

19029 Grown-Ups Get a Scolding on Climate

<https://www.nytimes.com>

Words: 412, 12/03/2019

The girl in long braids and lavender pants was in striking contrast to the rich and powerful adults gathered in Davos in January for the World Economic Forum, and her brief address lacked the usual niceties.

“Adults keep saying, ‘We owe it to the young people to give them hope,’” she said. “But I don’t want your hope. I don’t want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.”

Hers was not a tone grown-ups welcome from a 16-year-old. But Greta Thunberg is someone they should listen to. In fact, must listen to.

Not because the catastrophe she sees coming is news: the warnings of impending climatic catastrophe are already deafening — in the 2018 report of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which warns that we are less than 12 years away from the point of no return; in the findings of 13 United States federal agencies that describe the grave threats posed by climate change to the nation; in the extremes of weather reported daily; in the vanishing Arctic ice, raging wildfires, violent tornadoes and other consequences of an overheating planet that appear with ever increasing frequency.

The grown-ups should listen because the alarm is being sounded by kids like Greta who, unlike President Trump and other willful deniers of the obvious, have realized that they stand to inherit a wounded world their elders are failing to protect.

“You are not mature enough to tell it like it is,” Greta told COP24, a United Nations climate change conference in Poland in December, where the United States joined Russia, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in watering down a response to the climate change panel’s report. “Even that burden you leave to us children.”

Greta is an unlikely agent of change. She is autistic, diminutive, not given to long speeches. But her decision to regularly skip school to sit in front of the Swedish Parliament since August to demand action on the climate has helped inspire a global movement of young people who share her alarm and anger. Tens of thousands of school and university students in Australia, Belgium, Britain, France, Germany, Japan and many other countries have followed her lead.

“We have not come here to beg world leaders to care,” Greta told COP24. We have come here to let you know that change is coming, whether you like it or not.”