

Life: The choice of a new generation



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By Nate Smelle

With Bancroft's climate strike now in its second week, Earth Hour on Saturday, and the media starting to pay attention to the paradigm-shifting idea of a 'Green New Deal,' there appears to be a global transformation taking place. For decades now, 97 per cent of the scientific community has been calling on governments around the world to take action and work together to lessen the impacts of a warming planet on humanity.

In this time, as Bancroft climate striker Chuck Potter said, the same scientific community has been working tirelessly to develop green technologies that shrink humanity's ecological footprint and increase our chances of sustaining life on earth. As a species, we have found ways to turn renewable resources like straw into highly energy efficient healthy buildings with more than double the insulative qualities of unsustainable, conventional modern structures. By incorporating biophilic design into our urban landscapes we discovered how we can reduce storm-water runoff - an inevitable byproduct of a warming planet - through the construction of living roofs and walls. These same constructions can be used to enrich biodiversity, nurture healthier pollinator populations and the agricultural sector they support. We have harnessed the power of the sun, wind and water to generate electricity it improves our quality of life. We have relearned how to grow the food that sustains us without using pesticides and herbicides that make us sick, shorten our life spans and poison the water we need to survive.

At the same time, we have created weapons of mass destruction that have the potential to destroy most of life on earth with the simple pressing of a button. We have cut down more than 80 per cent of the planet's old growth forests to satisfy our craving for fast, unhealthy food and disposable wood products. We have allowed the global banking system to prop up the fossil fuel industry - which we know is the biggest contributor to climate change - with more than \$1.3 trillion, yes trillion, in the last four years alone. We carelessly continue to pollute our water with industrial chemicals like mercury, chromium, lead, and arsenic from mining operations, factory farms, textile and plastic producers. Rather than living in harmony with the natural world, we have genetically modified plants and animals to recklessly serve the desires of a single species - our species, without knowing the consequences to the web of biodiversity that maintains the earth's sacred balance. Worst of all, we've allowed all this to happen just so the wealthiest one per cent can get richer while the poor and the planet get sicker.

When I look at both sides of this equation I see solutions and I see problems, I see wisdom and I see mistakes. As humans, we have the potential to learn from our mistakes and gain wisdom that enables us to find solutions to our problems. We also have the self-destructive ability to repeat the same mistakes over and over again and make our problems and lives worse. Ultimately, it is our choice.

Dr. David Suzuki and Dr. Tara Cullis said it best in their pledge to planet earth, The Declaration of Interdependence, 'Our science has brought pain as well as joy; our comfort is paid for by the suffering of millions. We are learning from our mistakes, we are

mourning our vanished kin, and we now build a new politics of hope.?

Paying attention to the next generation of leaders stepping up to take charge, there is plenty of hope for change, and no shortage of political will to make it happen. As one of the leading voices in the United States pressing the government to adopt a 'Green New Deal,' congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has set her sights on the future by focusing her energy on the implementation of eco-effective solutions that immediately address the climate crisis and ecocide that is taking place at the hands of the status quo.

Across the globe, millions of students, including Bancroft resident and Hermon Public School Grade 4 student/activist, Brynn Kilpatrick and her fellow climate strikers have decided to ditch class and take a day away from their routines every Friday for the rest of the school year to pressure our governments to start acting as if their future, our future matters.

So, what's next?

As poet/artist/activist Tupac Shakur said in his song 'Changes.'

'We gotta make a change. It's time for us as a people to start makin' some changes. Let's change the way we eat, let's change the way we live, and let's change the way we treat each other. You see the old way wasn't working, so it's on us to do what we gotta do, to survive.'

The next generation is obviously choosing a much different path forward than the one that led us into this mess. Whether we join them on this path to transformation, or continue standing in their way by heading in the wrong direction is up to us.

The choice is ours.