



Balangaw: The Climate Justice Tour Rainbow Warrior Ship Tour 2018 Greenpeace Southeast Asia - Philippine Leg February 14 – March 5, 2018

Hettie Geenen

“The longer I am sailing around the world, from Greenland to Brazil, from the Marshal Islands to India, the more I see what we do with Mother Earth, the more I feel the need to keep on working for Greenpeace, for the environment.”

Hettie Geenen, captain of the Rainbow Warrior and one of the few female captains in the open seas, started sailing when she was just 13 years old. She received her captain’s appointment on March 8, 2016, Women’s Day.

At the age of 15, she realized that she loves the sea, despite growing up in the south of the Netherlands, far from the open waters, and without any seafarers in her family or her community.

But maritime colleges in the Netherlands would allow her – a female – to be enrolled only if she already has a contract from a passenger shipping company. They also required her to wear a uniform, which she really did not like. So Hettie decided to do something completely different: she went to a furniture-making school.

But Hettie kept on sailing, first as an instructor and later as a professional, on the typical old Dutch sailing barges for tourists. After 12 years she decided to stop, as she wanted to do something more meaningful. On her free time, she went to maritime school and studied psychology for a couple of years.

In 1999, Hettie joined Greenpeace as a third mate, with her first trip on the Rainbow Warrior during the Toxic-Free Asia tour. “This trip and mainly the stop in Manilla convinced me to continue sailing for Greenpeace,” she said.

Hettie has a remarkable background, combining studies (Psychology, Social Studies, Nautical studies) with being self-employed as furniture-maker, and with full-time sailing with Greenpeace, to fulfill not only Greenpeace goals and objectives, but her personal goals as well, all of which are so closely intertwined.

“After 18 years I am still here and still believe I have the best job in the world.”

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