



Greta Thunberg: The Easiest Solution is Right in Front of You

Talare

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My name is Greta Thunberg. I am a climate activist from Sweden and for the last nine months I have been school-striking for the climate every Friday in front of the Swedish Parliament.

We need to change the way we treat the climate crisis.

We need to change the way we speak about the climate crisis.

And we need to call it what it is. An emergency.

I am certain that most of us in here today are generally aware of the situation. But my number one experience during these last nine months is that people in general do not have a clue.

Many of us know something is wrong, that the planet is warming because of increased greenhouse gases, but we don't know the full consequences of that. The vast majority of us know much less than we think.

And this should not be a surprise.

We have never been shown the graphs which show how much the CO2 emissions must be reduced for us to stay below the 1.5°C limit.

We have never been told the meaning of the aspect of equity in the Paris Agreement – and why it's so important. We have never been taught about feedback loops or tipping points – or what the runaway greenhouse effect is.

Most of us don't know almost any of the basic facts.

Because how could we? We have not been told. Or more importantly, we have never been told by the right people.

We are *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Of the family Hominidae. Of the order Primates. Of the class Mammalia. Of the kingdom Animalia. We are a part of nature. We are social animals. We are naturally drawn to our leaders.

During the last months millions of schoolchildren have been school-striking for the climate and creating lots of attention for the climate crisis. But we children are not leaders. Nor are the scientists, unfortunately. But many of you here today are. Presidents, celebrities, politicians, CEOs and journalists. People listen to you. They are influenced by you. They follow you. And therefore you have an enormous responsibility. And let's be honest. This is a responsibility that most of you have failed to take.

You cannot rely on people reading between the lines or searching for the themselves. To read through the latest IPCC report, track the Keeling Curve or keep tabs on the world's rapidly disappearing carbon budget. You have to explain that to us, repeatedly. No matter how uncomfortable or unprofitable that may be.

And yes, a transformed world will include lots of benefits. But you have to understand. This is not primarily an opportunity to create new green jobs, new businesses or green economic growth. This is above all an emergency, and not just any emergency. This is the biggest crisis humanity has ever faced. This is not something you can like on Facebook.

When I first heard about the climate and ecological breakdown I actually didn't believe that it could be happening.

Because how could it be? How could we be facing an existential crisis that would threaten our very survival, and yet that wasn't our first priority?

If there really was a crisis this big, then we would rarely talk about anything else. As soon as you turned on the TV, everything would be about that. Headlines, radio, newspapers. You would almost never read or hear about anything else.

And the politicians would surely have done what was needed by now, wouldn't

they?

They would hold crisis meetings all the time, declare climate emergencies everywhere and spend all their waking hours handling the situation and informing people what was going on.

But it never was like that. The climate crisis was treated just like any other issue, or even less than that. Every time you heard a politician speak about this they never talked with urgency. According to them there were always countless new technologies and simple solutions that, when put in place, would solve everything.

Politicians one second say that ‘climate change is the most important topic, we are going to do everything we can to stop it’. And the next second they want to expand airports, build new coal power plants and motorways and then they fly off in a private jet to attend a meeting on the other side of the world.

That is not how you act in a crisis. And humans are social animals, we can’t get away from that fact. And as long as you, the leaders, act like everything is fine and you have things under control, people won’t understand that we are in an emergency.

You can’t only keep talking about specific isolated solutions to specific isolated problems. We need to see the full picture.

If you say that we can ‘solve’ this crisis just by maybe increasing or lowering some taxes, phasing out coal in ten or fifteen years, putting up solar panels on new buildings or manufacturing more electric cars, then people will think we can ‘solve’ this crisis with a few political reforms, without anyone making a real effort.

And that is very dangerous. Because specific isolated solutions are no longer enough, and you know this. We now need to change practically everything. We now need a whole new way of thinking.

I know you are desperate for hope and solutions. But the biggest source of hope and the easiest solution is right in front of you, and it has been all along. And it is us people, and the fact that we don’t know.

We humans are not stupid. We are not ruining the biosphere and future living conditions for all species because we are evil. We are simply not aware. But once we understand, once we realize the situation, then we act, we change. Humans are very adaptable.

So instead of only being obsessed with finding solutions to a problem that most of us do not even know exists, you must also focus on informing us about the actual problem.

We must acknowledge that we do not have the situation under control and that we don't have all the solutions yet.

We must admit that we are losing this battle.

We must stop playing with words and numbers.

Because we no longer have time for that, and in the words of author Alex Steffen, 'Winning slowly is the same thing as losing.'

The longer we wait the harder it will be to turn this around. So let's not wait any longer. Let's start acting.

For too long the people in power have gotten away with basically not doing anything to stop climate and ecological breakdown. They have gotten away with stealing our future and selling it for profit.

But we young people are waking up.

And we promise we will not let you get away with it any more.

Taggar

2010-tal, 2019, Fridays for future, Kvinna, Miljö och klimat

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