

Hello,

My name is Hugh Birdsall, and I am the education consultant for the non-profit organization, called Reforest the Tropics, based in Mystic, Ct. I have been teaching climate change to 4th, 5th and 6th graders in southeastern Connecticut for the past two years. To date I have worked with over 1,000 students and their teachers in 9 different towns. I believe that teaching our children about climate change is not only a practical and relevant practice, but also a moral imperative. It ties in directly with the teaching of African American Studies (HB7082), Latino Studies (HB 7083), since black and brown communities bear the brunt of the negative impacts of climate change. Witness the forced migration of Central Americans, Africans, Middle Easterners, and Asians, all trying to get out from under the crushing impact of drought and flood and crop failure and civil war in their home countries.

All of the solutions to the climate change crisis exist right now. When I ask my students why they think the problem hasn't been solved yet, they totally get it. "It's inconvenient," they say. "It costs too much money, people don't care, we like our devices too much..." When they understand that fossil fuel billionaires cannot see beyond their own lifetimes, cannot see that we are all in the same boat together, can believe that their money is more important than all of our children's future, my students are outraged, as well they should be. The successful disinformation campaigns of the fossil fuel industry have tried to make climate science irrelevant, but my students see through this self-serving propaganda and refuse to look down the dark tunnel of a disastrous future, without saying, "If you don't fix this, we will." I can only marvel at the courage of 5th graders challenging the federal government in the courts, of teenage girls speaking truth to power in Europe and elsewhere, of children taking on the struggle that we adults should all have been involved in years ago. Kudos to them. Shame on us.

I find it utterly astonishing that legislators and Americans in general are so blindly complacent when it comes to taking action on climate change. We are like the proverbial frog sitting in a pot of warm water on a stove where the burner has just been turned on. "Has anyone noticed that it is getting a little warmer?" we ask blandly, not realizing that we are about to be cooked.

I applaud Christine Palm's initiative in proposing that climate change education be mandated in Connecticut schools. It's about time! Climate Change is the true national emergency. Let us respond to it with everything we've got.

Sincerely,

Hugh Birdsall

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