

Wawa Gatheru is a Kenyan-American climate activist passionate about cultivating a climate movement that reflects the voices, leadership, and lived experiences of all people. In 2019, she made history as the first Black person to receive the Rhodes, Truman, and Udall scholarships. She holds a B.A. in Environmental Studies from the University of Connecticut and an M.Sc. in Environmental Governance from the University of Oxford.

Wawa is the founder and Executive Director of Black Girl Environmentalist (BGE), the only national organization dedicated to addressing the pipeline and pathway issue for Black girls, women, and gender-expansive individuals in the climate sector. Under her leadership, BGE has become a trusted, national organization that has partnered with 80+ corporate and nonprofit organizations and hosted over 100 events across 15 HUB cities. In 2024, BGE launched the Hazel M. Johnson Fellowship Program—the first climate pipeline program created for and by Gen Z of color. With a membership of 3,000+, Forbes has described BGE as “one of the largest Black youth-led organizations in the country.”

Beyond BGE, Wawa serves on boards and advisory councils for Greenpeace USA, EarthJustice, Climate Power, Brian Eno’s Earth/Percent, and Sound Future. She was also an inaugural member of the National Environmental Youth Advisory Council of the U.S. EPA, the first federal youth-led advisory council in U.S. history. In this role, she advised Administrator Michael Regan on ways to strengthen the EPA’s work on environmental issues impacting youth.

For her leadership, Wawa has been recognized as a Glamour College Woman of the Year, a L’Oréal Paris Woman of Worth, a Climate Creator to Watch by the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and a Sierra Club Trailblazer Award recipient. She has also been named to major lists in climate and culture, including Forbes 30 Under 30, Harper’s Bazaar’s “Most Powerful People,” Ebony Power 100, The Independent’s Climate 100, Grist 50 Fixers, and AFROTECH Future 50. In 2025, Billie Eilish named Wawa as one of her three inspirations—alongside her mother Maggie Baird and Jane Goodall—and Wawa was featured on the digital cover of Vogue with Eilish and seven other climate leaders.