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The Last Generation

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A red sun glares from an oilskin sky, so thick and choked that the school nurse is handing out filtration masks. My world never felt so apocalyptic as it did last November, when our "snow days" had been eaten by flames. On the other side of the country, my friend told me that when she stepped outside, her eyelashes froze together. Arctic glaciers are spawning icebergs, and Antarctic ice shelves are separating into the sea. Each year, the temperature raises a little bit more.

Humans have created a monster that threatens our homes, our livelihoods, and our planet. Students nowadays have a different doomsday than that of past generations. While our parents faced the threat of an instantaneous atomic bomb, children today are looking at a slow, tortuous extinction-- and one that could've been prevented. We are stuck watching hundreds of people in positions of power turn a blind eye to the ever growing problem of climate change while clinging to the profit that means more to them than the survival of the human race. We are inching toward an inevitable apocalyptic if people in power don't listen to scientists and use their influence to reverse climate change.

In response to adult inactivity, the rising generation has taken this responsibility into our own hands. We are desperate for a change, a future, and it is clear that we are the only ones who are going to do anything about it. We must and we will strike, protest, vote, and make our voices heard until something changes on Capitol Hill. We'll take to the streets and organize until climate change meets systematic opposition. It is not enough for one person to swear off straws, take the bus or become a vegan. The world must vow to, by 2030, reduce our energy usage by 45%, quit coal altogether, and scrub CO₂ from our atmosphere by planting billions of trees, and that's just to keep the climate livable (4). The biggest perpetrators of climate change are companies who pollute our Earth and use up our natural resources, and the governments who refuse to regulate their unethical activities. They will not fight climate change unless we force them to.

Former President Obama once said "[w]e are the first generation to feel the effect of climate change and the last generation who can do something about it." It is easy to see

the effects of climate change around us every day, whether in record heat waves, increased wildfires, or rising waters. In less than 12 years, the effects of climate change will be completely irreversible (3). We have very little time to stop this catastrophe, and to return to living in harmony with the Earth. If we do not slow climate change now, we will be not only the first, but, more importantly, the last generation to feel its effects-- because the next generations will not have the privilege of a habitable climate.

Footnotes

1. Downie, James. "The Fierce Urgency of Climate Change." The Washington Post, WP Company, 24 Feb. 2019, www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2019/02/24/fierce-urgency-climatechange/?utm_term=.03ebd5d5d46f.
2. "Green New Deal — Full Language." www.gp.org, 2019, www.gp.org/gnd_full.
3. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Global Warming of 1.5 °C." IPCC, 2019, www.ipcc.ch/sr15/.
4. Reilly, Katie. "What Humanity Must Do to Prevent Catastrophic Climate Change." Time, Time, 8 Oct. 2018, time.com/5418577/what-humanity-do-limit-climate-change/.
5. Thunberg, Greta. "The Disarming Case to Act Right Now on Climate Change." TED, TEDx, 2019, www.ted.com/talks/greta_thunberg_the_disarming_case_to_act_right_now_on_climate?language=en.