

Season 3.1_Jamie Alexander

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SPEAKERS

Narrator, Eric Benson, Jamie Beck Alexander



Narrator 00:00

This podcast is a project of the Climate Designers network.



Eric Benson 00:03

Hey, this is Eric. Welcome to season three of Climify. This season, I'm talking to women across the globe, who are at the forefront of climate science and climate action. Each guest is a thought leader in one or more of the drawdown.org climate solutions sectors.



Eric Benson 00:23

What you may ask are the drawdown.org solution sectors, well important topics like renewable electricity, soil and agriculture, architecture, oceans, health, education, and so much more. The goal of this season is of course, to continue to help design educators incorporate a foundation of sustainability and regeneration into their courses, and, in turn, inspire more climate designers. Climate Solutions are already here, you can literally start being part of the solution today. Climify brings these solutions to you. So no matter what your skill or knowledge level, you can implement what you learned today in your personal life and classroom.



Eric Benson 01:20

Jamie Beck Alexandre is the perfect person to kick off this season, as she is the director at drawdown labs, the inspiration for our show this year. In this discussion, she'll be talking about her work at Drawdown and why "every job is a climate job". I hope she inspires you to imagine your work as an educator, as one that includes climate action as part of its foundation.



Jamie Beck Alexander 01:49

Hi, I'm Jamie Beck Alexander founding director of drawdown labs at Project Drawdown based in Duluth, Minnesota and project drawdowns work is focused globally, though. And you can find me online on Twitter at JABECX or at Project Drawdown.



Eric Benson 02:15

Jamie, welcome to Climify. I'm excited to have you on the program. You were one of the people I really wanted on the show, after we determined the theme. And you our focus this year is solutions from drawdown so I'm glad that you said yes. Thank you for having me. It's really a thrill to be here with you. Yeah, I feel like you're a little bit of a celebrity for me, after how many times I've seen your TEDx video and in my classroom and such, but I really appreciate you making that.



Jamie Beck Alexander 02:48

Oh, thank you for saying that. It was definitely speaking from my heart. And



Eric Benson 02:54

I could tell



Jamie Beck Alexander 02:56

a bit of Yeah, but of pushing the boundaries at that time, I guess it was a couple of years ago now. So it felt like it was a little bit. It was a little bit pushing the boundaries. But it was actually because I guess it's just something that I think will be somewhat timeless as we go forward, unfortunately. But I definitely think you did start something with that video. Thank you for saying that. I did not expect that. But I think



Jamie Beck Alexander 03:24

it felt like something I was kind of doing under the radar, just like, you know, sort of questioning what in the world we were doing by having, you know, sustainability work owned by so few people. So I definitely didn't, you know, didn't expect that it would like have any traction. But I'm really happy to see that within a lot of sectors of society. Now we're seeing climate work kind of expand and you know, break down silos, which is really, I think what we absolutely need to see where else,



Eric Benson 03:54

it's absolutely, we need that happen. And I guess when you make something, it's hard to tell, right? What, what its impact is going to be especially if you're not like, I guess you can determine how many views you've gotten. But you know what, what people do with that is like a whole other thing.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 04:09

Exactly. It just feels like you have no idea if anything is ever going to reach anyone even even with views. You're just sort of like was I just talking into the quarry? They're

 Eric Benson 04:20

going into the void of this like,

 Jamie Beck Alexander 04:22

right. Right. Right. And, you know, it did kind of Yeah, right. And it did kind of you know, I think it did ruffle some feathers with the, the people that in at that time that I was mostly working closely with which is Chief Sustainability officers inside corporations who were like, wait a second, like my job. Exactly. And I'm sort of like, you know, maybe you should be trying to work yourself out of a job or war or or, or work to have the biggest team possible that's owned by everyone not just owned by by one or two people but climate is such a deeply and you know, it's like a part of who Will a lot of us have become it's like part of our who we are as people. And so I think there's a real pride in having that as part of your identity. And so it's really something. Yeah, I think saying like everybody should have climate as part of their job. It's it's, it can be threatening to people who have been working on it for a while and put their heart and soul into it. So it's understandable, but I think it is where we need to where we need to move.

 Eric Benson 05:25

Yeah, and you, you didn't start at drawdown, you have a pretty impressive career. Let's see us aid series. Did I pronounce that series? Is it series?

 Jamie Beck Alexander 05:37

Yeah. The cultural Conservancy?

 Eric Benson 05:40

A lot of good work you've been doing? And I guess, I'm wondering, then, because I tend to ask this question a lot is like, how did you get to where you are? Was it? Was this part of your ethos all along? Or was there something that kind of triggered your movement into this impact work?

 Jamie Beck Alexander 06:00

So when I look back on my career, I, you know, I used to think that it was very random and sort of just like, How in the world did I, you know, I took this very circuitous path, but now I can

really see how it all sort of, you know, wove together. My time at, you know, I initially went into, went into the workforce from college thinking I really wanted to work on public health, and I really wanted to work in, you know, in and supporting lower and middle income countries on health, you know, and health related public health issues. So I, you know, went into government service at USA ID, which is focused on, you know, humanitarian assistance work. And in that time, I was based in Bangladesh and working there, and I happened to be there during the 2013, collapse, massive factory called the Rana Plaza. I remember, you do, yeah, I mean, I just, I just happened to be working there in the, you know, in the US Embassy there, and it was everything. I mean, just seeing what happened, it killed almost 1000 Bangladeshi people, and a lot of US companies are several US companies had their, you know, had outsourced to the manufacturing of their product in that factory. And there was such poor, you know, conditions and oversight in that factory. And companies were sort of taking advantage of it and getting, you know, these lower income countries to produce their stuff. And then with because of, because there was little oversight and regulation. You know, this, this horrible catastrophe happened. And that's what that was really a turning point for me around corporate responsibility. And just see any effect of you know, how large corporations have a very, very real effect on people's lives around the world. And at the same time, was having this this revelation about climate change, living and living in Bangladesh, where, you know, there were a few months of the year when I took a when I took a kayak to the office, because place is sinking and the monsoon, you know, and the monsoon season is getting worse and worse. And Bangladesh, she people knew what was happening. And they were, it was clear to them that the glacier above them was melting because of climate change. And it was, you know, I mean, they, there were there were just a lot of realizations I had in that, in that time period working in Bangladesh, that I think kind of coalesced to just kind of inspire me what to want to work on. A climate change is a foundational issue of everything else we care about. And then, you know, kind of really wanting to work on corporate accountability within that.



Eric Benson 08:43

Yeah, the corporate accountability part I was just looking at I shared this on Instagram story. Maybe it was yesterday. But the the companies that are contributing the most since 2016, to our carbon emissions, gas and oil, coal mining, the who's who of carbon emitters here, like Chevron, you name it, right? They have a huge role in all of this.



Jamie Beck Alexander 09:12

Right? And I mean, they their names and faces too, like there are a handful of people, you know, with their hands, literally with their hands on the dials of how much of our greenhouse gas emissions continue to be churning into the atmosphere every second making this crisis worse. I mean, there are there have a finite number of people who are making those decisions day after day. And, you know, I think part of our work within drawdown labs and we don't work with you know, with big fossil fuel companies or or, you know, oil and gas or mining companies, yeah, good to hear. But, but we do try to, you know, try to say, we're never going to get out of this by by relying on the same you know, power rests with a handful of people who are beholden to investors who need to show profit every single quarter. Who can't who are unable to think in the medium or longer term about global, you know about our human and planetary health. And so we try it. So that's another part of, you know, the importance of every job as a climate job is more people who may not be taught, you know, have to be tied to, you know,

showing profit, you know, quarter over quarter who can actually help make decisions with the health of people and planet in mind. You know, having more people throughout the business, raise their concerns, put their passion to work and their expertise to work can only help us you know, kind of move beyond the status quo that is that is putting all of our you know, everything we know and love at risk.



Eric Benson 10:48

Yeah, more voices more price patient, right.



Jamie Beck Alexander 10:51

Yeah.



Eric Benson 10:51

Let's talk about drawdown lads drawdown labs, because you are do you



Jamie Beck Alexander 10:56

I like jot down lads.



Eric Benson 10:58

Yeah. That could that could be something it could be a teacher



Jamie Beck Alexander 11:05

or like a calendar. So.



Eric Benson 11:07

Yeah, there you go. Right. There,



Jamie Beck Alexander 11:11


The lads of drawdown





Eric Benson 11:13

the lads of drawdown you could do a fundraiser for that you know I get like 1% of the profits

the idea of drawdown, you could do a fundraiser for that, you know, I get like 1% of the profits from Yes,

 Jamie Beck Alexander 11:21
yes.

 Eric Benson 11:24
Well, let's talk about drawdown labs, as you are the reason for our season this year. And I'm, I think I may understand why you started it, maybe from that time in Bangladesh, but why don't you go into the history of how you how you started drawdown labs and what its mission is.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 11:43
Yeah, thank you. So I guess I'll start with broader project drawdown which is, you know, sort of drawdown Labs is one program of project drawdown, which is a nonprofit organization, laser focused on climate solutions. So what are the solutions to climate change? You know, we have them in our hands today, we know what they are, we know the practices and technologies that we need to shift to to get us out of this mess. And they're going to save us money, they're going to improve our lives, our health, our city's equity, poverty, they're going to help us address all these other things at the same time. And so our you know, our broader organization's purpose is to lift up those solutions, and make them tangible, actionable, and, you know, kind of decision worthy decision making worthy for, for different actors in society. So then, within that drawdown labs, the program that I sort of designed and launched three years ago, is focused on, okay, you know, we have these solutions in hand, we know what they are, but they're not scaling quickly enough. They're not, you know, we need them to scale so quickly that they displace the things we did in the past that are no longer compatible with thriving life on our planet. And so how do we get those climate solutions to scale and, and displace the the bad stuff? Right, the more carbon intensive ways that we used to do things? Well, you know, one of the, the truths about our current economic system is that some of the biggest actors that are responsible for a big chunk of the problem, also have the resources, the scale, the influence, the cloud, to be able to, to address this problem quickly. So we so within drawdown labs, we sort of, you know, with that understanding, we work with companies, investors, and then kind of philanthropists to enter and we started, we're kind of known for our work with businesses, because that's sort of where we started and more recently, are now working with investors and climate funders. But our goal is really to kind of use or even exploit the resources and scale that large corporations have, and put it to work for adjust climate future. And so, you know, I think, part of what part of the the design of drawdown labs early on was to address some of what I saw as major gaps in the corporate sustainability space, I came from another nonprofit called series where we worked deeply within the system to try to change you know, try to get companies to reduce their emissions and it was sort of like, why are you know, why are we taking this one by one approach? We're working with one company at a time to try to get them to do marginally less bad over over like, three decades, like how like, that is not it cannot be a leadership position to achieve net zero by 2050. Like if that's a leadership position, then we're all doomed. Doomed.



Eric Benson 14:54

Sorry to say that but



Jamie Beck Alexander 14:55

it's gonna say use a different, yeah. Less, less PSP word, but yes, that's And so, so you know, so drawdown Labs was sort of a response to that saying, I'm sorry, but, you know, net zero by 2050, or even 2040 is not a leadership position that's like table stakes. In order to actually, you know, for the world to achieve net zero, it means that every company needs to be there. And so how do companies, leading companies go beyond just achieving net zero and also use their clout their employee power, their political clout, their financial power through the bank, the banking relationships, they hold? Their governance practices? How do they help shift capitalism, you know, like, you're looking at many more of the leverage points that companies have to help achieve what we call achieve drawdown which is this moment in time when when emissions in the atmosphere peak and begin to steadily decline. So it's sort of about you know, a more holistic and more expansive definition of corporate climate leadership that leverages employees, and capital and political power and all the things that companies have to be able to influence climate change for the better.



Eric Benson 16:14

And how do you work with these companies? Is this something where you reach out to them? Or is it a consultancy thing?



Jamie Beck Alexander 16:21

So we're not consultants, we have we, you know, we're a nonprofit organization. And we're very committed to all of our all of the work that we do with our business partners, being a public good. So we believe that, you know, we, we don't do bespoke one on one work that benefits one company, we have an agreement with our business partners, that anything we do with them, we will make available to the broader world, because every company needs to do the same thing.



Eric Benson 16:48

Open Source, right. Yeah, I



Jamie Beck Alexander 16:50

mean, you know, the world doesn't benefit, if just, you know, a handful of companies Yeah, you know, are able to make to make strides. So we, we really work with them in ways that where we can aggregate their influence and push, you know, push obstacle, you know, kind of knocked down obstacles to climate action. So we'll do aggregated policy letters, like, you know, when the the Inflation Reduction Act, our business partners, many of them came together

and, you know, supported an issue, they're allowed in public support to Congress to act on climate change to get investments supporting climate solutions. So it's a big moment. It was it was a very big moment. And, you know, and it's it aligned with where, you know, I, I believe, and I think many people believe that if companies are going to be able to achieve their emissions reductions targets, they need this, they need policy in place to help them get there. Right that Yeah. So we do things like that will do, you know, we support kind of cutting edge, business climate leadership practice. So how can we help our business partners provide green 401 K options to their employees or green retirement? I would like that, I would like that. Right. Yeah. I mean, that should be the default, right? It's how do businesses push their banks? So you know, banks are far financed that the biggest five banks in the world are responsible for financing the fossil fossil fuel companies. So how do we how to corporations that have like, billions of dollars in the bank? How can they use that capital to say to their banks, hey, we've been banking with you, we have a ton of money in this bank, but we need you to stop financing fossil fuels, I'm gonna pull out sorry, or we're gonna pull out or we're gonna Yeah, or we're gonna go, you know, we'll go, we'll go elsewhere, or we are going to pressure you, you know, and many companies aggregating together to say, change, or we're all going to get a well, we'll build our own Green Bank universe, like, Yeah, I think there are, there's, there's pushing from the inside, you know, that a lot of pushing from the inside that that can happen with when you're talking about some of the biggest companies in the world, they can really, they can influence systems change on a, like on a real scale. So, so working with them around around those things, and then also piloting, you know, this idea of every job as a climate job, we work with our business partners to say, what does that actually look like beyond just a mantra, you know, what does it look like to tie OKRs or, you know, specific job functions and responsibilities and achievements within the procurement team, or HR or sales or marketing or the legal team? What does it actually look like to embed climate action into those roles? So we do work with our business partners around that so that ideally, you know, literally the sustainability team is sort of like the quarterback, but there is climate action happening you know, across the business, but the sustainability team can kind of core nailed it and lead it. But like it's happening everywhere. Yeah, the company has more of like an ecosystem with, you know, with climate action being sort of the North Star.



Eric Benson 20:10

Yeah, it does seem like you got it all covered with drawdown labs. Because in you're working with the business partners, you have maybe, maybe a top down, but with the every job as a climate job mantra, it's bottoms up, right. So it's, it's kind of taking it from two different fronts, which I think is super smart. But you totally



Jamie Beck Alexander 20:29

I feel like you you sit in on our internal meetings, that's like, exactly what I mean, that's what we that's what we tell that's we try to do work from, you know, the grass tops and the grass roots. And, you know, early on, we were sort of




Eric Benson 20:44

guys I saw right through it,

 Jamie Beck Alexander 20:46


you did totally. And, you know, and sort of like, how can we also be a little bit of a Trojan horse, you know, to get in there and try to, you know, build good relationships and trust, but also speak the truth, because we're, you know, we're on solid ground, we're speaking, you know, we have climate scientists, that, that, you know, in our organization who are telling us the truth about how quickly things need to change. And so we can, like, get in there, you know, get inside the get, you know, get get inside and really try to help change decision making from the inside.

 Eric Benson 21:20

Change the system within the system, right.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 21:23

Am I right? I think I think we need to do both. I mean, you know, there's this like, Yeah, I mean, there's this, there's this, I think, some people set it up as a conflict do I leave? To I leave my current job and go find? Nor do I? Yeah, do I leave my current job and go find a climate job? Like, as you said earlier, a job where sustainability is in the title or climate is in the title? Or do I, you know, try to use my skills to make change from where I am now. And that's gonna you know what, everybody's going to make their own decision about that. But we need both. I don't think we do. It's not one or the other, like, the existing system, deeply needs to change and quickly needs to change. And we also need people, you know, doing new things that can leapfrog and move faster. So I think we need both change from within and then change pushing it all forward from the outside,

 Eric Benson 22:16

we do. Last season, I interviewed two of my students, one of them Sadeen, she wanted to work in the climate field, and really embrace that every job as a climate job mantra from within the system. And the other student, I interviewed Adam. At the same time, he said, I that's not who I am, though, I'm going to kind of push it from the outside. And we had this really cool conversation about that.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 22:44

I would love to listen to that. That's yeah, exactly. That is the heart of I love that. I would love to listen to their conversation, and how they can't

 Eric Benson 22:54

remember off the top of my head what episode it was, I would tell you but do not. I can't go digging. go digging. Yeah, for anyone that's listening. If you missed that episode, it's one of the

better ones because we really hear from the students younger generation about what they're thinking about when they're going into the workforce. And I can tell you, they are thinking every job is a climate job. And they just don't know how to verbalize it until I think they watch your video, Jamie. And they know. Me know.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 23:28

I mean, I It's funny, I actually used to I was a mentor with another organization called terra.do. I don't know if you've heard of

 Eric Benson 23:36


them on the show last season, too. Oh, nice.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 23:39

Yeah. So I was a mentor for them. And one person I was mentoring was grappling with this decision. He worked inside, like in the belly of the beast, like in a while one of the big oil, oil companies will remain nameless. And he was deeply committed deeply passionate about climate change. And, you know, it was grappling with, do I try to stay and like push things faster and try to you know, organize employees internally and, you know, do more activism inside the company? Or do I just, you know, do I say like, I just can't I can't do this. Yeah, and I totally understand that. Yeah. And it's I it's definitely a personal decision, but I don't think vilifying people who work inside, you know, I think I think we need those we need we also need those people to push faster from the inside as well. So, yeah, I'd love to listen to that episode. I'll have to dig it up from last year. Thanks for wallow

 Eric Benson 24:41

while we're talking. I'll slowly find it on my phone. But I will say that I can totally relate to the person that you mentioned from Tara in that. Prior to me going into teaching I worked at a fortune 50 He company and ended up reading some. Well, I know his book was Cradle to Cradle, and really had basically a life life changing moment. And I tried to go back to the workplace, and I guess, change it from within. But this is like 2002, I think 2003. And I really didn't know what I was doing. I didn't have the vocabulary, the knowledge. And that's pretty much why I went to graduate school to try to get that information, so I could go change it from within, but then I felt wait. I could teach and affect a lot more people all at once. Yeah, eventually. So that's why I got into education.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 25:47

Oh, incredible. Wow, I love that story. What a inspiring story for your students.

 Eric Benson 25:52



ERIC BENSON 25:55

Well, speaking of which, it's episode 1102. So last season, I dug it up on my phone while we were talking here,



Jamie Beck Alexander 26:02

got it amazing. Well, I'm gonna listen to you as



Eric Benson 26:05

well, thank you, I would appreciate any input that that you might have from that. Well, speaking of students, I teach a lot of my listeners teach. And many students are looking to do a lot of good work, the design knowledge that they have. And so they complain to me all the time, that they look for a sustainable designer or something like that designer for impact. And they cannot find enough job titles with that. So I'm wondering what your advice might be for any student wanting to work in, in climate action. And I think I know what you might say, but I'm, I'm, I need some more help with talking with my students about this.



Jamie Beck Alexander 26:56

Right? It's such a great question. I mean, on the highest, you know, on the sort of the highest level, figuring building the world that we all want to live in together and that is sustainable, and, you know, can inhabit, you know, where we can all inhabit and thrive, you know, life can thrive. That's a design question, right? Yeah. That's like, how do ya like we've never, I feel like never in human history, have we thought, thought intentionally and thoughtfully about what the world is that we want to live in together, right? It just sort of like happened. And now like, we know, that we need to rebuild every part of society, and when know how to we essentially and we have like, sort of the tools like we, you know, solar panels, regenerative agriculture, indigenous land tenure, like we have, we have the products, the things. Now we need to figure out, like, what does this look like in communities? What does this look like in a place? Like where I live in Duluth, Minnesota? And how is that different from Austin, Texas, or Berkeley, California, you know, and those are, those are like, some of the most exciting design challenges. You know, I could imagine that, you know, we're designers coming together with climate scientists coming together with builders. And I think that, you know, on the very highest level, that's not an actionable thing, but just on the highest level, when you think about it, practice, you know, kind of, theoretically, I think of it as a as a very exciting design design challenge. And then, you know, in terms of look, you know, getting getting more practical, like, what does it look like when you're looking for a job because a lot of I mean, we worked with a design firm, IDEO? Yeah. When, like, when I when I was launching drawdown labs, it was just me, I was the only person working on drawdown labs,



Eric Benson 28:54

You did a great job.



J Jamie Beck Alexander 28:56

But I was like, you know, I don't know how to, like, I knew what I what I wanted to do, I had no idea how to build it. So I, the very first email I sent from my drawdown.org email was an email to IDEO where I had, I knew I knew some people I had done some consulting there in the past and I was like, Okay, I need like a design sprint with you all, like helped me figure out what are the gaps? Am I trying to address what are what is my what is my organization superpower? How do we structure this? How do we move mountains? How do we do you know, and they were instrumental in and these weren't, these weren't like climate designers. These were this was an organizational designer. This was a, you know, a systems designer. And, you know, I mean, it was kind of a bunch of people from throughout IDEO, not one of which had sustainability or climate in their in their title, and had probably never worked on, you know, many of them probably hadn't really ever worked on a sustainability challenge before but they were listening to what are you trying to achieve? What is the current state of play? How do we design you know, some thing that matches what you're looking for. And they helped me design and launch drawdown labs together collaboratively. And so, you know, I think, and then I and then since that idea, no, I know IDEO has been on a very exciting journey with how they, how they try to embed climate across different design function or didn't know that, that's good to hear. Yeah, so they're really building that out now. And so I think, you know, it's about kind of looking at, you know, the different aspects of design. And and, you know, are you are you interested in like product design, organizational design, graphic design. And even if sustainability isn't your job title, there are ways to infuse that into your work, right. And I think that is going to be the future. I mean, I don't think we're going to be spending a lot more years designing things that are not compatible, we, you know, with with, with sustainability, and so getting really, you know, kind of just looking for ways to infuse that into whatever type of design work you do. And then also looking at, you know, how can you how can you raise conversations internally about climate change? And how can you look at how you can influence your clients, you have a really, designers have a really important role, and probably, in many, many cases, access other influential clients, and how can you influence them and use your, you know, sort of use your relationships to not just not just bolster, you know, climate action inside your own, wherever you're working, but also with your clients? So I would say, I mean, the most important thing to me, as you're looking at where to work, you know, is sort of, where can I have the moat, you know, what am I really good at? And how can I infuse climate the most there? And if it seems like the company, or you know, a business that you're looking at working for is, is open to sort of being pushed or being challenged, like, which hopefully most design firms would be? Like, yeah, sounds like that would be sort of what I would look at.



Eric Benson 32:10

Sounds like we're perfect partners here, and that the climate designers group as a whole, and then this podcast, as well. We're trying to get that information to design educators, like you are really every job as a climate job mantra. And when they graduate, right, they can bring that to these conversations with the client. So that's why I chose you, and drawdown labs and the drawdown sectors for this season.

J Jamie Beck Alexander 32:42

That's so exciting. Yeah, you're absolutely right. I mean, yeah, I mean, it really is, I think it it's, it's such a it feels like a beautiful coming together of, you know, of climate and design in a way that we need, you know, in a generative and like exciting and creative way. I think that's that's

that we need, you know, in a generative and like exciting and creative way. I think that's that's exactly what the world needs.



Eric Benson 33:04

I agree. And since this season is all about that and solutions to our climate problems. I'm interested in what you felt some of the successes have been with drawdown labs in terms of really positive outcomes. Do you have any favorites? Or some success stories that can be inspirational for our listeners?



Jamie Beck Alexander 33:29

Yes. I am laughing because some of them, I think, Well, I think part of what needs to happen is like I think feathers do need to be ruffled. And that's why I'm laughing because Oh, yeah, things that I would mention, are not necessarily things that have made everyone in my organization, and



Eric Benson 33:49

it wasn't.



Jamie Beck Alexander 33:51

They have, yeah, they have, you know, some things that I'm the most proud of where the most controversial. And I mean, I think that's what we need to do for those of you know, for those people that have a relative comfort and stability, like we better be, we better be trying to push as hard as we can, you know, right, like I and so, one of the things that I am proudest of was, you know, there's there's a lot of the these like business climate coalitions out there, run by NGOs, where, you know, NGOs, work with businesses and try to, like lift them up as Climate Leaders, and a lot of times, it's a lot of greenwashing and a lot of PR, and I did not want that to happen with drawdown labs. And so, you know, I was sort of like, as an NGO, we have very, very little leverage over these big behemoth corporations. But one leverage point we do have is, you know, like I can, we can talk freely about how much our business partners are doing or not to the, you know, publicly. And so, yeah, you



Eric Benson 34:57

you can name names,



Jamie Beck Alexander 34:59

we can name names. So, there have been a few instances where, you know, I have been open about my disappointment in various ways there was, you know, specifically one. One thing I'm thinking of where we took out a full page ad in the New York Times last year, oh, my you to say

we use my our own programmatic budget took out a full page on the New York Times, it is not inexpensive to do, and



Eric Benson 35:27

it must be totally expensive, right?



Jamie Beck Alexander 35:30

Very, it's very expensive. But we felt like, you know, the build back better act was just was felt like it was hanging in the balance. We were hearing from, from legislators that, hey, we really need business support to get this over the line. And the build back better act is what then became, it ultimately failed, but then became, you know, major portions of it became the inflation Reduction Act. So we were hearing like, we really need, we really need businesses to step up and be loud about their support for climate for a climate bill. And so we took that we were like, what's the biggest, boldest thing we could do? And we took out a full page on the New York Times. And it's, you know, big bold, said, You know, you know, we have the solutions to the climate, you know, the world has the solutions to the climate crisis. Now, we need Congress to act, basically, you know, we need Congress to pass bold climate policy. And we went out to all of our business partners and extended community and said, put your logo on this and like, show that you're that you support this. And most did, but a few of our very big, kind of biggest, largest corporations that we work with, did not. And so, yeah, so we got all kinds of questions from the press, like, oh, I noticed that XYZ companies didn't have their logo. And I would like give very candid interviews about how disappointed I was and how I question whether they're Climate Leaders if they're not gonna, like support climate policy. So that was I mean, you know, I think we were told later, like, the business voice did make a difference in getting the inflation Reduction Act passed, ultimately. So it was controversial. I'm sharing that story, because it was controversial, and I did get in some hot water with certain of our business partners. But ultimately, you know, I think it I think it's important for us to find accountability and like Courage where we can and like, if we can push things, even if it's controversial, or not totally comfortable. Like, I think that that's, that's where we are like that we have such little time, and we need to pull out all the stops and use every tool we have at our disposal.



Eric Benson 37:45

Yeah, well, that's free owes a lot to you then with your you could get some sort of Presidential Medal of Honor. Goodness. I didn't know that. That's, that's so cool.



Jamie Beck Alexander 37:58

Oh, I mean, there's no, there's there's no way you could ever tie. That's the thing about climate change. You know, it's so hard to ever tie to ever say like, I helped do that, you know, right, in some very small way. I think we like to think that we played some small card.



Eric Benson 38:14



ERIC BENSON 38:17

I mean, I don't get the New York Times, but I was already on board with it. So



Jamie Beck Alexander 38:18

yes. Well, I will hang my proverbial. My Eric granted, presidential rifle, background of my Zoom.



Eric Benson 38:28

If I could, and if I'm President of the United States, I will give it to you. That's going to be highly unlikely.



Jamie Beck Alexander 38:37

We can dream Yeah.



Eric Benson 38:39

Well, what's next for you? drawdown? What's your? What's your success story at drawdown in the future? How do you how do you measure success for you? Wow, that is a great question. Yeah, good luck answering that one. That's



Jamie Beck Alexander 38:52

yeah, I mean, you know what, I've actually been working with a coach who, who gave me this great advice. She said, what got you here is not necessarily what's gonna get you to the next place. And so are unbundling the words but something like that. Get the idea though. Yeah. And sort of, so I am in this process of sort of, like, okay, what are we? What are we? What, what, what is next? And yes, we've like are, my team has done, you know, a lot of work to do these, like, you know, employee resources and really try to help employees get more active on climate change, but like, what's next? Is it you know, thinking about how are employees protected in the workplace? Is it unionizing? Is it you know, like, how do we, as we start to see more layoffs in certain sectors? How do we use that? I mean, I'm not sure but I think, you know, we're sort of in this process now of thinking, Okay, we've started this conversation provided some resources, how do we keep pushing and how, like, what's what's the next thing for us? To push. So that is that is very much a in process. Thought thought exercise right now, but I would love to come back to you on that one.




Eric Benson 40:13

Yeah. Well, I hope we can help here. Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we want to get more of these climate solutions in the classroom. The so that there's just more people knowing like you said, we have the solutions. We just need to embrace them and do them. And there's these people with gobs

of money. And, yeah, if they put their money, you know, where it needed to be for the future of our civilization. Right, you know, Hey, see such big changes. So we I hope we can help you with your with what's next a drawdown?

 Jamie Beck Alexander 40:51

I love that. I mean, there's so many there are so many incredible synergies between your work and our so that definitely feels like hundreds here. Yeah.

 Eric Benson 41:02

Well, we're running out of time here. And it comes to, again, my favorite question. By now my listeners should know what that is. And I want to put you in an ED design educators shoes just for a moment, hopefully designer shoes and share with us your through your own work and knowledge and experience. What would you do? What would you assign if you were teaching? My class? Oh,

 Jamie Beck Alexander 41:33

yeah. What would I assign?

 Eric Benson 41:35

You can do anything

 Jamie Beck Alexander 41:36

teaching your class? Well, I would think I mean, I am. So I'm really intrigued right now about organizational design. And I don't know if that's a component of your class, but that just thinking about how systems function, and it is totally how to Yeah, okay, and how to how to exert pressure in various parts of the system? And, you know, kind of identifying leverage points in flute like, Yeah, I think of like a power almost like a power mapping exercise, which I guess is sort of like could be a design challenge and thinking about, you know, I don't know if you would want to go as broad as like capitalism itself, but looking at, you know, just like the systems around us, and how do we have how do we apply some design principles to moving this, our economic system toward one that is, you know, is not so incessantly focused on profit above all else, and can also value human and planetary health? And to me that there are aspects of that, that are a major design challenge, and where is their power? And who has influence and mapping out? I don't know if this is necessarily a design challenge, but kind of map Yeah, mapping out like, Okay, we have the market, the broad, like, sort of capital markets, and then there are investors and corporations and banks and individuals, and what is this design? What is the design of this whole system that we've set out for ourselves, that is, like locking us into these decisions we're making that are, you know, that are digging us into our own grave? And how, where are they? No pun intended? And just if they're desert, like, how might we? How might we? Like, maintain? I don't know, I don't know what the how might we

question is there but how might we lead us to a good a good question in the end, right? Yeah, maybe maybe that's the question, not just like, how might we design another, like, economic system? But like, how do we work with what we've got right now? Because we know, we know what we have, we know the different points of leverage we have. We know the different, like systems that are in place. Maybe the challenge maybe the design question is like, where are opportunities for design to influence the system? Or question? Yeah,



Eric Benson 44:12

project. And yes, indeed, systems thinking, right is something that I teach in my classes with an emphasis on life centered.



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:21

Oh,



Eric Benson 44:22

as opposed to human centered.



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:25

I love



Eric Benson 44:27

what problems that can cause.



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:29

Yeah. Oh, I love that. I've never heard of that. But that yeah, I love it. That's such that's a great, it's all great reframe. Yeah.



Eric Benson 44:37

I think so to



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:38

life centered design. Yes.



Eric Benson 44:40

So yes, your your assignment is something that definitely it's a great design assignment. same wavelength. This is why we're good drawdown and climate designers match where,



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:53

yeah.



Eric Benson 44:54

this is what I'm doing in my classroom.



Jamie Beck Alexander 44:56

Very cool



Eric Benson 44:56

students who think this way, and they're not gonna be Be able to unless they see how everything is connected?



Jamie Beck Alexander 45:02

Yes. Well, if any of your students ever want to help me out with a power mapping exercise, looking inside some big corporations like where's their power? How can we give employees more power? How do we like access the decision makers? And what are all the things if you ever have any, any, any students interested in that area?



Eric Benson 45:23

Oh truly yea. I name dropped two students today. And hopefully they have listened to this and they will reach out to you.



Jamie Beck Alexander 45:33

I look forward to listening to that to that recording. Yeah,




45:36

well, it was a great time today, I really enjoyed hearing more about your work at drawdown labs and what you hope to do. And I think we have a great opportunity to work together to help get

and what you hope to do. And I think we have a great opportunity to work together to help get to make sure everyone knows every job is a climate job.

 Jamie Beck Alexander 45:55


I love it. Eric, thank you so much for having me on. I really appreciate the opportunity. This was a really fun conversation, and I look forward to more more to come.

 Eric Benson 46:05

Yes definitely. And before we go, Where can we find you online again, Jamie?

 Jamie Beck Alexander 46:10

So project drawdown.org on the web, and then on Twitter project drawdown is at Project drawdown and I am at JABECKX on Twitter.

 Eric Benson 46:23

Climify is produced, edited and engineered by me. A huge Special thanks to Ellen Keith Shaw, and Christine Pilate for their gorgeous work on the new brand Betula chic, and Mark O'Brien for their design help, and brandy Nichols for her strategic guidance on improving the offerings of this podcast. If you enjoy the work we all do here, and you have a spare minute or two. We truly appreciate if you left a rating and review over at Apple podcasts. The more folks that review our program, the higher the algorithm pushes up climate fi in the search results. And in turn, the more likely we all can learn how to become climate designers.