



Greta Thunberg: The Gathering Storm Politicians Ignore at Their Peril

Environment

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“The seas are rising. And we’re rising with them.”

But one of the many impassioned calls to action chanted, over and over again, by a multiracial gathering of young climate activists in peaceful demonstration in front of the United Nations Building, in New York City, last Friday, 30 August 2019.

Bright-eyed, shining faces; smart, committed, focussed; eyes wide open to the singular mission that unites them all. Everyone of them eager to proclaim to the world; in the best tradition of the veteran news ‘anchor-man’ Howard Beale character in Paddy Chayefsky’s much lauded satire ‘Network’: “I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore.” The collective folk memory of the Civil Rights Movement’s: “We shall not be moved” echoing through the city’s fabled canyons of steel.

“Climate change is already affecting millions of lives. I don’t understand why there are world leaders that are not doing anything,” one teenage girl declares to the crowd. The determined look on her face, making it crystal clear to one and all she’ll brook no denial in her earnest demand for action this day.

“Stop Denying The Earth Is Dying!”

“System change. Not Climate Change.”

“Science Not Silence.”

Greta Thunberg sitting quietly in the eye of the storm fast gathering all around her, not just on the streets of the Big Apple, but all around the world. Perfectly centred. Wonderfully calm. Oddly still, never showy, always quietly serious. She speaks plainly, without artifice. No word ever wasted. Her clarity of mind, measured response, and steely resolve, cutting through all the clatter and noise of the world’s climate change deniers.

Her eminently reasonable request that people please just stop talking and do something; anything, at all; that will get us closer to meeting the goals of the Paris Climate Accord and, ‘God and Mammon’ willing, keep global warming well below 1.5°C. The urgency all too real and profound: “There’s no more time left for talking,” urges, Greta. “Only time for action.”

Taking action, the genesis of Greta’s ‘Skolstrejk för klimatet!’ (‘School strike for climate!’). Her very own ‘Ground Zero’ you could say. When, only, in August, of last year, she began skipping school every Friday and, come rain or snow or shine, she started staging a one-pupil ‘school strike for the climate’ in front of the Swedish Parliament building, in Stockholm.

It’s truly staggering just how very quickly her actions captured international attention. Other school children soon joining her, and thus was the easy searchable/discoverable hash-tag movement #FridaysForFuture protest movement born. And in a little less than six months, each and every Friday, more than one and a half million students all around the world were “school-striking” for action on climate change. The speed of it all, utterly breath-taking, but true; almost as if the world had been holding its breath, hoping for such a one as Greta to emerge from out of the blue.

#FridaysForFuture, a phenomenon that’s now happening in more than 70 countries and in more than 700 schools; with no sign of it abating. A veritable army of impassioned,

young, climate activists that will not be gainsaid. For actions speak louder than words. And their peaceful demands for politicians to take action to prevent further global warming and climate change are now being heard all around the world. One message that seems to pop up with increasing frequency on hand-painted 'school strike' banners, the world over, that politicians need to listen to the scientists.

“Unite Behind The Science.”

“Listen to the proof, you owe it to the youth.”

“We want our hope and dreams back!”

The all but inevitable deniers of climate change, responding to it all with accusations that the “known to be autistic” Greta and all the other young “dumb” kids like her are all being manipulated by calculating adults with hidden agendas. And, anyway, a hugely complex subject like climate change simply can't be understood by a bunch of kids who are all far too young. So any talk of them having genuine convictions, about any climate issues, is stuff and nonsense, and can't be at all genuine. It's all a fraud. Fake news!

One interesting takeaway from all that nonsense: the number of such determined climate change detractors and deniers only seems to increase, all the more, with Greta Thunberg's every continued success. Funny that.

All of which is to say, the online 'trolls' and the right-wing pundits who say she'll be forgotten within a year, really don't understand or appreciate whom they're dealing with.

Just like another extraordinary young woman, Malala Yousafzai, activist, advocate for girls' education, champion of human rights, and Nobel Peace Prize winner; whose words and actions also offer inspiration and hope to people all over the world. Who, said:

“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”

As Malala has proven with such grace and fortitude: she's not going away. And neither is Greta Thunberg. The two young women are unstoppable.

As Greta says:

“Together, we can put pressure on people with powers, so that they will have to change something.”

And, perhaps, my favourite of all her many inspiring utterances: **“No one is too small to make a difference.”**

That little acorn of thought already well planted in the minds of children and teenagers and young people the world over. And from little acorns...well, you know how it grows.

Greta Thunberg is a force to be reckoned with and her message so perfectly attuned to the times that politicians and governments ignore her, and the legions of young people she inspires, at their peril. “They see us as a threat,” declares Greta, “because we’re having an impact.”

“No More Coal. No More Oil. Keep the carbon in the soil.”

“Our House Is On Fire!”

“Save Our Planet: There is ‘No Planet B’”

Little wonder, then, that Greta Thunberg was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, last March. The citation: “If we do nothing to halt climate change it will be the cause of wars, conflict and refugees. Greta Thunberg has launched a mass movement which is a major contribution to peace.”

Is the world really in need of another hero? An ever-growing number of people of all generations, all around the world, think we do. I know I do. As the undisputed superstar of the climate change movement, Greta Thunberg is the woman of the decade, not just this year.

Yet despite the adulation of the crowds, Greta says she doesn’t relish being cast as the global figurehead and rebuffs any and all attempts for anyone to idolise her. “I’m no hero,” she insists. “My role is to be but one of many, many activists who are pushing for climate action. I don’t see myself as a leader or icon or the face of a movement. It feels like we are at a breaking point. Leaders know that more eyes are on them, much more pressure is on them, and that they have to do something. They have to come up with some sort of solution. I want a concrete plan, not just nice words.”

Her genuine and deep-seated passion and commitment for, together with the growing number of spirited young climate activists the world over who feel the same, is nothing but awe inspiring and not a little humbling. Living proof, if ever it was needed, that hope is contagious.

Certainly to me, who, like Elvis, will have left the building, long before the shift in climate change truly hits the fan for Greta Thunberg and the growing legions of young people, who are all demanding proper action.

As famed astronomer, astrophysicist, and cosmologist, Carl Sagan, once, put it: “Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity, in all this vastness, there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.”

Or, then, maybe, just maybe, Greta Thunberg has come to save us all from ourselves. While, she carries on striking and striving to ‘Save The Planet’.

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