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Being the change

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BEING THE CHANGE

Kartikeya Singh '07 spent the last year addressing the issues closest to his heart: climate change and renewable energy.

Singh, who wrote about his efforts as a Compton Fellow in his native India for the Summer 2008 issue of *Furman* magazine, is a founder and first executive director of the Indian Youth Climate Network (IYCN), a grass-roots movement among the country's young people. Through its work with like-minded non-profit groups, the IYCN strives to increase awareness about climate change both nationally and internationally.

To illustrate his dedication to the cause, Singh spent part of the last year on a "Climate Solutions Road Tour," a 4,000-kilometer journey across India designed to document and profile solutions to the climate crisis within the country. In the process Singh and his cohorts tested technology by driving the entire distance in specially designed solar-electric cars made by REVA, an Indian company. He also continued his focus, begun during his Compton Fellowship, on bringing renewable resources to the rural areas of India.

For Singh, one tangible culmination of his efforts occurred in April, when solar lanterns were distributed to 70 households in rural villages in Madukkarai District of Tamil Nadu State. The lanterns provided families with more and extended access to light for reading, studying and other activities.

As Singh wrote in a letter to friends and acquaintances, "The next steps will be to bring in some other forms of energy into the villages: biogas, perhaps biofuel for decentralized electricity generation, and maybe even micro-wind.

"The big story is that young people drove this change. They got together, formed a group and adopted a village. They committed to making change . . . and in doing so have set a powerful precedent for what young people across the nation need to be doing. This is being the change!"

Singh himself is an example of renewable energy, as the launch of the rural energy project came only a week after he had returned from a trip to Antarctica to study the effects of global warming.

He was one of 80 young people from throughout the world to take part in the Inspire Antarctica



Singh displays the flag of India on his visit to the frozen plains of Antarctica.

Expedition 2009, run by Project 2041. The expedition allowed the group to see the impact of climate change on the fragile ecosystems of Antarctica, study the challenges that lie ahead and, in Singh's words, "realize the full potential of the kind of drastic changes we need to solve the climate crisis."

Having spent the last two years promoting environmental issues, Singh has returned to the States and enrolled in the School of Forestry and Environmental Studies at Yale University, where he will pursue a master's degree in environmental management.

But he is not leaving his activist ways behind. He plans to attend the United Nations Climate Negotiations in Copenhagen this December with the Indian youth delegation. At last year's UN climate summit in Poland, Singh spoke to the plenary session — and urged leaders to act. As he said at the time, "the very survival of humanity" rests on international willingness to address the issues.

He'll likely share the same message with this year's delegates.

COURTESY KARTIKEYA SINGH