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OPINION



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PHOTO BY ABBY SNETHEN/LINCOLN HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR

Students from Portland area schools demand action on climate change during a Dec. 6 march in downtown Portland.

Confronting the Impacts of Climate Change

If we don't act now, then when?

BY ABBY SNETHEN

Portland had a major breakthrough in addressing climate change on Friday, Dec. 6 when student activists and local community members held a climate strike in downtown Portland to focus on frontline communities who are most in danger. Those hit first and worst by climate change, not just in Portland but all over the world, are sharing stories of how their homes could soon face total eradication.

Beautiful and powerful speeches were given during the Portland event thanks to the hundreds of students from Roosevelt, Lincoln

and other schools that filled the streets. Kaiya Young, a senior at Lincoln High School, presented a discourse on how to be an ally to the frontline communities. She expressed the importance of recognizing your privilege as an ally who doesn't face the direct impact of climate change. Yes, we will all at some point suffer from the devastating effects of climate change but frontline communities, like Pacific Islanders and indigenous groups, have been affected long before we declared this war against climate change.

Recognizing your privilege and being cognizant that feeling guilty of your privilege is a privilege in itself, is the first step to being an ally. The importance of uniting

with our frontline communities was one of the main topics at the rally. Most feel that talking about our race, religion, gender or privilege will only divide us more, but the fact is that we are already divided. The scantiness of this topic does not solve this issue. The moment we come together, as allies and frontline communities, as one society, as one movement, is the moment we can make a difference. "We must listen to understand" said Kaiya, one of the students who spoke at the event.

I had the opportunity to go to a middle school before the strike and present a talk on how to be an ally and how to make a change. The last thing I said to the students was, "This is your future. You control

the outcome. The second you become optimistic about the future is when you can change the world."

Almost all of the students participating in the Portland rally and call for action wanted to make their presence known. This will not be the last time you hear from them nor will this be the last climate strike in Portland. There is power in numbers. Join the movement that will save my future. Ignorance is bliss but we no longer have time to blissfully turn the other cheek and ignore the Earth's cries for help. They say it is impossible to change what's to come, but with unity comes a possible future.

Abby Snethen is a senior at Lincoln High School.

