

Keyword: global-warming

Headline: Gory Gaia

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Published Date: 09:21 PM January 18, 2014

Section: opinion

Word Count: 1181

Content:

It is not my intention to bore you with numbers and percentages showing how much the world has gotten warmer since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century, or how much the population has grown and how much pollution it has caused since. But even without the numbers, studies prove that, yes, the world is heating up to an alarming extent.

There are many misconceptions about environmentalism, and it is my pleasure to mention and rectify a few. First, the general misconception that global warming is a natural phenomenon. Although global warming is indeed a natural event, what we are experiencing now is what top scientists refer to as anthropogenic global warming that has resulted from human-induced wastes such as fossil fuels. It is unnatural how fast-paced the Earth is heating up. Studies show how much greenhouse gas emissions have increased since the Industrial Revolution and how these continue to increase until today.

Second, the belief that environmentalists are misanthropes. A renowned conservation biologist, John Terborgh, argued in his 1999 book "Requiem for Nature" that: "Ultimately, nature and biodiversity must be conserved for their own sakes, not because they have present utilitarian value." His belief brings about the idea that conservationists fight against natural destruction because nature should be conserved and not because in the near future we can make use of nature.

This reminds me of a bus ride I took on my way back to Baguio from a Greenpeace volunteer orientation in Quezon City, and I had to share a seat with a man who looked like he was in his late 40s. We chatted for a while and he later revealed that he used to work at a mining firm in Baguio and is currently working for a similar firm. I was silent when he ranted that most, if not all, environmentalists are against developments that will bring about employment and economic progress, such as mining and the controversial cutting/balling of pine trees in Baguio in exchange for a mall expansion.

When he exclaimed that Greenpeace volunteers were all talk ("Salita lang nang salita") and did not bother to understand that the activities of people like himself were also beneficial to others, it was my turn to speak. What most people think is that environmental activists care more about the conservation of nature than the survival of humanity. My personal belief is, and I would like to believe that I share this with many environment advocates, that the survival of humanity does not have to cost the destruction of the environment, and that the conservation of nature, in return, will eventually bring about humanity's survival.

Conservation does not have to get in the way of economic development. In opposition to Terborgh, I believe nature exists because it has a utilitarian value, but that value is yet to be available to the generations to come and not be terminated to the abrupt extent that it is taking at the moment.

The third misconception is that environmentalism in general is an esoteric subject matter. This belief results in apathetic behavior toward the issue of environment degradation. I reached a point in my life when I refused to consume seafood after reading Sylvia Earle's "The World is Blue." For a number of my friends who are large consumers of seafood, it was an eyebrow-raising issue, and I

would go on telling them how many—to name one, tuna—of the bountiful fish that our grandparents used to enjoy are now almost on the verge of extinction and how many other marine creatures, such as sea turtles, die because of mass fishing. Some of them roll their eyes in disinterest even before the middle part of my little speech, and, well, some change the subject even before I finish.

The reality is that many people find this matter uninteresting, and they would rather do something else than understand its complexities. Contrary to popular belief, it is, in fact, a simple concern: If we do not act against natural destruction, we will face fatal consequences in the near future.

It has been more than two months since Supertyphoon “Yolanda” hit central Philippines, and the remnants of the unfortunate event are still very apparent, particularly in Tacloban City. I traveled to Tacloban once, in 2009, when the city hosted the annual Palarong Pambansa. I have a vague memory of what the place looked like, but I remember that its people were one of the most welcoming and warm I have ever encountered. It was such misery to read about how an alarming number of those optimistic people have lost their lives, loved ones, and homes.

I am in no position to trace Yolanda’s ecological background or whether or not it was brought about by climate change. But I do know that global warming brings about extreme weather events, among its many effects, and that it could result in longer heat waves, coastal flooding, more severe droughts, and more powerful hurricanes. Some environmentalists say that if we do not start fighting climate change, we will have a lot more Yolandas to face in the future. I say there is no point in fighting climate change anymore; we have gone past the stage where we could have still prevented global warming. At present, even if we put an end to all our gas emissions overnight, Earth will still be heating up. What we should focus on now is preparing for the Yolandas to come.

Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, coauthors of “Break Through,” point out that environmentalism is not anymore relevant to today’s context. I agree that we should instead develop a post-environmentalist ideology that attends to preparation needs for global warming that may bring about more lethal calamities such as Yolanda. I call out to all environment advocates that we shift from the idea that global warming can still be prevented if we control our carbon footprints, to the post-environmentalist mindset that pollution reduction still does matter, but a larger problem should be recognized: How do we cope with the rapidly increasing warming of our planet? I call out to non-environmentalists to recognize this startling issue and not let environmentalism die. I call out to politicians to develop new and innovative laws that will address these issues.

Finally, I call out to the survivors of Yolanda and others who mourn what it had wrought. We all had a fair share of nightmares from the past months and it is time that we dreamed again. I do not call for the Philippines to wake up. I call that we indulge ourselves in the limitless imagination of what we can be after a storm. And I call that we do not stop there; I call that we stop when we finally see a glorious Gaia instead of a gory one.

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