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Young voices: Changing human mindsets

YOUNG VOICES

My favorite congress quote: "Ignorance gives rise to planetary threats" said by Sarah Cornell, Coordinator of the Planetary Boundaries Research Laboratory at Stockholm University at parallel session "Governance in light of planetary boundaries".



"Ignorance gives rise to planetary threats." Sarah Cornell stated this during one of her talks about governance, which is, perhaps, one of the biggest issues that we will have to overcome in this fight for sustainability. Creating a comprehensive understanding of how the political, economic, and human-earth relationships exists within the framework of the natural world seems to be a challenge. Yet, it is a challenge for which we will undeniably have to find a solution. And fast.

It is a challenge that cannot be postponed because the widespread ignorance that afflicts the planet, in turn, directly and indirectly effects the human habitat and innumerable ecosystems.

Inaction, theoretically, would be the biggest failure of humankind since we gained consciousness. Think about that. We are living in

a world that has taken a turn for the worst. There is poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. For a species that has been so innovative, creative, and successful in the realms of development and technology, there is a severe disconnect from our potential. The optimal systemic operation would be a populous that lives in communion with the natural world. They would have balance and respect across the board; where the predominate mindset was an empathetic one. It would be a world where people wanted the best for each other and for the space that they shared. The system is damaged, but not irreparable. The system-wide changes that would need to be implemented through governance might take some time to become accustomed to, but it's important to remember that time isn't something we have a lot of.

Through the combination of proactive political will and accurate knowledge dissemination, we have a fighting chance. It will be up to governments and leaders to insist, or even require that, for example, mass media outlets switch from the incessant, mind-numbing gobbledygook, and move into engaging education. It means teaching about people's intrinsic worth and that no amount of "stuff" will make them a better person. It will be about redesigning the consciousness of the public so that consumption and over-consumption are mitigated. It will be about teaching the ability to differentiate between need and want and what that means for people, animals, ecosystems, and the interconnected planetary ecology.

Without an informed public, there will be no success. It would mean integrating engaging, accurate information into both media and education. It will mean injecting a new component into educational systems and restructuring curriculums so the most important information is taught from a young age; a time when children's brains are still absorbing information, and haven't been dulled by overstimulation from meaningless—and repetitious—noise. The 'most important information' as aforementioned is basically how to live in a sustainable manner. It should be the goal of every parent, teacher, and politician to keep the minds of coming generations unclouded so they can see the bigger picture; so they can see

that they have to take care of the planet if they want a place to live.

On the other side of this issue, of course, there are governments, corporations, and individuals that do not want an aware, informed public. If people really understood their motives—which are about power, money, or a combination of the two—they would stop making enormous profits. Once people are able to think for themselves and see past the guise of conventional media—the vapid sitcoms, the hyperbolic drama in reality shows—the individual will start to connect the dots like they never have before. That is, they will start to see that the life they knew was a social construction of how someone else wanted them to live. They will realize that their education had not afforded them the thing that is most crucial to becoming an aware person: truth. It is truth that scientists aim to convey through their research. It is truth that journalists want to share with others. It is truth that is being kept from many people across the planet because the truth in these matters would force people to stop in their tracks and reconsider their personal affiliations with those around them. If people really understood the consequences of their choices and actions, they would likely stop doing them.

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