

# ***Rootbound*: Harnessing the Power of Young Adult Fiction to Challenge Corporate Climate Propaganda**

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We need **new** stories to expose and counter industry narratives of doom and gloom, individual responsibility, and fossil fuel industry saviorism. To empower young people and to motivate political action we need stories with justice, hope, joy, community, and systems change. Drawing from my PhD and postdoctoral research on how the fossil fuel industry undermines democracy and how to empower youth on climate action, I have written a young adult novel—*Rootbound*. (Think Greta Thunberg meets *The Hunger Games*, with heaps of queer joy and swoony romance.)

Using *Rootbound* as a jumping off point, I'll be speaking to thousands of young people about climate obstruction and civic engagement in the coming months. I'm also creating a story, workshop, and curricula experience where young people can learn about the root causes of climate change, design their own piece of the fandom, and learn how to take collective action for climate justice.

Why? Joy disrupts apathy. Stories allow us to honor and hold space for grief and fear, but add a little magic, play, love, and camaraderie to climate engagement for the years to come. They create cultural touchstones for young people craving stories of both collective upheaval and resilience in the face of immense hardships like climate injustice, and blueprints for how to keep putting one foot in front of the other. One of touchstones of the characters in the *Rootbound* world struggling with their own climate grief is—*the only way out is through*.

As folks spend time with the story they'll learn about systemic action, or what I've coined the 3 Vs: **Voice** your climate feelings and concerns to friends and family. **Volunteer** in climate community. **Vote** for climate justice champions. **Voice. Volunteer. Vote.**

What if we had a tool for nimble and consistent storytelling, also grounded in social science?

What if we could meet new people, those not already engaged, where they're at, with content that is engaging and enjoyable but also explains the power of frontline defenders, systems change, and collective action?

What if we created a platform and a community of young creatives that allowed us to continually identify and challenge shifting fossil fuel industry narratives?



Figure. 1: Art by Jazz Groden-Gilchrist