

## Regeneration Team Leader Profile: Maria Perez

Maria Perez describes her first 12 years in a neighborhood in Guanajuato, Mexico: “We used to live in the part of the City where everyone barely tried to survive every day. There was violence. They were trying to survive instead of caring for the other people.”

Maria arrived in the US in 2011. No longer having to worry about having enough to eat allowed her horizons to broaden. Inspired by a film event produced in 2014 by Watsonville Climate Action, Regeneration’s predecessor, she catapulted herself into environmental justice activism.



She recognized that “the people at the top are taking advantage of everyone and of the planet and of the people who don’t have enough money, to create profit, and that’s when I started realizing how unfair that was and I started learning more about the environment.”

Soon to graduate, Maria has now completed two years of the Pájaro Valley School District's Solar Academy, worked as the farm and harvest manager at an organic farm through the youth empowerment program Food What?!, and mentored elementary and middle school students as a Wetland Steward. She’s taken the initiative to speak at School Board meetings and fundraisers for the environmental organizations she cares about.

Independently she recruited a small but mighty team of Pájaro Valley High School students to enter the International Project Green Challenge, which entailed doing and recording a green action daily for an entire month. Maria won second place in the finals in November 2016.

<https://projectgreenchallenge.com/finals/>

According to Maria,

Now after the election, young people are starting to understand the next four years are crucial for them to stand up for things they care for, like families and the environment.

I hope that people actually open their eyes and start changing everything around them for the good.

I hope that the community comes together and unites and develops leadership and to find a way that everyone can connect with each other. Stop making your own groups without having all people together. I think that’s something that needs to change for change to happen.

I think right now that it’s very important for people like me that are often stereotyped either for my race or my gender or whatever to start breaking stereotypes.

We need support so we can continue reaching more people and organizing local actions to stop global warming.

At Regeneration, we hope Maria's story inspires YOU to take action, too!