



DANIEL LITTLE

Volunteer Activist and Campaign Coordinator for Greenpeace Orange County

Age: 27

Born: USA

Current location

Orange County, California, USA.

Why Greenpeace?

For Daniel, Greenpeace is “basically ensuring a future for the planet” and for almost a year now, the 27-year-old has been at the Frontline of that fight – quite literally. Daniel is spending five days a week on the streets of Orange County with Greenpeace Frontline, the hugely successful face-to-face fundraising and member recruitment programme of Greenpeace USA. On top of that, he coordinates local campaigns and actions for Greenpeace Orange County: protests, rallies, petitions. It all turns a 30-hour week into a 60-hour week; but for the future of the planet, Daniel says, every minute is worth it.

Hope for the future?

Daniel wants people to be empowered on an individual level, so that they realise that they can change the world. “If more people felt empowered,” he says, “that’s all we would really need to win this.”

Daniel, you’re just training a group of young people to become Greenpeace volunteers and canvassers. Let them have a short break and tell us: what’s it like working with a new generation of Greenpeace people?

Oh, I love it. I really believe that the environmental movement is the revolution of my generation – and what I’m seeing around me confirms that all the time. And I love working with volunteers. We have some amazing people here in the community, in Orange County. There are people coming to our campaign meetings every week. Two girls just started their own Greenpeace club at their high school. People from all walks of life come together under the Greenpeace flag to figure out how we can positively impact our community. It’s wonderful, it really is. We’re really active too: there’s around two actions a month. The group here also just came up with an idea that’s going to be adopted nationally soon: for the oceans campaign, we’re starting up a fish and chips booth. When we hand out the fish, it’s just going to be a paper cut-out – because the fish are red-listed. “Here’s your fish and chips, with no fish – and why is there no fish? Because they have all been fished out.” Greenpeace volunteers like to get creative in how they do stuff – and have a lot of fun at the same time. It’s great.

Absolutely. And it’s often seen as one of the greatest strengths of Greenpeace: ordinary people taking extraordinary action for the planet. What is it that motivates you, personally?

I’m a people person; I have a lot of love for people, working with them, getting involved. I also spent time in countries where I saw some of the devastating effects of climate change. When I was in Africa, I really saw the water shortage. Climate change really, really gets me going. My mother is from Australia. I have a lot of family there. This year, all of my uncles where flooded out, due to rising sea levels. My family got hit very hard with hurricane Yasi earlier this year. Some of their houses were destroyed. Uncaring consumerism that has devastating effects on other people around the globe – that makes me angry. It’s just not fair for some of us to use all the resources and destroy the environment, while those people who are hit the hardest have no control over it. And those people also aren’t really the ones contributing to the destruction. That really gets me: the injustice.

In our fight against environmental destruction, we’re up against some pretty big enemies; sometimes the challenge can seem enormous. It can be all too easy to give up. What keeps you going?

We are having victories! And pretty regularly too. To actually see the momentum allows me to keep the faith. The other thing that really, really motivates me is the amazing people I work with. Every person that I’ve met at Greenpeace has just been incredible. Greenpeace has become family to me – and a great encouragement. The passion and the genuineness of everybody else I work with – it’s amazing. Even the whole David versus Goliath thing really gets me fired up. I always enjoyed being the underdog and there’s nothing I like better than seeing people rise up against overwhelming odds and succeed. What seems to be an unattainable goal, I try to picture another unattainable goal that we have already accomplished and realise: nothing is impossible. It’s really just about unifying people. Together we can really accomplish anything.



40 years after the organisation was founded, what does Greenpeace mean to you today?

Honestly, the world would not be what it is without Greenpeace. I can't imagine how few rainforests we would have left or how few whales would be left in the ocean, if it weren't for Greenpeace. 40 years later, we're still growing and we're still fighting. I'm realising more and more clearly that Greenpeace is basically ensuring a future for the planet. Personally speaking, I want to have a family – and I'd like to take my family into a world where they can breathe and swim in the ocean and enjoy the kind of things that should be important to us. That's what Greenpeace is to me, really: it's the future. It really is.

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How did you get involved then?

I signed up as a member a long time ago. Last year, a good friend of mine knew I needed a job: she worked for Greenpeace here. I worked for a lot of humanitarian organisations at the time. I had spent time in Africa and South America and was doing lots of inner-city work with kids. My friend suggested checking out Greenpeace and I already loved them, so I said "That's a great idea!" I went in for an interview and they hired me. I always had a lot of love for nature and the environment – I spent the last twelve years in Oregon and I grew up camping and hiking almost every weekend. Working for Greenpeace meant I could start actively fighting for it. I also wanted to learn how to change the world – and I wanted to learn it from the people that do it the best. I think that grassroots organisations are one of the most effective ways to make change happen. I didn't immediately realise how important Greenpeace would become to me. Now I do. I'll be around for a while, I'm sure.

The organisation works on many different issues. Apart from climate change, what's particularly important to you?

I love forests – that's what I grew up with, so that's dear to my heart. But every campaign the Greenpeace Frontline is working on, I get super fired up on. Currently it's sustainable seafood and the oceans – and I've been working my butt off on that. Obviously, there's the nuclear campaign, I'm really interested in that. There are actually two nuclear power stations nearby and I'm working with another person in San Diego to get a campaign started to shut these things down. That's something I'm really excited about. One of the stations is already leaking, the structural integrity date is eleven years ago, it's built right on a fault line – this thing can't sustain a large quake.

Picture © Daniel Little

Are you guys often running local campaigns then?

We try to get involved as much as possible with different things going on in the community; but one of the strengths of Greenpeace Frontline is that we can unify nationally, that we can really come together on single issues. As a Frontliner and a campaign coordinator, I really try to focus hard on the most current issue we're given to work on. There have been quite a few campaigns actually, where the breaking point came when the Frontline got involved. We're out on the streets. We're talking with people face-to-face, every day. The Greenpeace Frontline talks to about a million people a year. There's not that many of us, but we're actually able to generate massive pressure on corporations. A recent example is Costco. Greenpeace had been working for eight or nine months to get the retailer to adopt a sustainable seafood policy. Then, the Frontline got involved. Volunteers were able to generate thousands of phone calls to their corporate headquarters, as well as petitions. Less than two weeks later, Costco folded. The Frontline, volunteers, all these committed and passionate people out there – it's really, really powerful.

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