

# the Catalyst

Citizens for Public Justice

Winter 2019

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## A Growing Need for Unity

By Willard Metzger

Federal elections can be stressful. Campaigns can be contentious as candidates jockey for public favour. The campaign this autumn was a bitterly fought contest. The election results suggest a divided country. Many people are expressing fear of separation. It is not easy to see a country in pain.

Populist sentiment does little to equip a people in addressing divisive attitudes. Fear and worry of loss are limited and unhealthy motivators. When a population is reduced to everyone primarily worrying about themselves, the sense of community is distressed. No part of society wins when plagued with protectionism. Self focus never satisfies; instead it produces feelings of discontentment.

Community is not about ignoring your own needs. It isn't a call to abandon concern for yourself or your loved ones. Community is about caring for everyone: self and neighbours included. And a sense of community is critical for a thriving society.

People of faith are called to be a positive influence in encouraging a society that strengthens community. Sacred writings oblige us to care for the other. Community resists the temptation to separate humanity into categories of insiders and outsiders and instead views all people as siblings.

The recent federal election shows that Canada needs a rejuvenated sense of community. Political leaders will need to focus on rebuilding a shared and positive sense of nationhood. But it will be people of faith and organizations that can help heal the divisions. We must pull people together around common causes rather than be fragmented by regional interests.

This autumn CPJ participated in conversations across the country through our Fall Election Tour. I met many people. I have been heartened by the experience. There are many people who are concerned about the common good. They want to see a society where all can flourish and grow. This will require changes in policies. It will re-

quire an acceleration towards a green economy. It will require a more open welcome to refugees. It will involve measures to eradicate poverty rather than simply reducing poverty.

CPJ will continue to harness the goodwill of people across the country. We will bring a growing collective voice to elected officials. We will stand in solidarity with a burgeoning youth and young adult movement that is demanding real change.

This is an exciting time! Concerned citizens are becoming mobilized. There is a growing realization that healthy communities require the collective cooperation of all its members.

At CPJ we want to be part of this positive momentum. Together we can continue to encourage a healthy society where all can thrive and grow.

*Willard Metzger is CPJ's executive director.*

# In Review

## CPJ in the Community

On September 27, CPJ staff joined the Climate Strike in downtown **Ottawa** (below). Canada-wide the strike brought out nearly 700,000 people. CPJ members were also out on the streets in **Vancouver, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Waterloo, Toronto, and Halifax**.



CPJ's **Edmonton** chapter co-hosted an inter-faith climate vigil in September on the steps of the Alberta Legislature. Hundreds of Edmontonians of all ages gathered with music, prayer and reflection.

**Natalie Appleyard**, CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst, and **Deirdre Pike**, the Social Justice and Outreach Consultant for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, spoke at the Reimagine Conference in **Hamilton**. Together, they presented on "Advocacy As Public Witness," exploring how people of faith can speak out in the political arena.

On November 2, **Stephen Kaduuli**, CPJ's refugee rights policy analyst, joined **Ida Kaastra-Mutoigo** and **Rebecca Walker** of World Renew at the CRC Day of Encouragement in **Edmonton**. Stephen presented CPJ's report *A Half Welcome*, which looks at several barriers to refugee sponsorship in Canada. Learn more at [cpj.ca/half-welcome](http://cpj.ca/half-welcome).

## Prayers for Creation

In September, to mark the Season of Creation and support Global Climate Action Week, CPJ hosted a week-long national prayer chain, *Prayers for Creation*. Across Canada, CPJ members joined together in prayer to pause, reflect, and contemplate our relationship with the created world.

## Chew on This! 2019

CPJ and Canada Without Poverty once again organized *Chew on This!*, through Dignity for All, the largest anti-poverty campaign in Canada. Over 16,000 postcards were distributed at events in every province and territory. The postcards are addressed to the prime minister, calling on him to show his commitment to ending poverty in Canada within the first 90 days of taking office.

## CPJ Podcasts

CPJ has entered the podcasting world! In July, we launched *The Intern Exchange*, hosted by our public justice intern, **Serisha Iyar**. Episodes include conversations among CPJ's interns on a range of issues including intersectionality, representation, and confronting white privilege in advocacy work. CPJ's new public justice intern, **Keira Kang**, took over hosting duties in November. Listen at [cpj.ca/podcasts](http://cpj.ca/podcasts).

## Staff Updates



CPJ expanded our policy team in April, bringing on **Stephen Kaduuli** as our refugee rights policy analyst. In July, **Natalie Appleyard** returned to CPJ to take on the role of socio-economic policy analyst. And in September **Brad Wassink**, our communications coordinator, returned from a one-year parental leave.



CPJ welcomed three new interns this fall. **Keira Kang** joined us for her year-long public justice internship, with a focus on climate justice. From Carleton University's social work program, **Halima Abdille** spent the fall with us conducting research on refugee integration into Canada. **Dalen Ewald** from Trinity Western University's Laurentian Leadership Centre worked at CPJ this fall also assisting us in our climate justice work.



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Citizens for Public Justice's mission is to promote public justice in Canada by shaping key public policy debates through research and analysis, publishing, and public dialogue. CPJ encourages citizens, leaders in society, and governments to support policies and practices which reflect God's call for love, justice, and the flourishing of creation.

**CPJ annual membership fee** includes *the Catalyst*.  
Suggested donation of \$50

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# Together, for the Common Good

By Karri Munn-Venn

**W**e are in a unique moment in history, marked by the ominous deadline set by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. We have barely a decade to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions to avoid serious climate consequences.

And Canada is at a crossroads. After a divisive federal election, the climate crisis is one among many significant issues that need to be addressed, including national unity, equalization, and the economy. Our governments, at all levels, clearly have important roles to play.

So too do we, as citizens and as people of faith.

## Remember our Calling

As Christians, we have been called to “love justice, seek kindness, and walk humbly with our God.”

In times of uncertainty, of separation, and of fear, it can be easy to lose sight of this calling. Yet that is precisely when it is most important. As people of faith, we are blessed to be part of very special communities. Our parishes and congregations are unique places where people of different ages and from different backgrounds and political ideologies gather for worship, communion, and deep conversation.

Through dialogue we might find that regardless of where we live or who we voted for, we likely have a lot in common. Fundamentally, we all want the same things. We want better lives for our families. We want to take pride in our work. And, we want a secure future.

As we look to chart a way forward together, what if, instead of going straight to emissions, pipelines, and carbon pricing, we started with: *What matters to you? Why is it important?*

The current moment invites intense listening. Let us approach it from a place of love, humility, and compassion. By draw-

ing out the core values that we share, we can open ourselves to conversations about potential solutions that can both quell our fears and address our needs and desires.

## Foster Connection and Community

Similarly, it can be useful to recognize that we’re all in this together.

The impacts of climate change — forest fires, floods, and heatwaves — are being felt from coast to coast to coast. Unencumbered, they will continue to be felt. This is true of all Canadians, of everyone around the world. No matter our view on human-induced climate change, we are all impacted.

So how do we respond, together?

Canada has long benefited from the contributions of Alberta — and Albertans — to the economy. In other words, people across the country have benefited from fossil fuels. Indeed, the systems and structures we use every day are fueled in one way or another by oil and gas. Sadly, our dependence on fossil fuels is also contributing to the global climate crisis.

Just as we all feel the impacts of climate change, we all feel the impacts of climate *policy*. Of course, the structure of our natural resource-based economy means this is especially true in the West. This is why a just transition is so important. In a just transition, the burden of change is shared across society. A just transition reduces emissions, creates good jobs, and supports individuals and communities vulnerable to change.

Through a just transition, we can prioritize low-carbon energy development as well as funding for skills development and re-training programs for oil and gas workers. According to the International Labour Organization, global just transition strategies will lead to a net gain of 18 million new jobs in renewable technology, electric vehicles, and energy efficiency.

Beyond jobs, Canada’s just transition must include a culturally-competent and In-

digenuous-led approach to reducing climate change impacts and addressing the unique needs of Indigenous peoples. Addressing the particular needs of people living in poverty as they face climate-induced extreme weather events is also key.

Change is coming.

But we can choose to focus on what we have in common. And we can recognize that as we move forward together, people of faith can inject a sense of hope and shared humanity into the conversation.

We can help to identify and work towards a shared vision of societal and ecological well-being. And, we can walk humbly together, honouring one another’s contributions, and holding one another up through times of difficulty.

For the love of all humanity, and for the love of all creation.

## Are you ready to Give it up for the Earth?

CPJ’s annual faith-in-action climate campaign will take place from February 26 through April 9, 2020. *Give it up for the Earth!* blends personal action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and political advocacy for increased federal action. Materials will soon be available at [cpj.ca/for-the-earth](http://cpj.ca/for-the-earth).



Karri Munn-Venn is CPJ’s senior policy analyst.



## Moving Past the Middle

By Natalie Appleyard

There are millions of people across Canada living in poverty. Yet, in this recent federal election, poverty and inequality was almost entirely ignored. Poverty in Canada is a crisis that needs to be prioritized. The fact that we do not see it this way betrays some of our deeply held beliefs about who is poor, why people are poor, and what (if any) are the responsibilities of governments and citizens to do something about it.

Some of the issues and living conditions associated with poverty and inequality did come up at times. This includes safe drinking water on reserves, affordable housing, parental leave, and the cost of living in general. The previous Liberal government did take some important first steps toward reducing poverty, though not eradicating it. Unfortunately, most of the proposals during the election focused mainly on the middle class and their experiences of these issues.

We did not hear, in contrast, how each party planned to address the disproportionate rates of poverty among Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, newcomers, people with disabilities, or singles aged 45 to 64. We did not hear how each party would move Canada towards our human rights obligations or the Sustainable Development Goals.

Despite not getting a lot of airtime, there were significant sections of our newly-election government's platform dedicated to building resilience and helping lift people out of poverty. Initiatives like a pan-Canadian framework for childcare, improvements to Employment Insurance, and continued progress on a national pharmacare plan would be further steps toward addressing poverty on a systemic level. During their last term, the Liberals took some important first steps in legislating the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the right to housing, for example. They made some notable gains in reducing poverty among children and

seniors, demonstrating what is possible with targeted support and funding. There is hope that needed improvements will be made in the context of a minority government as the Liberals look to progressive parties for support.

Meanwhile, thousands of CPJ members and supporters engaged with these issues through our Election Bulletin. I was heartened by stories I heard on our Fall Election Tour of people's ongoing advocacy and their commitment to raising these issues with their federal candidates, colleagues, congregants, and community members. Despite the parties' relative radio silence in the media, I know many voices were raised this election season and I am grateful for the faithfulness (in multiple senses) of the CPJ community!

**"We need to share not only the plight, but also the fights and insights, of people living in poverty."**

**- Shailly Gupta Barnes,  
the Poor People's Campaign**

We can celebrate the recent growth of the *Chew on This!* campaign to over 100 organizers across the country, with close to 17,000 postcards requested to send a message to our next prime minister calling for ambitious action to end poverty in Canada. We know those postcards will be there waiting for the re-elected Prime Minister Trudeau – and so will we, as constituents, be there to follow up on our message!

I have seen significant stories of strength and success that we can build upon. I was encouraged by Shailly Gupta Barnes of the Poor People's Campaign in the United

States who suggested that, "we need to share not only the plight, but also the fights and insights, of people living in poverty." That is to say, we can't just focus on the crisis, we need to capture people's imaginations for what is possible by sharing stories of what has already been accomplished and learned through the ongoing fight for justice.

In that spirit, I look forward to building upon the success and momentum of our campaigns and engagement. In the coming months, CPJ will be building on the relationships we have with MPs and ministers from our previous government, as well as leveraging the need to cooperate with MPs of all parties in a minority government context.

Much more is needed to address the systemic injustices of our current systems, pushing us past our concerns for the middle class alone and considering also those most deeply entrenched in poverty. Honouring the rights and dignity of Indigenous peoples, for example, will be key to addressing the many ways in which people on and off reserve face disproportionate barriers to economic security, food security, health, and general well-being.

I remain hopeful that we can seize this moment to work with MPs of all parties to push us past half-hearted measures and effect real change that benefits more than just the middle class. As we envision a just transition to a greener economy, we have a tremendous opportunity to put sustainability and equity at the core of our systems, rather than seeing them as fringe interests. I invite each of us to share in the plight, fights, and insights of our pan-Canadian community so that together, we can build the power needed to win real systemic change and end poverty in Canada.



Natalie Appleyard is CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst.



Photo Credit: Takver/Flickr

# Working Together for Refugee Rights

By Stephen Kaduuli

**T**he 2019 federal election campaign is now behind us. I personally traveled 5,800 kilometres during our Fall Election Tour to Regina, Winnipeg, Waterloo, and Montreal, talking about CPJ’s refugee policy work.

Of course, one of the key moments during the campaign was the digging up of pictures of a younger, but adult, Justin Trudeau wearing blackface and brownface. The photos were seen as racist and an insulting display of white privilege. And it must have evoked the daily lived experiences of racism among refugees in Canada. Another moment was when Maxime Bernier, leader of the People’s Party of Canada, said a fence should be built between Canada and USA to keep out refugees. That statement displayed an ignorance of Canadian and international law pertaining to refugees.

## Looking Back

The 2015 Liberal majority government came to Ottawa with some significant commitments to refugees. They promised to bring into Canada 25,000 Syrian refugees and did so successfully. To date, Canada has resettled more than 60,000 Syrian refugees. However, most of the Syrians were sponsored by Canadian citizens through Sponsorship Agreement Holders, Groups of Five, and Community Sponsors and not by the government. The Liberals also fulfilled their commitment to give the United Nations \$100 million for Syrian refugee relief. In April 2016, as promised during the last campaign, the government fully restored the cuts that had been made by the previous government to the Interim Federal Health Program.

Around the time President Trump issued executive orders barring refugees from certain countries, Prime Minister Trudeau declared that Canada welcomes all refugees fleeing persecution. Since then, more than 40,000 asylum seekers have crossed into

Canada from the United States. But earlier this year, the Canadian government rolled back its welcome and shifted its focus on what it called reinforcing border security. It introduced a new ground of ineligibility for refugee claimants who have previously made refugee claims and been rejected in the United States, with which Canada has the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA).

## Campaign 2019

Among the major parties, there is no resistance to raising Canada’s immigration levels. The Liberals pledged to steadily increase the number of newcomers from the current 300,000 to 350,000 a year by 2021. Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer stated that those immigration levels are “consistent with what is in Canada’s best interests.” The NDP did not set an immigration target, and the Greens simply said they would increase immigration overall.

The Bloc Québécois said that Quebec should be the one to decide how many immigrants and refugees the province accepts and not the federal government. Prime Minister Trudeau is open to working with Quebec to increase the province’s control over immigration. However, Quebec also wants to be exempted from the Multiculturalism Act to, perhaps, accommodate their new Bill 21 that bars public servants from wearing religious garments. Quebec’s Bill 21 is a step backward because it enshrines religious discrimination into law and is a barrier to the integration of newcomers. It is an additional tool of social exclusion, which I call Canada’s “border wall.”

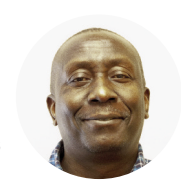
The Liberals campaigned on a promise to “modernize” the STCA between Canada and the United States. The agreement allows would-be refugees to make claims at unofficial points of entry. Trudeau is looking to close the so-called “loophole.” Professor Sharry Aiken of Queen’s University suggests that any attempt to amend the STCA will

fail because it would require President Trump to agree to keep more immigrants and asylum seekers in the U.S. which he is unlikely to do. Another reason why this promise may not succeed is because the Bloc Québécois, the NDP, and the Greens have all called for the STCA to be suspended until the Americans can prove that their asylum system is fair to refugee claimants.

## Looking Forward

Now with a new minority parliament, Prime Minister Trudeau must balance the perspectives put forward by all of Canada’s major political parties, as articulated through the election campaign. We need a government that is transparent, that listens and cares, and that is cooperative with other parties. Fortunately, every party in the House of Commons agrees on the value of raising immigration levels. But they will have to come up with the best way forward for the STCA and generally ensure that refugee rights are protected.

Over the next few years, CPJ will continue championing refugee rights by working with government, opposition MPs, and civil society to push for effective anti-racism strategies and measures to ensure that refugees and all other immigrants are fully integrated into Canadian society for the common good.



Stephen Kaduuli is CPJ’s refugee rights policy analyst.

# CPJ Brings Fall Election Tour to 12 Cities Across Canada



## Surrey

*Rev. Tom Bomhof speaks at our Fall Election Tour in Surrey, B.C.*

CPJ kicked off our tour at Fleetwood Christian Reformed Church in Surrey, B.C. Rev. Tom Bomhof and Rev. Scott Turnbrook, of Fleetwood and Northwood United Church respectively,

hosted us as we talked with citizens from their two church communities and beyond. Together, we discussed how to respectfully address community members and candidates whose perspectives may differ from our own.



## Edmonton

*Karri Munn-Venn, CPJ's senior policy analyst, addresses the crowd gathered in Edmonton.*

In Edmonton, Jonathan Nicolai-deKoning, director of the Micah Centre, welcomed us to The King's University. Gerda Kitts, Associate Professor of Economics at King's, and Gabrielle Gelderman, CPJ's Edmonton Organizer, joined us for a lively panel discussion. Our conversation focused on a just transition and ways to move Canada to renewable energy while protecting the well-being of workers, especially those in the oil and gas sector.

## Calgary

*Tiffany Talen (right), CPJ's board member from southern Alberta, welcomed attendees to our event in Calgary.*



In Calgary CPJ was hosted by Derek Cook, the director of the Canadian Poverty Institute housed at Ambrose University. As a result, our Calgary event focused more on the issue of poverty in Canada. Our discussion also reflected the overlap between climate justice and poverty as we considered again the importance of a just transition.



## Regina

*Stephen Kaduuli (right) prepares for our event in Regina.*

At CPJ's Fall Election Tour event in Regina, we partnered with World University Services of Canada to focus on refugee rights. At the Research and Innovation Centre of the University of Regina, a small group gathered for an intimate discussion led by Stephen Kaduuli, CPJ's refugee rights policy analyst.



## Winnipeg

*Terry Schellenberg speaks at our Fall Election Tour event in Winnipeg.*

Canadian Mennonite University (CMU) hosted us in Winnipeg. CMU's Vice President External Terry Schellenberg opened the event. As we looked at the intersections between climate justice and refugee rights, we had a lively discussion with students and other members of the community who joined us.



## Montreal

*Stephen Kaduuli speaks about refugee rights in Montreal.*

In Montreal, CPJ held our Election Tour event at the Auberge YWCA. Though most of the event was in English, we were able to have an engaging discussion around refugee rights, an issue that is especially relevant in the province of Quebec.



**St. John's**  
*Natalie Appleyard, CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst, in St. John's.*

At the Johnson Geo Centre in St. John's, N.L., CPJ hosted a discussion about poverty both locally and nation-wide. CPJ was honoured to join the strong multi-faith connections already made between various community groups and churches in the city, including the Religious Social Action Coalition, Choices for Youth, and the St. John's Council of Churches.



**Halifax**  
*Willard Metzger opens our event in Halifax.*

At the Halifax Central Library, we met with representatives from several local groups who share our vision for a just Canada, and we heard of their commitment to pursuing justice as an outworking of faith. A big thank you to Stella Lord of the Community Society to End Poverty in Nova Scotia and Linda Scherzinger of KAIROS Halifax for their help in planning and promoting our event.

**Waterloo**  
*Federal candidates answer questions at our Fall Election Tour event in Waterloo. (Photo Courtesy of Martin Luther University College.)*



We had a packed house at Mount Zion Lutheran Church in Waterloo, ON! CPJ partnered with Martin Luther University College (MLUC) and were joined by David Pfrimmer and John Milloy of MLUC's Centre for Public Ethics. This event also included a panel of federal candidates as Lori Campbell (NDP), Mike Morrice (Green), and Bardish Chagger (Liberal) answered questions from voters.

**Toronto**  
*Héctor Acero Ferrer speaks at our Toronto event.*



In Toronto, CPJ partnered with the Institute for Christian Studies' Centre for Philosophy, Religion & Social Ethics (CPRSE). We were graciously hosted by Rev. Molly Finlay at Christ Church Deer Park. CPJ staff presented alongside Héctor Acero Ferrer, Associate Director of the CPRSE. We had an excellent discussion looking at partnerships between communities of faith and refugee settlement agencies.



**Hamilton**  
*Deirdre Pike, of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, presents in Hamilton.*

We were thrilled to add a Fall Election Tour stop in Hamilton at Christ's Church Cathedral. Natalie Appleyard represented CPJ at the event co-hosted by the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction (HRPR), the Anglican Diocese of Niagara, Hamilton Organizing for Poverty Elimination, and the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. Tom Cooper, director of HRPR, and Deirdre Pike also spoke, with a focus on anti-poverty work they are doing locally and provincially.

**Ottawa**  
*CPJ's team at our event in Ottawa.*



We ended the tour back home in Ottawa at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. All three of our policy analysts spoke, connecting our three key policy areas in a discussion that touched on issues including climate refugees, a just transition, and poverty among refugees in Canada. There was a large contingent of students from Carleton University in attendance and a lively discussion.



## Why I March

By Keira Kang

I spent the fall of 2017 in Barbados. I was there as an urban planning intern with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was there that I first began to understand the magnitude of climate change impacts.

At the UNDP, I was introduced to a project that focused on increasing accessibility to solar-powered public transportation for impoverished residents on the island. One of my main tasks involved conducting surveys of Bajan locals to identify key environmental policy issues that needed to be addressed. My personal encounters with climate-affected individuals woke me up to realize the bleak landscape of our humanity's state, propelled by the absence of systemic change against the use of fossil fuels.

My few months in Barbados marked a new turning point in my life as I observed the daunting consequences of global warming in front of my eyes. I listened to stories of many young women and girls living in poverty and with trauma from gender-based violence. Despite their contributions to the resilience of the Bajan community, these women and girls faced day-to-day marginalization in their households and within the broader society.

Most married women I interviewed were occupied in household activities, like childcare, washing, cooking, and cleaning. According to them, gendered division of labour often perpetuated their husbands' view of women's roles as inferior to men, which normalized sexism and even sexual assault on the grounds of gender identity. What made things even worse, was the utter lack of systemic initiatives for tackling such violations, especially pertaining to climate injustice and environmental degradation.

Systematic failures caused women to bear additional burdens from the aftermath of climate change in their communities. Faced with sporadic yet intense storms, the fragile infrastructure of chore-flooded homes were utterly destroyed. Women had to stretch their limited domestic income to manage the household budget, simultaneously over-exerting themselves in the workforce to find alternative sources of income. Extreme heat also caused life-threatening heat strokes among older women who continued to work to support their families.

I saw a stark contrast between the quality of life afforded to the women of Barbados and my privileged life in Canada. I came to understand that the climate problem is not

only environmental and that suffering in the climate crisis is often exacerbated under systems of oppression. I finally identified myself with the millions of youth who have been marching endlessly for climate justice around the world.

In the first few months of my internship at CPJ, I have spent many of my Fridays at climate marches with young people from across Ottawa.

Youth do not march simply because it's fun to walk out of their classes. They do not march because they value their time standing outside more than their education. Youth march because there are children — just like them — on the other side of the planet whose lives are at risk due to global warming. They march in hopes of becoming a part of a stronger force in the world that fights against the misuse of power, the type of misuse that wipes away Indigenous land rights, sovereignty, and dignity.

In October 2018, I participated in my own climate walkout from McGill University, along with thousands of students in Montreal, to demand and urge for a stop to the age of fossil fuels.

And I continue to march today.

I march for my friends in Barbados, because I know that those living in small-island developing countries are always the most susceptible to the adverse impacts of climate change.

I march for my family in South Korea, as the fine dust and air pollution invading the entire nation continue to infringe upon their basic right to a healthy life.

I march for myself, because despite not being eligible to vote in Canada with my Korean citizenship, my voice can be heard alongside millions of other global citizens who eagerly desire for climate action by the government.

I march because I have hope that we can deconstruct and improve the discursive practices that affect the environmental decisions of our policymakers.

Civic engagement is one of the most far-reaching and necessary instruments for public transformation. This is why I have joined the youth movement and am advocating for future generations through climate protests.



Keira Kang is CPJ's public justice intern.