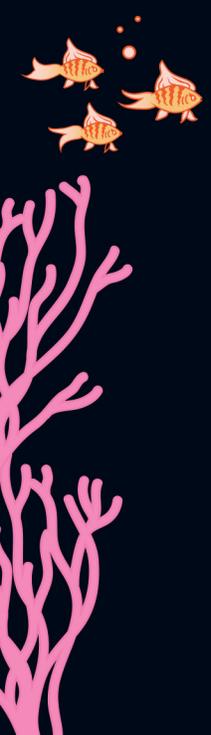


PROTECT
ARIEL'S HOME

THE TOOLKIT



FANDOMFORWARD.ORG

INTRODUCTION

The Little Mermaid is a story that transcends cultures and generations. From Hans Christian Andersen's dark original to the Disney classic many of us know and love, this story resonates with so many people both because of Ariel's desire to experience more of the world and the striking visuals that allow us to imagine mermaid life under the sea. Now, with the live-action remake of *The Little Mermaid*, a new generation is posed to become part of Ariel's world.

However, we know that the reality of our oceans is no fairy tale. The human-caused climate crisis has caused increased weather disasters across the world, deteriorated natural habitats in the ocean, and created harmful water sources for various communities. This reality is what inspired Fandom Forward to organize the campaign **Protect Ariel's Home**.

We know climate change is part of our world, but with the help of this toolkit, you can do something about it! Read on to better understand the current situation regarding **clean water access** as well as how you can take direct action to make a big splash and help support the communities most impacted by the climate crisis.

FACILITATOR TIPS

You are welcome to use this toolkit on your own time, but if you plan on working through the toolkit with a group, it's important to keep some things in mind that we hope will make it a better experience for everyone.

1. Support Each Other

You never know what a particular subject may mean personally to someone or how a discussion may impact them. A great way to start is to set some guidelines as a group for what is and is not acceptable in your circle. If things start to get too uncomfortable, don't be afraid to end a line of discussion or steer it to another topic. Remember that not all of us are ready to go on this kind of journey—make sure you let your group know they'll be participating in a discussion or action beforehand so that everyone can choose whether or not to participate.

2. Listen to Each Other

Every member of your group has a unique viewpoint and things to share. These subjects are complicated, and different viewpoints are okay—take time to listen, let everyone speak, and challenge each other without devaluing each other or resorting to personal attacks.

3. Think First

It's important to discuss these subjects before immediately taking action. Use the Talk It Out sections to think more deeply about the subjects at hand before deciding how you want to tackle them.

4. Don't Jump to Conclusions

Don't assume you know everything about a subject, even if you feel knowledgeable about it already. If you have anyone in your group whose identity or lived experiences are impacted by a subject that does not directly impact you, consider asking them ahead of time if they would feel comfortable contributing to or even leading the discussion. This way, you know in advance whether or not they want to be called upon to share those experiences with the group.

5. Take Action

When you and your team feel ready to jump in, use the Take Action suggestions to get started. If your team comes up with a different idea, that's awesome—don't be afraid to get creative!

6. Keep Learning

We've only begun to scratch the surface—these subjects are highly complex and constantly evolving. Take what you learn from this kit and continue to educate yourself.

Need Backup? That's okay, there's a whole team of volunteers ready to help. Just send us an email at info@fandomforward.org—we're happy to answer questions or help you with facilitation or action items.

ALL CHARACTERS ARE FLAWED

We've done our best to represent the issues in this toolkit as accurately as possible, but because these subjects are so complex there are bound to be things we missed or things you have different views on. If you find factual errors in this toolkit, please let us know!

REPRESENTATION

Ever since Disney's beloved stories were first released in 1937, it has been a bumpy road toward diverse and inclusive representation. Many of Disney's early films feature an all-White cast with little to no BIPOC (Black and Indigenous People of Color) representation, and even those few instances of diversity were culturally insensitive. A couple of unfortunate examples include:

- ★ In *Peter Pan* (1953) the word 'redskins' is used in reference to Native Americans and the film includes dancing scenes that make a joke out of Native peoples' culture and imagery;
- ★ *The Lady and the Tramp* (1955) and *The Aristocats* (1970) contain negative stereotypes of Asian people,
- ★ There are negative depictions and stereotypes against Roma people in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996) which depict them as aimless nomads and untrustworthy thieves.

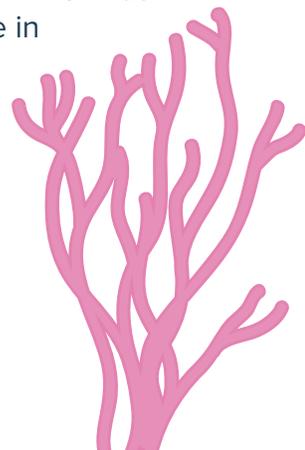
You can see more of these examples [here](#).

There have been some positive developments in Disney's efforts towards representation. For example, on the streaming service Disney+, subscribers will see the following message when they click on specific films: "This programme includes negative depictions and/or mistreatment of people or cultures." This is a step in the direction towards acknowledging past harms.

However, fans continue to critique certain elements, specifically in the representation of Black characters. In *The Princess and the Frog* (2009), Princess Tiana isn't presented in the same manner as the other White protagonists. Tiana's storyline is the only one driven by financial hardship as she works two jobs cleaning houses, while other princesses are born into wealthy families. This forces Tiana into the stereotype of the Black servant that colonizer perspectives of history have associated with Black womanhood. Even so, the film is set in the 1920s Jim Crow South, but doesn't acknowledge the experience of being a Black woman during that time.

One major critique of Disney's portrayal of Black characters is that there is a recurring pattern of them becoming non-human during their stories. For example, Tiana and her love interest, Prince Naveen, are transformed into frogs and spend the majority of the film in that state. The only Black main character that stays human is the villain, Dr. Facilier. Another example is in Disney and Pixar's *Soul* (2020). The protagonist, Joe Gardner, has his body inhabited by the spirit of a character, 22, who is played by white actress Tina Fey.

Disney has improved their efforts towards better representation in the past few years, with films like *Raya and the Last Dragon* (2021), *Encanto* (2021), *Coco* (2017), and *Moana* (2016), all of which had increased BIPOC representation behind the scenes. While there is still work to be done in providing authentic, culturally-supportive stories and giving more opportunities to BIPOC writers, animators, and other creative workers, these accomplishments should be celebrated as we see the positive impacts it has on young audiences.



REPRESENTATION & THE LITTLE MERMAID

In July 2019, 22-year-old singer Halle Bailey was cast as the iconic red-haired mermaid, Ariel, for Disney's live action adaptation of *The Little Mermaid*. With the release of the first official teaser on September 9th, 2022, mixed reactions emerged and caused discourse on social media. Some people reacted by posting videos with "#NotMyAriel" attached to protest the princess's change in the depicted race by criticizing political correctness and canon accuracy, while others rejoiced in the prospect of a Black woman playing the iconic, red-headed mermaid with many young Black girls seeing themselves represented.

What you might not know is that the original *The Little Mermaid* (1989) film had a few instances of representation of marginalized communities too. The beloved octopus antagonist, Ursula, was inspired by the drag queen Divine. Animator Rob Minkoff took inspiration from elements such as Divine's eye makeup and jewelry. There's also the well-known singing crab, Sebastian, who was originally written to be English but was suggested to be from the Caribbean, specifically Jamaica, and played by Black actor Samuel E. Wright. Moments of representation have been present, even in small ways. And despite the critical response to Halle Bailey's casting from a vocal minority, the casting has brought joy to many Black people, specifically Black women and girls who can now see themselves represented in a light-hearted, inspiring character such as Ariel.

When Black and Brown people are not represented in the media, it reflects the invisibility these communities face on a societal level. These communities are fighting against systemic racism, an institutional practice that negatively impacts quality of life in every way. When BIPOC characters don't get a chance to be seen or heard, not only do these conversations never see the light of day, but Black and Brown viewers don't get the same chance to see themselves in their favorite heroes like White viewers always do. While this campaign is about bringing attention to the environmental needs of communities, it is also about celebrating the visibility of BIPOC characters and the joy that diverse stories bring to these communities.

CLEAN DRINKING WATER

Water is essential to life. No living thing can survive without it. In *The Little Mermaid*, we see the presence of water everywhere—from the sea that is Ariel's home to the boiling pot that Sebastian narrowly escapes.

In our own world, safe and readily available water is important for public health—whether it is used for drinking, personal hygiene, domestic use, food production, or recreational purposes. **Access to safe drinking water and safely managed sanitation facilities is a human right, not a privilege. However, not all water is equal. Many people's access to water is threatened by the pollution of water sources, bad economics, poor infrastructure, and costly management.**

The people most likely affected by the lack of clean water are BIPOC, lower-income, and rural communities, especially communities living at the intersections of these identities – a consistent trend shown through multiple studies around environmental justice and drinking water contamination. One such report, called Watered Down Justice, analyzed data provided by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) between 2016 to 2019 “and found a disturbing relationship between multiple sociodemographic characteristics – especially race – and drinking water violations.”

According to the report, nearly 130 million people in the U.S. (almost 40% of the U.S. population) got their drinking water from systems that violated the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), exposing them to serious health risks. The data also reveals that public water systems that constantly violate the SDWA are 40% more likely to serve BIPOC communities. It also takes water systems in these communities much longer to come back into compliance.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE?

The environmental justice movement arose as a response to the constant environmental harms minority communities were experiencing.

Often referred to as the father of the environmental justice movement, Dr. Robert Bullard defined it as, “all people and communities are entitled to equal protection of environmental and public health laws and regulations.” ([Source](#))

(Learn more about the movement [here](#) and find additional terms and definitions [here](#).)

The SDWA sets the framework for regulating naturally-occurring and human-made contaminants that may be found in drinking water. Potential sources of contamination include improperly disposed of chemicals, pesticides, waste injected underground, non-human animal waste, bacteria, and various pollutants (natural and synthetic). Other sources of contamination include improper treatment or disinfection of water or improperly maintained distribution systems.

Maintaining the quality of water sources in addition to building out, maintaining, and updating water infrastructure is extremely costly in terms of resources like money and manpower. A history of residential segregation, discrimination, and community disinvestment, or the purposeful withdrawal of investment (i.e. money and development) from communities, has left many BIPOC and low-income communities with aging, underdeveloped, and underfunded water infrastructures that contribute to unsafe water conditions. Environmental racism also increases the likelihood of BIPOC communities to live near hazardous waste sites and pollution-producing facilities such as factories and landfills.

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM?

Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. coined the term in 1982 in a speech where he defined it as “racial discrimination in environmental policy making, the enforcement of regulation and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements.” ([Source](#))

The impact of the lack of access to clean water is significant. For many, the first thing that comes to mind are attacks on health equity – the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Contaminated water results in a wide range of health problems including serious infections, cancer, compromised fertility, developmental effects, and more. These health risks come not only from drinking the contaminated water itself but also from its other uses, like growing food or showering. Not having access to clean water also disrupts people’s daily lives by impacting what can be cooked at home, requiring extra time to boil and filter water for daily use, or causing school closures while testing for lead. There are also economic impacts as people in these communities are forced with the difficult and intolerable choice between water and other necessities like paying for rent, buying food, and paying for necessary medication and medical services. Another impact people might not immediately think of is a growing distrust in public services or the government which creates a spillover effect that exacerbates worsening health issues in these communities.

When it pushed its way into national headlines in 2014-15, Flint, Michigan, became a striking case study for SDWA violations, environmental racism, and the deteriorating trust people have in government agencies. Back in 2014, officials looking to save money switched Flint’s drinking water supply from the Detroit city system to the Flint River. This new water supply was highly corrosive and failure to properly treat the water resulted in lead leaching from aging service lines, resulting in mass lead poisoning throughout the community. The problem worsened as government officials downplayed or ignored

the mounting complaints about the foul-smelling, discolored, and off-tasting water and accompanying health issues.

However, Flint is also an inspiring case study of everyday citizens uniting their voices to fight for justice and government accountability. Residents, including Amariyanna “Mari” Copeny (aka Little Miss Flint), elevated public awareness around the issue to gain national attention. A coalition of citizens and groups sued the city and state officials to address the crisis and secure safe drinking water for the community. Even as Flint’s crisis faded from major national headlines, people continue to advocate for Flint’s residents. When the free bottled water program for Flint Residents was discontinued in 2018, Copeny once again partnered with Pack Your Back to raise money for bottled water. (In 2019, Copeny also started another campaign to raise funds for a water filter to address the single use plastic waste from water bottles.) Organizations like the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) also continue to keep city officials accountable until the replacement of lead pipes in Flint is completed.

Flint is an example of how our right to clean water can come under attack. It is an example of why it is so important to protect our water. It is also an example of how important it is for us to use our voices to fight for and defend our rights.

TALK IT OUT

- ★ Don’t give up your voice! In *The Little Mermaid*, water is an integral part of life for those who live above and below the water.
- ★ In what ways does water play an important role for each of these groups? What are the similarities? Differences?
- ★ For each group, why would maintaining and ensuring the cleanliness of the water be important?
- ★ What roles does water play in our own lives? What is important about maintaining and ensuring the cleanliness of our water—whether it’s ocean, lakes, rivers, etc.?
- ★ Have you ever noticed that not all water tastes the same? The source of your water, any present impurities, and treatment techniques used will all impact the safety, appearance, and taste of your water. (Don’t believe us? Try tasting the differences between glasses of tap water, filtered tap water, bottled water, mineral water, and distilled water.) (Source: [Where Does Your Water Come From?](#))
- ★ Depending on whether water is sourced from surface water, groundwater, or private wells, what types of impurities would you expect to find in each of these?
- ★ What are some possible sources of water in your community?
- ★ Which type of water would you consider safer to drink: surface water, groundwater, or private wells?
- ★ What might impact the safety of these water sources?
- ★ What are some actions we can take to keep our water sources safe?
- ★ What organizations can you join or support to keep our water sources safe?

Humans and merpeople in *The Little Mermaid* have different experiences when it comes to water. Similarly, different communities in the U.S. also have different experiences around and with their access to clean drinking water.

Just as Ariel extends her curiosity to “the world up above,” how can we extend our curiosity to communities outside of our own?

- ★ What makes listening to and supporting voices from different communities so important?

GET CRAFTY

Objective: Demonstrate how water is filtered - one step of the several treatment methods used in providing us clean water. (This experiment should follow discussions around potential sources of pollution to drinking water supplies and the importance of protecting our water and working to keep it clean.)

SUPPLIES:

- ★ Clear (or compostable! ;) plastic cups (for collecting filtered water)
- ★ Filter container (options):
 - ★ Cups with a hole cut into the bottoms
 - ★ Plastic water bottles with bottoms cut off
 - ★ Plastic sandwich bags with a small hole into one of the corners
- ★ Dirty water
- ★ Create dirty water using oil, dirt, stones, sand, leaves, and other debris.
- ★ Coffee filters
- ★ Paper towels
- ★ Nylon stockings
- ★ Elastics
- ★ Sand (fine and/or coarse)
- ★ Pebbles/gravel stones (small and/or medium)

TIPS:

- ★ You may be able to find smaller packages of sand and gravel/pebbles at pet stores that sell aquarium supplies.
- ★ Rinse gravel beforehand to prevent any dyes from adding color to the water.

Reminder: Remember to recycle your plastic cups and bottles after rinsing them out! You can also recycle the sandwich bags at your local grocery stores (after rinsing and drying them)!

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Prepare a jug filled with dirty water beforehand.
2. Set supplies out for participants to choose what they want to build their filter with. Encourage participants to go through a process of trial and error and record what seems to work and what does not.

3. Filter ideas if people are getting stuck:

★ a. Filter Idea 1:

- Construct a filter using the plastic bottle with its bottom cut off
- Attach the coffee filter to the outside neck of the bottle with an elastic. Turn the bottle upside down, placing it in a plastic cup of the cut-off bottom of the bottle.
- Pour a layer of pebbles into the bottle
- Pour the coarse sand on top of the pebbles.
- Pour the fine sand on top of the coarse sand.

- Pour some of the dirty water through the filter.
- Collect the filtered water in a plastic cup.

★ **b. Filter Idea 2:**

- [Hands on Teaching Ideas: Clean Water Experiment for Kids](#)

4. Optional: Run the filtered water through the filter a second time to try and get it even cleaner.

ACTIVITY DISCUSSION:

- ★ Save the filtered water (and accompanying filter) from each trial and error process. Have participants compare the filtered results against each other and against the dirty water. How has the filtering treatment changed the appearance and smell of the water?
- ★ Although the filtered water looks clean and clear now, it still might not be safe to drink. Why might that be?
- ★ Depending on the water source (e.g. from a nearby pond or stream), there may be bacteria, microbiological organisms, and/or harmful chemicals that aren't visible to the naked eye.
- ★ Disinfectants and other treatment methods are applied at water treatment plants to disinfect and further purify the water to make it safe for consumption.

TAKE ACTION

- ★ Understand the importance of water in our everyday lives.
- ★ Try keeping a log for how much water you and your family use in one week. Come back as a group to discuss your findings.
- ★ Read about [How We Use Water](#)
- ★ For communities without access to safe drinking water, how does this lack of access affect their daily lives?
- ★ Sign up for a training or convergence with [PowerShift Network](#).
- ★ Support mutual aid efforts in a community suffering from lack of access to clean water. Examples include [River Valley Organizing](#) and [Solidarity for East Palestine](#).

CONCLUSION

The reality of the climate crisis may be bleak, but the future doesn't have to be. Fan activism, the organizing methodology that Fandom Forward was founded on, involves making connections between pop culture and the real world to inspire fans to take action for social change. The power fan communities have is incredible, especially when they work together on a common goal. Please use this toolkit to organize and inspire action amongst your fellow fans, your friends, and your family. We can't wait to see what the Disney fandom—arguably one of the largest fandoms in the world—does to Protect Ariel's Home!

IF YOU TAKE ACTION, PLEASE TELL US ABOUT IT!

#ProtectArielsHome



[Fandom Forward](#)



[@FandomForward](#)



[@thehpalliance](#)



[@FandomForward](#)

If you have questions, please contact us: info@fandomforward.org

RESOURCES

- ★ Clean Drinking Water Resources
 - [Understanding the Safe Drinking Water Act](#)
 - [How Does Your Water System Work?](#)
 - [Close the Water Access Gap Report](#)
 - [Draining: The Economic Impact of America's Hidden Water Crisis](#)
- ★ Water Activities and Resources for Students & Teachers
 - [UNESCO SDG Resources for Educators - Clean Water and Sanitation](#)
 - [EPA's Drinking Water Activities for Students & Teachers](#)
 - [6 Fun Classroom Ideas to Celebrate World Water Day](#)
 - [Educational Resources for Students & World Water Day Activities](#)
- ★ Flint Water Crisis (articles by NRDC)
 - [Flint Water Crisis: Everything You Need to Know \(2018\)](#)
 - [Fighting for Safe Drinking Water in Flint \(2022\)](#)

