

## Our Future

A sustainable future is the only future. For too many hundreds of years, we humans have become engrossed in greedy profits and that the pollution of prosperous industries have blurred any realistic view of the years to come. Yet, the people who do the least to generate rapid climate change are often the ones most affected by it, and so the blame for the current state of our contaminated world rests on the padded shoulders of the corrupt, the nefarious, the elite.

It is nothing but shameful to continue on generating self-abuse, abuse against ourselves and our Earth, the other animals that are all too commonly forgotten about, the archaicly modern complex ecosystems, the tiniest and grandest environments, the brilliant and diverse weather patterns, the naturally regulated “disasters” of immense glory, and all of the other traits of Nature that cannot be expressed. A sustainable future is one taken on with the overarching mindset of caring for our Earth and acting according to its needs. There is simply no other possible method, for we will no longer exist if we do not act sustainably.

As a teenager in Pittsburgh, the beautiful city that is infamous for its pollution with its long-lived reputation as the “Steel City”, I cannot help but notice the contamination myself and my neighbors experience on a daily basis. Most notably, the air and water qualities are entirely rancid. Yet, as a city we are also known for our rivers. The question arises: how can we, Pittsburghers, use our resources and core identities to actively promote a more sustainable future? Of course, I am drawn to our rivers, and the insurmountable potential of hydropower if installed in our rivers that they would generate. I have noticed that some people who are active in the climate change movement advocate for elimination or heavy reduction of energy usage as a whole, and I have also determined that human reliance on energy is nearly unmeasurable and forming a sustainable future, for now, must not focus on ridding of energy usage but transitioning to renewable sources. Thus, I am very interested in pursuing a career in renewable energy, with a strong focus on hydropower developments in heavily polluted areas.

Pittsburgh is an stellar example of how new innovative energy processes can create a successful economy, an economy that not just includes but focuses on and is led by the people. The national coal revolution in the mid-1700s heavily relied on the production in Pittsburgh and surrounding areas and went to on quickly change the customary energy forms, like wood and whale oil, and certified the concept that an energy-based economy provides for plentiful jobs. Likewise, a renewable energy revolution unique to each region, would be even more prosperous. In Pittsburgh, I find the answer lies in our water: hydropower systems that would simultaneously fuel the city and clean the water making for a better environment would be extremely powerful and beneficial. Additionally, introducing such systems into low-income and otherwise underrepresented polluted communities justly earn this ability to sustain themselves off of past harms. It is imperative to learn from and understand how wounds from the past affect the present, and an ideal future only exists with this philosophy, and better yet with the adaptations of modern technologies unto generational pollution. A future fueled by renewable energy must be led by

the people, to honor the empowerment of person interaction and understanding of core functions of the community and its economy. Energy has always been and always will be a significant component of the economy, because we do not know how to exist without energy! Therefore, renewable energy sources that uplift the present and future with attainable remedies for issues from the past is the only career I can allow myself take part of.

More specifically, I am attracted to a variety of Pittsburgh and Pennsylvanian companies and groups that work to make renewable energy sources of the sustainable future more accessible. The Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation stands out to me, as it focuses on a core passion I have related to the future of renewable energy: to utilize the lasting polluting harms from past expenses into key mechanisms of the sustainable future. I think of Coal Hill, the birth of the Pittsburgh coal industry, and how the environment remains damaged. Though the EPCAMR is located in the eastern part of the state, its values and goals hold true to Pittsburgh, such as turning famous landmarks of polluting industries like the various Pittsburgh inclines into historical tourist attractions. I am reminded of the painting series "The Course of the Empire" by Thomas Cole that explores humanity's exploitation of the Earth, and how the Earth may recover after humanity falls into the dusk. As a major proponent of the climate change movement is to slow human-caused climate change, I firmly believe the restoration of damages already done by our past neighbors into safer environments is wonderfully beneficial and necessary. Additionally, economic independence in relation to energy production is another cornerstone of the sustainable future, which can be accomplished through the work of groups like Pennsylvania Solar Center and Scale Solar. Both of these companies focus on spreading their resources to those who require it so that individuals, homes, and businesses can confidently contribute to the sustainable future with solar energy. The past lacks informed unity, and these three companies certainly bring about harmonious community strength.

Ultimately, I am destined for a career in the innovation of renewable energy sources, and how to make them most accessible, especially to those who require the most aid. As an autistic person, I often find myself struggling to relate to my peers in conventional methods like pulling up the corners of my mouth and mocking a bird when someone says something funny, but I so graciously appreciate the communal understanding that the passion to care for our Earth brings. When I become overwhelmed with crushing fears of what is to be of our Earth: if I will die by my own concerns or by the death of the Earth, if anyone else is aware of the global crisis. In these meltdowns, I swear burning oil sears out of my eyes and I cannot compose myself and the endless drills that are my nails demand more, more, more. But of course, when I come down to my senses, I simply know the complex truth that when polluting industry poisons the Earth and empties Her of Her blood, the Earth knows me, and I know everyone and everything on it. My logic flows like the ocean into the droughted crevices that minds not as sensitive cannot reach; my ozone layer is worn but this only makes me all the more sympathetic. I am the Earth and so are you and we and us, and through renewable conscious energies, the sustainable future is now.