

**Whalen Symposium Proposal:** What does the world need to know about COP24? Reflections on the U.N. Climate Summit in Katowice, Poland.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is an annual international conference concerning how best to support our global environment. The event hosts government representatives, business leaders, nonprofit organizers, and members of the press. But climate change does not restrict itself to certain professions, and thus, neither did the discussion around it.

The purpose of this presentation is to make messages from the conference accessible to those who cannot attend, but feel the effects climate change all the same. By sharing my experiences at the 24th annual Conference of the Parties in Katowice, Poland, I hope to include such communities in critical discussion and give them the agency to contribute to the conversation about sustainable solutions. My goal is to present climate change as a multidisciplinary issue that requires an equally complex solution. I will separate my presentation into three digestible themes: community, communication, and action. In doing so, I hope to catalyze positive action in the fight against climate catastrophe.

The most resonant idea from the conference was the sense of community. Throughout the week I listened as activists and advocates pitched climate change as a human rights violation, political threat, fashion statement, opportunity for innovation, medical emergency, and beyond. In this section of the presentation I will reflection on this tactic. Pitching climate change to every field – every *person* – emphasizes their individual power and importance in the movement towards sustainability. In my presentation, I will urge my audience to do the same by setting examples through their own activities; find how sustainability is applicable to them and their communities and use their own strengths to make a difference.

The second portion of the presentation will discuss the sustainability movement in terms of communication and conversation. Often, climate change is talked about as a crisis – so crippling that many people (including major world leaders) tend to ignore it as if pretending the problem does not exist will resolve or dissolve it altogether. We know this and we know *better*. Changing the conversation of climate change to be empowering and inclusive is the most effective way to engage across communities – transnationally and intergenerationally. Communication and community converges here, with the role of the media.

Keeping in mind the importance of communicating sustainability across fields, a third and final reflection on COP24 is action items. This element of the presentation will stress using individual voice to spread public knowledge, diet to stop eating meat, wallets to disempower unethical and unsustainable business practices; apply pressure to make change where policy does not. For example, prioritizing climate action in schools fosters a community that cares about the future of their environment. At the university level: climate should not be looked at by a strictly scientific or environmental perspective. The topic is vast and we need to develop and disseminate concepts so that they are digestible for students and learners across fields – social studies, finance, health, communications, etc.

The structure of this presentation will be a lecture and discussion, a reflection on my formative experience and the culmination of my sustainability research and education.