



Who is That Woman Behind the Green Cape?

Green Power Girl... Super Hero! | by Andrea Dean

Green Power Hero Pledge:

Our mission as Green Power Heroes is to sustain life on this planet for all children of all creatures for all time.

The day started like any other. Gigi Starr got up in the morning, ate breakfast and went to school. She was the new girl at Goodall Middle School and was already feeling like the lone wolf of environmentalism at school. Just that morning in science class the other kids were making fun of her paper about global warming, "Global warming? Yeah right, sounds like global whining," sneered the class bully. After school Gigi saw the bully and his friends trying to fry a frog with the sun through a magnifying glass. Gigi's compassion for the creatures of the earth was immediately activated and without a thought of her own safety she jumped right in to tussle with the boys and saved the frog. But the bad boys didn't like being one-upped by a girl and turned the magnifying glass on Gigi. She surprised both them and herself by somehow deflecting the sun's rays back and shattering the magnifying glass. Not that Gigi didn't have it all handled, but just

then Buddy Biomass rode up on his veggie-oil-fueled motorcycle and told the little frog burners to pick up their trash and skedaddle. "You're that new girl. You got power, kid. It's in you." It had been a long, hard day. Scuffed up, dirty and holding a frog, Gigi wasn't feeling very powerful at that moment. She sighed and thought to herself "If only he were right. I wish I could see my power."

Little did Gigi know that at that very moment Mother Nature was lamenting about how humans had lost their connection to nature and were polluting the earth by overusing fossil fuels. She called a Council Meeting of the earth animals and the Green Power Heroes- Jah Wind Power, Mercury Man, Marina Del Ray and Crimson Tide. On the meeting agenda: to look for a young human hero to fight the Fossil Fools (headed by Mr. Moo Goo of Earth Acquisition, Inc.) and lead

the humans into a new age of green power. Gigi was walking home with her frog when suddenly she was caught up in a huge wind storm. It was Jah Wind Power sweeping through on his way to the Council. He scooped her up and brought her along. Jah had been on a mission to acquire the Renewable Energy Cape. Imagine the surprise of the earth animals and Green Power Heroes when Jah unfurled the cape and a human girl and a frog fell out! The frog spoke up for Gigi and told the story of how she had saved him, he told of her passion and bravery. Fulfilling Mother Nature's wish for a human hero, Gigi was elected by the animals and the Green Power Heroes to be a champion on earth for green power. Jah gave her the renewable energy cape so she could fly, Marina Del Ray gave her the solar scepter that makes things grow exponentially, and Green Power Girl was born. "It's a mistake, I'm just a regular girl" she protested. "Yes," said Mother Nature, "and we need all the regular boys and girls to wake up to their Green Power Mission."

Big Island resident Susan Cox is the real-life Green Power woman whose imagination has created Gigi Starr, Green Power Girl, and the Green Power Heroes.

Susan woke up to her Green Power mission in early 2000 when the Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power hired her to develop an educational program on energy conservation for school children. At that time, California was experiencing rolling blackouts and energy conservation was top of mind. Global warming reports were implicating CO2 emissions and industry was responding with aggressive disinformation campaigns to discredit climate science, even calling global warming "global whining." In her role as an environmental educator, Susan was feeling overwhelmed by the enormity of the problem and the power of the corporate forces. She started to think, "What can I do? I'm just a girl. This is a job for a super hero, a job for Green Power Girl." Susan began to develop the character of Green Power Girl and the GP Heroes to tell the story.

Shortly thereafter, Susan and her daughter were shopping for Halloween costumes and her daughter spied a 1950s-era green satin cape with matching green hair. Perfect!

Susan showed up for the first time in green hair and cape representing the Dept. of Water and Power at a middle school career fair. The feedback from students, teachers and her surprised employers was immediately positive. Susan began developing Green Power Girl and the Green Power Heroes as a teaching tool and found that it was empowering for her as an educator and much more interesting for the students and teachers.

Obviously a result of the powers of the "solar scepter," the Green Power Heroes program has grown exponentially—it has been in hundreds of schools and touched more than 150,000 children in Hawai'i, California

and Louisiana. Green Power Girl has taught elementary students from 25 island schools through the Hawai'i Gateway Energy Center at NELHA.

The Green Power Heroes program includes school assemblies, an energy card game, curriculum and teacher workshops. The genius behind the Green Power Heroes program is in using the power of storytelling to engage students in the real human

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When Big Island resident Susan Cox, creator of the Green Power Heroes, comes to a school as Green Power Girl, the students don't relate to her as a teacher, adult, or another child, but rather as a superhero. Here she addresses students at the Hawai'i Gateway Energy Center Voyager School.



and environmental issues of climate change. All of the Green Power Heroes are based upon a real-life person or friend of Susan Cox's that has inspired her in some way.

Jah Wind Power, for example, was inspired by William Kamkwamba from Malawi, Africa, who at 14 years old, created an electricity-producing wind turbine for his family home from a book. His project inspired international action and led to additional water and energy projects in his village. Jah Wind Power captures the energy of the wind, his dreadlocks have power and he flies with the birds. Jah Wind Power is from Africa where desertification from climate change is severely affecting the lives of the people, animals and ecosystems. The Green Power Hero curriculum always has three elements: a character's back story, a standards-aligned science or writing-based activity, and an eco-action. Students learn about Jah Wind Power's story and are then tasked with researching, creating, building and writing. They might build a wind turbine, study wind velocity, learn about green jobs and wind power, as well as the impact of desertification on people and ecosystems.

It has been Susan's experience that when she comes to a school as Green Power Girl, the students don't relate to her as a teacher, adult, or another child, but rather as a superhero. They suspend disbelief and enter the "Green Power Hero Universe," where magical powers, imagination and creativity abound. Green Power Girl fosters a creative, solution-oriented learning environment.

Children aren't the only ones who enter the "Green Power Hero Universe." Green Power Girl recently inspired her real-life environmentalist friends (including the author, a.k.a. Crimson Tide) to become Green Power Heroes for the Kailua-Kona Christmas Parade. "It's great to see how excited and engaged people got assuming their Green Power Hero identities," says Cox. All of the Green Power Hero outfits were made from recycled and found materials. The next live performance of the Green Power Heroes will be March 13th at the Kona Brew Fest and other Earth Day festivities. Got a green power hero waiting to come out?

The Green Power Heroes concept has also been developed into an educational card game which teaches kids about energy. The cards feature the Green Power Heroes who battle

the Fossil Fools. Players collect Green Power Hero points to stay away from extinction. The cards are a part of the teaching curriculum and are used in a number of ways. Typically a student from each class becomes a game master who then teaches the other students in her class. A student can also pick a card and write a story about a character or an issue that the card suggests. "One of the biggest challenges," says Susan, "has been to simplify the complex environmental challenges that each of these characters represent while making the game fun and interesting."

Cox sees the game encouraging research learning and storytelling. "Our creative solutions will get us out of our problems. If the game fosters creative thinking, then action will follow. I like to think of children becoming not only critical thinkers but critical dreamers and critical DO'ers."

Green Power Girl has been asked to appear at Earth Day Tokyo. A student who met Green Power Girl in New Orleans became so inspired that he created his own Green Power Hero, a robot-like character called "Renew-A-Bot" and he wants to accompany Green Power Girl to Japan. "They come up with wacky and wonderful ideas. The Green Power Heroes encourage children to envision solutions through the characters and their powers."

Inspired? Maybe you can become the next Green Power Girl! Susan will continue to be the green fuel behind the curriculum, teacher training and cards and wants to create a GPHero cartoon series, but is ready to pass the solar scepter to a new, young person who is passionate about working in the schools with children.

Maybe you're saying right now in your mind, "It's a mistake, I'm just a regular girl." Then you will feel the wind swirling, Jah Wind Power's strong arms around you. You will don the satin cape, straighten your green hair, pick up the solar scepter, and know that you are the Green Power Girl and anything is possible.

Check out all of the Green Power Heroes at www.greenpowergirl.com and www.greenpowerheroes.com.

Become a fan of Green Power Girl & Green Power Heroes on Facebook and Twitter.



Green Power Girl recruited local residents to assume "Heroes" identities for the Kailua-Kona Christmas Parade. From left: Michael Kramer as Green Flash, Deborah Ozaki as "Back to the Green" and Andrea Dean as bad girl Crimson Tide.