



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Our House is on Fire. Pittsburgh Earth Week 2020 Coalition Declares a Climate Emergency**

Fifty years ago, the first Earth Week drew millions of participants across the U.S. to New York City. It was a moment that captured the hearts of many Americans who dedicated themselves in the fight for clean water, land and air.

This year SWPA organizations will escalate the alarms sounded that first Earth Day to raise awareness of the dire urgency required to save our region and the planet. A regional coalition has joined forces to raise the decibel level and **Declare a Climate Emergency**. An epic, creative collaboration of dozens of local activists, organizations, musicians, artists, videographers and more hopes to raise the bar and call for a list of actions and demands.

While we cannot join with one another in close physical proximity due to Covid-19 concerns, the event promises to be nonetheless historic. The [Pittsburgh Earth Week 2020 Teach-In](#) marks a first in the history of SWPA. The goal is to amplify new and familiar local voices from a broad spectrum of Pittsburgh organizations and frontline communities. Together we will raise up the concerns of many with an epic, creative collaboration of dozens of local activists, organizations, musicians, artists, videographers and more.

There will be two events. [Sunday, April 19, a Virtual Teach-In](#) will feature speakers, artists and musicians who will address the harm inflicted on our most marginalized and environmental justice communities. Topics to be addressed include housing, education, employment as well as environmental assaults from air and water pollution, the expanding petrochemical complex and climate change.

The second event will begin at midnight on **April 22. A virtual 24-hour Youth Climate Strike** broadcast on Fridays for Future Pgh Instagram will feature a team of Fridays for Future Pittsburgh students who will call for a Climate Emergency Declaration. Upper St. Clair High native Leandra Mira will lead the way.

“Neglect for science and the environment today mean that our silent streets have become a second silent spring,” says Tracy Baton, project organizer of the Teach-In and an organizer of Pittsburgh Women’s March. “The current environmental assault is most brutal for those that are also most vulnerable.”

The Teach-In will convey the lessons on taking action at the personal, community and systems levels – from food security, urban housing and recycling to reducing our carbon (and petrochemical) footprint and voting this year to elect strong leadership in the primary and presidential elections.

Michelle King will lead the Teach-In as emcee and moderator. A self-proclaimed love activist and instigator of learning, King is a middle school teacher who has taught more than 22 years in SWPA schools.

“On the 50th anniversary of Earth Week, let us listen to what our people have to say,” says King.

“We are encouraging everyone in communities across our city and region to take the time to listen as we raise up the voices of our people. Whose stories are still invisible? Who are on the front lines of justice? Who is not at the table of these critical conversations? How might we recognize the interconnectedness of environmental, social justice, and public health issues?”

“As the emcee, my aspiration is to weave the threads of our stories of triumph and challenge together by listening to our people of all ages, histories, races, genders, orientations, (dis)abilities and lived experiences.”

More than 50 organizations have aligned to work together on these events. A complete list of partners can be viewed on the [Earth Week Pittsburgh](#) website. Among those who have stepped up to support the event include Rising Appalachia, JasiriX, Etta Cox, Jamil and Raqueeb Bey, Megan Stanley, Dr. Ned Ketyer, Leandra Mira and Dr. Patricia DeMarco. (See speakers attached)

“Pittsburgh Earth Week 2020 aspires to make Earth Day better than the original Earth Day 50 years ago, despite the challenges of having the event occur online to protect our community’s health,” says

Matt Mehalik, executive director of the Breathe Project and a member of Earth Week 2020 Coalition Steering Committee.

“Our goal is to try to broaden and strengthen connections with more community members in the event,” adds Mehalik. “The program foregrounds the voices of meaningful community justice needs in our regional communities, especially people who have been excluded historically from participating in a broader environmental movement. We hope we are helping support these broader connections.”

“What’s comforting to me is that in the darkest of times, when the material world is stripped away, the things we value most are communication, relationships and the health of our loved ones,” says Mira. “Here in Pittsburgh, students who have been sitting for the last year on the steps of the City County Building, will instead send our message on climate out through a 24-hour live stream on Earth Day.”

Proceeds raised during the Teach-In and Youth Climate Strike will support the [Greater Pittsburgh Community Food Bank](#).

### **There are 3 ways to Watch Live Stream on April 19**

Watch the Teach-In Live on [Earth Week PGH](#) website (preferred)

Watch Live on [YouTube](#)

Watch Facebook Live [Pittsburgh Earth Week 2020](#)

[Schedule](#) and [Coalition Partners](#)

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