

Carrying the weight of CLIMATE CHANGE

Students explain the importance of climate change advocacy

TEAM NP10

Staff Writer

The world is on fire -- or at least Australia is.

The world is melting -- or at least the glaciers are.

The world is changing -- everywhere.

The climate crisis is reaching its boiling point and Generation Z is taking notice of it. In this turbulent political climate where the generational divide is growing and the youth feel ignored it is easy to get lost in the struggle. But now Generation Z is finding their voice and are demanding to be heard -- and it's climate change they are talking about.

"If we don't start like getting our crap together now then we may lose this short window of opportunity that we do have and future generations will probably not have that same window," Alexander Robinson said. "If you tackle this one huge problem, if you kill it then you're simultaneously, I think, mitigating a whole other host of issues ... from then you can also combat food and security, you can also combat poverty, you can combat socio-economic inequality and all that good stuff."

There is a rise in students like Robinson who are becoming more aware of the world state and they are either becoming activists or at least becoming outspoken about these issues. This has been the reason why now entire movements are being led by teenagers.

"And it's our generation, we are the ones stepping up and we are like 15, 16 years old and like we are doing so much," Andy Kemp said. "So I feel like if we keep doing that then we can solve the problem that has been on our mind for years."

But why are these movements being led by teenagers? Are the older generations simply not stepping up? Not exactly. Robinson explains that the United States had been making a good first step with certain things like being in the Paris Accord, -- an agreement for countries apart of it to reduce greenhouse gas emissions about every five years -- but the U.S. has now

left it.

"It's really disappointing and it's really bad and I think that, at the very least, we need to re-join the Paris Accords," he said, "and probably, if we are serious about doing this right, we should probably on our own go further and encourage other countries to do the same."

While steps have been taken already to work towards a more sustainable future, much of today's youth feels it simply is not enough.

"What I would do is pretty much try to find a way to either ban all single use plastics or find something that we can use instead," Kemp said. "Like you see seaweed substitutes or you see people taking that plastic and turning it into furniture or into shoes, like I have a pen made out of water bottles. Things like that. There's so many different ways, so I feel like what we need to do is start funding those researchers that actually look into those types of things so that we can change the future for the better."

But widespread policy changes aren't the only way to create change.

"I know that my best friend has talked for the longest time trying to establish a school garden, a school community garden, because in terms of all the waste that's produced, in terms of all the energy that goes into bringing food from the interior of the country. They process it, package it, and then get it to our table. There's a lot of waste involved in it and there's a lot of fossil fuel consumption involved with that," Robinson said.

It's metal straws. It's thrifted clothes. It's reusable water bottles. It's seemingly small steps that create a ripple effect of change which work toward a brighter and more sustainable future. Kemp explains that not only are teenagers gravitating towards sustainability for the activism aspect but that it seems to be becoming a trend. Social media can be partially credited with aiding in spreading this trend.

"I don't give the general media a lot of credit nowadays, but I do think that they are ringing the alarm bells as a scientific community so they're doing their part," Robinson said.

It is the scientists, the journalists, and now the citizens who are all working to spread awareness about climate change and find solutions to this rapidly growing issue.

Today, people are stepping up and speaking out about the fact that climate change is no longer a problem to be dealt with in the future, it is

“If we don’t start like getting our crap together now then we may lose this short window of opportunity that we do have and future generations will probably not have that same window

ALEX ROBINSON



James Williams stands on Hampton Street with the various recyclable products he has collected. He spends March 7 the same way he spends every Saturday morning, searching for aluminum cans, plastic water bottles, and paper goods. *photo // Staff Photographer*

right in front of the eyes of the youth and is an issue that, if not fixed soon, could possibly lead to unfixed, even fatal outcomes.

"I wouldn't be surprised if water became more expensive," Robinson said. "I wouldn't be surprised if food became more expensive, I wouldn't be surprised if basic necessities began to skyrocket in cost and result with kind of slow burn."

With scientists and activists continuously

working to implement change and gain support for this movement, now the burden rests on the shoulders of the people.

"I think it's really just, it's down to the rest of us," Alexander Robinson said. "The scientists have done their job, the journalists have done their job, it's up to us as citizens to force the government to do its job and if they don't do it or even if they do, even better would be if we did ours."