

We Need Young Greta Thunberg

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Abstract: Greta Thunberg, a girl who voices for environment protection, is the world's best-known environmental activist. She has appeared frequently on television and in noted magazines. Extensive coverage and nominations for several prestigious international awards have greatly enhanced her popularity in the world as a "little environmental campaigner". Her eco-celebrity is anchored in her role in a global climate movement. Greta's climate activism, which may be read as a life-writing project. As a teenager, what Greta says and does has greatly impressed her peers. This essay's emphasis is placed on whether we do need Greta and environmental defenders like her from the perspectives of her influence among teenagers, her contribution to the media and her positive influence on the upper class.

1. Introduction

What will people think when they see a report or article titled with a teenager, standing on stages of the UN, warning the world leaders, the people with the most political power in the world? It looks like the opening of an attractive story. People would click that article and want to learn about that teenager. People know that under the thousands of news reports, there must be a change that is going on. The sign is obvious that climate problems have already been an issue that concerned not only individuals but also corporations, organizations, groups, parties that gathered by certain profits. All these changes and improvements, do we all credit to Greta? The answer is not entirely. But do we need Greta? definitely.

2. Greta Thunberg's Influence

Greta Thunberg has inspired millions of people to take action against climate change and has had world leaders listen to what she has to say. There is no doubt that her influence in the world is obvious to all, especially on the younger generation. She didn't exaggerate, she didn't stir up emotions, all her speeches were plain and simple. And it was her simple words that made waves around the world.

2.1. Greta Thunberg's Influence on the Youth

Greta is a young, female, Generation Z leader inspires the Generation Z. Generation Z, abbreviated into Gen Z, refers to the people born from 1995 to 2010 and "are true digital natives: from earliest youth, they have been exposed to the internet, to social networks, and to mobile systems" [1]. Compared to current global leaders, Greta is very unique in that she is only 18 and a member of Generation Z. It made a strong contrast between her and the majority of the world's leaders nowadays.

Operation Enduring Freedom's research has shown that the average age of president and prime ministers of democratic nations in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development as of March, excluding Switzerland, is around 53 years old in 2020 [2]. The world she grew up in and the world those leaders grew up in are totally different.

According to research, Gen Z members, in general, tend to be more sensitive and understand how destructive the climate crisis can be [3]. These people's feelings about climate change are found to be anxious and frustrated [4]. Also reflected in the study, "Gen Z students feel a sense of

disappointment and anxiety surrounding the presidential election and politics in general. Politics does not provide them with hope for the future because of its ties to capitalism and its lack of urgency when it comes to climate action” [5]. With the success that their representative has made, Generation Z will be willing to devote more time and energy to this issue. That will boost the whole process. Generation Z generated Greta as an activist, and Greta can use her influence to protect Generation Z from harsh criticism, as well as provide more inspiration.

2.2. Greta Thunberg’s Influence on the Political Leaders

Greta can influence the people who can make the big-budget decisions, the politicians. One of the reasons that Greta is so famous is because she dares to challenge the politicians and demand them to take immediate action on mitigating climate change. Her unique identity as a young, female, and Gen Z person and straightforward way of talking have caused her to receive a lot of controversy among the public and, of course, global leaders. After Greta gave an enthusiastic speech at the UN, Vladimir Putin, President of Russia, expressed that “I don’t share the excitement about Greta Thunberg’s U.N. speech” [6]. In addition, he claimed that “No one has explained to Greta that the modern world is complex and different” [7]. The Times also reported that “after Greta has spoken to Parliament and demonstrated with the British environmental group Extinction Rebellion, the U.K. passed a law requiring that the country eliminate its carbon footprint” [8]. French President Emmanuel Macron says that “When you are a leader and every week you have young people demonstrating with such a message, you cannot remain neutral. They helped me change” [9]. The voices from Greta and everyone who wants climate change to become mitigated are loud, and the politicians can hear. It is really important that the politicians and global leaders receive this warning-like message. Greta’s identity as a Gen Z member has effectively helped her in gaining attention and amplifying that message to the world, and specifically, political leaders.

3. The World Needs Greta Thunberg

Climate change is already “beyond dispute” and it is “very likely” that human activity is the main cause. Sadly, only a few people are aware of the seriousness of global warming, so action to curb it is limited. We need someone like her to tell the world harsh facts about the environmental damage caused by human actions. People suffering from natural disasters need a voice from people like her, and the media needs her. The need to protect the environment is urgent, and the voices of people like her can raise awareness and make people take action to protect the environment we live in.

3.1. The People Outcast by the Elite Needs Greta

The people outcast by the elite class need Greta. The wave brought by Greta can shake the public cognition of only the elite class can put their fingers on the world’s issues. The scholars can realize the reports to suggest government take the actions, the philanthropist can host the events to raise the fund to improve certain situations, the successful entrepreneurs can donate millions of money to the climate-related organizations. Not to mention the mistrust between the classes, making saving the earth sound like a scam. But Greta, the girl from a non-elite background, voluntarily gave up the comfortable life and constantly doing things to practice her belief, gain fame and reputation without intention, is a rock star like the 70s that naturally wins the trust of young people, also the people outcast and unheard by the elite class. Along with the attention from the public, Greta has also received a lot of controversy about her actions and behavior. Many people hold the opinion that Greta does not understand the difficulty and challenges the leaders may face when issuing climate change mitigation policies. They think that the world does not need this girl as her speeches and propaganda are not bringing actual changes to the world.

But no matter whether her idea will be bought by the majority, the constant debate and exposure have made the climate a common topic that people will be willing to talk about, in school, in the company, in the elevator, on the dining table. And that will be a sign of change.

3.2. The Press Needs Greta

The press needs Greta, as well as Greta needs them. When looking at the title, “Greta Thunberg to world leaders: How dare you? You have stolen my dreams and my childhood”, [10] an image of a brave young girl who is willing to shout out the problem that the majority would tend to neglect. The press needs an impressive story and powerful voice to attract more audiences. More importantly, such a key opinion of a leader can change the atmosphere of the press, bring the press fresh air so as to let it keep up the world’s running pace. The press is implanting ideas, influencing our values and our sensibilities into problems all the time. It can even turn the phenomenon that happens every day into problems that are urgent to solve in our cognition. The invention of Greta’s image and the dissemination of images by the press can boost the process of solving the problem. But, “yet at a time when civilization is accelerating toward disaster, climate silence continues to reign across the bulk of the US news media. Especially on television, where most Americans still get their news, the brutal demands of ratings and money work against adequate coverage of the biggest story of our time. [11]” In the western news world, the press plays an important role in helping global corporations to earn reputation and exposure.

There is nothing wrong with this pattern, but sometimes when the current world’s business cannot help with the climate issues, or even make it worse, the public not only needs a brave girl to tell the truth but also the press to deliver the voices. With such a strong voice from Greta, the press can fix the hysteresis caused by the gatekeepers who need to prioritize the profits brought by global corporations. Greta, a vivid character with persistent actions she is doing. The press can always follow her, expose her, and make news.

4. Conclusion

The world needs Greta Thunberg because she can inspire not only Generation Z but all people from different backgrounds, and she is able to use her words and actions to influence politicians and leaders. We not only need Greta but also all the activists and people who take practices. Although the world is still running under the current rules, bit by bit change can make a big difference.

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