

TAKE ACTION: MY BEAUTIFUL NICARAGUA



In *My Beautiful Nicaragua*, BYkids filmmaker Edelsin Linette Mendez showcases how the effects of climate change, such as increasing temperatures, erratic rainfall, and the resulting fungal epidemic known as “la roya” have affected her family’s generations-old coffee farm. Edelsin’s family, and many more like hers, have suffered losses up to 50% of their typical crops, and USAID estimates that Central American coffee production as a whole will fall by up to 40% in the next few years. These decreases in production mean drastically reduced incomes for these small farmers, and the unraveling of the tenuous economy of her rural village and those surrounding it in the picturesque mountains of Nicaragua. When thinking about the human right to an adequate living standard, consider Articles 25 and 28 in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Article 25:

(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 28:

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

For Teachers: Research

Ask your students to identify some major, global environmental trends. What are scientists observing on each of the continents? Consider markers such as documented extreme temperatures, sea level change, changes in rainfall, biodiversity, and other indicators of environmental health and stability. Explore what impact these indicators have on the human populations on each continent, in terms of economic security, housing, physical health and wellbeing, cultural protections, and more. What are the relationships between the security of humankind and the health of our global environment? After doing research, how might it be argued that policies that protect the environment might actually be protecting global citizens’ basic human rights as outlined in the UNDHR – such as the right to an adequate standard of living, health and well being, food, housing, and more?

For Students: Reflect

In this film, climate change is personal for Edelsin. It's not a political hot potato, or a far off policy debate – it's not even a subject she learns about in school – it is something tangible and immediate, a problem that affects her daily life. Consider an issue that is, for you, tangible and immediate, that affects your daily life. How do you relate to this problem? How does it make you feel? What do you do to try to solve this problem, or avoid making it worse? What is your relationship to this problem? Now imagine creating an awareness-building campaign to get young people in the US personally involved in climate change as a human rights issue. Using this reflection, how could you present global warming in a way that American students would take it personally and make it their own? Brainstorm the beginnings of your own campaign – an ad, a poster, a tagline, and a jingle – making the issue of global warming and its impact on human rights a personal one for young people and teens in the United States.

For All Of Us: Respond

1. 350.org is a global network of local organizations that work to promote conservation and environmental protection. Find a group near you, or start your own, at www.350.org/get-involved/
2. Sign a petition or start one of your own to raise awareness about the ongoing effects of climate change and the importance of policies that protect the environment and promote sustainable, clean energy at: www.change.org
3. Host a community or private screening of *My Beautiful Nicaragua* to raise awareness of the challenges facing Nicaraguan coffee farmers and how storytelling through film can deepen our understanding of global issues. Email info@bykids.org for more information.
4. Buy your coffee directly from a Nicaraguan coffee farm. Vega Coffee supports small coffee farmers by helping them roast, package, and sell their own beans, in order to retain more profit. Learn more at www.vegacoffee.com
5. Support fair trade coffee with Root One, a micro financing organization that supports agricultural businesses on the ground in Latin America and Africa. More information at www.rootcapital.org/support-us

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