

## An Open Letter to Greta Thunberg

You are not a moral leader. But I will tell you what you are.

Nov. 11, 2019 | Jason D. Hill



Greta Thunberg:

You have declared yourself a leader and said that your generation will start a revolution. You have comported yourself as a credentialed adult and climate change activist who has fearlessly addressed politicians and world leaders. You have dropped out of school and declared that there isn't any reason to attend, or any reason for you to study since there will be no future for you to inherit. You have, rather than attend your classes, been leading Friday Climate Strikes for all students in your generation across the globe. Your attendance at oil pipelines has been striking. There, you unequivocally declare that all oil needs to remain in the ground where it belongs.

I shall, therefore, against the backdrop of your activism, address you as an adult rather than as a child.

In September of 2019 you crossed the Atlantic in a "zero carbon" racing yacht that had no toilet and electric light on board. You made [an impassioned plea](#) at the United Nations in which you claimed that, "we have stolen your dreams and our childhood with our empty words." You

claimed that adults and world leaders come to young people for answers and explained in anger: “How dare you!” You claimed that we are failing you and that young people are beginning to understand our betrayal. You further declared that if we continue to fail your generation: “We will never forgive you.”

You have stated that you want us to panic, and to act as if our homes are on fire. You insist that rich countries must reduce to zero emissions immediately. In your speeches you attack economic growth and have stated that our current climate crisis is caused by “buying and building things.” You call for climate justice and equity, without addressing the worst polluter on the planet China; the country that is economically annexing much of Africa and Latin America. You dare not lecture Iran about its uranium projects -- because that’s not part of the UN’s agenda, is it?

You proclaim that we need to live within the *planetary boundaries*, to focus on equity and “take a few steps back” for the sake of all living species. You resent the hierarchical distinctions between human and animals and entertain no qualitative distinction between a monkey, a malaria-infested mosquito and a snarling hyena. You mouth slogans such as: “We have set in motion an irreversible chain reaction beyond control,” and you advocate for universal veganism on the Ellen DeGeneres show. You do not buy new clothes, and you don’t want the rest of us to either. You want us all to stop flying in jet planes without giving us an alternative as to how we would re-transform our financial and trading systems—to say nothing of our personal enjoyment of the world—without regression to a primeval era. Few can afford to cross the Atlantic in a \$6M zero carbon yacht financed by rich people who made their wealth by the very means you condemn as loathsome.

There are a few things that we, the rational adults of the world who are not bowing to you like guilt-ridden obsequious Babbitts need to say to you, Greta.

First, we did not rob you of your childhood or of your dreams. You are the legatee of a magnificent technological civilization which my generation and the one before it and several others preceding it all the way to the Industrial Revolution and the Renaissance, bequeathed to you. That growth-driven, capitalist technological civilization has created the conditions for you to harangue us over our betrayal. It is a civilization that eradicated diseases such as small pox from the world, and that lifted millions out of abject poverty in a universe you think is dying and decaying. It assured you a life expectancy that exceeded that of your ancestors. Most likely by focusing on economic growth which you demonize, and scientific advancement, that civilization will further enhance a robust quality of life and health for your descendants.

Here is a hard truth to ponder, Greta: if the great producers of this world whom you excoriate were to withdraw their productivity, wealth and talents—in short—their minds from the world today, your generation would simply perish. Why? Because as children you have done nothing as yet, with your lives besides being born. This is what we expect of children until such time as they can be producers by learning from their elders. You are understandably social and ecological ballast. You are not yet cognitively advanced to replicate the structures of survival of which you are the beneficiaries.

Children are important installments on the future. We have invested in you. It is you and your smug generation which think they have nothing to learn from the older ones who are failing themselves. Whom do you expect to employ the majority of you if you have neither the job credentials or life competency skills to navigate the world? The future unemployable-skipping-school-on-Friday obstreperous children?

The truth, as one anonymous blogger aptly put it, is that your generation is unable to work up to forty hours per week without being chronically depressed and anxious. Its members cannot even decide if they want to be a boy or a girl, or both, or neither, or a "they." They cannot eat meat without crying. I might add that your generation needs "trigger warnings" and "safe spaces" as pre-conditions for learning in school. Its members have a pathological need to be coddled and protected from the challenging realities of life. Your generation is the biggest demander and consumer of carbon spewing technological gadgets and devices. An hour without any of them and too many of you succumb to paralyzing lethargy. Your generation is the least curious and most insular set of individuals one has ever encountered. Your hubris extends so far that you think you have nothing to learn from your elders.

Yes, we have betrayed you: by capitulating the world of leadership to bored, attention-deficit children who spout bromides, platitudes and slogans that a rudderless and morally relativistic culture accepts because a significant number of its denizens have become intellectually bankrupt and morally lazy.

The logical endpoint of your ecological vision would see us living in primeval conditions eking out an existence in jungle swamps in which we would regard poisonous snakes and man-eating tigers as our moral equals. We would have to adapt ourselves to nature rather than adapt nature to meet our needs, like all members of civilized civilizations do. Your vision would see us foraging for mushrooms and plants without knowing which were inimical to our digestive systems. Under your system we would swelter from heat, die from rampant plagues and starvation because there will be no air-conditioning units, no sophisticated plumbing and irrigations and sewer systems, no anti-bacterial soap made from animal matter, no pesticides and chemicals to sanitize our food and drinking supplies: just one primordial swamp of human putrefaction.

If civilization is left in the hands of your ecofascist supporters we will be living in grass huts, drinking animal feces infested water, and shrinking in fear from polar bears instead of killing them for food when they attack us.

Greta, living in complete harmony with nature is the death of creativity. Understand this. All great civilizations were forged in the crucibles of proper exploitation of the earth. Those who lived on land with oil and did nothing with it never had a right to it in the first place. Non-usage of God's resources is the cardinal sin because it results in the un-development of our human capabilities, and makes us indistinguishable from beasts.

Your generation needs to be taught the morality of wealth creation, rather than only parasitically benefiting from it. The only revolution you will lead is one into nihilism and civilization regression. You need to learn about the moral case for fossil fuel. You owe it to yourself to understand how as, Kathleen Hartnett White has detailed, the harnessing of the vast store of concentrated

energy in fossil fuels allowed mankind, for the first time in human history, to escape intractable constraints and energy limits that had left all but the very privileged in total poverty and depravity. Before the Industrial Revolution all societies were dependent on a very limited flow of solar energy captured in living plants for subsistence needs such as food, fuel and shelter.

But we, the creative enterprisers, will not go back to the Dark Ages. Your philosophy can be summed up as follows:

*What was good for my anthropoid ancestors is good for me. Do not rock the boat, or even build one as that will require cutting down a tree. Do not disrupt nature. Do not dare to see the earth as rightfully belonging to us. We don't have the right to use our brains in a manner that can transform our needs into a material form. Let's conveniently forget that production is the application of reason to the problems of survival. Let's all diminish the grandeur of man and his luminous potential. Crush the Thomas Edisons of this world.*

The apocalyptic world vision you hold has been a strip landing for those who have hated progress throughout history. Your apocalyptic predictions have been made for millennia, and, we're still here. We will still be here long after you've grown up and we have forgiven you for skipping classes, thereby lowering the intelligence quotient of an entire generation.

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