

Greta Thunberg says the climate debate is slowly shifting

13 August 2019, by Alice Ritchie



Wind in her sails: Greta Thunberg is heading to North America to continue her climate campaign

A year after starting a school strike that made her a figurehead for the fight against global warming, Greta Thunberg believes her uncompromising message is getting through—even if action remains thin on the ground.

The 16-year-old Swede, who sets sail for New York on Wednesday to deliver her demand for [climate action](#) to North America, has been a target of abuse but sees that as proof she is having an effect.

"The debate is shifting. I feel like people are taking this more urgently, people are starting to be more aware, slowly," she told AFP on board the 60-foot (18-metre) yacht taking her across the Atlantic.

However, she admits this still needs to be matched by action, warning: "When you see the big picture almost nothing positive is happening."

Since she made headlines by skipping school to protest outside the Swedish parliament in August last year, Thunberg has met political and business

leaders across Europe.

Now she is heading to the United States to attend a UN climate summit in New York in September—and as she refuses to fly, she's been offered a lift on a racing yacht.

Malizia II will be skippered by Pierre Casiraghi, a member of the Monaco royal family, and German sailor Boris Herrmann.

The facilities are basic—the toilet is a bucket, there is no kitchen—but it has solar panels and underwater turbines that allow it to operate without producing carbon emissions.

Thunberg—who has never sailed before this week—will be onboard for two weeks, along with her father Svante and a filmmaker.

"It just shows how impossible it is to live sustainably today—it's absurd that you have to sail across the Atlantic Ocean like this to get there with no emissions," Thunberg said in the English port of Plymouth.

"But I feel like since I'm one of the few people in the world who can actually do this I want to take that opportunity to do it."

She has no plans to meet with President Donald Trump in the US, saying: "I can't say anything that he hasn't already heard."

'They see us as a threat'

In the past year, Thunberg has addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, UN talks in Poland, been interviewed for *Vogue* magazine and featured on the new album of band The 1975.



her school strike.

"To be a part of such a big and strong movement, the Fridays for Future movement—just to see all the children, the young people around the world, all the millions of young people who are rising up," she said.

Her plaits, battered trainers and sweatshirt make Thunberg look younger than she is, but that doesn't stop her critics throwing abuse at the teenager for speaking out.

"I just ignore it because it's also a good sign that they are actually trying to make us quiet, that means that we are having an impact, and they see us as a threat," she says.

Pressure people in power

After New York, where she also plans to take part in climate demonstrations, she will travel to Canada and Mexico, before heading to another UN meeting in Chile in December.

Her goal is to ensure "that the climate crisis is being taken as seriously as it should be taken and that people really start to understand".

As she refuses to fly, Thunberg has been offered a lift on a racing yacht

She has received several awards and been nominated for the Nobel peace prize.

Thunberg is sceptical about some of those who ask her to appear at their events.

"Many people see this an opportunity to invite us, school striking people, to clear their name in a way," she said.

But she adds: "I do this because it is actually having an impact."

For her, the most powerful part of the past year has been watching the children around the world join

"Then together we create an international opinion, and movement so that people stand together and put pressure on the people in power," she said.

Thunberg does not like talking about herself, saying she is just an activist, but acknowledges that having children speak out has a special power.

"We tell it like it is, we don't care to be polite. And we make people feel very guilty."

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