

My Story - Climate Change

My name is Yani Nganzobo. I am originally from The Democratic Republic of Congo, but I grew up in South Africa. I arrived in the United States of America in the year 2019 as an international student majoring in business at the University of Maine at Machias. During the past few years living in the United States, I have gotten the chance to understand the importance of the environment and its necessity through the different organizations and community services I have participated in. Not only did it build my understanding but also helped me put what I have learned into practice. Where I come from the word environment is something hard to even hear about. It is not every day you hear people talking about how necessary it is for us to take care of our environment. What I mean is that it is not something that is emphasized. I grew up in an environment where nobody cared. It was all about waking up, brushing my teeth, and getting ready to go to school, study, and get employed, nothing more! I remember one time I participated in a community work whereby we had to pick up litter at the park and that was it. Never did I do something like that again. It was something rare.

The word climate change never existed to me, the only place I have heard about it is in our geography classes and that was it. When I got to 10th grade my main focus was on accounting and business, that's it. I believe if you watch the news you would understand why our countries are not moving forward. We don't have the right people to lead us and how our communities grow to be a better place for us to live. Yes, there are parts of the country people are doing well but it is rare. Another thing is that I would remember throwing things on the floor/ground because it is something that we were used to. You would see trash on the ground which increased pollution in the community. Unlike here, throwing dirt on the ground is illegal. I was shocked when my friend warned me about trash being thrown in an inappropriate area. When I came to the United States my perspective of the environment changed when my friends started mentioning to me the importance of what is around us. I started participating in community service.

One of the community services I am really committed to is COC - Color of Climate and MEEA - Maine Environmental Education Association. Both organizations emphasizes climate change. At first I just wanted to be a part of something but later I realized that it became a part of me. If it was not I would not continue to participate in the different activities or events that take place. I started to realize its importance to my life and the people around me. I started to realize how my actions can or could affect another individual. It was not all about me but the community around me. Things started to change as well as my behavior towards the environment. Yes, there's not a lot of people participating in this kind of community services but the little people who do make a difference. Sometimes we will have two to 4 people joining our climate change meetings, but this didn't change anything. Later I become one of the ambassadors of COC and become one of the Change Maker planner. I help with organizing an event and providing information if necessary. These kind of work I do during my spare time, because I enjoy doing it. Change starts within!