

# Natural Selections

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

## Wasting Not

SARAH BAKER

Nine years ago Ainhoa Perez Garijo took the first steps towards reducing her waste and today she and her family live almost completely waste-free, meaning they do not use any unnecessary plastics and try not to not send anything to a landfill. When Ainhoa first moved to New York City almost ten years ago she became aware of the massive amount of waste that the city produces every day. The waste suddenly became “visible” to her as she realized she “was coming back from shopping with more plastic and packaging than food.” Although her transition to zero-waste was a slow process, she thinks that she could have done it more quickly and hopes that she is at the forefront of a movement that will pave the way for others.

Ainhoa grew up in the large metropolis of Madrid, Spain, and always cared about both animals and nature. Most people that she knows who live zero-waste grew up “close to nature, in the middle of the mountains, or close to the ocean,” but that was not the case for her, and she loves living in big cities and enjoying all that cities have to offer. Being environmentally aware and living in a city do not have to be mutually exclusive.

Ainhoa is currently a post-doctoral associate in Herman Stellar’s lab where she studies the “last will of dying cells,” or how cells undergoing apoptosis communicate with neighboring cells in order to coordinate collective cell death. You may recognize her from her involvement in the Child and Family Center on the Rockefeller University’s campus. A mother of two daughters, she believes that her kids have been extremely helpful in her path to zero-waste. As she says, “It’s really funny to see how my older daughter is aware of plastics



Ainhoa Perez Garijo

and reminds her dad when he forgets to refuse any plastic item.” Ainhoa is also passionate about teaching and is currently part of the Scientist-in-Residence program, a NYC-wide initiative that matches scientists with classrooms in the NYC area to bring scientific research and expertise to high-need schools.

This past year, Ainhoa partnered with Rockefeller’s Science Communication and Media group to launch the Science & Nature documentary series, featuring various documentaries about the environment, each followed by a discussion about how to promote more sustainable practices on campus. Ainhoa wants to inspire the campus using documentaries similar to those that challenged her to change her daily life and become aware of the issues that we as a community have the opportunity to tackle. So far, Ainhoa has shown two documentaries in the year-long series, and

this initiative has already brought together many people who have offered some great suggestions about how we can improve sustainability here at Rockefeller. She has plans to meet with the Sustainability Committee to relay these suggestions and to work with the administration on reducing unnecessary waste.

Ainhoa believes that whereas “Rockefeller is such a special place, probably the best institution to do research in the world...with the best scientists, the best campus, the best programs, and the best standards of living...we should become leaders in environmental policies as well, especially considering the current political situation.” As she emphatically exclaims, “If scientists don’t lead this movement, who will?” She hopes to help others in her community start to *see* waste. Once we realize how much trash we throw away every day and understand that it is mostly unnecessary, she declares that “it’s actually quite liberating.”

Plastic pollution is an environmental issue that largely affects CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and conservation of biodiversity. Today, the Rockefeller community should start working with companies that use less packaging and efficiently reuse and recycle materials. Our cafeterias on campus should also be plastic-free, as there are “plenty of zero-waste options.” It is time to change our lifestyles because we are damaging the environment beyond repair. This does not only affect other species and the planet, but also greatly impacts humankind and our children. As Ainhoa pronounces, “We can easily live without plastic, or without fossil fuels, but we cannot live without breathing.”

Ainhoa believes that just as with other movements in the campaign for human rights, it is now time for the environmental movement. Although change may be





"Hokusai's Great Wave" by Bonnie Monteleone, 2016

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initially regarded as "crazy, idealistic, or simply impossible to accomplish...once the shift is made, younger generations cannot even believe that things were the way they were in the past. We could call this the Planet Rights Movement. And Rockefeller University could make history and be remembered as a leader in this movement. It's just the right thing to do."

As she said passionately during her introduction to the last documentary, "As scientists, shouldn't we do what science has told us is right and reduce our impact on our environment...People think that I am crazy and ask me how I could go waste-free...and you know what I tell them – it's actually very easy." If anyone is interested, she is happy to help them along the way. She wants you to get in touch, and here she has shared some of her tips for beginning your transition to zero-waste today.

Ainhua's Tips to More Sustainable Living:

1. Realize. Study your garbage and try to think of alternatives to what you throw away. One day go to the supermarket and challenge yourself to buy everything plastic-free. It will help you start "seeing" the plastic.
2. Refuse. Refuse single-use plastics,
3. Compost. Food waste makes most of the trash that is generated in most households. If you live in Faculty House/Scholars Residence, there is compost collection in the basement. Otherwise you can take your food scraps to Green Markets or even have your own composting bin at home. Make sure that you don't buy food in excess, and make sure you cook it, eat it, or freeze it before it goes bad.
4. Take your own containers to stores. This is probably the easiest and most efficient way of reducing your plastic waste. The best places to buy things in bulk are food co-ops. I like very much the 4th St. Co-op and the Bushwick Co-op. You can also find large bulk food sections at Whole Foods and Fairway, buy meats and cheeses at deli counters in supermarkets where they are not pre-wrapped, and buy laundry detergents and soaps at the Package Free Shop in Brooklyn. You can find many more options using the Bulk app.
5. Look for plastic-free alternatives or
6. Get rid of your trash can. Once you manage to greatly reduce your garbage, this is the best way to get as close to zero-waste as possible. Collect your remaining trash in a cup or jar in the kitchen counter, and throw it in a trash can in the street when you need to. This will make you much more aware of everything you dispose of. And it also means you won't use plastic bags for the garbage!
7. Repair, repurpose, or donate. Fix your non-working items, sew your broken clothes, be imaginative and make with them something new, or use something else you already have to replace them. If

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you want to get rid of something, think of donating instead of throwing it away. For unusable clothes and shoes, a good alternative are the Fabric Recycling points in most of the NYC Green Markets. They'll use them to make insulating material.

8. Buying. The single most effective way of not producing waste is not buying! Every time that you want to buy something ask yourself: do I REALLY need this? If you really need to buy, then buy second hand and products made from natural materials and with minimal or no packaging. The best of all: get it in the Faculty House Thrift Shop where it will be almost free and the few dollars you spend will benefit the RU kids. If you want to buy something new, some good options are the [Package Free shop](#) or the online store [Life Without Plastic](#). If you want to buy a gift for someone else think of experiences instead of material things such as tickets for a museum, theater, opera, an online gift card for a bakery, restaurant, or spa, a cooking, music, or dancing lesson, etc. The options are innumerable and the gifts are way cooler.



Greenepeace USA, Turtle and Plastic in the Ocean © Troy Mayne / Oceanic Imagery Publications

9. Recycling. Recycling should be the last resource, only when you have something that you couldn't refuse, reduce, or reuse. Even though it's better than sending something to landfills, it still takes lots of energy and carbon emissions to transport and recycle something (not to mention

that collection involves tons of plastic bags). Additionally, plastic recycling is especially problematic and, contrary to glass or aluminum, it is usually "downcycled" into less desirable products that can no longer be recycled. So try to make every effort to avoid plastic, even recyclable ones.

## Word of the Month

DAKOTA BLACKMAN

### green

*adjective* \ 'grēn \

1. of the color green
2. covered by green growth or foliage • *green fields*
- 3a. *often capitalized* relating to or being an environmentalist political movement
- 3b. concerned with or supporting environmentalism • *green consumers* who practice recycling
- 3c. tending to preserve environmental quality (as by being recyclable, biodegradable, or nonpolluting) • *greener energy solutions*

The word "green" has always been infused with life: according to the Online Etymology Dictionary, its origins, circa the early thirteenth century, are Old High German, stemming from the word *gruoni* ("to grow," specifically in reference to plants and grass). *Gruoni* went on to influence Old English *grene* and Northumbrian *groene*,

meaning "green, the color of living plants," or, in reference to plants, "growing, living, vigorous."

For roughly 700 years, "green's" definition has not veered too far from its source. The word as it exists today has over ten definitions (though I have only focused on three), and they all relate back to the natural world somehow. Take, for example, the definition meaning "not fully qualified for or experienced in a particular function," or "deficient in training, knowledge, or experience" (i.e., a *green* recruit). Perhaps the connection to nature is not immediately obvious, but when considering one of green's other definitions—"not ripened or matured," or "fresh, new"—it becomes clearer. There is something appealing and perhaps a bit magical about a word that was borne of observing and describing nature in its innate state: growing, living, and vigorous.

In the twentieth century, "green" began to shift into a decidedly more political word, wherein humans moved from observing nature to taking an active part in its protection and preservation. Earth Day was

first celebrated in 1970, and, a year later, the organization Greenpeace was founded for the purpose of, according to their website, "expos[ing] global environmental problems and promot[ing] solutions that are essential to a green and peaceful future." Although Greenpeace has been a source of [controversy and criticism](#), both it and Earth Day exemplify the third definition of "green," which means "relating to or being an environmentalist political movement," or "concerned with or supporting environmentalism." The Green political movement has spanned nearly fifty years since its inception (in the United States, environmental protection has been a key issue for closer to one hundred years; the word green has simply come into play more recently). This movement spans strategies and scales, from direct anarchist actions to the outgrowth of green roofs in urban centers to individual efforts to compost. The connection to nature is still direct and explicit in this last definition, but the key difference is our own agency; in order to keep nature growing, living, and vigorous, we now have a responsibility to respect and protect it.

## Culture Corner

My Thoughts On Two Documentaries: *Long Strange Trip* (Amazon Studios, 2017) and *Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars* (2017 film; released on Showtime Network in February 2018 for television)

BERNIE LANGS

Two recent documentaries, one on the Grateful Dead and the other about Eric Clapton, offer fantastic insights into two of the most talented and powerful musical forces that arose in the 1960s. All of the surviving members of the Dead are interviewed at length in the Amazon Studios-produced the 6-part, *Long Strange Trip* directed by Amir Bar-Lev. Eric Clapton cooperated with director Lili Fini Zanuck in the making of the story of his life by giving voiceover narration to archival film footage, music, and documents from his long career as a premier English blues and rock guitarist. Both documentaries offer incredible journeys into the music and lives of those involved, including candid appraisals of some of their darker moments. In particular, the living-on-the-edge life of the Grateful Dead's late leader Jerry Garcia (1942-1995), his tragic death, and the terrible self-abusive states of addiction suffered by Clapton.

I saw the Grateful Dead three times between 1978 and 1980. During that period, I would often play along at home or college on guitar with Dead albums, where I learned to listen carefully to the other players and respect the unity of the whole sound rather than standing out as a soloist or "stepping" on another musician's phrase. The Grateful Dead were known for playing as a unit and for being uncannily of one mind during their complicated and experimental live performances. When I joined a band in 1979, I took this lesson to heart as I played with my fellow bandmates. In the documentary, bassist Phil Lesh, drummers Mickey Hart and Bill Kreutzmann, and rhythm guitarist and vocalist Bob Weir delight in discussing the magic of playing and jamming live and how the audience would be taken along with them on their journey.

As the Dead's audience grew, it made a transition from arena performances to stadium venues. These shows attracted a large number of people who would arrive without tickets, many in hope of gaining free entry by slipping through fences or gates. Others would set up booths to sell unauthorized merchandise and there were those who abusively drank alcohol or ingested drugs leading to erratic or often dangerous behavior. The members of the Dead grew alarmed as violence became a regular feature in stadium



Cream in the 1960s, (from left to right) Ginger Baker, Jack Bruce and Eric Clapton.

WIKIPEDIA

parking lots, at times to the point of loss of life. Lesh, Weir, Hart and Kreutzmann took to recording public service announcements with forceful messages that only ticket holders were welcome and that the circus-like atmosphere that had been created was not in the true spirit of what the band stood for.

The surviving members of the Dead appear to have emerged in excellent mental shape after years of substance abuse and come across as sharp, insightful and articulate in the film's interviews. Lesh gives a detailed account of how virtuoso guitarist Garcia deteriorated from heroin use in his final years. He notes that even if the band had stopped touring as an intervention, Garcia would have likely just gone out on the road with his solo band and met with the same sad end.

The musical soundtrack of *Long Strange Trip* confirms that the Grateful Dead's performances remain beautifully textured and vital, with each member playing lines of melody that unite seamlessly into a magical whole for a refined essence.

*Eric Clapton: Life in 12 Bars* is a completely different tale of self-destructive behavior of a guitar magician. The documentary runs just over two hours and is an extremely painful two hours at that.

I have seen Clapton perform many times, but not in the past 25 years. I have great memories of a concert in the 1980s at a small club in Manhattan and of an outdoor

festival in 1978 at an aerodrome field outside of London. I became aware of the talented blues player in 1968 when my brother mixed up our daily album selections with records by a far out band from England called Cream. I was 11 years old and records such as *Wheels of Fire* completely changed my understanding about music. Cream's extended jams pounded at a breakneck pace, with Mr. Clapton soloing at blistering speed amid the complex, jazz-inspired drumming of Ginger Baker and the wandering, fuzzed basslines of Jack Bruce. I believe that this was Mr. Clapton's peak period which was matched in 2005 at Cream's reunion concerts at the Royal Albert Hall and Madison Square Garden where the wisdom of all of his playing years coalesced.

The band's final album, *Goodbye*, was a farewell to their fans offering a selection of live recordings and studio songs. The opening number is a live version of a fast-paced blues song that was one of their signature numbers, "I'm So Glad." The song has Clapton tearing off what I believe to be the finest guitar solo in all of rock music, performed with screaming passion and intensity that never flags.

The Cream years were rough on Clapton, having already emerged as a blues star and given the nickname "God" by his London fans. Whereas the Dead welcomed widespread fame, Clapton didn't care in the

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least about stardom. He wanted to perfect his craft and was on a mission to educate the world about the unrecognized African American pioneers of the blues genre. The late Muddy Waters and B.B. King appear in the documentary speaking fondly of the unexpected popularity of their music after Clapton had worked tirelessly to promote it.

In one film segment from the 1960s, Mr. Clapton plays some riffs for an interviewer and notes how he can be “aggressive” as he slashes into a searing lead. This particular guitar tone had been a Cream staple sound during live performances, for example, in “Deserted Cities of the Heart”. Later in the film, as we watch Mr. Clapton descend into years of alcoholism, he goes on record at the time as hoping his life would end, in order to remedy his suffering. In one interview, his eyes barely open, he bitterly wishes that Cream had never existed and says that he loathed, once again, his “aggressive” tone and playing from that time.

Clapton describes in detail how his problems stem from his troubled family history, having grown up believing his grandmother and step-grandfather were his parents only to learn his older sister was his mother and that his father was nowhere in the picture. His mother went off to have another family, and when he finally does meet with her, she acts terribly, scarring him for life and pushing him into the solitude of obsessive practice, which made for a genius guitarist. Equally tragic is how much Clapton



Promotional poster for *Long Strange Trip*.  
AMAZON VIDEO

enjoyed the positive energy and friendship of fellow blues genius Jimi Hendrix and how much the overdose death of Hendrix left him feeling isolated and alone with his talents and musical insights.

I had known of Clapton’s heroin addiction, which ceased in the 1970s, and that he’d gone into alcohol rehab years later. I had not known until *12 Bars* that his drug and alcohol abuse spanned decades of seemingly nonstop misery. There were years lost fretting over his relationship with Pattie Boyd, the ex-wife of his close friend, George Harrison

of the Beatles. She had inspired the tortured song “Layla”, which remains a fantastic piece of music. Viewers of the film learn just how long his infatuation with Boyd lasted before it came to a maddening culmination and how Clapton remained unhappy despite finally winning her over.

The bulk of *12 Bars* focuses on the period of Clapton’s emergence as a Blues guitarist through the “Layla” sessions. Many of his solo studio albums are dismissed as uneven and uninspired. After years of playing drunk onstage and making angry, embarrassing statements to his audience, he regained the great magic of his live concerts. There is a concert film produced in 2002, *One More Car, One More Rider* where he shines on acoustic guitar during “Bell Bottom Blues” with the late Billy Preston riffing beautifully on the organ. Clapton was also the band leader of a fantastic musical celebration of the life of the late George Harrison in 2002, “The Concert for George”, which recently was re-released in selected theaters.

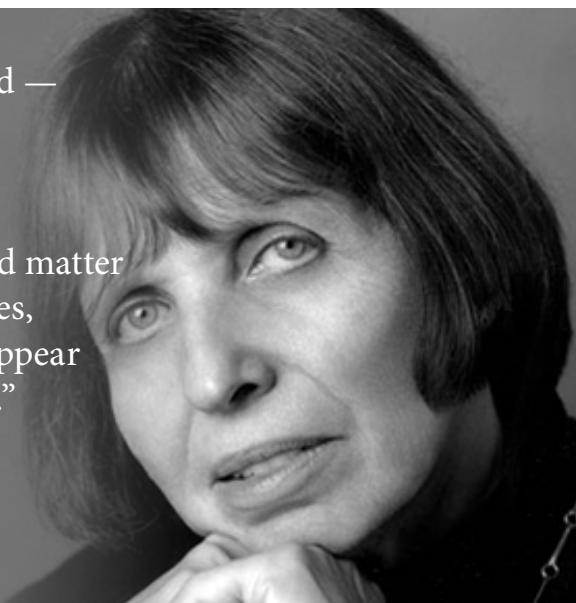
*12 Bars* ends in the present with Clapton happily married and enjoying life with his children. He operates and funds an alcohol rehab center to assist those in need. He is set to perform concerts in October at Madison Square Garden. We can only hope that he has truly finally found peace of mind. And whether I am misinterpreting his guitar tone or not, I’ll always have the music of Cream and many other songs by Clapton to simply enjoy and assist me in my own personal journey in this life of the heart and mind.

## QUOTABLE QUOTE

“A flurry of leaves at the window  
like those calendar pages flying  
in old movies  
to indicate time passing,  
and it is passing,  
though where it’s going  
nobody seems to know.  
Something is always lost

Linda Pastan, 1932-

and something found —  
an earring or the key  
to a certain door,  
to some second self.  
I watch as energy and matter  
bow and switch places,  
as last year’s leaves appear  
and disappear again.”



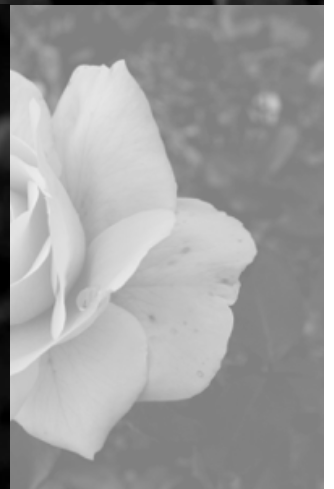
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## ***Life on a Roll***

ELODIE PAUWELS

<https://elodiepphoto.wordpress.com/>

Nasturtium Leaves



Rose in the Park