

2026

# COMMUNITY CHANGES EVERYTHING

E S T E B A N   G A S T

HOW TO BUILD COMMUNITY  
THAT INSPIRES AND SUSTAINS ACTION

NAAEE WEBINAR

**COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING**

**NATURE – OFF**

**"MAY THE BEST  
NATURE WIN"**

COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING

IN THE CHAT,  
CHOOSE:

BEACH /  
MOUNTAIN /  
FOREST

COMMUNITY CHANGES EVERYTHING

ONE OF YOU WILL PRESENT YOUR CASE  
AND EVERYONE ELSE (OF THAT TEAM)  
WILL HYPE THEM UP IN THE CHAT:

BEACH /  
MOUNTAIN /  
FOREST

COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING

Comedian and writer...  
(shows on VICE,  
OutsideTV, Spotify,  
etc) and co-founder  
of **climate comedy  
cohort** and **climate  
cultura** and formerly  
ran **kalu yala  
institute**, an off-the-  
grid environmental  
study abroad  
program



NAAEE

HELLO  
THERE  
I'M ESTEBAN

**WE NEED TO BE  
REMINDED MORE THAN**

**WE NEED TO  
BE TAUGHT**

**– JOHN NORLIN**

# DISCLAIMER DISCLAIMER

OBVIOUSLY HUMANS ARE VERY HUMAN (BY DEFINITION) SO BIG  
PICTURE THOUGHTS ON COMMUNITY AND HOW

HUMANS ACT DOES NOT CAPTURE THE FULL SCOPE OF HUMANNESS.  
EVERY EXAMPLE I SAY CONFIDENTLY SHARE, THERE IS PROBABLY THE  
COMPLETE OPPOSITE THAT ALSO WORKS.

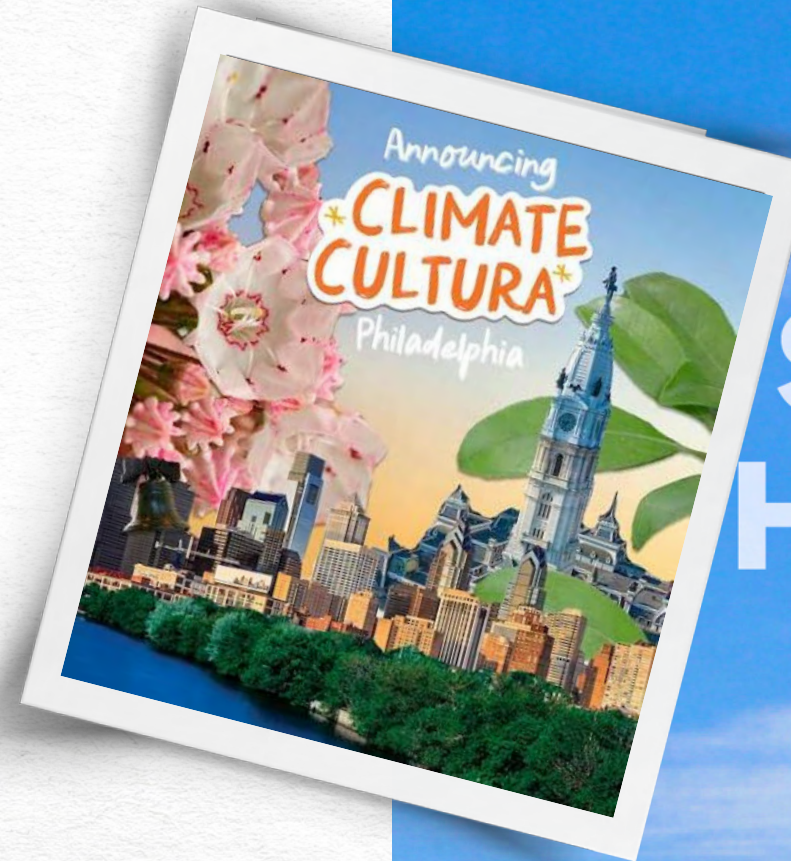
# THE START...

WHY AREN'T MORE \_\_\_\_\_ INVOLVED IN THIS?

I PERSONALLY FEEL A LITTLE ALONE IN THIS....

# invitation

- YOU CAN'T GET SPECIFIC ENOUGH
- WORK WITH TRUSTED AMBASSADORS
- BUST EVERY MYTH
  - "THEY DON'T CARE"
  - "THERE IS A PIPELINE ISSUE"
  - "THEY WON'T GET IT"



THE CLIMATE  
SOLUTION YOU  
HAVEN'T HEARD  
ABOUT.

*Comedians.*

# MORE THOUGHTS

- IF YOU ARE INVITING **EVERYONE**, THEN **NO ONE** WILL THINK IT'S FOR THEM
- LARGE ORGANIZATION/IDEA CAN INVITE EVERYONE, **THE WAY IN** FOR PEOPLE WILL BE MUCH MORE SPECIFIC
- THE BEST COMMUNITY BUILDERS ARE ALWAYS DOING THIS:
  - POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS (FUNNY EXAMPLE: FRIEND JOSH BURSTEIN, "JEWISH ASIAN AMERICANS FOR OBAMA" )
  - "I CAN'T LEAVE (GROUP/SPACE), THAT'S PART OF MY IDENTITY"

# FLIP THE SCRIPT



- What if there is no urgent “ask” or “call to action”...except friendship?
- Someone will come back if they make a friend or two, **so that’s the first priority**
- Organizing around issue is great, organizing around shared identity (especially at first) is powerful

Did you hear the  
one about... The Climate  
Comedy Cohort?



## COLLECTIVE in COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Create a **shared experience/language** (to me, that's inside jokes)
- Get an **easy win** (wow, we work together so well!)
- As quickly as possible, move away from "top down" leadership (and even communications)
- Think **long term relationship** over **short form campaign**

# COLLECTIVE IN COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Inspired by commons (from [commonerscatalog.org](http://commonerscatalog.org))

## **The commons is....**

- A system of shared intention designed to steward collective care
- A socially coherent group of peers managing collective resources
- A living process that enables people to co-create a sense of purpose, meaning, and belonging while meeting important needs.
- A neglected sector of the economy -- and life! – that generates living value in ways not easily captured by markets and prices.

Peter Block's book **Community** writers about these ideas as well

# COLLECTIVE IN COLLECTIVE ACTION

- Flip the script:
  - **DONT** get people on a room and say “figure out what you want to do”
  - **DO** get people in a room and meaningfully provide time and space for connections and friendship, then facilitate a process to find “shared intention”

Community / Collective / Commons is  
**NOT** a vaccum of leadership!

**COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING**

**CREATIVE TECHNIQUE:**

**PROBLEM TREE**

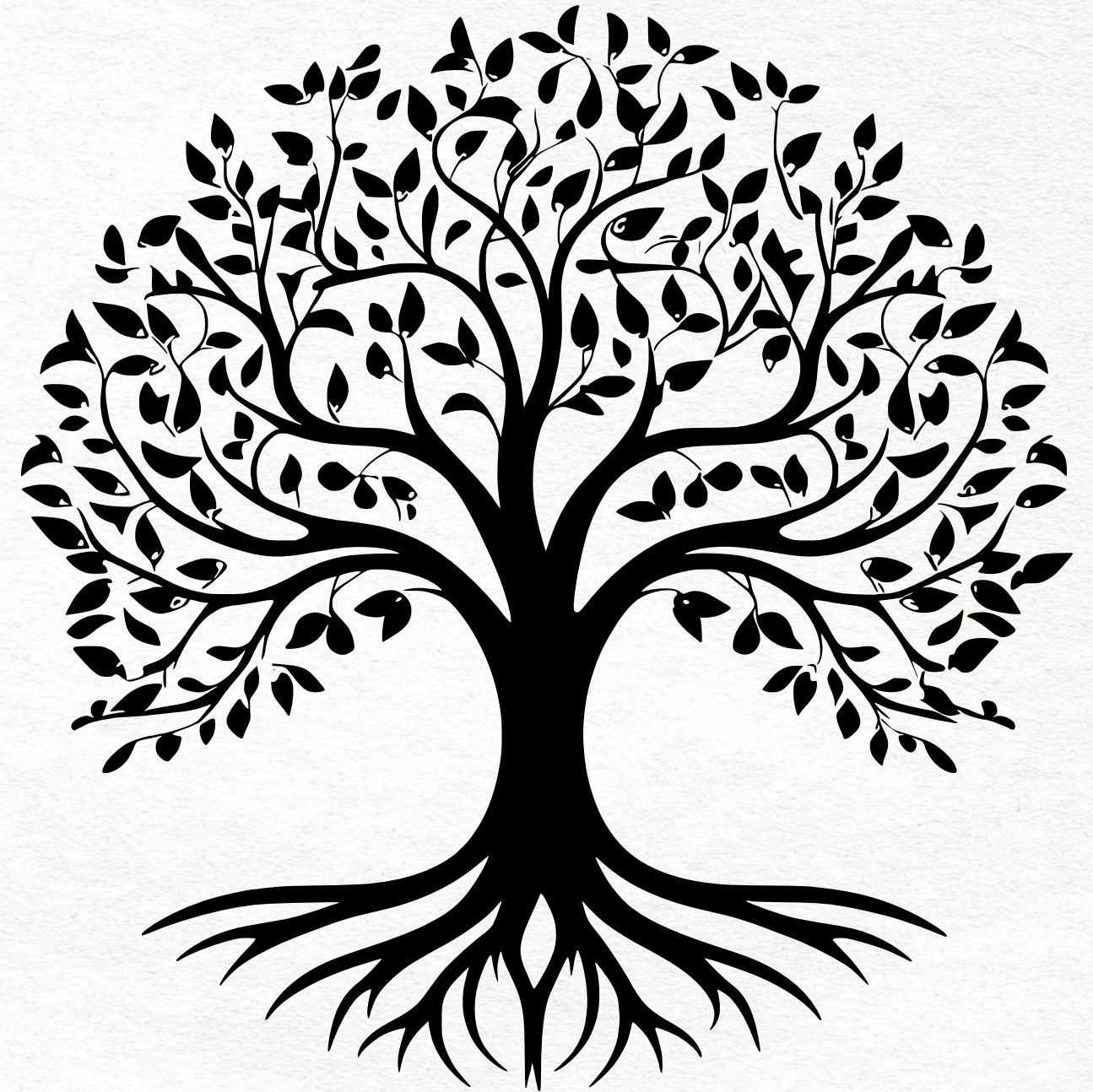
**COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING**

**BRANCHES: EFFECTS (AS MANY AS  
POSSIBLE, GET SPECIFIC)**

**TRUNK: PROBLEM**

**ROOTS: ROOT CAUSES (EACH CAUSE  
SHOULD ENCOMPASS MULTIPLE  
BRANCHES)**

**IMPORTANT: NO SOLUTIONS YET**



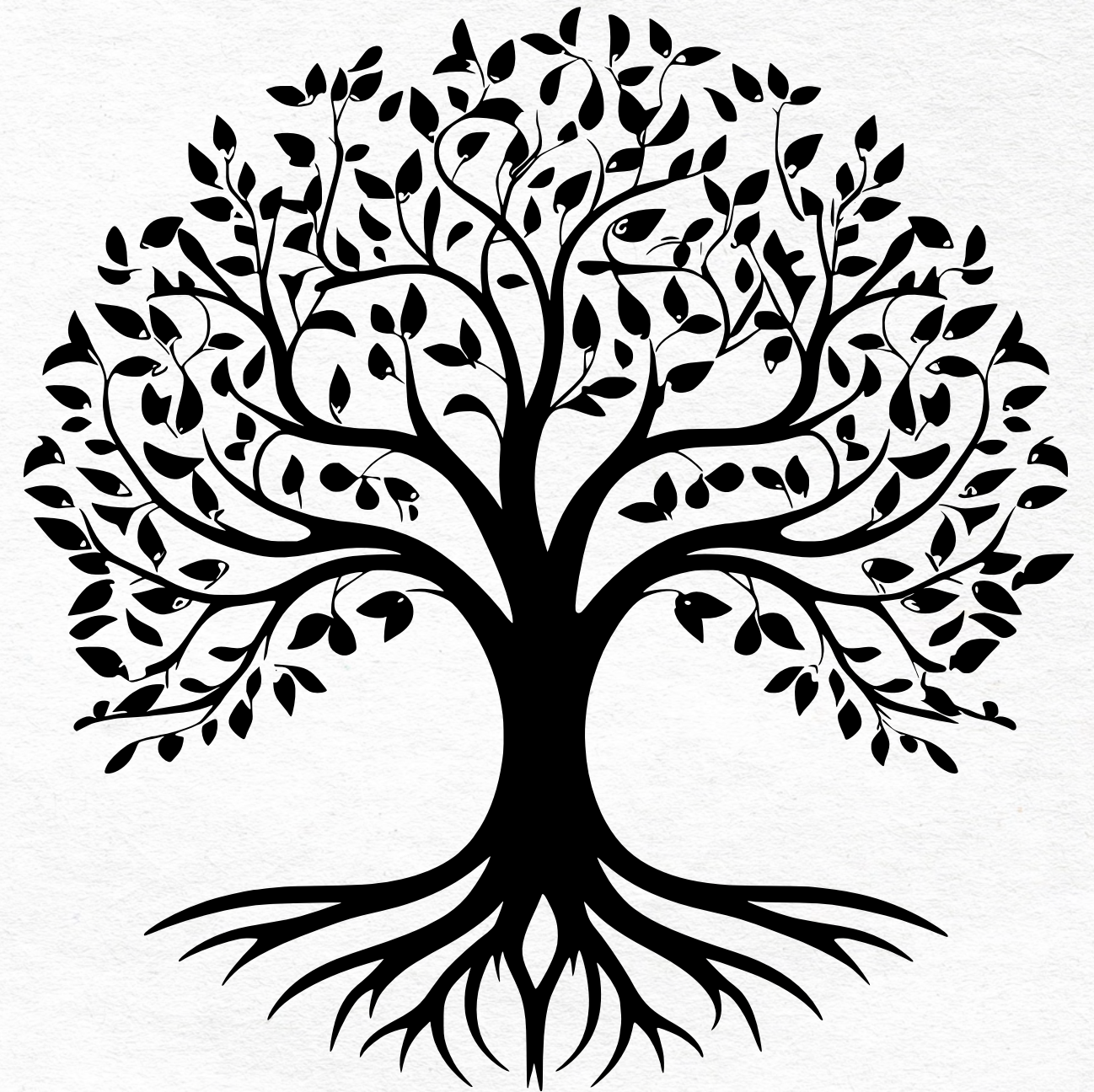
**COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
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**BRANCH: I COME ONCE, I SKIP  
MEETINGS**

**TRUNK: "I WANT TO JOIN BUT I  
DON'T HAVE TIME"**

**ROOTS: \_\_\_\_\_**

**IMPORTANT: NO SOLUTIONS YET**





# ⟨REALLY BIG PICTURE⟩

## HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS:

- Things often simpler than we think: people don't come out because they are **scared, busy, overwhelmed**, or feel the **strains of our system**
- We want to create places that: are **welcoming**, if possible **pay people**, **flexible** ways to plug in, and **offer more than just one "outlet"**
  - *More than one outlet: find a friend, find a lover, grow your network, childcare, mental health, workout, etc*

# HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS:



- Create something **for exactly you** or **find a trusted ambassador**
- People will come back if they **make a friend** so our first priority is facilitate friendship

# THE <REAL> START...

**WHY AREN'T MORE \_\_\_\_\_ INVOLVED IN THIS?**

HOW CAN I INVITE PEOPLE LIKE ME IN A WAY THAT IS GENUINE,  
AUTHENTIC, AND SPECIFIC?

**I PERSONALLY FEEL A LITTLE ALONE IN THIS....**

HOW CAN I BUILD SOMETHING THAT MAKES ME (AND OTHERS  
LIKE ME) FEEL LESS ALONE?

# ONE FINAL THOUGHT:

ESTEBAN, YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME TALKING  
ABOUT FUN, FRIENDSHIP, ETC.  
THIS WORK IS SERIOUS.

# ONE FINAL THOUGHT:

ESTEBAN, YOU SPEND A LOT OF TIME TALKING ABOUT FUN,  
FRIENDSHIP, ETC.  
THIS WORK IS SERIOUS.

THIS WORK IS SO SERIOUS THAT WE MUST  
TAKE THE WORK OF COMMUNITY BUILDING  
SERIOUSLY. WHICH MEANS THE SILLY PARTS OF  
COMMUNITY BUILDING MUST STILL HAPPEN.

**COMMUNITY  
CHANGES  
EVERYTHING**

**THANK YOU!**

**QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?  
QUANDRIES? CELEBRATIONS?**

**@ESTEBANJGAST ON ALL SOCIALS**

**I'LL BE AT NAAEE CONFERENCE HOSTING THE FINAL SESSION! COME SAY HI!**