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-7-1_Rhodes-Anne*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-7-1_Rhodes-Anne_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
- *Recorded as part of the 2019 - The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca) - An Oral History - by Rachel Garber Cole*

Rob Ross (00:54:26)

Rob Ross is an educator at the Paleontological Research Institution (PRI). Ross discusses teaching climate change to Tompkins County through PRI, understanding climate change from a scientist's perspective, and feeling hopeful and anxious for the future.

- *Recorded 07/01/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-7-1_Ross-Rob*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-7-1_Ross-Rob_Transcript*
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Eric Schatt (01:21:05)

Eric Schatt, Cornell Orchards Manager and and co-owner of Redbyrd Orchard Cider, discusses the climate crisis from an agricultural perspective. From growing up skiing in Pennsylvania to losing apple crops to early thaws and late freezes, Schatt talks about personal experiences with climate change, evolving farming practices to address global warming, and philosophical tensions between individual and government duty in fighting the climate crisis.

- *Recorded 06/27/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-27_Schatt-Eric*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-27_Schatt-Eric_Transcript*
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Noa Shapiro-Tamir (01:00:00)

Noa Shapiro-Tamir is a high school student at Lehman Alternative Community School and climate change activist. Shapiro-Tamir discusses the climate change culture in Ithaca, the Sunrise Movement, learning about climate change in school, and being a young person during the climate crisis.

- *Recorded 06/25/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Shapiro-Tamir-Noa*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-25_Shapiro-Tamir-Noa_Transcript*
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Michael Smith (01:39:07)

Michael Smith, a professor of history and environmental studies at Ithaca College, reflects on the effects of the climate crisis in daily life and global society. In addition to discussing the science of the climate crisis, Smith touches on local activism, familial relationships, emotional dilemmas, and the future.

- *Recorded 06/24/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-24_Smith-Michael*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-24_Smith-Michael_Transcript*
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Christianne McMillan White (01:27:29)

Christianne McMillan White owns Steep Hollow Farm and approaches the climate crisis from a farming perspective. While walking through Steep Hollow, McMillan White reflects on extreme weather events, sustainable farming practices, ornithology, and the power of observation.

- *Recorded 06/30/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-30_White-Christianne*

- *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-30_White-Christianne_Transcript*
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Ingrid Zabel (01:12:28)

Ingrid Zabel reflects on teaching climate change to students of all ages with the Paleontological Research Institute and how younger generations understand the climate crisis. Zabel argues both societal and individual change is critical and discusses balancing sacrifice and fear with action and hope.

- *Recorded 06/29/2019*
- *Name of Interviewer: Rachel Garber Cole*
- *Audio File: OHTC_2019-6-29_Zabel-Ingrid*
 - *Digital Format: MP3 & WAV*
- *Transcript File: OHTC_2019-6-29_Zabel-Ingrid_Transcript*
 - *Digital Format: PDF & Word Doc*
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CITATION FOR THE PROJECT

“The Warmest Years on Record (Ithaca)” Oral History Project, sixteen oral histories recorded between June 24th-July 1st 2019 by members of Rachel Garber Cole, The History Center in Tompkins County. Oral Histories of Tompkins County Audio Archives, Ithaca, NY, 2021.

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