

WEATHERING INJUSTICE: CLIMATE ANXIETY IN *THE SEASONS*

By Annalisa Dias, Co-Founder of Groundwater Arts

*"Sometimes, we feel the weather inside of us
more than we feel the weather outside of us."*

—The Poet, *The Seasons*

In *The Seasons*, we're invited on a journey through a complex tapestry of emotions that emerge when confronting how the climate crisis has fractured our relationship with land, time, and place. Together with the artists, we navigate through confusion, anger, despair, fear, overwhelm, activation, and... maybe eventually... a precarious and tender **hope**.

When faced with global inaction, it's natural to spiral into despair and even echo the performance artist's question: "Can we change?" The scale of destruction we face can feel paralyzing. Hope often feels out of reach. Recent research in psychology and sociology suggests a framework to understand our shared experience: "climate anxiety."

Here in Boston, climate anxiety intertwines deeply with environmental justice concerns. Communities like East Boston, Chelsea, and Roxbury bear disproportionate burdens of climate change impacts, from extreme heat due to fewer trees and more pavement, to flooding risks in low-lying areas. These same

neighborhoods have historically faced higher rates of air pollution from highways and industrial sites. Yet these communities are also at the forefront of climate resilience, with organizations like [GreenRoots](#) in Chelsea and [Alternatives for Community & Environment \(ACE\)](#) in Roxbury leading the fight for environmental justice, demonstrating how local action can create meaningful change.

Ask any climate scientist and they'll tell you: we don't have an information problem; instead, we have a crisis of imagination. We have the solutions necessary to mitigate the worst impacts of climate chaos, yet many of our stories about the futures we face due to climate change end in doom and gloom, dystopia, and apocalypse. Artists and storytellers can play a key role in shifting that narrative. It's up to us to "feel the weather" inside of us and translate that into tangible action. As marine biologist, policy expert, and Urban Ocean Lab founder Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson asks: instead of existential disaster, "[what if we get it right?](#)"

DEFINITIONS

If this conversation and terminology is new to you, here are a few helpful definitions and examples of where these concepts show up concretely here in Boston:

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. For example, neighborhoods in Boston that were redlined — labeled risky investments because its residents were Black, immigrants, or Jewish — are “7.5°F hotter in the day, 3.6°F hotter at night, and have 20% less parkland and 40% less tree canopy than areas designated as A: Best,” according to the city’s 2022 Heat Resilience Plan.

FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES: communities who experience the “first and worst” impacts of the climate crisis. These communities are disproportionately Indigenous, Black, low income, coastal communities of color, migrant communities, and more. For example, the city of Boston was founded on unceded Native land, and Boston’s urban Indian community, while large and complex, frequently faces disproportionate negative community health impacts related to climate change.

CLIMATE ANXIETY: distress about climate change and its impacts on the landscape and human existence. That can manifest as intrusive thoughts or feelings of distress about future disasters or the long-term future of human existence and the world, including one's own descendants. Boston Children’s Hospital has a [Pediatric Environmental Health Center](#) which provides medical treatment and care for young people experiencing the impacts of climate anxiety.