



**Connecting the Local to Global:
Report on SustainUS's New York City
Delegation to the United Nations
Secretary General's Climate Summit
Fall 2019**

Thank you!

To those who offered financial support for the SustainUS delegation to the UN Secretary General's Youth Climate Summit: THANK YOU! We are deeply grateful, humbled and moved by your support. Your contributions enabled us to advance the Kick Big Polluters Out campaign inside the United Nations, publicly expose the hypocrisy occurring at the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Summit side by side with Global South allies, and empower 10 New York-based youth to have a transformative experience that will stay with us the rest of our lives.

SustainUS is a small organization entirely led by young people who believe in creating a just and equitable future for all. We are not a conventional NGO and we know that funding us is a statement of trust in our work and belief in our power as young people. Your support for us means the world, and without you, our work would not be possible. Thank you.

We are pleased to share a report back with the background, highlights, and outcomes of our work over the six months. We have been debriefing with our SustainUS community across the country over the last month to determine the next steps of our work, both here in New York City and on a global stage to Kick Big Polluters Out of international climate policy. Onward!

Yours in solidarity,

The NYC SustainUS Delegation to the UNSG Climate Summit
December 2019

Table of Contents

Background	4
Political context	4
Delegation	5
Who we are	5
Delegation creation	5
Program structure	6
Policy team	7
Fundraising team	7
Media team	8
Goals and strategy	8
Key actions and highlights	10
UNSG Youth Climate Summit art	10
UN Secretary General birddog	10
Microsoft birddog	11
350 art workshop	11
Youth Climate Lab partnership and Policy Jam	12
Intergenerational Town Hall action	13
Oil and Gas Climate Initiative organizing	14
Oil and Gas Climate Initiative inside action	15
Oil and Gas Climate Initiative outside action	17
Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Summit action	19
Strengthening partnerships	20
Media hits	20
Looking ahead	23
Impacts	23
Where we could have done better	26
Moving forward	27
Acknowledgements	28

Background

Political context

In September 2019, New York City became the epicenter of the international climate conversation. The climate crisis has long been here. Six years ago, Hurricane Sandy flooded the city, destroying 650,000 homes and leaving 7.5 million people without power. This devastation still has ramifications for the 8.6 million New Yorkers today, but the climate crisis is bigger than just extreme weather events. Communities of color here and around the world disproportionately bear its everyday impacts. But this city, known for its resilient diasporic communities, is not giving up. While communities are organizing on the ground to pass ambitious local climate action, we aimed to amplify local grassroots movements, fights, and successes to a global scale at the United Nations Secretary General (UNSG)'s Climate Summit on September 23, 2019, held at the UN Headquarters in New York City.

As the climate crisis becomes more all-encompassing by the day, the world requires ambition and immediate follow-through. At the UNSG Climate Summit, countries like Germany, Bolivia, and even the US, were supposed to reveal "ambitious" climate action. The Summit aimed to encourage world leaders and their UN delegates to amp up their climate commitments prior to the 25th UN Climate Talks (COP25) in Chile. However, the fact that the polluters most responsible for causing the climate crisis still have a seat at the table in the UN climate negotiation process has remained undiscussed. For far too long, agreements have been watered down by the fossil fuel industry, the polluting elite, and regressive Global North delegates. From the revelation that Shell wrote a whole article of the Paris Agreement to the continued lack of mention of fossil fuels in international climate policy, it is clear that to achieve true climate ambition, it is necessary to kick big polluters out of UN climate policymaking through a conflict of interest policy.

Without real legal ramifications and accountable commitments, we saw that the UNSG Climate Summit served as little more than a press conference. We are tired of the fossil fuel industry and the United Nations offering empty and/or inadequate responses to the global climate crisis. Accountability for our future needs to begin now. Accountability for our future begins with seating those most impacted by the climate crisis at the decision-making table, not those who caused it in the first place.

Delegation

Who we are

SustainUS is a youth-led organization—a community of young people (ages 18-29) from diverse geographies and identities across the United States who train one another in action, media, and organizing skills for long-term climate justice. We have a proven track record of over 17 years of taking strategic action at key political moments. From the UN Climate Talks to the Global Climate Action Summit, our strengths lie in bridging local, national, and international movements for climate justice, and empowering young climate leaders to take charge of their own futures.

Members of the NYC Delegation
(illustration by Mayana Nell Torres)



SustainUS launched the NYC Delegation to the UNSG Climate Summit, consisting of 10 local youth representatives (ages 18-29) from NYC's front-line communities and environmental organizations. This delegation aggregates not only different experiences of the climate crisis but also diverse organizational backgrounds and clout in the work to advance climate justice.

Our delegation consists primarily of POC youth aiming to create space for frontline communities to train and organize one another. Around the UNSG Climate Summit, the delegation will be organizing on the inside while coordinating in coalition with other movement groups taking action on the outside—all to hold the Summit and the United States accountable to the voices of global young people and frontline communities, not the fossil fuel industry.

Delegation Creation

In Fall 2018, SustainUS leadership identified the UNSG Climate Summit as a strategic place for SustainUS to take action. While at COP24, Gavi Reit-

er, who is based in New York City, attended meetings hosted by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Youth Constituency, (YOUNGO) about the Summit. Upon returning to New York City, with the support and guidance of SustainUS's alumni network, she built relationships on the ground and attended citywide coalition meetings in order to assess SustainUS' potential role in connecting local work to the global moment. With the confirmation that our friends at the Canadian organization Youth Climate Lab would grant SustainUS badges to the Summit, Gavi laid out a plan for a SustainUS delegation to the UNSG Climate Summit.

In June, applications opened to New Yorkers ages 18-28 to join the Delegation.

Program structure

The delegation met weekly for two-hour blocks from July through October to deepen relationships, share about local campaigns, and participate in training, such as learning about international climate policy from one of SustainUS' global climate justice partners and friends, having conversations and strategizing with local organizers around local campaigns, and training with local trainers in organizing skills that will benefit our young people and nurture our movement for the long haul.

The delegation was also selected to be an Activist in Residence at the Human Impacts Institute, allowing us the opportunity to gather in person weekly at the Brooklyn Public Library in Williamsburg, as well as host a retreat at their home on Governors Island.

Through SustainUS's UN accreditation and through working in partnership with the Canadian based organization Youth Climate Lab's workshop at the Summit, the delegation gained badges to the UN Youth Climate Summit. Inside, the delegation aimed to push the conversation inside the UN to reflect conversations outside of the UN organizing space, serving as the "inside-game" for coalition strategy. Throughout the summer leading up to the Summit, the delegation coordinated local with the People's Climate Movement NY and NYC Youth Strikers, nationally with the Future Coalition, and internationally with the Demand Climate Justice coalition, Corporate Accountability, and our friends in YOUNGO.

Outside of preparing for the one day the delegation would spend inside the United Nations, the delegation focused on organizing direct actions around other events surrounding the Summit that center the fossil fuel industry's agenda.

As a group, we support our collective growth as leaders by encouraging one another to step into the power of our individual stories. We make decisions as a group and operate with comradery, consensus, and support. We look to break out of traditional power structures found in activist spaces to make decisions where our members feel empowered.

Policy Team (Kathleen, Mayana, Swetha, Xaver)

The Policy Team focused on partnerships, strategy, and research gathering. The team met weekly on hour-long calls. In order to foster partnerships, the team focused on relationship building through meetings with groups in NYC and digitally around the world that were also preparing for climate week, organizing calls with young people attending the UN Youth Climate Summit, and coordinating with our partners at Corporate Accountability and Engajamundo. The team created a strategy proposal that included actions around Youth Summit and CEO dinner, as well as a document with organizing inside/outside strategy, taking into consideration all the events happening around the Summit. The team shared a public phasing version of this calendar with partners to coordinate strategy. Finally, the team gathered content through research on UN Processes, determining the location of the OGCI dinner location, and research on key attendees of the UN Youth Climate Summit.

Fundraising Team (Edric, Gavi, Jamie)

The fundraising team built out a pipeline that consisted of three foundations, three individual donors and one in-kind donation. We completed traditional grant applications to address long-term and short-term needs. Reflecting the urgency of our goals, we focused on rapid response grants in order to meet the needs of the delegation. We submitted grants through the North Star Fund, NDRC, and NorthLight Foundation. The total amount awarded by these foundations was \$17,000. The delegation received \$2,400 from individual donors, resourced through Resource Generation and Edric's personal contacts. The Human Impacts Institute rewarded us \$4,000 of in-kind donations that contributed to our meeting space.

Media Team (Kulsum, Lena)

The media team, drawing on discussions with the whole Delegation, developed talking points to concisely communicate our message: to kick big polluters out of the UNFCCC, as well as hold the fossil fuel industry for historic harms to people and planet.

In preparation for the Youth Climate Summit, the media team, in partnership with Corporate Accountability, prepared delegates to be spokespeople throughout our weekend of actions. The media team also conducted reporter outreach, drafted press releases, and cultivated relationships with reporters who had expressed specific interest in our work.

Throughout the weekend, both at the Youth Climate Summit and during the OGCI actions, the media team used social media (Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook) to share updates from inside these actions. Additionally, the Delegation promptly disseminated press releases, fielded reporter inquiries, and directed reporters to spokespeople within the delegation as well as global allies. During the OGCI reception, SustainUS partnered with [The Illuminator](#) to project messages from our top line: “Make Polluters Pay; Make Big Oil Pay,” and “Systems Change Not Climate Change” on the wall of Gramercy Park Hotel.

In the aftermath of the actions, SustainUS also released a video documenting the actions around the OGCI reception.

Our goals and strategy

Our goals as a group spanned three central areas:

- Elevate New York and Global frontline voices while exposing the voice that the fossil fuel industry has at the United Nations through the the Kick Big Polluters Out campaign.
- Strengthen connections between NYC-based and international climate organizing.
- Show the oil and gas industry that we the people are a threat to their hegemony.

Towards our first and second goals, SustainUS members attended meetings of NYC-based organizing groups both in-person and virtually to offer our global perspective and emphasis on kicking big polluters out and centering frontline leadership in a just transition. We found that the disparity in the messaging of these groups suggests that our presence in meetings was impactful, but there is still work to be done in the broader conversation in the US-based youth climate movement.

During the UN Youth Climate Summit, SustainUS delegates both organized amongst other youth attendees and publicly interrupted proceedings. These actions served all three of our goals. We connected with youth from four continents, sharing stories and sharing our plans to sing a song in the final panel of the day. The song called on the UNFCCC to kick polluters out of climate negotiations and meaningfully engage frontline youth in policy processes. During the day, two SustainUS members bird-dogged both the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, and Microsoft's Chief Environmental Officer, Lukas Joppa. In both of these instances, we were able to call out the wrongful influence of the fossil fuel industry.

On the ground, the press conference SustainUS co-organized with Corporate Accountability and Demand Climate Justice outside of the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative reception on September 22nd both elevated frontline voices and drew clear lines between NYC-based organizing and events and global struggles for justice. Frontline spokespeople from ActionAid, Asian People's Movement on Debt and Development, Friends of the Earth Uganda, and Friends of the Earth Nigeria shared testimony on fossil fuel corporations' historic and future responsibility for the climate crisis. The press conference garnered substantial news coverage from a variety of outlets, sharing these stories in long- and short-form around the world.

Our pursuit of the final goal—to threaten oil and gas industry dominance—was embedded in all of our work. Inside of the Gramercy Park Hotel, just before the press conference began outside, SustainUS members attempted to infiltrate the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative reception. They were met with heavy security; industry professionals recognized us—nonviolent young New Yorkers—as a threat to their greenwashing and interference with meaningful climate policy.

Key Actions and Highlights

UNSG Youth Climate Summit Art

Our delegation used art to tell a story. We created and shared zines, a song, and stickers at the UN Climate Summit.

Within the Zine we used poems, responses, and stories from amazing youths around the United States. We wanted to share stories of climate activism and of people who are currently being affected. In addition to stories, we included an informational section of the zine focusing on the history and goals of the Kick Big Polluters Out campaign.

In addition to the zine, we created stickers to amplify our message in a colorful and uniting way. The stickers said "Kick Big Polluters Out", "Communities Not Corporations", and "People Not Polluters," pictured at left. The stickers were designed by Kathleen Ma.

Through handing out our zines and stickers, we were able to use our art as a strategy to develop connections with youth from all around the world. Every time we offered our art, we were able to have a conversation and develop deeper friendship with people attending the Summit. At the end of the Summit, there were so many young people wearing our stickers and reading our stories, that we were able to feel true global solidarity.

Lastly, we created a song with the help of Sustainus alumni. In order to teach others our song, we created postcards with the lyrics which we shared with the zines and stickers throughout the day.

Our delegation learned that art allows us to connect with the other youth in the UN Climate Summit, and bring a powerful, colorful message into an otherwise monotonous, bureaucratic space.

UN Secretary General Birddog

The Delegation identified the UN Secretary General (UNSG), António Guterres, as a desirable target for bird dogging before the UN Youth Climate Summit. After the opening panel, Xaver Kandler of the delegation confronted the UNSG in the hallway outside of the event. He asked the UNSG why he was having the Youth Summit and also inviting Shell to speak at the

COMMUNITIES
NOT
CORPORATIONS

PEOPLE
NOT
POLLUTERS

KICK
POLLUTERS
OUT

Climate Action Summit two days later. The confrontation was captured on video by Lena Greenberg and [shared on SustainUS' Twitter](#), where it was retweeted by accounts including 350 Europe and Corporate Accountability International.

Microsoft Birddog

During a session entitled “Youth Take the Mic!” Kathleen Ma took the opportunity to direct a question at the tech executives in the room, asking Lucas Joppa, Microsoft’s chief sustainability officer: “If Microsoft is so committed to sustainability, why did Microsoft partner with Chevron and Schlumberger this week to accelerate oil extraction?... Do you care more about getting fossil fuel contracts than you care about youth? Do you care more about profits than you care about us?”



Xaver Kandler birddogging
António Guterres

Despite the clear discomfort of the emcees, who uneasily praised the “dialogue” while pleading for the questions to remain “respectful,” the room erupted in cheers and applause. It was clear that many of the youth in attendance were no longer interested in symbolic representations of dialogue—they were inter-

ested in asking hard questions and demanding answers.

The confrontation was captured on video and shared on SustainUS’s Twitter, and was later picked up by several media sources, including [NowThis](#), [KUOW](#), [IBTimes](#), and [CNews](#).

350 Art Workshop

In the midst of the first ever Youth Climate Summit, 350.org organized an art workshop dedicated to Global Week for Future. The work of art was carried via printmaking. Delegate Kulsum Rifa took part in the process of coming up with the design leading up to the Summit, from brainstorming ideas with youth from across New York City to choosing the most desired designs. The selected designs were made into a silkscreen using a light process. Kulsum and the 350 art team brought the silkscreens to UN head-



Silkscreened prints from the 350 Art Workshop

quarters, where they held an outdoor printmaking workshop. Throughout the day, Kulsum and the team guided youth through the process of art making, giving them hands-on experience with Printmaking, as well as prints they would be able to take home.

Youth Climate Lab Partnership & Policy Jam

The NYC Delegation co-facilitated the only climate policy workshop advertised on the program: the Youth Climate Lab (YCL)'s Climate Finance "Policy Jam." YCL is a youth-for-youth, global non-profit that aims to build skills for youth in climate policy and entrepreneurship. In the weeks leading up to the Summit, YCL Executive Director Dominique Souris and Director of Programs Seth Blum organized two video sessions for our Delegation, training us in effective facilitation and equipping us with necessary background on global climate finance.

During the "Policy Jam," a fast-paced session that uses design thinking to brainstorm creative policy interventions, each pair of NYC delegates facilitated a diverse group of 10-12 youth to answer the question: How can we strengthen support for youth-led, youth-friendly, and ambitious climate finance initiatives? As facilitators, we encouraged our peers to think beyond the status quo of the UN's current systems, at which point we realized that many others were similarly frustrated with the showy, inaccessible nature of the Summit's morning session.

After about an hour of rapid-fire discussion, each smaller group presented one cohesive solution to the entire room. Many of the solutions revolved around similar themes: climate education, increased accessibility of UN bureaucracy, and climate reparations, among others. At its conclusion, Souris and Genevieve Jiva, the Pacific Islands CAN Coordinator, informed everyone they would take these solutions directly to the UN during its "Financing for Development" (FfD) Dialogue on Thursday, September 26. The NYC delegation walked out inspired by the action-oriented thinking of our fellow youth leaders and excited that we were finally able to meaningfully engage with over 100 other youth climate leaders.

A group presents their conclusions during the Policy Jam



Intergenerational Town Hall Action

One of our largest goals of the day was to call out the hypocrisy of the UN letting fossil fuels in to the space when its supposed to be a neutral space. In order to take action inside the United Nations Headquarters, which traditionally has more strict rules for civil society intervention, we decided on creating a song action—we needed something that was bold and gathered media attention but that didn't get us de-badged. In order to pull our action off, we contacted Kyle Lemle to help us work out the lyrics and the tune.

(To the tune of Love on Top by Beyoncé)

*Leaders of the world,
Kick the oil men out
Cause they've got no right
To kill our future now*

*Heed the youth's call
And the frontline voices, y'all
The emergency is now*

*Time to Kick Polluters Out
Time to Kick Polluters Out!*

Through our contact within the Youth Climate Summit planning committee, we got an early hold of the schedule for the day. In the schedule, we learned that there would be an "Intergenerational Town Hall" at the end of the day. The event would be an aspect of the conference that would include youth, UN officials, and world leaders. We determined that because the event was at the end of the day, if we got in trouble, we would still have been able to accomplish our earlier goals for the Summit.

Leading up to the Summit, we chose not to do any outreach to Youth Summit attendees for fear of being flagged. At the Summit, following the success of Kathleen's birddog, we created a WhatsApp group to slowly add people to throughout the day as we met them, or as we saw them show support for other SustainUS actions throughout the day in the general Summit Attendee Whatsapp group. We used the zines, lyric cards,

and stickers as ways to introduce ourselves, assess people's politics, and to gather who would be interested in participating in the song action.

At the start of the Intergenerational Dialogue, we sent our song lyrics and a video of Mayana singing the song into the Whatsapp group that we had created.



Swetha Saseedhar leading the song, as reported in NowThis

The Intergenerational Dialogue, which was attended by the UN Human Rights Commissioner, UN Deputy Secretary General, and other world leaders, such as Mary Robinson and Jay Inslee. We decided that in order to start the action, we would ask a question and ask leaders why they were supporting fossil fuels in climate policy. We spread out all around the room, and aggressively tried to wave the microphone over so that Swetha could ask her prepared question, tell her story, and lead us in song calling the United Nations to kick polluters out. After Swetha asked the question, about a third of the room stood and joined the song, disrupting the norms set in the space and bringing truth into the room. In response to our song and Swetha's ques-

tion, Jay Inslee took the opportunity to state that the fossil fuel industry should be kicked out of all democratic decision making as well.

[NowThis produced a video about the action](#) which soon went viral on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram.

Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Organizing

In the months leading up to the UN Climate Action Summit, the Delegation learned that the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative would be convening at an undisclosed New York City hotel around a similar time. The Oil and Gas Climate Initiative was formed after the 2014 UN Climate Summit, and is made up of BP, Chevron, CNPC, ENI, Equinor, ExxonMobil, Occidental Petroleum, PEMEX, Petrobras, Repsol, Saudi Aramco, Shell, and Total.

All of these companies are in the top 55 producers of greenhouse gas emissions between 1988 and 2015. They have spent billions of dollars around the planet extracting and burning fossil fuels, devastating communities and ecosystems.

They were also the earliest climate scientists, first to figure out that ex-

tracting and burning fossil fuels adds GHGs to our atmosphere and has serious short- and long-term environmental impacts. Rather than sharing this knowledge, they waged an all-out disinformation campaign to prevent meaningful climate action.

We immediately identified this event as a clear target of our delegation's goals. In conferring with our partners at Corporate Accountability and Demand Climate Justice, they too saw this as a strategic place to uplift stories and solutions from frontline communities in New York and the Global South, not corporate false solutions.

Two months out, we began to research where the event could take place. About 3 weeks before the Summit, we received the text of the invitation from a contact, detailing the timing, location, and attendees. As we organized in coalition with our partners at Corporate Accountability and Demand Climate Justice, we learned that another group of people had also begun conversations about organizing around this event. We were soon invited onto the calls, where it was clear that SustainUS was ready and prepared, on the ground, and held a vision for the action and its potential outcomes.

OGCI's event took place on the sidelines of the UN Secretary-General's Climate Summit, where polluting corporations are welcomed. Time and again governments in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, supposedly a neutral international governing body, have continually allowed fossil fuel corporations and trade associations to influence global climate policy.

Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Inside Action

Inside of the hotel, disguised as wait staff and attendees, members of SustainUS's NYC Delegation attempted to enter this closed reception to present Oil and Gas CEOs with an award. Pictured below, the plaque commended these CEOs and their companies for their "years of climate change denial, false solutions, inaction, and the horrifying harms [they've] inflicted on people and planet." This action intended to use satire to call out fossil fuel industry's intentional disinformation about and deliberate failure to address the climate crisis.

In the lead-up to the action, the Delegates scouted the Gramercy Park Hotel, where the reception was hosted, on three separate in-person occasions and with numerous calls with hotel staff. We confirmed not only the precise location and time of the event but also recorded crucial information about the hotel's layout and security detail, including entry & exit routes, security cameras, and the event's spatial flow. For example, we confirmed that the event would be a standing cocktail reception as opposed to a seated dinner, and noted entrances between rooms. Delegates scouted on numerous days of the week and times of day to account for variables in layout and security. As some of us were posing as waitstaff, we leveraged personal connections to the hospitality industry to confirm information about the uniform, potential alibis, and appropriate props.

Delegates dressed in disguise before the inside action.

From left to right: Xaver Kandler, Lena Greenberg, Swetha Saseedhar, Edric Huang, Jamie Wefald, Gavriela Reiter, Kathleen Ma

We also participated in organizing calls with others who had been planning an action at the reception. Through these calls, it became clear that SustainUS was best equipped to lead this organizing as well as receive some



support from others in the group. Most notably, the Delegation gained access to a hotel room at the Gramercy Park Hotel for the night of the action.

In preparation for the reception, we gathered pen cameras, assorted wearable disguises and props, and had the plaques made. Kathleen designed wanted posters with the faces of some of the CEOs we knew would be in attendance.

Traveling to the hotel room in groups so as to avoid any suspicion, we assembled an hour in advance of the reception to get dressed and finish preparing. While we had plans of how the action would pan out, we knew that we would have little or no communication once we separated, and that there were so many unknown factors that could thwart our intentions.

Edric and Xaver went upstairs first. Second, Swetha and Lena. Both groups were diverted by security fairly quickly; our unquestionable age difference with the average reception attendee gave us away. Some of us were escorted out by security, and others escaped by running down stairs. After this first set of attempts to enter, Kathleen, Gavi, and Jamie also made an effort to access the reception. They too were unsuccessful.

While we were not able to enter the reception and present the award as planned, this alternate outcome illuminated something relevant to all the events of Climate Week. Private security and NYPD were out in force to protect these fossil fuel CEOs; some of the Delegates received summonses from the NYPD for trespassing on private property. That a group of peaceful young people was met with such a show of force demonstrates how the systems of power in which we resist fossil fuels are constantly mobilized to silence our demands. While this is a genuinely terrifying realization, we came away from this experience with the recognition that a nonviolent youth action felt like a genuine threat to these climate criminals.

Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Outside Action

On September 22nd, 2019, The Oil and Gas Climate Initiative held a meet-and-greet with 'stakeholders' from across industry, academia, government and non-profits at the Gramercy Park Hotel. Outside of the reception, our friends and partners from Demand Climate Justice, living on the front lines of climate change in the Global South, held a press conference demanding

Following page: Delegates chanting outside of the Gramercy Park Hotel beneath a projection put on in collaboration with the Illuminator. Photo by Carolina Santamaria, courtesy of Corporate Accountability.

MAKE
POLLUTERS
PAY
MAKE
BIG OIL
PAY

← ONE WAY



that these polluters get out of the way of meaningful policy and pay reparations for generations of damage they have caused.

In addition to Demand Climate Justice spokespeople, three of our delegates participated. Mayana introduced and emceed the event, grounding the event in her experience growing up in Brooklyn. Kulsum shared a poem she wrote about how she experienced climate change growing up in Bangladesh and then moving to Queens. At the end of the event, Edric shared his experience on the inside of the event.

As the press conference dispersed and the media interviewed the speakers and spokespeople, the Illuminator projected an image, designed by Kathleen and crafted jointly by SustainUS, Corporate Accountability, and Demand Climate Justice, onto the side of the Gramercy Park Hotel. The projection read "System Change Not Climate Change" and "Make Pollut-

ers Pay Make Big Oil Pay." The projection pointed light onto the false solutions being developed by the high walls of the Gramercy Park Hotel, and called for reparations for the stories told at the press conference tonight.

Oil and Gas Climate Initiative Summit Action

On Monday, September 23rd, Delegates joined allies from Corporate Accountability and 350 to unfurl a banner with the statements, "Exxon Knew" and "Make Them Pay," outside of the OGCI Summit at the Morgan Library. The group chanted outside for about an hour, attracting attention

with the huge banner. Afterwards, Delegates spoke with reporters about the action and OGCI's greenwashing efforts. The action continued our Delegation's commitment to threatening oil and gas industry dominance. Even though we were unable to disrupt their event, we got up the next morning and showed up again, which we will continue to do until the fossil fuel industry is history.

Delegates chanting outside of the OGCI Summit



Strengthening partnerships

Throughout the course of the UN Youth Climate Summit, members of SustainUS made connections with delegates from other countries who shared our alignment and mission. SustainUS formed a Whatsapp group with other youth who were interested in forming a critique of the presence of fossil fuel companies in the UN space. In addition, SustainUS members connected these new friends to the COP25 delegation, to build momentum and solidarity across countries and UN conferences.

Media hits

(See table below for a complete list of media coverage; follow [this link](#) to a table with links to articles.)

The NYC Delegation to the Youth Climate Summit (YCS) received media attention during and after the YCS, across a broad spread of platforms and with a variety of foci. The Delegation's actions during the YCS went viral on Twitter, and our interference with the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI) events received both long- and short-form coverage. Additionally, members of the Delegation were [profiled in Vice](#) and a [two-part](#) feature by Milk. The variety of this coverage suggests that our actions cut across a range of audiences, drawing in readers and viewers from diverse backgrounds and interests. Furthermore, the Delegation's work directed media attention to our partners—global frontline organizations and their representatives—thus leveraging our privilege as a Global North-based group to uplift the voices that must be heard most urgently.

As referenced earlier, the Delegation bird-dogged Microsoft's Chief Environmental Officer, Lukas Joppa, and interrupted an intergenerational town hall with a story and song. Both of these actions were covered on NowThis ([links here](#)). Another longer-form article about the Microsoft interruption was published by KUOW, an outlet based in the Seattle area, where Microsoft is headquartered. We were pleased to receive coverage on this action on a national level through an independent news outlet. This exemplified the Delegation's success in connecting local and global struggles.

Both inside and outside components of the OGCI reception action on September 22nd were well-covered, thanks in part to collaborations with Corporate Accountability International and large environmental organizations

Date	SustainUS mentioned /quoted?	SustainUS pictured?	Outlet Name	Title
9/22/2019	Yes	Yes	Cmmmedia.es	Young people star in the Climate Summit, they ask adults to lead the change
9/22/2019	Yes	Yes	Gulftoday.ae	From the streets to the summit: Young climate leaders mobilise at UN
9/24/2019	Yes	Yes	Heated.world	How fossil fuels infiltrated the U.N. climate summit
9/22/2019	Yes	Yes	Agence France-Presse	At the UN, young people's suspicions against greenwashing
9/22/2019	Yes	Yes	RTBF.be	At the UN, young people's suspicions against greenwashing
9/24/2019	Yes	Yes	The New Diplomat	#UNGA74: Grassroot Movements Slam Oil Executives For Climate Crisis
9/24/2019	Yes	Yes	Nigerian Tribune	Climate Crisis: Grassroots Movements Blame Oil Companies' CEOs
9/24/2019	Yes	Yes	EnviroNews Nigeria	Activists, grassroots groups tackle oil executives on climate change
9/24/2019	Yes	Yes	KUOW online	Microsoft pledges climate action even as it helps Big Oil drill faster
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Mysocialgoodnews.org	NYC Youth and Global Frontline Leaders Challenge Oil & Gas Climate Initiative Greenwash Soirée
9/23/2019	Yes	No	CommonDreams.org	Activists Unfurl 'Exxon Knew, Make Them Pay' Banner Outside Meeting of Fossil Fuel CEOs Steps From UN Climate Summit
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Financial Times - ft.com	Greta Thunberg tells UN leaders 'we will never forgive you': 2019 summit latest
9/23/2019	Yes	No	rawstory.com	Activists Unfurl 'Exxon Knew, Make Them Pay' Banner Outside Meeting of Fossil Fuel CEOs Steps From UN Climate Summit
9/23/2019	Yes	No	CNBC	As youth anger rises, world leaders promise action at U.N. summit
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Reuters.com	Under pressure on climate, Big Oil pitches to the young
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Center for Biological Diversity	NYC Youth, Global Frontline Leaders Disrupt Oil, Gas Climate Initiative Greenwash Soirée
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Grist.org	Meet the other Greta Thunbergs at the first-ever U.N. Youth Climate Summit
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Times of News Turkey Online	UN climate summit: 'A moment of truth'
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Rawstory.com	Activists unfurl 'Exxon Knew, Make Them Pay' banner outside meeting of fossil fuel CEOs steps from UN climate summit
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Al Jazeera Online	UN climate summit: 'A moment of truth'
9/24/2019	Yes	No	Premium Times Nigeria	UN Climate Action: Activists demand oil corporations pay for environmental damages
9/24/2019	Yes	No	Theenergymix.com	Youth protesters' secret recordings catch Guterres' welcome (and challenge) to fossil lobbyists
9/22/2019	Yes	No	France24.com	Youth leaders at UN demand bold climate change action
9/23/2019	Yes	No	Buenos Aires Times	Argentine climate activist makes waves at UN climate summit
9/23/2019	No	Yes	New York Times Online	Oil Giants, Under Fire From Climate Activists and Investors, Mount a Defense
9/23/2019	No	Yes	CommonDreams.org	Want Real Climate Ambition? Keep Polluting Industries Out and Make Them Pay.
9/24/2019	No	Yes	Desmogblog.com	Greta's UN Climate Summit Speech Successfully Predicted More Business as Usual From World Leaders
9/23/2019	No	No	Alternet.org	The industries that have fueled the climate crisis should have no part in dictating the solutions — they should be made to pay
9/23/2019	No	No	Spiegel.de	When corporations present themselves as climate protectors
9/22/2019	No	No	The Independent View blog	Fossil Fuel Execs to Hold Invite Only Forum at UN Climate Summit
9/18/2019	No	No	Times of News Iran	Fossil fuel execs to hold invite-only forum at UN climate summit
9/18/2019	No	No	Exec Review	'Greenwashing': fossil fuel execs to hold invite-only forum at UN climate summit
9/18/2019	No	No	uk.news.yahoo.com	Greenwashing': fossil fuel execs to hold invite-only forum at UN climate summit
9/18/2019	No	No	The Guardian Online	Greenwashing': fossil fuel execs to hold invite-only forum at UN climate summit
9/24/2019	No	No	Washington Post Online	Some corporations step up climate action as government policies stall
9/24/2019	No	No	kansanuutiset.fi	Global NGOs: Government promises at climate summit disappointing
9/22/2019	No	No	Theenergymix.com	36 Countries expected to announce new climate plans as UN Climate Summit convenes
9/22/2019	No	No	The Intercept	GOP leadership huddles with fossil fuel industry during climate week
9/21/2019	No	No	International Business Times	From The Streets To The Summit: Young Climate Leaders Mobilize At UN
9/20/2019	No	No	Vice.com	Get Your Shit Together': Millions of Genius Kids Are Saving the Damn Planet for You
9/25/2019	No	No	Blogarama.com	Greta's UN Climate Summit Speech Successfully Predicted More Business as Usual From World Leaders
9/24/2019	No	No	Renewableenergyworld.com	It's a big week for renewables. Here are some of the newsmakers

that helped to amplify the events. Spokespeople from our global partners, who spoke at the press conference outside, as well as members of SustainUS, spoke with reporters who produced around 50 individual articles as well as a piece in Reuters that was picked up by over 150 additional outlets. Tracking software suggests that the articles published had the potential to reach over 1 billion unique internet users.

These articles varied in scope. Some covered the action specifically, and included quotes from SustainUS delegates. Others addressed this movement more broadly, discussing the international Youth Strikes on September 20, 2019, as well as the UN Youth and Climate Summits.

One [article in the New York Times](#), while focused on our actions in- and outside of the OGCI reception, included photographs of the frontline-focused press conference without mention of or quotes from the speakers. This type of coverage certainly has value, but the lack of attention paid to those voices most in need of an audience is disappointing. The downplaying of frontline community presence at this action suggests a need for further organizing and media work towards covering the work of frontline communities.

While our primary intention with respect to media coverage was to direct attention to frontline voices, coverage of individual delegates also served our purpose. We recognize the trouble with elevating individuals over communities and movements, and tokenizing specific organizers rather than movements. This individual coverage was qualitative, though, rather than feeding the media's inclination toward breeding the cult of personality. Unlike articles that speak more broadly to the climate justice movement, personal profiles have potential to access audiences who may not be engaged in the movement. Furthermore, this kind of personal storytelling can invite those who have not been able to see their own place in this movement to do so.

Just after our actions around the UN Climate Summit concluded, we produced a [short video](#) that was viewed on Twitter 1400 times.

Overall, the Delegation's work received media coverage that accurately reflected our actions in alignment with our chosen points of emphasis and general framing of the issues at hand. We celebrate the presence of our

work in the world, and acknowledge that the fight to shift media narratives around the climate crisis is one deserving of continued attention and resources.

Looking Ahead

Impacts

1. Kick Big Polluters Out

The Kick Big Polluters Out campaign was incredibly useful as a framework for onboarding the Delegation as we learned about the connections between global climate governance and local action. SustainUS's partnership with Corporate Accountability was tremendously helpful, as Corporate Accountability Press Secretary Taylor Billings was available at every step of the way to train us in the campaign and media, connect us with her contacts, and support as we developed strategy.

2. Direct Impact on Media Narrative

Our Delegation played a major role in shifting the public view of the discourse surrounding the UN Climate Summit. We shifted the portrayal of the event from one of a pace of ambition, to a backwards event space being infiltrated and influenced by the fossil fuel industry. The title of the New York Times piece on the Summit is the greatest example of how our focus on calling out the UN's inclusion of the fossil fuel industry in international climate policy and support of the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative speaks the most clearly to this achieved framework shift: "Oil Giants, Under Fire From Climate Activists and Investors, Mount a Defense."

Our strategy not only revealed the role of the fossil fuel industry, but put them on high alert. As they should be.

3. Community

At the end of the day, what will carry us through this climate crisis are the communities that we form and hold.

Our delegation accomplished exactly this mission. From creating supportive spaces for giving and receiving feedback, to building out strong

accountability mechanisms, to spending hours in a diner on the Sunday night of the OGCI action hearing everyone's experiences of the night, to hangout out socially as much as possible, our community that we built with one another is what enabled the success of our work, and is the strongest takeaway we are leaving this experience with.

4. A test for SustainUS: Having one day inside the UN

Unlike other SustainUS Delegations, our Delegation only had one day inside the United Nations. In the past, Delegations have had time to build relationships and scope out the scene of a UN event over the course of the first week, while using those established partnerships understanding of the space to take action during the second week. Our Delegation had to find tools to do all of this in one day.

In order to build relationships to participate in our action, we took a myriad of approaches. These included:

- Having calls to build partnerships with Engajumundo and Youth Climate Lab in the lead-up to the Summit.
- Attending the VICE party the evening before, hosted for Youth Climate Summit attendees.
- Giving away our zines, stickers, and postcards as a way to interact with other young people.
- Messaging like-minded youth identified in the attendee-wide WhatsApp group.

In order to understand the layout of the day, we took the following approaches:

- Supporting youth to write a Pre-Summit Document.
- Creating strategic partnerships with Youth on the planning committee. These young people eventually shared an early draft of the agenda for the day.
- Implementing a buddy system within the Delegation
- Assuring that our delegation relationships were strong and communicative, allowing us to be flexible, adaptive, and emergent throughout the day.
- Planning one specific action, while also building up our skills for potential emergent action opportunities, such as birddogging.

5. *The UN is not a space for us*

One of the most dominant feelings amongst members of the Delegation at the end of the UN Youth Climate Summit was the impact of the United Nations Space on us. From the towering ceilings to the lack of true youth engagement on climate policy that occurred, it was clear that the United Nations was not built to include genuine participation by those with the identities we carry: youth, people of color, low-income, non-binary. The day was a show of winners without any real engagement of the young attendees, and a photoshoot to benefit the United Nations' optics.

At one point Xaver and Gavi stepped into the Indigenous People's Forum happening next door. A space where real solutions were being discussed by real impacted communities. The room was completely empty.

This moment in comparison with the experience of the jam-packed fanfare of the Youth Climate Summit really carried home this takeaway: that the United Nations prioritizes optics over including frontline voices in climate policymaking. This lesson will remain with us as we continue to organize.

6. *Us versus the Fossil Fuel Industry*

Without a doubt, the Fossil Fuel Industry (FFI) is the most powerful industry in recorded human history. It has unquestionably shaped the human experience, from our economies to our standards of living to our conceptions of truth and consequence. When we interrupted proceedings at the UN YCS and attempted to intervene at the OGCI reception, we came face to face with that power. Although we were well-versed in the ways the FFI impacts individuals and systems, it was deeply moving to have to contend with these climate criminals up close—to recognize that there are human beings behind the catastrophe we had come together to face.

To contend with the modern-day oil barons and weavers of untruth that head up and defend the FFI is to contend with evil. And thus, it is to recognize that these people, the worst of humanity, have threatened the best of humanity: the tremendous, beautiful power of people fighting for their land, resources, histories, and futures.

This is nothing short of terrifying. On the night of September 22nd, 2019, our delegation gathered to debrief the events of the evening: our attempts

to infiltrate the OGCI reception, that some of us received summonses from the NYPD, the success of the outside action in elevating voices of those who most need to be heard. As we began to discuss, our shared surprise and fear emerged. None of us had anticipated what it would be like to go through the motions of this action we had planned for weeks, how it would feel to encounter security guards, be asked to or forced to leave the premises.

That the FFI mobilizes international governing bodies, the police state, and private security is a sign of power. But it is also a sign of fear; the FFI knows we, the people, are coming for them. They know they have done wrong in the interest of profit because our movements have made that unflinchingly clear. The more we talked that night, the more we realized that the force with which our interruptions were met was a sign that we had made our presence known. While our actions as a Delegation may have concluded that night, each of us, from seasoned climate organizers to newcomers to the movement, know there is still much work to do.

Where we could have done better

While SustainUS Delegations are leadership development opportunities where we learn from our mistakes, there are always things to improve on. Some of the feedback has included:

- More accurately preparing the Delegates for what it feels like to be inside the United Nations, having qualitative preparation instead of quantitative.
- Preparing contingency plans for our actions.
- Having different roles for delegates during our week of action than during the months of preparations.
- Dispersing media and social media responsibilities.
- Pre assigning spokespeople for each event or action.
- Exploring more fully SustainUS's institutional support for the media team.
- Spent more time on relationship building at the Youth Climate Summit.
- Making communications over Signal more clear.
- Ensuring greater number of youth attendees and people of color attendees to the OGCI Press Conference.
- Having our weekly meetings be more training oriented.

- Bringing SustainUS alumni in to meet the Delegates at the beginning of our training process rather than the end.
- Communal visioning process at the beginning of our time together.
- Holding accountability conversations at the beginning of our work, rather than mid-way.
- Creating pathways for intentional forms of mentorship within the delegation.

Moving forward

Since the Summit, the Delegation has continued to have monthly potlucks during the first week of the month. We hope to maintain and strengthen the community and connection that we have built together.

The shape of our Delegation has since changed as well! Xaver will soon step into the role of Lead Coalition Organizer for NY Renews. Through the experience and relationships built during their SustainUS experience, both Lena and Swetha have been offered jobs at Corporate Accountability. Mayana leaves soon to study in Spain, where she will continue to explore international climate justice policy and community.

The Delegation has taken active steps to ensure that the outcomes of our Delegation are a part of other SustainUS work. We held a joint Zoom call with the World Bank Delegation to the COP25 Delegation Retreat, to update them on what we accomplished and our lessons learned. Kathleen and Gavi actively connected those we met through Summit activities who will be at COP, with the COP25 Indigenous Youth Delegation.

We hope to maintain the local and global connections that we have made as a delegation. During the Delegation, as the Amazon burnt, we found ourselves in a unique and strategic position to serve as a connection between our friends at Engajamundo in Brazil, and our local friends in New York City. In the future, we hope to be able to leverage our role and proximity to the United Nations in moments in need of rapid response solidarity building.

Thank you to all who made this delegation possible!

We would not have been able to pull this Delegation off without the power of SustainUS's partnerships.

We are so grateful to:

Youth Climate Lab, for without whom we would not have had access to the UN Youth Climate Summit

The Human Impacts Institute, for without whom we would not have had a place to gather each week and to retreat.

Corporate Accountability, who guided and supported our vision to enact the Kick Big Polluters Out Campaign.

Demand Climate Justice, who welcomed our delegates in with open arms as we learned so much from their work and stories.

Engajamundo, who we learned so much from through connection and standing in solidarity when their region needed international support.

350.org, who support Kulsum to join their artbuild at the UN.

NYC Youth Strikers, who we learned so much from as we prepared for the week of action.

And to our funders:

North Star Fund

NorthLight Foundation

Natural Resources Defense Council

Jessie Bluedorn

Thank you for your support of our New York City Delegation.

As we look to 2020, we are excited to gather this February in California with SustainUS's World Bank Delegation and COP25 Indigenous Youth Delegation, where we will build community and begin our work for the next year.

Out of the gathering, seedlings of new ideas will form, and we will need your support to turn them into reality while continuing to support our organization's operational needs. We look forward to updating you on what comes next for SustainUS. We hope you will continue to join us in strengthening global climate justice.

Onwards!

