

## There Is No Planet B

Imagine a world where every human born faces a lifelong struggle for survival on their dying planet. A world of abandoned, submerged coastal cities and of mass human migration ahead of ever-rising sea levels. A world of super-hurricanes, uncontrolled wildfires and the extinction of entire species. A world of cities hidden under dark clouds of unbreathable air, where there is more plastic in the oceans than marine life, and where wars are fought over access to drinkable water. But then, we don't have to imagine too hard do we, for some of this has already happened or is happening before us and the time to act is now.

From the first time humans gazed up into the heavens to the use of the most powerful modern telescopes, we have looked for signs of other life in the universe. But it seems that Earth is unique in this regard, making the priority of protecting our planet and all living things within it of cosmic importance. Simply put, we're it, there is no Planet B and we must move immediately to a clean, sustainable and renewable way of life.

The first step in this is to change the language we use when describing what is happening to our environment. We have spoken for several decades about climate change, yet what we should be talking about is climate crisis. Downplaying the environmental catastrophe that is happening before us downplays what is needed to reverse course and move to a greener world. We need to use language that is direct, accurate and sets in motion a worldwide shift in human behaviour.

The next steps that are required go far beyond bringing re-usable cloth bags to the grocery store or running the washing machine in off-peak hours. They go beyond buying locally-sourced foods or driving smaller vehicles. While these are good, their impact is not enough to stop our climate crisis. We need big changes, including how and where we live. This starts with a total move from combustion engines to electric ones for cars, trucks, ships and even

airplanes. We need to agree to live in much smaller homes and in more densely populated cities that grow up, not out like suburban subdivisions. We need to change what we eat, especially when it comes to meat. Meat requires huge amounts of pesticides, fertilizer, fuel, feed and water, and the production of it results in massive amounts of greenhouse gases (including, yes, cow flatulence -a major source of methane 84 times more harmful than carbon dioxide when trapping heat in the atmosphere). Consider the bacon-cheeseburger served with ketchup lettuce and tomato -probably the most popular fast food anywhere. To make it you need two different cows -Dairy for the cheese and Beef for the patty. You need a pig for the bacon and every other ingredient in the burger happens in nature at different times of the year. Lettuce grows in Spring, tomatoes in Summer and wheat for the bun in the Fall. And of course, nothing grows in Winter. So strictly speaking, the cheeseburger shouldn't be a thing and yet it is available 365 days a year, and on average for less than 5 bucks. A triumph of the global food chain for sure, but a luxury our planet cannot afford. But even more than driving electric vehicles and eating more vegetables, we need to change our focus on consumer culture and replace it with new values -human values- that give priority to the environment over our wish to own more and more things. We need to re-define our relationship with our planet entirely, and for one simple reason: it is our home.

Throughout history, in times of war great efforts were made by countries on a national scale. These included scrap metal drives, food and fuel rationing and the issue of war bonds to finance a greater cause. But what cause is greater than planetary survival? The Earth is what we all have in common and is the cause that can bring people of all countries together, united in purpose and principle. We can no longer live on this planet as if we had another one we could go to.

I conclude with a quote from 14 year-old Climate Activist Greta Thunberg

I don't want your hope.

I don't want you to be hopeful.

I want you to panic...and act as if the house was on fire.

