



„A movie, that raises the discussion about
the climate crisis on a next level“

- New York Times

m y f r i e n d

SAYYA

a movie by Jacob Nielson



Plot [edit]

[Typhoon Haiyan](#) is close to hitting the coast of the Philippines. We see the tv news, a blonde woman in a suit is telling the Filipino population to evacuate. For many this warning is too late. Strong pictures of water rushing down streets and destroying houses show the viewer how severe the situation is. Soon, we hear Saya speaking. The Filipina describes vividly how she experienced that day. She lost a lot. "Everything and everyone", she says.

The camera follows Saya and her brother for a day, giving us an intimate impression of how drastically their life changed.

Then she leaves. Next destination: Norway. Saya joins an arctic expedition on the ship „[arctic sunrise](#)“, organized by [Greenpeace](#). Their mission: observe and investigate melting [glaciers](#), the changing ice landscape and attempt to convince the Norwegian government to stop expanding [arctic oil drilling](#). Glaciers are more than important. That is one of the messages that the viewer will not forget. The melting of the Arctic will have vast consequences, Saya, as well as the other Greenpeace members on that ship, are more than aware of that. Halfway through the film, scientist Alex is introduced. The background of him and the Filipina couldn't be more different. Is it possible to fight for the same cause, while having quite different approaches?

The movie is a journey. A journey of a brave young woman from the Philippines through the [Arctic](#). A journey deep inside our subconsciousness, trying to understand what it takes for us to become active. Saya's thought process often leaves us questioning our own habits. But she still succeeds to motivate, raising awareness rather than blaming the viewer. Together we discover the limits of activism, what effects it has meeting people with the same motivation and the power of individuals working together.

SAYA'S PURPOSE

**What does it take to take action on climate crisis? What motivates us?
„My friend Saya“ by Jacob Nielson as an impuls for further thoughts**



Saya (26) experienced one of the worst catastrophes in her home country, the Philippines. Two years ago typhoon Haiyan has been raging, being one of the strongest tropical cyclones observed since reliable weather records began. You decided to come to Norway to join the Greenpeace team putting pressure on the Norwegian government of opening up new frontiers of oil drilling in the arctic.



Photographer and Filmmaker Jacob Nielson (41) was born and raised in Norway. After his bachelor of science photography degree he joined Greenpeace in the fight on climate change. He uses his powerful pictures not just to document changes in nature but also to deliver a message.

Green Magazine: We're able to follow your journey thanks to the movie *my friend Saya*, made by Jacob Nielson. Am I right assuming that you two are close friends now?

Saya: Yes, that is correct. We spend quite some time together during our time heres at Greenpeace. And fighting for the same thing really creates a strong bond I'd say.

Green Magazine: In the movie we see that you two, Alex and Saya, met at the Greenpeace headquarter in Oslo for the first time. Do you remember that day?

Jacob: I sure do. I was enjoying my lunch in our break room, when I noticed a new face, which was Saya. It seemed like she was looking for something so I approached her, asking if I could help. We ended up eating lunch together after she found the microwave she was looking for. Since I know all the faces of our team here, I couldn't help but ask what her story was.

Saya: You were one of the first people I talked to. I remember thinking afterwards wow, someone who didn't experience crisis on own body, but knows a lot of facts and numbers and still has a similar motivation like me.

It feels good knowing people from other side of the world are fighting too.

Back in Philippines I felt lonely sometimes, almost like rich, western countries don't take this problem serious enough.

Typhoon Haiyan is just an example of

what's to come

Jacob: I always thought, studying the facts and numbers of crisis is the best way to go. I saw small changes in my beloved home country, temperature wise and also glaciers while hiking or snowfalls. So I focused on science, spoke more to me. Saya doesn't have an academic background. To be honest, before I felt like rich western countries with a good education system have to most possibilities to do and change something and through that maybe the biggest responsibility too.

Saya is the first person that is that severely affected I've ever met. She showed me the importance to continue fighting.

When we first met, I remember asking: "Why did you come here?" – "I had to"

I'm impressed by Saya's determined mindset to fight crisis. She showed me that everybody is able to be part of fighting the crisis if you really want to.

Green Magazine: Saya, how did people at home react to your decision to leave the country?

Saya: Mixed reactions. A lot of people encouraged me to go, happy that I'm speaking up for climate change victims. Others couldn't understand my decision to go, not believing a regular girl doesn't have the power to change anything. Which is technically true. It is all of us working together that has an impact.

Green Magazine: Jacob, how did you get the idea of making that movie?

Joacob: The camera is always part of my trips, sometimes multiple day hikes through the

Norwegian mountains. I'm born here and absolutely love my home country and feel strongly connected to it. Many years ago, I started noticing that the landscape began to change. Especially in usually cold areas high in the mountains. I realized that was connected to the climate change and melting glaciers. I started documenting those changes. I believe pictures speak more to people than anything else. That's also why I joined Greenpeace. When I met Saya I noticed the contrast between her background coming from the other side of the world and being strongly affected and ours as being scientists. That encounter of those both sides was an exciting one I wanted to capture.

...pictures speak more to people than anything else

Green Magazine: Why did you agree to be part of that movie Saya?

Saya: well, first Tomas I such a nice guy (laughs). Previously I talked to him a lot about his photo- and videography of the Norwegian nature. I really like his style of photographing nature. I'm impressed how he has an eye for details when being outside while having this great respect of nature. And that's something he delivers through his work. Part of the fight against the climate change is reaching more and more people and continuingly showing them what is going on with our earth. Even though I don't think my story is a special one, people kept telling mw how unbelievable it is and

how strong I am. So I thought, well if that's the effect I have on people, I actually like that and can use it for what I'm fighting for. After seeing Tomas work I was certain he could portrait me and my journey in the best possible way. A way that gives people goosebumps.

Green Magazine: That is an effect the movie had on a lot of people for sure. The movie got attention all around the world. From Europe to America. After it was shown at the Toronto international film festival, there were numerous articles about how touching and eye-opening it was. Did you expect the movie to be that successful?

Saya: To be honest, when agreeing to film that movie and during the process of it, it felt more like a personal project. I wasn't expecting it to be seen by thousands of people. I was sure it would be a hit in the Greenpeace team and maybe will be a great tool for future Greenpeace campaigns of some sort.

Green Magazine: In the movie it feels like you're emphasizing that to many people are not taking the climate crisis serious enough. What do you think would help people to understand the importance to take actions against the climate crisis?

understanding and internalizing that everybody can do something

Saya: Typhoon Haiyan is just an example of what's to come. What happens in the arctic do-

esn't stay in the arctic. The first step is to realize what and how big the problem is. The climate Crisis is not just about the statistic and a couple of degrees more the last summer. It is affecting people. It is severely endangering existences. And sooner or later we're all going to feel the effects. Next step is understanding and internalizing that everybody can do something. I know how paralyzing It can feel when thinking the massive problem, we're facing here. It doesn't matter how big the actions you take must be and nobody is telling you how much you should do.

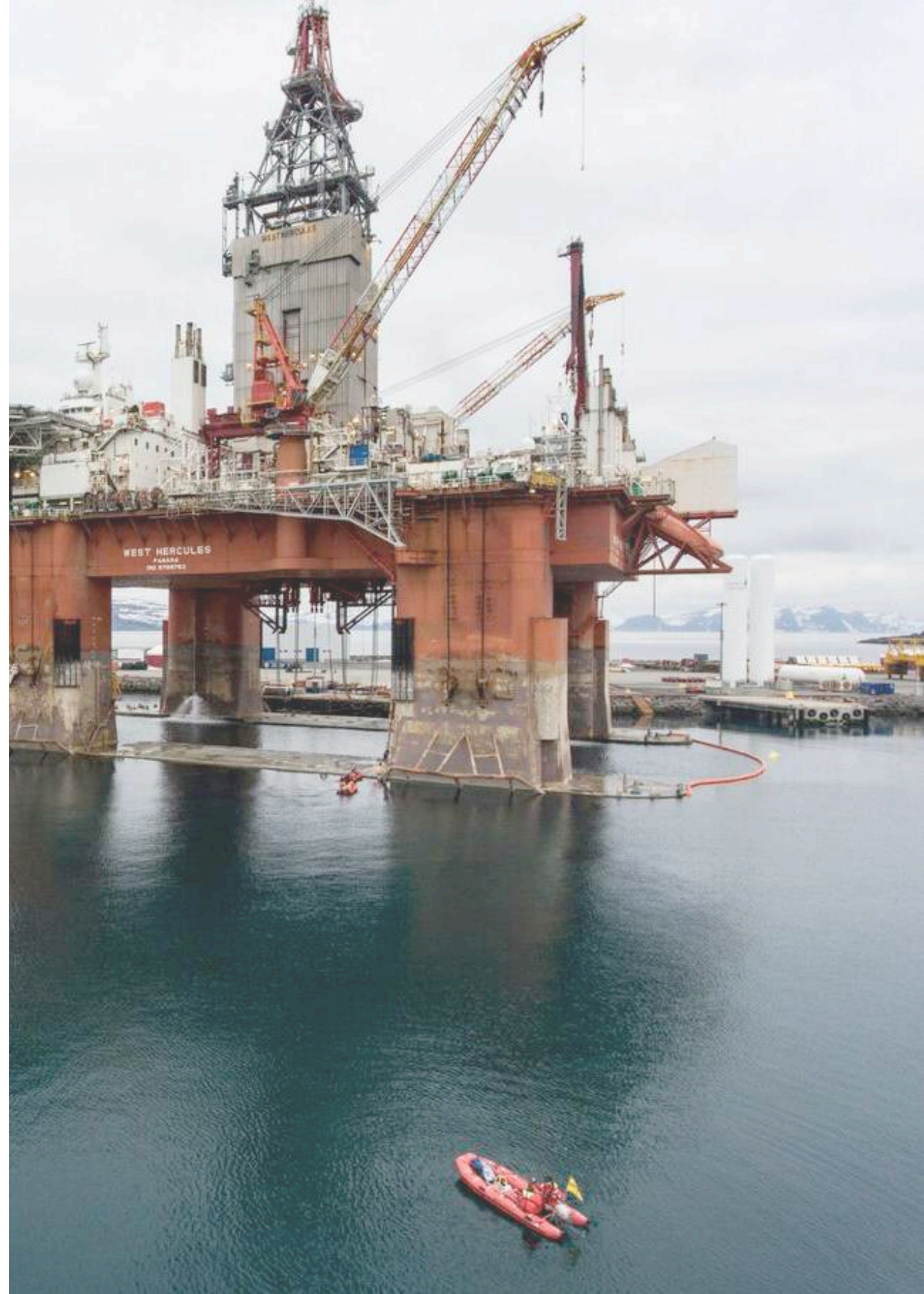
Green Magazine: Both of you joined an arctic expedition with a ship called arctic sunrise, with some breathtaking pictures of the arctic nature the movie gives us an idea of that journey. Can you tell me about your experience being a part of that expedition?

Jacob: One of the last almost untouched regions of the world is most affected by climate change. The glaciers melting exceeds all previous climate scenarios. The uncontrolled exploitation of the Arctic must be stopped. A industrial use of the Arctic Ocean, which was previously protected by ice, must be banned. That is the mission o arctic sunrise. We're peacefully protesting while following a route along the coast of Greenland. The first destination of expedition is the Petermann Glacier on the west side of Greenland. A year ago, a huge iceberg broke off from him. Two more cracks can be seen on satellite images. Investigating the influence of tropical underwater currents on

glacier melting and the decline of sea ice on the Arctic Ocean is the focus of the third part of the expedition.

Saya: To me it felt like finally being at the right place after experiencing so much trauma. I realized how much it helped my mind to get to an optimistic state. Our work is important and that energy of fighting for a brighter future really radiated within the Greenpeace team.

Anna Wilson
freelance journalist



IN THEATERS

STREAMING MOVIES


TV SHOWS

MOST POPULAR

-  **69%** A Mouthful of Air
 - No Score Yet Monster Family 2: N...
 - No Score Yet American Gadfly
 - No Score Yet Delicate State
 - No Score Yet Monsters in the Clo...
 - No Score Yet Nightshade
 - No Score Yet Rucker
 - No Score Yet Four to Dinner
 - No Score Yet 2020: The Dumpste...
 - No Score Yet The Wasteland
 -  **86%** See for Me
 -  **50%** The Tender Bar
 -  **100%** June Again
 - No Score Yet The Commando
 -  **89%** What Do We See W...
 - No Score Yet The Kindred
 -  **70%** King Car
 - No Score Yet Antisemitism
 - No Score Yet Another Paradise
 -  **64%** The Matrix Resurrec...
- [View All](#)



My friend Saya

 2014, Documentary-Drama, 1h 50m

 **69%**
TOMATOMETER
26 Reviews

 **86%**
AUDIENCE SCORE
100+ Ratings



CRITIC REVIEWS

[All Critics \(26\)](#) | [Top Critics \(8\)](#) | [Fresh \(18\)](#) | [Rotten \(8\)](#)



For a film so grounded in a real-life issue, the movie doesn't work to make its characters feel human or its world feel real, blunting the emotional impact it could have had.

November 2, 2014 | [Full Review...](#)



Kimber Myers
Los Angeles Times
★ TOP CRITIC



I loved to see how the Greenpeace team worked and harmonized together. Even though Saya has a different background than scientist Alex, the motivation is the same and that's what counts! A perfect real-life example that people from around the world can and should come together to face humanity's worst problem.

October 28, 2014 | Rating: B- | [Full Review...](#)



David Ehrlich
IndieWire
★ TOP CRITIC



When does the next arctic sunrise expedition start? I'm on board!

October 28, 2014 | Rating: 3/4 | [Full Review...](#)



Randy Myers
San Jose Mercury News
★ TOP CRITIC



A truly heartwarming story about a brave young woman, she's a rolemodel!
Her approach to activism and her emphasizing the problem with melting glaciers was eye-opening.

October 30, 2015 | [Full Review...](#)



Stephanie Zacharek
TIME Magazine
★ TOP CRITIC



Another climate change movie? I think the people who want to get it, got it...

I do believe that she thinks it is her purpose.

October 28, 2015 | [Full Review...](#)



Natalia Winkelman
New York Times
★ TOP CRITIC



Sure, the movie succeeds in telling a hero story of this young woman. But we shouldn't forget that big companies and a country's politician hold way more power to make changes to prevent more catastrophes due to the climate crisis. More than a young girl and a team of scientists.

October 28, 2015 | [Full Review...](#)



Nick Schager
Variety
★ TOP CRITIC

