

THE POWER OF PROTEST

WITH
**VARSHA
YAJMAN**



SCHOOL STRIKE FOR CLIMATE

**HOW WE CAN CHANGE
THE WORLD THROUGH
PROTEST**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



DEFENDING HUMAN RIGHTS



Varsha Yajman is an Indian-Australian climate justice advocate. Being from South Asia, she has always been aware of the severe impacts of climate change on vulnerable regions and communities around the world.

At just 16 years old, her climate activism journey started at a leadership program, surrounded by like-minded, passionate young people looking to create change.

Climate justice is key to addressing climate change because you can't talk about the issue of climate change without dealing with all the other inter-sectional issues

Now, as a prominent climate justice advocate, Varsha is shedding light on how climate change disproportionately affects minority communities and Indigenous people here in Australia and across the globe. Through large-scale protest movements, Varsha is fighting for climate justice to tackle these problems with an intersectional lens.

In 2018, the School Strike 4 Climate international movement was founded, inspired by Greta Thunberg.

Students would strike from school to call on the government to take action on climate change. In the first year alone, over 270 cities participated in the strike, demonstrating the scale of global solidarity for climate justice.



My future is on the line, I can't be at school right now, I'm trying to save my future because my government isn't



In 2019, Varsha joined the School Strike 4 Climate movement as an Organiser to use her voice to amplify the calls for climate justice.

At the same time, Varsha wanted to highlight the role of race in climate justice. She joined Sapna, a South Asian climate justice organisation working to amplify the voices of South Asians in the climate movement.

Acknowledging how important protest movements have been to achieving climate justice throughout history in South Asia, Varsha recognises the role of diaspora organisations to stand in solidarity with the climate protest movement in Australia.



“Solidarity is so important for protest movements”

For many minority populations, protest movements aren't always a safe space due to racial policing and discrimination. By diversifying climate activism in Australia, we can amplify all voices through protest and make it a safer and more inclusive space for everyone.



With a strong movement of global solidarity, School Strike 4 Climate was growing quickly! On September 20th 2019, just one year later, the Australian movement had grown to 350,000 nation-wide.



STRIKE FOR THE CLIMATE

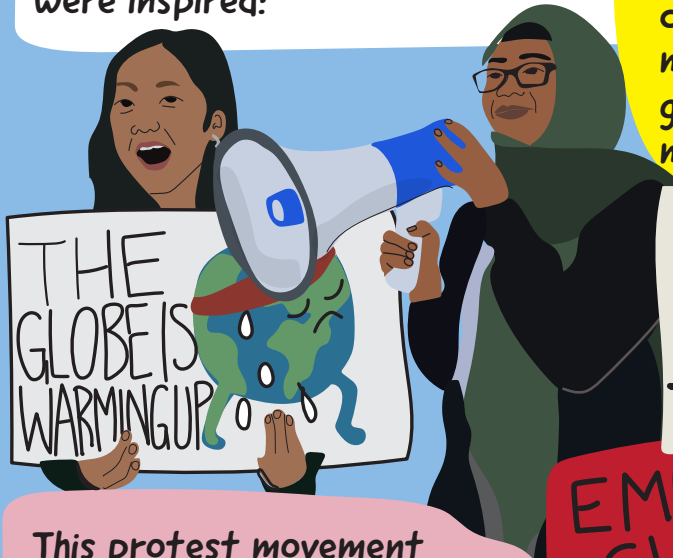
The collective power of everyone calling for the same thing, led by young people, was so empowering. There was a strong feeling of community with everyone out on the streets in strike.

For youth activists like Varsha, School Strike 4 Climate was a mechanism to have their voices heard and find a community of like-minded people who wanted to channel their anger into action!

Through these large-scale demonstrations of peaceful but powerful protests, the movement gathered a lot of solidarity and support. With organisations like Sapna amplifying diverse voices, they were calling for real justice for all.

The **School Strike 4 Climate** movement saw greater awareness of climate change in the news and wider society. By being a large and visible force in the streets, many were inspired!

Through a multiplier effect, more young people were having conversations about climate change and spurred many youth-led grassroots movements.



DETENTION ISN'T THE END OF THE BUT CLIMATE CHANGE IS!

EMERGENCY CLIMATE CRISIS!!

This protest movement allowed young people to have a platform to amplify their voices that usually go unheard. Many young advocates now had the opportunity and confidence to engage with politicians to call for policy level change and encourage government accountability.

The School Strike 4 Climate movement also saw more diverse voices being represented at protests, acknowledging the intersectionality of climate justice and, therefore, encouraged a greater sense of solidarity across all social justice movements.

As Varsha continues to be at the forefront of the climate justice protest movement, she calls upon other young people to join in too and continue to honour all the acts of protest that have gotten us to this point.

In order to make sustainable change, young people need to be seen and heard. The first step is destigmatising protest and **protecting our right to protest.**

Varsha encourages young people to use tools like social media to mobilise and organise. There are many ways to be part of protest – discover what works for you.

RAISE VOICES NOT SEA LEVELS

#STOP ADANI

She recalls how being an activist gives you skills and confidence that you don't learn in school, but that are vital to amplifying your voice and calling for change. She reminds young people to know your power, know your worth and show up to protest in any form you can!

SORRY I CAN'T GO TO SCHOOL I HAVE TO SAVE THE PLANET!



From all of us at Amnesty, thank you so much for taking the time to read this story.

Protest is an invaluable way to speak truth to power and create change.

Throughout history, protests have been the driving force behind some of the most powerful social movements, exposing injustice and abuse, demanding accountability and inspiring people that progress toward a better future is possible. However, around the world the right to protest is under attack as those with power intensify their efforts to suppress protest and silence critical voices.

That's why we need to #ProtectTheProtest.

ABOUT AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Like you, we believe everyone has equal rights to justice, freedom and equality. When these rights are violated, it's up to all of us to take a stand and act in solidarity, as allies. We are a movement made up of people who feel just like you do. Defending human rights is what brings us together, from all walks of life and from all over the world. Working together with you, we can challenge injustice by raising our voices for a better world, where human rights are enjoyed by all.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of this land and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that this land was and always will be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land.

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