

# Greta Thunberg

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✘ **By Jeff White**

Why are many of the world's adult population so terrified of someone they scathingly refer to as a mentally ill little girl?

There are a number of possibilities; but time and time again, I see the fear she is causing in certain quarters – fear that business as usual is unsustainable. And Greta, who now has millions of supporters – mostly young – but with all generations listening intently to her message, are clamouring for change.

My first encounter with Greta came in a David Attenborough programme about the environmental disaster that we are acknowledging, but doing little about. She was sitting in the snow outside the Swedish Parliament building with a hand written placard proclaiming that she was on strike from school to protest at the lack of action taken by her own government on the environment.

While David Attenborough has become a household name throughout the world, Greta was virtually unknown, yet within a very short space of time, she had ignited the passion of a whole generation to persuade their governments to get serious about climate change. She needed no expensive PR team and didn't even have a group of close friends that helped her.

This should have started alarm bells ringing in government departments worldwide, but the silence was almost deafening. How could politicians have so little foresight when millions of youngsters – who in a short space of time will have the

vote – were telling them to stop procrastinating and pandering to the fossil fuel industries and take action on this urgent crisis. Still nothing... It is no wonder that Greta made her well-remembered speech at the UN, haranguing the powerful representatives gathered there, being told, “How dare you”. As Greta herself said in a later documentary on her life so far, “I don’t want people to dwell on those words, I want them to examine the facts and act on them.”

When she spoke to our own UK Parliament, she was jeered and heckled by those on the far right, who see her as a threat to their comfy lives. Would they have behaved so abominably if that would have been one of *their* daughters warning them about future disaster? They can ignore her words at their peril...

Another phrase of Greta’s comes to mind. “Change is coming and you won’t be able to stop it”. Change *is* coming. The latest local council elections showed the two best performing parties to be the Lib-Dems and the Greens. The old two party system is dying. David Cameron’s statement – made off the record, or so he thought – saying “Let’s cut the Green crap”, really is a sign of a politician thinking out loud, and says it all.

I find myself being inspired by Greta. Some time ago, Life Stylers were encouraged to write to their local council asking them what they were doing to reduce their carbon footprint. I felt this was something of a waste of time for me, but as most of our members are retired, it wouldn’t hurt to rattle a few cages by seeing if local councils could be stirred to some kind of action.

Meanwhile, I got involved at work and was made ‘Green Champion’ of my bus garage. It isn’t a particularly prestigious appointment and is unpaid. I have had some minor successes, but mostly, the company is not listening. Thanks to Greta’s determination, however, I will never give up.

Greta’s trip across the Atlantic on a solar and wind powered

yacht, was definitely a case of walking the walk, unlike a lot of the attendees at environmental meetings such as the recent COP ('out') 26, where delegates flew in from all corners of the globe and then journeyed to the conference in motorcades that probably produced the same amount of CO2 as a small country.

Greta is often portrayed as being mentally ill by her opponents. However, Aspergers is actually a syndrome, not an illness or disease. Jody and I both have personal experiences of this condition as we each have a grandchild with it. According to the United Brain Association, although people with Asperger's may have difficulty with social interactions, their intelligence is often higher than average. Indeed, they commonly excel in science, maths, technology, and music – and can often focus deeply on one particular interest, and Greta's became climate change. And as Greta, herself, sees it, her condition is an asset, as it enables her to concentrate on a single subject 'for ever'.

Being fair minded, I have looked at several YouTube videos of Greta's opponents to see what they base their opposition on. I find it difficult to fathom how people of such little intelligence have risen to such high office. A recent posting on Channel 9, an Australian talk channel, featured an interview with an MP, who was out to ridicule the environmental movement in general and Greta in particular. His first statement was as amazing as it was ridiculous. After 2 years of drought in Western Australia, not an unknown phenomenon in that neck of the woods, he stated that they, referring to environmentalists, referred to the event as the beginning of 'the permanent dry'. He then went on to say that it had actually rained in that area recently thus making a nonsense of the statement. He failed to say who *they* were or give any names. He ignored the fact that scientists have said that extreme weather events will become ever more extreme and happen more frequently. He also failed to mention that a town

in Western Australia has just been evacuated for the second time in as many months due to severe flooding, something that had never before happened there. The real give away was in the final statement proclaiming that the whole climate change 'thing' was a hoax set up by those wishing to initiate a communist takeover of the world. Very old stuff, which shows the contempt with which opponents hold the population of the world in, whereas the real reason for their statement is the defence of the fossil fuel giants, who have been pulling the wool over our eyes for decades.

He then went on to say that 'Greta doesn't have the answer to the crisis. Since his earlier statements would suggest he doesn't believe there *is* a crisis, why mention it at all? I think if he looked into it, he would find that Greta has more of an idea than he ever will. However, it is not her mission to take action, unless of course she ever attains a high position in government. Greta's mission is to awaken the world to the crisis we are suffering right now and get action taken by governments, who are supposed to work in the best interests of those who elect them, and so far she has done an amazing job, even though the results are a bit patchy – mainly due to inaction by world governments – keeping in mind that they are the only ones with access to all the latest scientific climate change information, power to create necessary laws, and the capacity to determine suitable punishment/fines.

I shudder to think of just how little action would have been taken by now, but for the actions of a 'mentally ill little girl' sitting by herself in the snow.

**"Never believe that a small group of people cannot change the world. In reality, it is the only thing that ever has."**

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