

# A Cry for Help – Ginny Tyson meets Greta Thunberg

At numerous rallies across Europe, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg speaks out for the younger generation against “catastrophic climate change”, in favour of pleas that drastic measures must be taken immediately to avoid irreparable damage to the world as we know it.



On October 6th 2018, activist Greta Thunberg (15) addresses the crowd gathered around her, just outside the European Parliament. “If we don’t act now,” she says, “it will be too late”. This not the first time the young Swedish student has spoken up for the climate. Beginning three weeks before Sweden’s parliamentary elections on September 9th, she has

been ‘school-striking’ outside the Swedish parliament in Stockholm. Her aim? To gain media attention, and in this way to raise awareness about the little-known scientific facts behind the climate crisis.

A fifteen year-old girl may not be the most expected voice for an issue with such a worldwide impact. Yet her focus on the climate has remained unwavering since she began research on the subject over six years ago, after seeing a poster which piqued her curiosity. While the first thing she sought to change was herself, then her family, now she is making a stand to change the world. Unobscured by ‘adult concerns’, her perception of the issue is clear and precise. She worries about her future, not about money or a career, but about its very existence. “In terms of global warming, no one plans for after the year 2050. By that time, I will at best, have lived less than half my life. [...] What happens next?”

Thunberg is consistent and repetitive in discussing her subject. Whether in Stockholm, the Hague, Helsinki or Brussels, she repeats the same few quotes to any interviewers; the same facts. “We need to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 15 percent a year”, she insists; “We already have the infrastructures necessary for this”, she adds, and begs for people to understand that: “We only have until 2020 until the situation becomes irreversible”. The truth is, she doesn’t have time to humour each crowd with different speeches. She has done extensive research and knows the science; her goal now is to spread the truth before time runs out.

Thunberg repeatedly mentions that: “We cannot save the planet by playing by the rules”. It is legal for companies to pollute and destroy, with limits so high that they may as well not be there at all. She reminds her audience that every day, we use one hundred million barrels of oil, without infringing any laws. This needs to stop before global warming’s damage becomes uncontrollable, and it is up to the older generation to understand this and to act accordingly. “We don’t have time to wait for the children to make this change”, she warns the crowd.



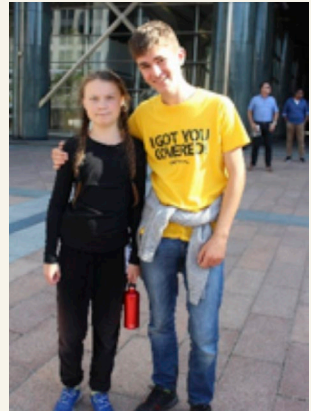
Simply put, this is why she protests. “The rules need to change” she says. Lawful action has produced little to no results so far and even international environmental efforts are wretchedly ineffective. Indeed, the most recent agreement reached at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) did not include even a third of the measures necessary against greenhouse gas emissions. If no one takes notice of scientific fact, sometimes someone has to make a stand – and sometimes, this someone is a fifteen year old girl making sure the truth is spread.

Due to lack of media coverage of the climate crisis, myths and doubt surround climate change. Doubt that it affects us, doubt that it is immediate and belief that it is inescapable and that we do not have the science to back it up. ‘If the mainstream media do not report the fact that without major, urgent change, we are heading for societal collapse, there is a part of our brain that cannot believe that the science is right.’

Mainstream media urgently has to get in line with mainstream science.

The thing is, as Thunberg points out to her increasingly numerous supporters, the research has been done and the facts are available. She recalls being told to become a ‘climate scientist’ instead of protesting, so that she can solve the problem. “The truth is, it’s simple, not complex” says Thunberg when discussing the answer to the climate crisis. “What is the point of learning facts at school, she asks, when the same facts [...] clearly mean nothing to our politicians and our society?” As she has said countless times, she is looking for a change – a change in the perception of climate change and of the nature of its current and future impacts.

Faced with parliaments and leaders in denial of the severe consequences of climate change, is it up to the younger generations to fight for their right to a future? Destructive floods, droughts, and natural disasters, not to mention their resulting mass migrations, are the results of climate change which are already visible today. Monsoon rain in Bangladesh killed over 1,200 people and impacted over 40 million in the worst flood the region had seen in years. In Sierra Leone, over 300 were killed and 2,000 left homeless by terrible landslides. The repercussions of global warming can be felt all over the world, from hurricanes in the United States to the sinking Netherlands, and they will be increasingly damaging. All of these are indicators of the systemic stress that the whole ecological system is under. And the whole of our economy is built on this, everything.



Yet, still climate change is not being treated as a crisis, still there is minimal effort on the part of governments and older generations to fight it. “This is a cry for help”, pleads Greta. “Give us a future. Our lives are in your hands.”

*Ginny Tyson, English, Aged 17.*