

## Introduction

You see, it doesn't have to be this way.

There is no law, no religion, and nothing in your genes, that says that young people must grow up so deeply worried about your future.

No Commandment in any Scripture states that you must live with a deep, dark, heavy sense of dread every day . . . because the Climate Crisis is going to destroy your world.

No destiny ever declared that your generation is doomed to live in quiet but constant fear of nuclear weapons.

No curse was ever placed upon your generation, declaring that "Thou must live and die in war upon war upon war upon war unto eternity."

You were born as perfect little packages of exuberant life. Before you could speak, you could smile. You were engineered so that without any special training, you could lie on your back and kick your feet; and then you could roll over and crawl; and then you, with a bit of help from your mother's and your father's outstretched hands, could begin to walk; and soon in your funny, bumpy way, you could run.

And then—there was no stopping you—you showed the world that you could dance! By the time you were a teenager, you were a Dancing Phenomenon.

Without any special effort, you began to speak, at first with simple words, and then with sentences of growing complexity. By the time you were a teenager, you were Super Cool, ready to take on the world.

You were more than just a kid growing up. You had these hidden treasures inside you, called Talent. Each kid had different talents. Some could run faster than anybody else. Some could sing better than anybody else. Some always got an A in mathematics class, while the rest of us stumbled and bumbled through algebra.

Some could speak in front of the class with a voice so clear and compelling that you understood something, crystal clear, that you had never even thought about before.

Some were so gentle, so thoughtful, so caring about other people, that you found yourself beginning to care a little bit more about the people who maybe needed some help.

Yes, by the time you were a teenager, you were blossoming with multiple talents, and wearing just the sort of clothes that suited you, and . . . without any special effort on your part, you were ready to fall in love.

Your first dance together was . . . magical. Your first real conversation made you so deeply happy because you could actually really *talk* with each other. And your first kiss . . . well, you would remember that forever.

So, who on earth has the right to come crashing into your world with the Insane News that the planet is so polluted that the oceans are dying and the glaciers are melting and the tundra is warming and the permafrost is thawing and massive amounts of ancient methane—from before the last ice age—are about to rise into the atmosphere as The Most Hideous Greenhouse Gasses Ever? Planet Earth now warms at an accelerating rate, getting hotter and hotter every year, so that by the time you graduate from college and get your first job and marry the Love of Your Life and bring your own perfect little package of life into the world . . . farms are parched by drought, agriculture collapses, climate refugees roam every continent in search of water and food, the Climate Wars slaughter people by the millions, and whatever survivors are left become victims of a global plague.

Who on earth has the right to come crashing into your world with nuclear weapons from the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bloodiest century in all of human history?

Who on earth has the right to come crashing into your young life—you are just getting started—with the racism and the greed and the corruption and the violence and the sexual arrogance which they have clung to for centuries?

Who are these Old Bastards who poison us with their small-minded hatred for everyone on the planet who doesn't wave their puny little flag?

You see, it doesn't have to be this way.

We do not need to destroy planet Earth, the only Cradle of Life in our corner of the universe.

We don't need to keep paying massive subsidies to the oil industries year after year, while they build their palaces and poison our planet.

We do not need to sacrifice a hundred thousand young lives on a devastated battleground so that some Macho Politician can keep his fancy office.

We do not need to cling to this notion that women—who bring new life into the world—are somehow deserving of our scorn.

We do not need, at the age of eighteen or twenty-one or twenty-five . . . to stop believing in ourselves.

Every teenager, bursting with energy, filled with dreams, is a miracle that should be able to flourish in a healthy and peaceful world.

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So how do we change the course of our long human journey toward a far better future?

The good news is that we have already begun. Teachers and students around the world are working together to develop vibrant new courses that prepare young people to tackle the great challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Clean energy companies are advancing rapidly in the transition from coal and oil to the sun and the wind. A new green spirit grows stronger every year.

But we are moving too slowly. Young people around the world are not nearly as engaged as they could be. The endless wars divert our attention from the work that we *should* be doing. Many of us still hope that the problems will simply go away.

As a teacher of many years, I believe that young people—who will live their lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century—must not wait any longer, but must *determine for themselves* what sort of education they need in their schools. They must determine what sort of careers, some of them in entirely new fields, they will pursue. They must reach out to their fellow students—and soon their fellow colleagues—around the world, so that they form the First Global Generation in Human History. They must work together to formulate a final goal, which they will reach within 25 years: 100% clean energy, so that the Earth can begin to cool before climate catastrophes overwhelm us.

Every cathedral, every mosque, every temple, every shrine, built centuries ago, began with a *blueprint*, a plan for building something which had never been built before. We need to do the same now, with a *blueprint for a Global Green Grid* which will wrap around planet Earth and bring clean energy to every city, every village, every farm, every child.

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