

Please read this document carefully before you start! Your homework submission should be *at least* 250 words total, addressing the questions at the bottom of the page.

### Scientist Spotlight: **Ayana Elizabeth Johnson**



To help us prepare for understanding climate change, we are going to explore the work of Ayana Johnson. Ayana Johnson is a marine biologist, a conservationist, social activist, and leader for environmental justice. She is the founder of both The All We Can Save Project and of Urban Ocean Lab, a think tank for progressive science-based oceanic strategies and policy.

She has devoted her life to protecting our ocean ecosystems and species. In turn, she is protecting our coastal culture and communities, often poor and minority populations that are disproportionately affected by climate change and habitat destruction. "My love of nature and humanity drive my work. It's not some abstract interest in policy or science."

- 1) Watch this Ted Talk about the climate crisis with Dr. Ayana Johnson: [How to Find Joy in Climate Action | Ayana Elizabeth Johnson | TED \(youtube.com\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ug811111111)
- 2) Learn more about Dr. Johnson's connection to Billie Eilish here: [Talking Trash with Billie Eilish. Nike.com](https://www.nike.com/story/talking-trash-with-billie-eilish)



### Instructions for Written Assignment:

After reviewing the background and scientific work of Ayana Johnson, write a reflection on what you discovered. You might wish to address some of the following:

1. What was most interesting to you in reviewing these resources?
2. What did you learn from these resources about ocean conservation?
3. What new questions do you have after reviewing these resources?
4. What do these resources tell you about the types of people that do science?

I find Dr. Ayana Johnson's work odd and very thought-provoking, providing a different view on the interactions of science, culture, and activism. One of the interesting things is how she relates complex scientific concepts to moments of everyday life. An example of this is how she turns social justice into a means of meaning-making on ocean conservation. Her emphasis on the interconnectedness of ecosystems and communities challenges the conception of addressing climate and environmental issues mostly separately. I reckon this holistic view was intellectually stimulating, showing that solving environmental issues must be conditioned on solving wider systemic inequalities.

From these sources, I learned that ocean conservation is not about marine animal protection; it is all about the delicate forest balance of Ecosystems within which life on this Earth must exist. For instance, Dr. Johnson stresses the fact that mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrass meadows act as areas of natural carbon sink to mitigate climate change. The advocacy for sustainable fishing practices to protect coastal communities strengthens the need for environmental policy that considers human livelihoods as a fundamental component.

How can we make sure those marginalized communities that are most affected by climate change become active agents in decision-making processes? What new tech/practices are rising up to revive degraded marine ecosystems? How many more people see themselves in taking ownership of climate solutions, irrespective of their professional backgrounds?

Such work challenges misconceptions about scientists. The ability to connect the dots between science, art, and public engagement shows that scientists are not isolated figures just working in a lab; rather, they are communicators, activists, and leaders. Her work with cultural figures like Billie Eilish is indicative of how multiple talents and backgrounds can come together over global issues. The realization further affirms that science is not destined for only one kind of people.