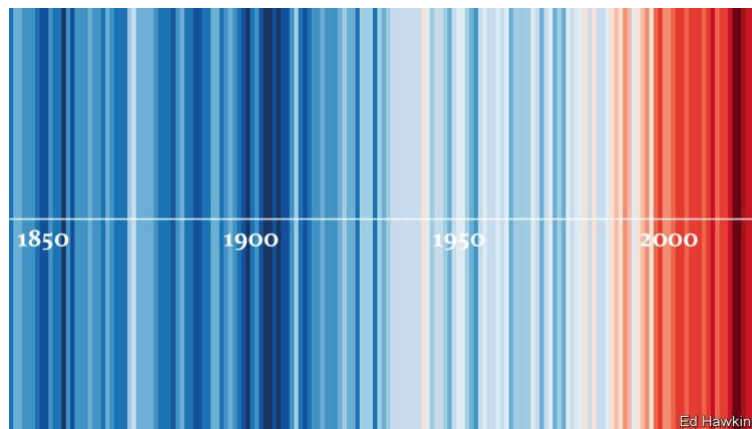


Shirley
Generation Green
March 1st



This is What We are Facing--The Climate Change Crisis

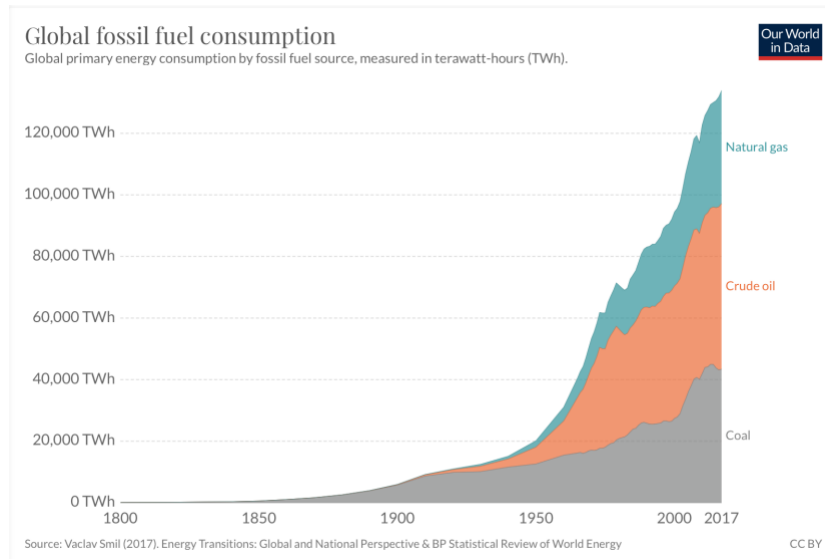
We only have 12 years to save our planet.
It must be dealt with immediately and clear-headedly.

Have you ever heard of the coronavirus (COVID-19) that was first reported on December 31st, 2019? It is a novel disease that has raided the globe. The root of it is still under investigation but there is one unique theory: the disease might just be one of those trapped in ice and permafrost. Of course, there is no scientific evidence for now. However, it is very much true that as the effects of climate change worsen, more long-dormant viruses and bacteria are reviving from the Arctic. Therefore, it is highly plausible to state that the impact of climate change is disastrous and permanent.

As shown in the picture above, the stripes represent the average temperatures from 1850 to 2000. Blue stripes indicate cooler temperatures while red represent warm ones. To describe the span of human history for a hundred and fifty years using simple coloured stripes might be too abstract. These are the years that saw unprecedented world wars, trades on a remarkable scale and various technological advancements. However, regardless of its complexity, the history and the simple stripes share a common cause. The impressive growth throughout history and the constant warming of the planet both stem from burning of billions of tonnes of fossil fuels.

The Dirty Truth

Fossil fuels include coal, oil and natural gas. They are currently the world's primary energy source. Formed from organic materials over the course of millions of years, fossil fuels play a big role in global economic development. Not surprisingly, burning fossil fuels is the largest source of carbon dioxide emissions. These gases could potentially lead to catastrophic changes in the Earth's climate.



The burning of fossil fuels produces around 21.3 billion tonnes (21.3 gigatonnes) of carbon dioxide (CO₂) per year. It is estimated that natural processes can only absorb about half of that amount. This means that almost 16 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide are trapped in the atmosphere. This is already a gigantic amount, but imagine multiple years adding on to that. The result will be calamitous. Therefore, actions need to be taken.

It's Time for Actions

Understanding exactly how urgent the crisis is, my partner Eila and I decided to take actions within our community. Inspired by the Pen Recycling Program at TerraCycle and Sheridan Mission Zero, we decided to execute a community-based initiative, called the Pen Drive, at our high school.

The purpose of the initiative was to collect writing utensils from teachers and students and send them to TerraCycle for recycling. The waste, therefore, was recycled instead of being diverted to the landfill. We also held a raffle at our school to encourage student participation.

We started off contacting local, eco-friendly companies and stores for donations. We were able to retrieve fifteen various prizes from a total of five stores. We then collaborated with our school's Eco Council (Eila and I are both members of the council), where we made announcements and one huge poster for advertisement.

Our initiative ran from February 7th until February 20th. We set a booth in the atrium, where volunteers from the Eco Council helped us record all the pens collected. We recorded the number of people who donated, number of pens collected, and types of pens. For each pen

donated, the donor had the chance to enter one raffle ticket. The winners were drawn on the last day of the drive.

The outcome of the initiative was incredible. We collected over 1,300 writing utensils at our school alone. Eila also contacted our local public school and received over 2,700 writing utensils. In total, we recycled 29,000 grams of wastes! Due to the success of the drive, our Eco Council started making pen collection boxes from old shoe boxes and decided to place them around the school. Eila and I were also thinking of expanding our initiative to other schools.

Make an Effort Before It's Too Late

Climate scientists have warned us that there are only a dozen years left for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C. If the temperature rise is beyond even half a degree, it will significantly worsen the risks of floods, droughts and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.

According to our calculations from the Pen Drive, 5-kilometers of driving is approximately 1000 grams of waste diverted to landfill. This is about 200 pens! Therefore, even a short walk can save much waste.

"The Earth is a fine place and worth fighting for." -- Ernest Hemingway. I hope you can take something from this article and start with your own efforts in this unprecedented, yet still hopeful fight!

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