

The Great Simplification

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[00:00:00] **Xiye Bastida:** A lot of where my work has been on is shifting the narrative of what is success? What is the appropriate amount of growth? Why are we obsessed with growth when Mother Earth has been so wise in making systems work, circularly in seasons in a way that is beautiful and has a cadence. And our duty is to tap into that cadence.

[00:00:23] And when you step in a place of guardianship and stewardship, a lot of the ego of I'm helping the world goes away because it's not about I'm helping the world. It is our responsibility to be guardians, to be stewards. And what humbleness do you need to recognize that Mother Earth gives us everything that we need to thrive.

[00:00:44] We just need to be wise enough to live closer to the cadence of the earth.

[00:00:53] **Nate Hagens:** Today I am pleased to be joined by Xiye Bastida, a 23-year-old activist and member of the Planetary Guardians, a group in which she shares the distinguished company of peers like the late Jane Goodall, as well as many former guests of this show like Johan Rockstrom, Carlos Nobre, Sunita Nore, and ELA m Xiye shares her extraordinary path to becoming a leading voice among her generation, working towards a future that is different from the conventional stories, our cultural beliefs, one where humans live in a simpler, more ecologically aligned society.

[00:01:31] Xiye Bastida is the Executive Director of Reith Initiative, a global youth-led organization supporting nature-based projects in communities on the frontline around the world of global heating. She was also recently named on Forbes 30 under 30 Social impact list. In this episode, Xiye and I discuss how her

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outlook on environmental advocacy has shifted as she's gone from organizing climate strikes in high school with hundreds of thousands of attendees to now speaking on global stages and raising millions of dollars to help fund effective small scale projects across the global south through philanthropy grants.

[00:02:11] Throughout this conversation, it became clear that Xiye roots, everything she does in grounded wisdom and a sense of interconnectedness with the earth. And as you'll probably notice, while watching or listening to it, it really moved me. This was our first conversation and I realized after hanging up that it's conversations like this, that, that remind me of why I do this work.

[00:02:38] and it galvanizes me to continue moving directionally, towards better human and planetary futures. Before we begin, if you enjoy this podcast, I invite you to subscribe to our Growing Substack newsletter where you can read more about the underlying factors of our human predicament. You can find the link to subscribe in the show description.

[00:02:58] With that, please welcome Xiye Bastida. This is one, that you shouldn't miss. Xiye, welcome to the program.

[00:03:07] **Xiye Bastida:** Thank you for having me.

[00:03:08] **Nate Hagens:** So six years ago, if my math is correct, when you were only 17, you started your career in climate activism by organizing student led climate strikes with the Fridays for the future.

[00:03:21] And since then, you've gained a global platform and have spoken on stages around the world, including the United Nations and the World Economic Forum and others. And you also founded a climate focused nonprofit, which supports frontline youth across 27 countries. This is quite the resume for anyone, much less someone fresh out of university.

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[00:03:44] You don't know what I was doing when I was your age, but given how far you've come from those first climate strikes six years ago, I'm, curious how your worldview and approach to activism has changed since you began all this back in 2019. Let's, start there.

[00:04:02] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah. That's a really great question.

[00:04:04] When I was, You know, organizing the first climate strikes I was in high school and the movement, the energy in New York, 'cause that's where I did high school, was so invigorating. we had just had the March for our Lives. We had like many different social movements that were born out of high school students going out there and doing things.

[00:04:28] And for me, the climate movement, I mean it, it was one of those things that people ask, what can I do? And nobody really knows where to start. And I was frustrated with those questions because. There's always communities that want you to be part of them, and if they don't exist, you can create them. So, I felt very empowered, when I first joined my environmental club and then disempowered that we didn't, weren't having as much impact as we wanted to have.

[00:04:54] So I think it was my perspective as an immigrant, not co, not from the US knowing the platform that especially a place like New York can be and really thinking if we have this opportunity to mobilize in New York. Where it's a global stage for everyone to see why wouldn't we do it? So I think it was really important that I had that perspective of knowing how the world perceives a place like New York to say we have the responsibility to actually use this platform to do so much to mobilize, to show the youth of the world that those who are in more privileged spaces, and by that I mean a place where you can't protest.

[00:05:31] We are using that privilege. and I think that also came from a place of knowing that type of mobilization is not possible in the global south because you

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can face harsh repercussions. So it was just this incredible moment of empowerment. And we started very small with 300 students from my high school and a few other high schools.

[00:05:53] And then the next month we were 10,000. The next month we were 20,000. And then just from March, when we started to September, we were 300,000 in the streets. And I had never experienced such exponential growth in any movement that I had witnessed or seen or even read about. It was a moment where it felt like the everything was possible and.

[00:06:20] Marching in the streets is what made it possible. Right. it was months of organizing lots of calls, like activism is lots of emails, lots of zoom meetings, lots of deep listening and just being open to learning and adapting. And I think from then to now, it's changed massively because we don't have that energy anymore, especially in the climate space because there's so many other things, going on in the world that kind of always push, especially like the threat to democracy.

[00:06:51] Like things that are really important, right? That are pushing the climate conversation under. Unless there is a climate disaster, unless we see a devastating flood or a devastating hurricane or a devastating fire, or we bridge another planetary boundary and then it kind of becomes this media thing.

[00:07:08] But it's still not. As centered as it was six years ago. So that's, I think, the hardest part for climate activists like myself who have been working on this for our whole, like young adult lives. and maybe like late teenager, like my whole teenage years and my young adult life has just been climate. but it's also given us a lot of time to come in, call ourselves in, and see how we can be more effective.

[00:07:36] Because being an activist is not just marching, it's how you talk to people, how you lead your life, what you choose to study, where you choose to

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work, what you choose to consume. and by that I don't mean just things, I mean like media knowledge. Being an activist is a practice, right? it's a way of life and.

[00:07:57] I think we were too stubborn of making it if you strike then you're an activist. And now we're expanding that to say, if you're a regenerator, if you are, dream a dreamer. If you can imagine a world in five years that's better than today, that's activism. and that's why I call myself a stubborn optimist.

[00:08:20] 'cause I believe that we can do better. I know I've seen it 'cause I work with incredible people every day and it fill my heart with so much joy to see that despite the challenges there is so much relentless relentlessness on the what we can do. And obviously grounding that on indigenous wisdom, which for me is like an integral part of my identity.

[00:08:42] **Nate Hagens:** Lots to unpack there. I have a lot of questions, but let's go back to when you were a teenager and what was it that. You started with 300 students and then tens of thousands and then 300,000, like what was it in your heart and the heart, and mind of your friends and colleagues that explained such growth?

[00:09:06] Like what, did it strike to create that? I

[00:09:09] **Xiye Bastida:** think it was a deep feeling of generational injustice. 'cause I had never felt so cold to when, as, when someone said, like, you are stealing our future. That you're giving up our future for profit. You're putting profit over the lives of children, over the lives of communities, and this deep feeling of injustice as not only for ourselves, but future generations.

[00:09:38] And me thinking, are my kids gonna have the life that my grandparents had in terms of air quality and access to nature? Right. Or. Knowing that the climate models go till the year 2100, that's when my grandkids are gonna be my

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age. Like this is so deeply personal and it's so infuriating when you see things like a hundred companies responsible for 70% of emissions or things like that, right?

[00:10:06] Where it's like the concentration of power of wealth is directly correlated to the amount of emissions, and that is trading off our future. And you are in high school, you're in a place where you're putting all of these things together, right? The science with what's going on, and then the injustice, and you're like.

[00:10:25] No way. We're not gonna let this happen.

[00:10:28] **Nate Hagens:** I was 20 years older than you are now when I started to fit all this together. So I, can only imagine. So, some rage and anger is understandable and also some fear, about the, the biogeochemical systems of earth and the planetary boundaries. How are you, if I might ask, at 23, with your emotions on our future versus when you started out, six years ago?

[00:10:57] **Xiye Bastida:** Well, I have a very. Interesting background in the sense that my parents met in the first Earth Summit in 92 when they were in their twenties. So for more than 30 years, my parents have been deeply into climate issues and climate solutions. my dad from the perspective of indigenous rights at the UN level, and my mom from the perspective of an ethno ecologist, which means looking at the relationship between people and their environment, so bicultural, heritage, connection, et cetera.

[00:11:28] And so I grew up with all the stories of how it was gonna get worse, of how we were gonna see more impacts. And when my hometown flooded when I was 13 years old, it shook my whole world because I thought my parents were. A little crazy 'cause no one was talking about climate, like global warming, right? It was like, like no one was talking about it.

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[00:11:55] I was like the only one bringing it up in class in school. It was a little paragraph in a book. Like it was really nowhere. And I think I could see that it was nowhere because it was always there in my day-to-day life. And my parents were going to conferences and writing articles and you know, doing all of these things, working in the environment.

[00:12:16] like environmental sector in Mexico and in the worldwide. So I was always deeply aware of the lack of information. And then when I started seeing the information, instead of getting like, oh my God, this is so horrible. Like a lot of people and a lot of youth get, I was thinking finally. Finally we have the information that we need to make our case.

[00:12:39] Finally, the world knows. Finally, they cannot tell us that we didn't know. Finally, we know that they had been covering up the information and with the planetary boundaries, finally, we have a health assessment for the planet that is Unequivocably telling us where we need to head towards and where it's wrong.

[00:12:58] So I am grateful for the information that we have because I know that the thing, the things that we're living through, we, like they could have been prevented. Yes, but we didn't have the information back then as clear as we do now, and we have to do something about that information.

[00:13:15] **Nate Hagens:** So I've had, bill McKibben and Kevin Anderson and others, Johan Strom.

[00:13:21] I mean, he's a scientist, on the show, but I'm not sure I've had like a. Specific, someone who identifies as a climate activist, what does a climate activist primarily do, and what is the daily work that you've found that makes a difference or might make a difference to these issues in the future?

[00:13:39] You mentioned a few things about what you consume with respect to media and such, but could you explain a little bit about your daily work?

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[00:13:48] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, of course. in a very more like philosophical level for me, being a climate activist and an activist in general is being a very creative person and being able to imagine positive features and do everything that you can to go to towards them.

[00:14:04] And that requires a lot of courage, requires a lot of bravery, and it requires just like believing in the right that we have to dignity. We deserve better and that the system is broken and it's not working for youth, for indigenous peoples and especially for future generations.

[00:14:24] **Nate Hagens:** And other species too.

[00:14:25] **Xiye Bastida:** And other species and mother earth and our like.

[00:14:29] Even calling like water a resource. My dad always says it should. We should only call quote unquote resources. Sacred elements, right? They're sacred. And so for me, being an activist under that definition is a bare minimum for being a good human and like fulfilling our purpose in many ways. And I know that the word activist is very contested.

[00:14:55] I know that a lot of people feel uncomfortable with that word. I, don't care what word you use, right? It's like, do you have the fire inside you that guides. The type of work that is needed.

[00:15:06] **Nate Hagens:** I don't really think of myself as an activist, but in the broader definition I am. And I define it as, here's what I understand about the future default trajectory.

[00:15:18] I am not willing for that to happen

[00:15:21] **Xiye Bastida:** mm-hmm.

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[00:15:21] **Nate Hagens:** While I'm alive. Mm-hmm. And so I have to do what I've chosen to do with this platform to make the future better than the default. So I'm an activist in that sense. Yeah. I just don't have the, widespread success that you do, in your voice.

[00:15:40] so were there any successes that were particularly, important teaching moments for you, during these last years of your climate activism? Which to me, I could also relabel as, you're just being a good wide boundary human alive at this time.

[00:16:00] **Xiye Bastida:** yeah, actually there's, I've learned a lot about.

[00:16:03] The difference between, for example, organizing an action versus long-term campaigns and narrative shift. for example, two years ago we were at COP 28 in Dubai and we knew that was a cop held in an oil country and we knew there was a lot of conflict of interest. And so conflict of interest with the fact that the host country was an oil country and we are in a climate conference.

[00:16:28] Right. and I understood the value of strategic campaigning and collaboration, that it's not just about making like fiery statements in a press conference or like having a good speech that goes viral. Like I feel like that's a lot of what we see from activists. but the coordinated. Campaigning that requires lots of planning, lots of thinking.

[00:16:52] That is really where the bonds are made for the movement to grow and resist. And so what we did at COP 28 to call out this conflict of interest is we printed in our badges in our blue zone badges, not paid by the fossil fuel industry. So we would say, if you are not saying that you are paid and disclosing that you are paid by the fossil fuel industry, we will say that we're not paid by the fossil fuel industry.

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[00:17:13] And then we had this whole campaign to push for fossil fuels to be included in the final decision of the cop, which was the first time that fossil fuels were included. And it was a lot of work of meetings with different ministers and with a cop presidency and doing like lots of actions and, both on social media.

[00:17:32] And I really saw the impact that being on the ground with coordinated efforts has on a document that informs like multilateral policy everywhere. And I had never felt like. Like, wow, we can really have that impact. Like if we are on the ground coordinated, organized at the cops, then we could shape how things are understood and seen and then thus acted upon.

[00:17:58] So it's really, I think when you go to a cop, knowing what you're going for is really empowering. The issue is that a lot of cops become this like media blob where nobody really knows what's going on. and so we have made it, a very big point in our activism as we are initiative, my nonprofit, but also as the youth coalitions that we go with, that we will have missions and we will be effective, and we're not just gonna be there like taking the picture.

[00:18:27] Like we are going to, you know, like use our skills as activists to make sure that policy is shaped and influenced.

[00:18:34] **Nate Hagens:** Did you go to the recent one in Brazil?

[00:18:36] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, I just came back from Brazil.

[00:18:37] **Nate Hagens:** And do you have any thoughts to share about that

[00:18:40] **Xiye Bastida:** in terms of the policy and everything that happened? I mean, fossil fuels were not mentioned.

[00:18:46] as part of like their requirements for the energy transition, like fossil fuel phase out. And that feels like a regression on all of the effort that we have put

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into COP 28. And the reason why is because this year we were pushing for the just transition and what it means for us to go through a just energy transition that doesn't exploit communities, et cetera.

[00:19:07] And it's like. They give us something like, yes, we're gonna have to just transition, but they take away the transition away from fossil fuels. So it's always this like pooling game. but something that I'm really happy about is that I'm part of the planetary guardians and we are ambassadors of the planetary boundary science.

[00:19:25] And we had the first ever planetary science pavilion and there was so much excitement about scientists actually being able to speak, have a platform. Johan Strom was there, Carlos Nore was there, and giving recommendations to the cop presidency, like chasing the cop presidency around, coming with them with a letter saying like, this is what needs to happen.

[00:19:43] You need to put fossil fuels in as part of the reason why we are in this mess. And like the transition out of them. And Columbia is hosting the first ever fossil fuel, like. Non-proliferation treaty conference or like a conference to transition out of fossil fuels in Colombia in April. So with over 50 countries already signed up to go.

[00:20:04] So we are in such a critical moment for fossil fuels to really be left behind. And maybe that's one of the biggest changes that we've seen in the past six years, that before people didn't want to mention fossil fuels, and now it's a no brainer that's part of it. Solutions.

[00:20:19] **Nate Hagens:** So I don't know how much you know about, my work and telling the systemic story of how all the pieces of our civilization have a metabolism, but when you talk about, fossil fuels and leaving fossil fuels behind, to me when I hear that it's synonymous with leaving economic growth behind because the 100, billion barrel of oil equivalents we use of coal, oil and natural gas

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every year, roughly when they combine with machines, do the work of around 500 billion humans.

[00:20:54] So if we leave those or start to use less of them. Even if we add some renewable energy, it has big implications for our financial markets, our economy, our convenience, our comfort. How have you, in the last six years, broadened your, awareness of the other challenges that we face? There's politics, there's poverty, there's polarization, there's economic things.

[00:21:21] what are your thoughts on all that?

[00:21:23] **Xiye Bastida:** This is probably the most critical PO points and questions of our time because yes, historically fossil fuel development and growth has been like in a strictly linked to economic growth. And I think it was two or three years ago that for the first time, GDP growth in the US was not tied to fossil fuel expansion.

[00:21:44] And so to show that economic growth is possible without the increase of fossil fuel usage is really important. but then another thing is that we really need to question. How much more can we grow in a finite planet and redefining that growth and what that growth looks like and our measures for success.

[00:22:05] And this is like the first thing that, what any type of person who is in any sort of economic activism, if that's even a thing, is like, why are we defining our success with GDP when we could be defining our success with like gross domestic happiness or all of these, like the ecosystem services that your, community for example, provides.

[00:22:28] And this is something that indigenous communities have had to get really smart about because our communities are deemed poor under the standards of the World Bank because we probably make like less than \$1 a day.

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But the wealth that we have, the ecological wealth that we have, the knowledge that we have,

[00:22:46] **Nate Hagens:** and

[00:22:47] **Xiye Bastida:** the social capital,

[00:22:48] the enjoyment, like if you're gonna measure success by enjoyment, relationality, knowledge sharing.

[00:22:57] Gimme those metrics to show that the wealthiest communities are those who live closer to the land and those who are allowed to keep their practices without the worry of being poisoned by Mercury because of the energy transition, or oil because of an oil spill. And so that's been like, I think a lot of where my work has been on is shifting the narrative of what is success?

[00:23:21] What is like the appropriate amount of growth? Why are we obsessed with growth when the Mother Earth has been so wise in the in making systems work, circularly in seasons in a way that is like beautiful and has a cadence. And our duty is to. Tap into that cadence and start like, stop trying to rush the earth in a way that is burning us out.

[00:23:49] Right.

[00:23:49] **Nate Hagens:** No wonder our mutual friends introduced us because your last paragraph is exactly how I feel. so you mentioned you're part of the indigenous, OMI community and spent your early childhood growing up in Mexico. How, do you think that cultural background, in addition to what you just shared, impacted your approach to all this climate work and, advocacy?

[00:24:14] **Xiye Bastida:** I think the first thing we need to recognize is that the types of colonization across indigenous communities in the world were so

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different. And so in a lot of places there's still a lot of pain from colonization in indigenous communities. And I think in my case, we had been able to kind of get to a point.

[00:24:35] Healing where we can actually practice the depths of our knowledge and our traditions without holding so much of the pain that colonization leaves. And that takes generations to process. And so for me, and for a lot of people talking about indigenous rights and indigenous issues, and actually in the UN it's called the permanent form of indigenous issues, which drives me crazy because we shouldn't say that indigenous people should permanently be having issues.

[00:25:05] but anyways, I think the beauty, of the way in which I was raised was that I wasn't raised with all of our stories of pain. I was raised with all of the rich wisdom that our ancestors had been keeping and passing down and cultivating, and. I was taught how to connect with the earth, how to listen to the earth, how to ask the earth for permission, for guidance, for clarity.

[00:25:33] And every time I feel lost in any way, I go to at Mascal, which in our cosmology represents the womb of the earth. And it's like you are born again when you come out of the te Mescal, which is the sweat lodge in English. And for example, we have sacred spaces like, which is our volcano, where you have, like a crater that's a lagoon.

[00:25:57] And that's the closest we get of connecting the womb of the earth with the heart of the sky. And so it's sacred places like these that are energetic points for us, where we get so much of the clarity that is needed for this time, but also those places call on us to be protectors, to be stewards, to be guardians.

[00:26:18] And when you step in a place of guardianship and stewardship. A lot of the ego, if not all of the ego of I'm helping the world goes away. Because it's not about I'm helping the world. It's, it is our responsibility to be guardians, to be stewards. And what humbleness do you need to recognize that Mother Earth

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gives us everything that we need to thrive and honor, that we do have everything we need to thrive.

[00:26:44] We just need to be wise enough to live closer to the cadence of the earth. And this, like, I've learned so much, from my, dad, my grandparents, my family, about just different, small, different ways of seeing the world. Like instead of living from the earth, we should live with the earth. Like just little shifts that are so powerful, that they do really guide the way in which I show up in the world.

[00:27:11] **Nate Hagens:** Wow. so I understand that your family, and you grew up in a town called San Pedro Pec in Mexico. and you actually then had to leave because there was a drought followed by extreme flooding. So what was it like to be personally impacted by extreme weather as you were learning about climate change in the broader systemic sense?

[00:27:39] **Xiye Bastida:** It was a very intense moment for me because, the, flooding, what it did was it made the river kind of. Go out of, its bank, right? The water over spilled everywhere. And that river is one of the most polluted rivers in Mexico. Elma, the Lerma River, because we are outside of Mexico City, maybe like in the next valley.

[00:28:08] So Mexico City is a huge valley. There's mountains. And then in the next valley is a Toluca Valley, and it's one of the largest industrial sectors in the country where we have over like 200 factories, over 2000 illegal wells from factories taking water from the aquifer and all of the, it's farm pharmaceuticals, it's food, it's textile, auto parts.

[00:28:34] All of that goes into the river. So the river is declared today dead. And that's a river that my dad used to bath in. And so in one generation for the river to go from a source of life. To a place of death is something that breaks the spirit of a community so much and not just mine, right? It's, there's like many communities around that depended on this river for everything.

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[00:29:00] And so that one day flooding happened, the pollutants from the river came into our town. And so the question was not just like, what's the water gonna do, but are people gonna get sick? Are we going to get skin rashes? Are we, there's like high levels of lead. Are the kids gonna be okay? There's high levels of, different, types of sicknesses and skin diseases in my community because of the pollutants.

[00:29:29] And a lot of families, they don't even bring their kids out of their homes because they're ashamed of people seeing them, like kids with down syndrome and other things that are caused because of the, polluted environment. So I understood that my community was a sacrifice zone. I understood that my community was a place that was forgotten by our systems and seen as expendable and, oh my god, sorry.

[00:29:54] It's like gets me emotional because I just can't understand how a place that, you know, gave us everything for life. Then some people decided, you know what? We don't care about them. And so my dream is for that river to be clean. My dream is that if another heavy rain comes, we're not scared of the water.

[00:30:19] and I want to realize that dream in my lifetime.

[00:30:22] **Nate Hagens:** I fully support you in that dream. What, is the, the land like there in, in that town of San Pedro Tilak? Like what are some of the animals or birds or trees or can you describe what that is like or was like,

[00:30:39] **Xiye Bastida:** so we have something called Las Nega, which is a wetland.

[00:30:44] It's the largest wetland outside of such miracle. Like near in the central, in Central Mexico. So Ami is known for like having all of these chins and the, and just this like huge amount of biodiversity in the south of Mexico city, where at

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historically, that the chins, which is a way of agriculture as well fed over 200,000 people based on historical records.

[00:31:15] so the chin ampas are incredible and we have the, like a similar type of ecosystem in, the tall Luca Valley where we have aloes and we have ducks and ales and all this type of long grass called that we weave. And that's part of our cultural practices that my grandfather taught me. And it's not, we went make mats and bags, but also like, like, little figures and things.

[00:31:44] And that was the identity. If not like, it's a, an identity that is being rescued in my community, of going to the lagoon, taking out the ula, drying it, teaching the kids how to weave it. we have frogs like we have. All sorts of incredible biodiversity. and we have a, legend on agenda that there's a mermaid, a siren that came to that valley and she decided to go into this little, like puddle pond of water.

[00:32:18] And when she started brushing her hair, all of the life of the wetland came from it and the water came and then all of the different, yeah, animals and plants like started to emerge and taking care of the wetland is taking care of her spirit. So we do offerings, to her and she's called like the mother of the water.

[00:32:42] And so that's. Like, that's when an example of how our philosophy, our tradition, our spirituality is so tied with the respect that we have through our ecosystems. So if we respect the deity, then we obviously also respect all of the beings that are under the protection of the deity.

[00:32:59] **Nate Hagens:** When you're speaking, it reminded me of that scene from the Disney movie, Fantasia, with that, little Sprite flying about the Elks antlers, like something similar.

[00:33:10] let me ask you this. So in all of your meetings with young people that care about these things around the world, did you find similar stories from people

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in other countries on the importance of the land and some of these legends? And did the story that you're telling me today, did that rhyme with other young people around the world that you've become friends with?

[00:33:31] **Xiye Bastida:** I would say yes, but mostly if the youth are not from urban centers, and this is something that I see over and over again that the youth in urban Centers in cities, they feel very disconnected from their identities and they, feel like they don't have roots as much as the indigenous used to. Like, I have friends, from indigenous friends from Indonesia, from Peru, from Ecuador, from Brazil, even from like certain parts of.

[00:34:05] Like the Sammy in, in certain parts of Europe. And it's beautiful that so many of our stories are so similar and maybe not the stories, but the lessons in the stories are very similar and the creation stories are very similar.

[00:34:21] **Nate Hagens:** It, kind of makes you think that there's a robustness and a truth to that.

[00:34:25] Like if yes, if it was just you saying these things, that would be one thing. But if they're rhyming with all the people who grew up in rural settings around the world in different countries, there's something really powerful about that. I think a

[00:34:38] **Xiye Bastida:** hundred percent. And I just recently went to, Tonga, which is, one of the islands in the Pacific and their relationship and their wisdom that people who live near the ocean have to the ocean.

[00:34:52] Incredible. I mean, I like the, way I feel about a mountain or a river is like the way they feel about their ocean. And I've learned so much from ocean wisdom and I, there's been a lot of conversation in the climate space about bringing the ocean in, and that means bringing in the voice of Pacific Islanders, the voice of what they call big ocean nations, which I love.

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[00:35:14] Instead of calling them small island states, big ocean nations. And that's like when the wisdom comes through, that is when truth comes through. I think you're absolutely right because if we have so many similarities of people who've observed the earth and learned from the earth, there has to be a truth in the fact that without knowing each other, we all arrive to similar conclusions.

[00:35:38] And like what I was mentioning about the youth who live in cities who feel disconnected from that. That's also where most of the activism comes from because it's where a lot of the information is flowing and most of the information is in English, which means that the people who can learn English are usually in the global North orange in and big cities.

[00:35:55] So that's where the disconnect is with a lot of the youth who are grounded in wisdom, the youth who have the ability to be activists. And then that's where the bridges come in and are so important. And so I see myself as one of those bridges of how can we bring in the wisdom of indigenous youth with all of the resources and access and, ability of mobilization of the youth in the global north or in cities, and bridge that to make sure that we have a unified fight where all of our skills are coming together and we can share wisdom, but we can also learn.

[00:36:31] Like the tactics that work, how then we like, you know, mobilize this influence a policy over there. and that's, I think where a lot of our un top power is and that we're working on.

[00:36:41] **Nate Hagens:** That's great. so it's, like we said earlier, it's six years now since you, you're, 300,000 people mobilization New York City.

[00:36:54] Since then, lots have happened in the world. The rise of COVID, accelerating geopolitical conflicts and wars and increasing economic pressures, in the world, and much of the momentum of the youth climate movement has kind of faded during that time. And I would guess that most of your original

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cohort are now young adults, not teenagers with jobs and economic responsibilities.

[00:37:20] And how have these changes impacted your work and, how do you think the main work and strategy of being more than a climate activist, I mean, that's shorthand for trying to have a right relationship with Earth as humans. how has this changed, in the last six years in, in your opinion?

[00:37:39] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, I mean, I have, I wouldn't say lost, but.

[00:37:44] Kind of lost contact with is probably a more appropriate term with so many of the people that I organized with in high school because they had to go to college and then they got jobs and then they need to pay rent and

[00:37:56] **Nate Hagens:** mm-hmm.

[00:37:57] **Xiye Bastida:** Advance in their careers. I mean, the system in which we're living in, where living is so expensive is definitely, if you ask youth activists, what is your number one constraint?

[00:38:10] Everybody is gonna say money, funding, like life, like being able to live.

[00:38:17] **Nate Hagens:** It's almost like being. Ecologically aware and being 16, 17, or 18 is a sweet spot in our global economy now, because you're not sucked into the vortex of the economic Superorganism and bosses and mortgage payments and all those things, but you can see and articulate the truth of our situation.

[00:38:40] **Xiye Bastida:** Mm-hmm.

[00:38:41] **Nate Hagens:** So do you have hope for gaining that momentum back again and what would that look like among all the other crises facing humanity at this moment?

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[00:38:48] **Xiye Bastida:** I mean, I don't think we'll get that momentum back, because it's. We're not in the same time that we were at. And I think that's okay.

[00:39:00] Like I don't think that's the only measure of success we can have, like the momentum in the streets of people being everywhere. And we have seen that, for example, in Beem there was a huge march, like tens of thousands of people walking, towards the cop. And we saw that march in Glasgow as well. And in all of these cops we see mass mobilizations, and we see mass mobilizations for other things as well.

[00:39:23] There's this like Gen Z protest going on around the world to call out corrupt governments. and so I think the power of mobilizing people is never gonna go away and people will show up for the things that are most, you know, contentious, I think for climate. It won't happen again because I think the climate protest did what they needed to do.

[00:39:49] It woke up so many people, it brought climate on the agenda like never before. I now meet people working on climate from all sectors, whether I agree with their work or not. Everybody has a climate agenda, even if they deny it like they do, right? Because there's no other option. Because we are seeing a crisis, where we need to adapt, where we need to respond to disasters.

[00:40:13] It's happening. And so I think we are now in that moment where the movement go to the peak, and now we're seeing the fruits of the movement and the people who still consider themselves activists and mobilizers. We need to be smart about how we direct that flow of all the people from their professional careers who are coming into this space.

[00:40:32] And that looks like us sitting on advisory boards. Like I sit in like. Seven advisory boards, like it looks like the planetary guardians being a thing, and the planetary boundaries being funded. It looks like the cops actually having the

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attention that they deserve. And, countries being able to send, you know, their delegations and their end, the national determined contributions.

[00:40:55] It looks like the ICJ win, where countries have no responsibility for, the impacts of the climate crisis. So I think we are in that moment where we're seeing the fruits of the movement. I think the question is how can we direct that? How fast can we fund it? And that's why a lot of us are now economists talking about like.

[00:41:20] Canceling debt and switching debt for nature. And like all of these things, there's this huge movement called Debt for Climate, where they're advocating for the cancellation of the debt of the global south, especially illegitimate debt, meaning debt that, for example, money was lent to Colombia for a project, but the money was stolen.

[00:41:37] So it's AEG legitimate debt because it wasn't used for the project that it was said it was used for. And debt has been canceled before many times. Right? So it's like if we can get these things to. So many things can be achieved. So we're like focusing on very specific economic things now, and it's like you're not gonna have a big platform off of that.

[00:42:03] **Nate Hagens:** When you say we, and of course I'll preface this question by the obvious, preface, which is I'm an old white guy in the United States talking to a young indigenous woman in Mexico, but the United States is kind of going off its own route now, and the rest of the world, at least on climate, in the environment, is kind of taking up the slack and, being a voice for these things.

[00:42:31] I'm not happy about that. but how do you see, as someone who went to college, I believe in the United States, but now you live in Mexico, what are your thoughts on that?

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[00:42:43] **Xiye Bastida:** I would say that the world ising. Maybe because the US is so descent, if, I dunno if that's a word, but the United States is kind of going off on a tangent and that is bringing a lot of the world together.

[00:42:59] something that I think is really, important piece of data is that the United States is the most polarized country in terms of climate denialism and just climate in general with a 45%, like polarization rate. And that is a clear outlier. Every other country in the world,

[00:43:20] **Nate Hagens:** I've seen that too.

[00:43:21] And, Australia is, number two. But beyond that, it's a large drop. What's it like in Mexico?

[00:43:27] **Xiye Bastida:** The four top four countries who are most polarized on climate are also the four global north countries whose emissions have grown the most since the Paris Agreement. So we're seeing a clear link between denialism, polarization and continued investment in fossil fuels.

[00:43:43] And that for me feels like obviously manipulating public narrative to make sure that fossil fuel expansion can still be ongoing, in the United States, Canada, Australia and Norway. And it's those like for countries who are part of the global north who need to pay their debts to the global south, who have the historical responsibility of emissions, who have the resources to face out first.

[00:44:07] And so I, it is just a very interesting observation, but. What I see is we shouldn't think that the rates of polarization are kind of the path forward for all the other countries. 'cause usually that's what we think, like that's a trend that we're all gonna follow. But the, in Mexico, I think it's like 3%.

[00:44:27] I'm gonna make sure, but in most of the countries, below top 10, it's single low digits of polarization. I mean, people are not debating

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[00:44:37] **Nate Hagens:** if, you talk to people in Mexico City or, wherever you are now, people that you don't know, are they generally aware that climate change is a thing and yes, things are happening and things are hotter and there are, higher standard deviation of weather events.

[00:44:51] I mean, is it just like commonly more commonly accepted there than in the us?

[00:44:56] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, yeah. A hundred percent.

[00:44:58] **Nate Hagens:** Okay.

[00:44:58] **Xiye Bastida:** I mean, the news, for example, in Indonesia, I spent almost a month in Indonesia. It's like there's a climate disaster and this is, you know, the floods are happening because like, there's no.

[00:45:12] Wishy-washy things. here I'm seeing Mexico's polarization rate is about 5%, and then the top four USA Norway, Canada, and Australia, they're all 30%. And then the US is like almost 50% polarization rate. And it's the tactic that the fossil fuel industry has used of debating the reality of the climate crisis as a way to keep producing.

[00:45:38] And if we know that, then we can have a tactic on how to make sure that people are not debating facts. And I know that's a big conversation in the US and a hard one because disinformation is very ramp rampant, but I think we can like fix it.

[00:45:58] **Nate Hagens:** You're just so articulate. I am. I'm just so impressed by you.

[00:46:02] Are you ever, I mean, what do you wanna do in 10 years? do you ever think about it or are you just going one month at a time?

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[00:46:09] **Xiye Bastida:** I have. Huge dreams, and I think that's good. It's, I don't really know where I'll be, but I wanna be doing something great. I have run my nonprofit for five years and I have 17 employees all under 30.

[00:46:28] **Nate Hagens:** Whoa. That's awesome.

[00:46:32] **Xiye Bastida:** So,

[00:46:33] **Nate Hagens:** and what does your nonprofit do again and what's the name of it?

[00:46:37] **Xiye Bastida:** My nonprofit's name is Rares Initiative and we do resource distribution for activists in the global south, specifically for ecosystem restoration. We do advocacy and impact at climate conferences. We do a connection with indigenous movements and youth to movements in the global north.

[00:46:56] And, we focus a lot on storytelling and narrative shift. So we have a documentary coming out called The Way of the Whale Next Year, which is a future documentary about my story following the gray whales from Mexico to the Arctic. And I will say one of the things, because you asked about jobs and responsibilities and things, it's like, if one of my goals can be that I'm providing a living wage to 17 youth across the world, that is one huge example that it can be done.

[00:47:27] That activism doesn't have to be. You go hungry, it can be, you get paid for the work that you do because the work that you do is important and the fossil fuel lobbyists are getting paid. You can also be paid. Yeah. And obviously they're getting paid a lot more. so that's one of my fears of change. If it doesn't exist, I build it and I build it the way I would like to live in the future.

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[00:47:52] 'cause I'm practicing the future today and having a youth led organization that has a living wage for everybody involved, where one of our main projects is we have 75 grantees across the world. That is something I'm insanely proud of

[00:48:08] **Nate Hagens:** and you should be. so let's talk about that. Those you provide small scale grants to communities who are on the frontline of our warming planet.

[00:48:17] How, do you select those, the recipients of these grants? And are there any particular success stories that you're able to share so far?

[00:48:26] **Xiye Bastida:** so the process is very, like how would you call it? we have a very strict process because we know that money is in incredibly contentious and you have to be really responsible about money.

[00:48:42] And not a lot of youth organizations get money. Youth get 0.76% of all climate philanthropy, which is 2% of global philanthropy. So we get like the drop in the bucket of the drop in the bucket. The crumb or the crumb?

[00:48:55] **Nate Hagens:** How do you define youth? Like under 30,

[00:48:57] **Xiye Bastida:** under 35.

[00:48:58] **Nate Hagens:** Okay.

[00:48:59] **Xiye Bastida:** Youth led organizations. Yeah. Which under 35 is still.

[00:49:03] Not to youth, but it's okay. That's the UN definition. Yeah.

[00:49:06] **Nate Hagens:** Wow. I didn't know that. That's, a really striking stat.

[00:49:10] **Xiye Bastida:** Mm-hmm.

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[00:49:11] **Nate Hagens:** And given how much of this century is going to be lived in by youth, it's also not too fair.

[00:49:18] **Xiye Bastida:** Exactly. And it's also the most effective ca climate campaigning has come from youth from, so the biggest narrative shift, the biggest awakening, so socially, societally, has come from the youth movement, so it's.

[00:49:34] Flat out unfair that the people building the future are massively under-resourced. And so what we do is we have a open call for anybody in the world who is a youth activist and has a project to apply to a grant. We give grants from 10, from \$5,000 to \$20,000. And it's based on the scope of the project.

[00:49:57] So if it's an individual, project, if it's like a ecosystem restoration project, if it's like taking care of your ecosystem and the project has to be intersectional, so you have to intersect it with either gender justice, racial justice, intergenerational justice, it has to be community focused and community led.

[00:50:18] and. We also prioritize those who have never received grants before because we know that getting funding is extremely hard when you don't have any precedents. So a high, like over 50% of our grants go to people who've never gotten grants before or are getting like their first or second grants ever.

[00:50:34] 'cause we wanna help them build the skills to receive grants, to apply to grants, but also the history that they have been able to use the money. and so we do a lot of capacity building, skills building. We have a mentorship, like pro program where we pair the grantees with some of us in the organization to accompany them in the process.

[00:50:58] give them like all of these, templates for reporting because we know reporting is really difficult. Our dream is that we don't have to depend on the

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philanthropic sector, but we're not there yet and we're all It's like regranting of probably the same five foundations, but that's a system that we have right now.

[00:51:20] And so I think that it's like how do we disrupt that system the most that we can while we are there and pushing foundations to do things like participatory grant making, which is like a group gets together and then they all receive the grant so there's less risk, because that's the favorite word of philanthropy today is risk.

[00:51:39] It's too risky. It's too scary. And so we need to de-risk that. And Wes Initiative, we are one of the largest youth to youth free grantors in the world. And so. It's a big responsibility to show that it is possible that we can get the money to use that. The pro projects work. We have projects, for example, that we've supported in Haiti where somebody was able to build a school to train youth on agro ecology.

[00:52:10] or we've supported projects in Tanzania for coral restoration or, for example, this organization in Argentina that has gotten several laws passed for climate education across all of Argentina. So anything from advocacy to underground.

[00:52:25] **Nate Hagens:** It's impressive. my own, view is there's a sea change, no pun intended, coming in this space.

[00:52:34] As more philanthropists or people that have amassed large digital claims on biophysical reality, start to recognize that, oh my gosh, we are in a systemic, ecological, planetary crisis. And the first thing to know is it's not their fault. It's part of this metabolism, but once they become aware of it, it is their responsibility because they have higher degrees of freedom than the average person that doesn't have a lot of recourse.

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[00:53:03] And number two is we need to widen the boundary of the definition of capital from just finance and dollars to the wellbeing of communities to heal, to ecosystems, to some of the things you mentioned, coral restoration and training people on agroforestry. We need to widen how we think about returns on capital.

[00:53:24] So to have a youth-led model is, and lots of 'em, is, a very important first step. So you, mentioned a movie, a documentary titled The Way of the Whale that you're working on, that I think you followed the Gray Whales migration from Mexico to the Arctic Ocean. And the movie kind of talks about the lessons you've learned following their journey.

[00:53:49] I don't think the documentary is released yet, but would you be able to share one or two of those learnings, that you had?

[00:53:57] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, of course. So the documentary will be released in the spring of 2026. We're very excited. and some of the lessons that I learned, well first is in part of the story is that the former environment Minister of Mexico, Julia Carrabas, who was the first environment minister of Mexico, she takes me to Laguna Ignacio and she tells me that Mitsubishi wanted to open a salt mine there.

[00:54:26] And that would've destroyed the ecosystem for whales, for the birthing side of whales, but not just whales. All of the other animals and plants that depend on that ecosystem and the people also fish there. And so that moment, that happened almost like over 20 years ago, it was an example of how the local community, the government agencies, international NGOs, all came together to protect that area to make sure that a company, foreign company couldn't come and destroy the habitat.

[00:55:01] And that is one of the big lessons that I learned, and that is explaining the film about how we have stories of success. Collaboration is the key, like mult. Getting together with the people who sometimes you are fighting because the

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environment minister is not giving you what you want, da. But then there's this external factor.

[00:55:21] You get together and you defend. And the other thing that I learned is just the wisdom of whales. I mean, I have never been so, so struck by the wisdom of another being in a way that is so engulfing that you don't even have words to explain. I mean, that's been the most incredible experiences of my life.

[00:55:44] To be on a little boat. And then a mother whale brings her calf to play with you for 30 minutes. And the calf is just rejoicing of having somebody scratch their head or their face and knowing that all that matters really for them, I think is just the love that they have for their children. And. The ocean

[00:56:08] **Nate Hagens:** in, the book that DJ White and I wrote for college students when I taught, reality 101, we referred to, whales and Dolphins as indigenous peoples because they have cultures and conscious minds.

[00:56:24] We just don't know what they're saying or thinking. but they are conscious earth life that we take for granted. I,

[00:56:32] **Xiye Bastida:** yeah.

[00:56:33] **Nate Hagens:** I've never been in, I've never seen a whale in live. so I'm You

[00:56:38] **Xiye Bastida:** have to,

[00:56:39] **Nate Hagens:** yeah. Yeah. I imagine it, it's just a profound grounding of how we're related to the nieces, nephews, cousins in nature were related to everything and.

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[00:56:53] I've been saying this recently, we have to move from apex predators to apex custodians as a species. And that's the conversation that you're helping, un unfold. I think people, a lot of people, not everyone, maybe especially like you said, urban people, but a lot of people feel it. They feel the truth of what you're saying.

[00:57:15] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah.

[00:57:15] **Nate Hagens:** So, I don't know. There's not easy answers as I'm sure you're aware. And, for we're taking more than our share, we're taking around 40% of the net primary productivity that the sun and the, soil provide to humans. And we're taking all of the ancient productivity, we're eating our ancestors to use your words.

[00:57:37] and so there's, the transition is not gonna be easy. But, I, I do think recognizing this kinship with other species is really important.

[00:57:52] **Xiye Bastida:** I totally agree. There's a statistic that I saw recently saying that human connection to nature has decreased by 60% from the 18 hundreds. And I think one of the easy answers is reconnecting to nature.

[00:58:06] there's so many things that we don't have the answers for, that nature has the answers for. My grandma used to say that nature is so wise that if there's a sickness coming or a plant that is poisonous or whatever the antidote will be right next to it. That's what nature teaches us, right? If there's something coming to the community, nature will bring the antidote.

[00:58:32] she also just taught me so much about the, how the moon connects with the cycles of the rain and then that dictates the harvest and it really is all there. So I think that's. Like my call to action to people is, what is nature telling you? What can you learn from nature?

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[00:58:56] **Nate Hagens:** One thing that nature's telling me is the place and time for billions of humans is spread out over a long period of time.

[00:59:05] And I don't know how long the planet can support 8 billion humans aspiring to live like the global North and the global north continuing to consume at the throughput. We are. the whole Earth is got a metabolism of 19 trillion watts running, that's 190 billion, 100 watt light bulbs turned on 24/7.

[00:59:30] That's just not sustainable, whether it's renewable or non-renewable. that also is part of the, conversation.

[00:59:37] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah. Yeah. And I think what you said is key. It's not necessarily the amount of people, it's the amount of people.

[00:59:44] **Nate Hagens:** And

[00:59:45] **Xiye Bastida:** the consumption. Yeah, the consumption rate, the, aspiration that's been also imposed, right?

[00:59:51] Because it's like the aspiration to live a certain way. It's not like people in the forest wanted to have a mansion and to their cars. Exactly. It was imposed. And so it's part of the solutions is also reclaiming and asking the question, what's enough, what's good? And that's something that we talk a lot about in indigenous cosmology.

[01:00:13] Not just asking what's better, because that's the question of the global north. What's better? What's more, what's faster? Our question is what is good? And when you define what is good, you can actually arrive to satisfaction and fulfillment. And that's what, to be honest, like the capitalist system is banking on you to never arrive to so that you can always want more.

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[01:00:36] And then fuel the system. If we can answer what is good for you, you have your life figured out.

[01:00:43] **Nate Hagens:** I am speechless, which doesn't happen often for me. what is good, not what is better. Yeah. that's right. So Xiye, I, understand you've recently put together a framework, that I think you refer to as tools for hope for those working on all these seemingly impossible issues in our modern world.

[01:01:06] Can you explain what these tools are and how they help you personally stay motivated doing all this hard work?

[01:01:13] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, so, I had the privilege of giving a TED Talk this year, and it was really hard to think, what do I have to say to the world, right? So that's a hard question. in just in general. And then I decided that it wasn't gonna be a lecture about how the climate crisis is like ravaging and how we need to act and how we need to be, you know, like everything that we're not being, I think.

[01:01:42] What was needed in that moment was what can we do to keep the fire alive? And that's how I define hope. I think it's, the first part of my talk was saying that hope is such a misused and almost abused term, and it's, people talk about it, but we don't really, I think, give it the right definition. And for me, hope is the fire, the sacred fire that you nurture and then that fire guides you.

[01:02:13] And taking care of hope is taking care of that fire. and in indigenous communities, in my community, the elders will ask me, how's your fire? And that doesn't mean like, how are you doing emotionally, physically? That's like, how's your, determination? How's your drive, how's your clarity? It's much deeper than the first three layers, like physical, emotional, spiritual, it's like.

[01:02:40] The thing inside you that really drives you and to feed that fire, to feed that hope. there's certain things that I've thought about it for a long time. One of them is doing things from a place of love rather than rage. 'cause if you feed your

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fire with rage, you will have an angry, uncontrollable fire that can be more destructive than nurturing a fire with love is the fire that regenerates.

[01:03:08] It's a fire that you use for slow burning, for then life to command you. and doing an activism from love is so much harder than doing it from rage because when you do it from deep love, oof, you know, then other tools for hope that I spoke about, were. Not being obsessed with leaving your mark. This is how it came to this conclusion.

[01:03:36] I was walking on a beach, and I realized that with every step you left a footprint and then the harder you stepped, the deeper the footprint and the, you know, the kinder you stepped, it would kind of go away. And it got me thinking about how we're always told that we should live a mark in the world, that we should live that footprint in the world, that people should know who you are and you have to have a legacy.

[01:04:03] But if we're so obsessed with that, we will just sink in the sand. We will just sink and never arrive to your destination. But if you walk softer with kindness, not obsessed with living the mark, but still living at trail, you'll arrive to your destination and you will not sink in descent. And that is, again, a practice of humbleness, of how.

[01:04:30] Do I get to where I need to be and fulfill my purpose, which is more important than people knowing that I did it. And so that is another thing that fuels my fire, knowing that my focus is over there and not in every step that I take. and then the last one, I'm trying to remember exactly what it was, but I think it was something around intergenerational relationships and really believing that youth have so much of the energy that is needed for the turnover of the societal shift that we need.

[01:05:10] And we need to recognize the wisdom of our elders, that we are so naive sometimes to recognize that wisdom is very sacred and valuable. And so

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having that intergenerational conversations. It's one of our most important solutions, especially in the global north, where intergenerational relationships are so institutionalized around fellowships and mentorships.

[01:05:34] And how do you make them communal and community-based?

[01:05:39] **Nate Hagens:** A lot of older people in the climate movement or just people that care about the future, they say that the youth like you give them so much hope. what do you think about that? does that put pressure on you or like how does that dynamic land with you?

[01:05:59] **Xiye Bastida:** Oof. That's why I start my to saying I don't like the word hope. 'cause I'm always told that I. Give people hope, but

[01:06:05] **Nate Hagens:** you give me hope. But, it's not related to your age. It's your fire.

[01:06:10] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah. and what I think is like, how can you, instead of just receiving the hope, be inspired to give hope back?

[01:06:19] **Nate Hagens:** Mm-hmm.

[01:06:19] **Xiye Bastida:** There was a, dinner that I went to and this like business woman, CEO of some big company was talking and she said, I was like, oh my God, another CEO who's gonna talk to us? You know? And she said, my responsibility to the youth movement is to give them hope back. And I had never felt such relief from a corporate like spokespeople before because I realized that so much of my energy went into inspiring people, that they can be the change.

[01:06:54] But I forgot that I needed to be inspired too, by people being inspired by us. And then I talk about it as. See my fire and mirror it, reflect it, give it back so that we can keep being mirrors of each other and then build this great thing.

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So that's how I feel about it. I think it's totally fine for people to have hope in us, but then ask yourself, how do you give the hope back to the youth?

[01:07:22] **Nate Hagens:** Reflecting that back. I love that. I love that. So in your recent, Ted talk I watched and you made the distinction between fighting against something compared to fighting for something. So why is that difference between those two things so important to you and I guess a follow-up is what are you fighting for ultimately?

[01:07:42] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, that's, kind of similar to the rage and love. Okay.

[01:07:46] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah.

[01:07:47] **Xiye Bastida:** because fighting against something can come from rage. Like, yeah, I hate that system and I'm gonna fight against it. And a really interesting example is fossil fuels. I was challenged to love fossil fuels because fossil fuels are our ancestors.

[01:08:04] Hundreds of millions of years of plankton and plant matter compressed together under the earth that we are disturbing. So we should actually live our ancestors to rest instead of extracting them and burning them mindlessly. When you push your imagination and the boundaries of your understanding to realize that what's harmful is not the things, but the system that has made those things harmful, your worldview is so redirected.

[01:08:36] And so what I focus now on is what do I want to build? And that's why I started Rio Earth Initiative because I was tired also of just marching against things and I wanted to propose, and I wanted to show that it's possible to trust youth to have projects implemented by youth that are regenerating the world.

[01:08:56] And to be honest, deep conversations like these, we have them. And those are the most beautiful things that come out of our meetings. Like just

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knowing that we are maturing spiritually. 'cause that's the type of generation that I wanna grow up with. Not people just who are smart, but people who are wise.

[01:09:20] And if we get there, I think we can do so much good.

[01:09:23] **Nate Hagens:** I increasingly say the energy transition is not about what type of energy we use, but about our relationships with energy and consumption, our relationship with each other, our relationships with the natural world. It's going to happen. The real change is gonna come from a change in consciousness and awareness.

[01:09:42] we need the facts and the engineers and the architects, but this deeper feeling and recognition I think has to lead, what you are clearly doing. So before I get to closing questions, just on your work and, how, inspiring it is, do you have any advice for anyone listening to this, irrespective of their age, young or old, who's interested in following your ambitious footsteps by pushing for better planetary futures?

[01:10:12] What would you say?

[01:10:13] **Xiye Bastida:** I think instead of thinking what are the three things that I can do better, I would really ask people or not better. Good. ask people to think how they can do everything different. And I know that's a big ask, but sometimes changing your mindset is easier than changing your habits.

[01:10:34] Changing habits takes a lot of discipline, but changing your mindset can be done in like one experience, one awakening, one epiphany. And in order to get to that shift of mindset, you need to tap into. The message is that the earth is giving. So try to arrive to that place where your mindset shifts by connecting to the earth.

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[01:11:02] And when that happens, everything else changes out of that, shift your habits, change the way in which you shop in the world, change the way in which you work, your purpose changes. My dream is that everybody can arrive to that point where they feel like they had the mindset shift needed for our times.

[01:11:20] **Nate Hagens:** So what can someone listening or viewing this episode do specifically now, today, this week, this month, to at least directionally help address the things that you've brought up, in this podcast? Or do you think it's all up to politicians and leaders? and, the economic system? Ultimately?

[01:11:41] **Xiye Bastida:** I think that, like, I'm never gonna blame individuals for anything because we are living in a system that.

[01:11:51] Wants you to be blamed individually. and we have so many examples of that from companies telling you to recycle when they're the ones producing the plastic or the fossil fuel industry coming up with the term carbon footprint. So we don't track theirs on and on. BP was the one who came up with the term covered footprint.

[01:12:12] And so what I will say that you can do is know that we can reclaim power and reclaim power. Looks like putting yourself in the environment where you feel empowered to not only learn, but be able to shape that environment. And that looks like stewardship. That looks like. Maybe becoming an ambassador for something or starting a club of some sorts or, starting a community where you talk about these things.

[01:12:48] I heard somebody say one time, I think it was Catherine, she said the climate crisis is a communications crisis, and if it's a communications crisis is a crisis of us not talking to each other enough about it. So talk about it, show up with. Love, clarity, intent.

[01:13:08] **Nate Hagens:** And how would you change that advice?

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[01:13:10] Or do you have any specific recommendations for young humans, in their mid to late teens or early twenties your age who become aware of not only climate and the environmental constraints, but the entire human predicament, today, what, sort of advice would do you give or would you give,

[01:13:31] **Xiye Bastida:** I would say find your organizing community.

[01:13:34] Like my life became so much better when I started to have the 3, 4, 5, 10 people that I organized with. And it's anywhere from becoming friends to having people who are in your same wavelength, who you can share space with, and also doing really cool stuff, like cool workshops or strikes or marches when you find your people, I mean.

[01:13:58] Everything is possible.

[01:13:59] **Nate Hagens:** I totally agree. I have several groups of those people and I could no way do this work without them. What do you do for fun, by the way? Or are you working like 68 hour weeks? What, what? are your pastimes?

[01:14:12] **Xiye Bastida:** Not anymore. I have burned out already, so I learned the hard way.

[01:14:16] **Nate Hagens:** Yeah.

[01:14:16] It's a marathon, not a sprint for sure.

[01:14:18] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah. I love like rock climbing, bouldering. I love reading. I love sitting on my balcony and reading a good book. I love going for coffee. Like I know I could make coffee at home, but going for coffee is. Experience, meditative experience for me. I love hanging out with my non climate friends and turning them into climate friends and then hanging out with my climate friends and ignoring the climate crisis while we're together.

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[01:14:53] I travel a lot because of my work. So this year I was in 15 countries and had the most incredible experiences from swimming with whales, with Sylvia Earl in Tonga to going to the Amazon rainforest with KU community to going into the deep of the Amazon rainforest with indigenous communities in near be.

[01:15:17] And so I'm so grateful that I get to see the world and my, I want to share that view with people because I do consider myself a global citizen with very deep roots in Mexico.

[01:15:32] **Nate Hagens:** What do you care most about in the world? Yeah.

[01:15:36] **Xiye Bastida:** Ooh. that's a hard question. I think what I care most about in the world is our spiritual health and our groundedness and our spiritual protection from the people that, that I love my own.

[01:15:53] And then I wish that upon everybody because I think, like my dad once told me, if we don't take care of ourselves spiritually, you cannot take care of the world. And that taught me that my responsibility is not only to take care of myself, but take care of my loved ones so that we can then have that output to the world.

[01:16:19] and I think maybe that leads me to the thing that I care the most about is. Transformation.

[01:16:25] **Nate Hagens:** What are you most concerned about in the coming decade, or what are you most hopeful about in the coming decade?

[01:16:32] **Xiye Bastida:** What I'm most concerned about is the impact that AI and technology can have in our connection with the earth, each other and our relationships, our communication, our media.

[01:16:44] I'm scared of ai, what do they call it? Like AI blobs or what, whatever

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[01:16:52] **Nate Hagens:** blobs. We, could just leave it at that. artificial super intelligence or chatbots or what were you

[01:17:00] **Xiye Bastida:** Yeah, like chatbots, also artificial a GI like all of those things. The investments in data centers. The energy consumption.

[01:17:09] Yeah. Yeah. That those data centers represent

[01:17:11] **Nate Hagens:** not helping climate for sure.

[01:17:13] **Xiye Bastida:** Mm-hmm. Not at all. Like the regression that we're having from a lot of the tech companies under climate goals due to their investment and. Mega investments in ai and my fear is that will break up our social relationships.

[01:17:29] But my hope is that we will be able to recognize humanity and life and that's not gonna impact our ability to fight for life, which is really, what where my fight is for. And so that we will be able to not only differentiate, but then know what's more important and know that we don't need that, and have that as one of the reasons why we fight for climate justice and all beings in the world.

[01:18:00] **Nate Hagens:** If you could ma wave a magic wand and there was no personal recourse to your decision or your reputation or anything, what is one thing you would do to improve the future for humanity and the biosphere?

[01:18:17] **Xiye Bastida:** maybe I would get rid of.

[01:18:24] Like in all its ways from academic, from the first time I felt I need be better grades. Having, like I said, more, better, faster, and that being the standard, the gold standard, and really drive towards collaboration and co-creation.

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[01:18:45] **Nate Hagens:** I've thought a lot about that. I don't think we're gonna get rid of competition as a biological drive, but I think we can change what we compete for, in a big way.

[01:18:55] Yeah. And that's what this work is about. Are there any big questions or research things that you're really fired up about in, in coming years? Be before we close? Like if you were to come back in a year from now on this show, like what, is a topic that you're really passionate and curious about that is relevant to our future?

[01:19:15] **Xiye Bastida:** I'm so curious about the psychological reasons why people don't act when they know that there's a crisis. Why, if you know there's a crisis, don't act. And I might do my masters on that, by the way.

[01:19:29] **Nate Hagens:** Let's talk about that. I'd be happy to be on your committee because I've spent 25 years thinking about that longer than you've been alive.

[01:19:37] yeah. it's a huge list of factors. There's cognitive dissonance and loss aversion and, sunk cost of identity. And there's a lot of reasons and, fear and a lot of people have trauma from their lives and change is scary. So, this has been amazing. You are a, really special young human and thank you for all your work.

[01:20:03] now in the past and in the future. Do you have any closing comments for people watching who understand and agree with what you've laid out today?

[01:20:13] **Xiye Bastida:** I mean, I'm just very grateful for this space and grateful for those who listen and I hope that we get to. Cross paths. And I know that the people who are in it for the right reasons, we share such an incredible network, that we, even if we don't know each other, we know each other somehow and we know each other because of each other's thoughts that travel.

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[01:20:35] And I believe a lot in how my dad often says, and I quote my dad a lot, he says, we need to, we have the responsibility to think beautifully. And I just want to tell everybody that I, despite everything that we know, I still think beautifully every day about us, about Mother Earth, about our potential. And I think that's a gift that we can give each other.

[01:21:01] And so, just wanna thank everybody for being here and say that I believe in you. to be part of this change that we need.

[01:21:09] **Nate Hagens:** Xiye Bastida, thank you so much to be continued.

[01:21:12] **Xiye Bastida:** Thank you.

[01:21:14] **Nate Hagens:** If you'd like to learn more about this episode, please visit The Great Simplification dot com for references and show notes.

[01:21:22] From there, you can also join our Hilo community and subscribe to our Substack newsletter. This show is hosted by me, Nate Hagens, edited by No Troublemakers Media, and produced by Misty Stinnett and Lizzie Ani. Our production team also includes Leslie Ba Lutz Brady Hayan, Julia Maxwell, Gabriela Slayman, and Grace Brun.

[01:21:45] Thank you for listening, and we'll see you on the next episode.