



Nature's Little Secrets

Feliza Fenty, VG Youth Leadership Initiative
Virgin Gorda, BVI

☀ Call to Action

Learn more about the Virgin Gorda Youth Leadership Initiative: www.vgyli.org and Feliza's project: www.preetbird.com

☀ Values

- Empathy
- Leadership
- Community Service
- Environmentalism

☀ Lessons Learned

Only by conquering your fears can you build a better world for yourself. Have the courage, and then jump!

Knowledge is power. Knowledge allows you to truly see. Once you see the truth, you can go almost anywhere, and do almost anything you set your mind to.

Learn from those who came before you, your neighbors, and your peers.

Everyone has a valuable lesson to teach you if you are willing to listen.

True strength comes from the ability to adapt to ever-changing circumstances. Learn to be resilient, and you will become stronger than you ever thought possible.

Growing up on the tiny island of Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands, Feliza Fenty saw income inequality close up from an early age.

Her parents both had a good education and were able to provide her with a comfortable middle-class lifestyle: but many of her friends in school were not as lucky. When she was 16 years old and she learned about work being done by the Vieques Youth Leadership Initiative in nearby Puerto Rico, she was inspired and energized. "If they can do it, we can do it too!" she said to herself, and she soon convinced some of her friends that she was right. That was the moment that led eventually to her career in public service. Today she uses her organizing and communication skills to work with women on Virgin Gorda to teach them how to create better, healthier lives for themselves and their families.

☀ Language Arts

Write a personal essay in which you answer Feliza's question: "What is your dream for your community and the world?"

Then go a little further: What do you plan to do to make it happen?

How has climate change affected the Caribbean Islands?

Their people? Their economy? Create a series of short videos explaining this issue, and finish with a call to action. Ask people to do something, and offer suggestions as to how they can begin to get involved.

A big problem in the Caribbean is the destruction of the ecosystem by the tourism industry. For example, coral reefs are decimated every year by uneducated motor boaters who anchor their boats on the reefs, destroying the very coral they came to "admire." Write a research essay on the threat that tourism poses to these ecosystems.

Is there a way to avoid the destruction that uneducated tourists cause to an ecosystem? Working in groups of 3-4 people, create an information campaign (2 videos, 3 posters, and 2 posts in social media platforms of your choice) about sustainable tourism: what it is, why it is important, and where to find information about environmentally friendly tourism companies.

How serious is the issue of inequality in the Caribbean islands? Why is the distribution of wealth in this area of the world so unfair? Who is responsible? More important: How does inequality affect the residents of the island? How about the environment in the region? Create a series of short videos (a total of five) in which you answer these questions. Plan one video for question, and make each video no longer than three minutes.

STEM Activities

Coral reefs are one of the most diverse ecosystems on the planet, yet nearly two-thirds of the reefs in the Caribbean are threatened by human activities. In this [module](#)¹, students will use real data to investigate the consequences of rising sea temperature on coral reefs. They will also consider the importance of coral reefs in their own lives.

Sargassum is a seaweed that provides a home for a variety of marine species, but is also known to cover local beaches with a foul-smelling, unsightly organic waste that threatens not only the environment but the tourism industry throughout the Caribbean. Conduct research on sargassum, both its economic importance and its impact on the environment. Based on your findings, do you think sargassum is an invasive species, or a vital component of an ecosystem? What are some ways we can reduce its impact on the environment but maintain its benefits?

Growing up in the British Virgin Islands, Feliza saw the effects of income inequality on the people around her. Research and find income data for households in British Virgin Islands and separate it evenly into [quintiles](#)². Then watch this [tutorial video](#)³ to help you graph a Lorenz curve and calculate the gini coefficient based on the data.

Sustainability Innovations

Green VI⁴ is a nonprofit organization that is currently focused on improving net sustainable impact, and developing innovations to help combat the sustainable issues that the BVI and the U.S. Virgin Islands face. Green VI includes innovations such as organic photovoltaics, farm pods, upcycling, among many other sustainable innovations.

In addition to the battle against climate change, the British Virgin Islands is host to a community that thrives through collaboration. The [Unite BVI Foundation](#)⁵ focuses on community enrichment, environmental conservation, and the empowerment of entrepreneurs. Driven by their slogan, “Unite by name, unite by nature” the Unite BVI Foundation helps to find short-term fixes and long-term solutions for the people of the British Virgin Islands.

In addition to environmentally-focused issues, the people of the British Virgin Islands have to deal with an increased risk of disease. [Bugout BVI](#)⁶ is a nonprofit organization that helps to protect the Virgin Gorda community from diseases spread by *Aedes Aegypti* mosquitoes, such as Zika, Dengue, Chikungunya, and the West Nile Virus.

Sustainability Career Pathways

Sustainable Tourism. Tourism can be unsustainable if it includes global travel, but it can also help to inspire deeper connection to the Earth and other cultures. Today there is a growing sustainable tourism sector, one that embeds environmental knowledge in tours,

makes hotels greener, encourages more local experiences, and so on. There are many ways to be part of this industry, from tour operator, to travel guide, from hotelier, to turning part of your home into an Airbnb and offering green tours of your town. [If this is a path for you, read these 10 tips on how to make a career in sustainable tourism⁷.](#)

Community Organizer. As Feliza discovered, engaging one's community around important environmental and social challenges is an important career path and type of community service. There are many programs to learn organizing, from online courses ([such as this one⁸](#)), to one-year environmental organizing field schools like [Green Corps⁹](#)

Environmental Journalist. Many people who love to write make a career as a full-time journalist. Some dedicate their writing to chronicling the many environmental problems we face, as well as exploring the many innovative solutions to our sustainability challenges that are being developed. Some are freelancers, pitching stories to a variety of outlets. Others work full time for a news outlet, or with nonprofits, or even government offices. To learn more about this career, [read here¹⁰](#). And here's a valuable resource: [the Society of Environmental Journalists¹¹](#), which offers job boards, mentoring, annual conferences, and listservs for environmental journalists.

1 <https://dataintheclassroom.noaa.gov/content/coral-bleaching>

2 <https://www.statisticshowto.com/quintile-definition/>

3 <https://www.khanacademy.org/economics-finance-domain/ap-microeconomics/ap-consumer-producer-surplus/inequality/v/gini-coefficient-and-lorenz-curve>

4 <https://greenvi.org/innovation/>

5 <https://www.unitebvi.com/our-work>

6 <https://www.bugoutbvi.org/about/about-bugout/>

7 <https://sustainability-leaders.com/ten-tips-sustainable-tourism-career/>

8 <https://www.coursera.org/learn/community-organizing>

9 <https://greencorps.org/>

10 <https://www.openschoolofjournalism.com/specializations/environmental-journalism>

11 <https://www.sej.org/>

