



SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2019

GLOBAL CLIMATE STRIKE

'I want a future'

Young people protest around the globe Friday, imploring leaders to tackle climate change



Swedish environmental activist Greta Thunberg, 16, center, takes part during the Climate Strike on Friday in New York. Rallies calling for action on climate change happened in cities around the world ahead of a summit on the issue. *Eduardo Munoz Alvarez, Associated Press*



Kamila Szandrowski, left, Stacey Petrov, Emily Lagace and Catie Sheley ride the Staten Island Ferry to the NYC Climate Strike, with a poster that reads, "I stand for what I stand on."

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Young people afraid for their futures protested around the globe Friday to implore leaders to tackle climate change, turning out by the hundreds of thousands to insist that the warming world can't wait for action.

Marches, rallies and demonstrations were held from Canberra to Kabul and Cape Town to New York, and German police reported that more than 100,000 turned out in Berlin.

Days before world a U.N. climate summit of world leaders, the "Global Climate Strike" events ranged from about two dozen activists in Seoul using LED flashlights to send Morse code messages calling for action to rescue the earth to Australia demonstrations that organizers estimated were the country's largest protests since the Iraq War began in 2003.

The demonstrations were partly inspired by the activism of Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, who has staged weekly "Fridays for Future" demonstrations for a year, urging world leaders to step up efforts against climate change. "It's such a victory," Thunberg told The Associated Press in an interview in New York. "I would never have predicted or believed that this was going to happen, and so fast — and only in 15 months."

Thunberg spoke at a rally Friday and is expected to participate in a U.N. Youth Climate Summit on Saturday and speak at the U.N. Climate Action Summit with global leaders on Monday.

"They have this opportunity to do something, and they should take that," she said. "And otherwise, they should feel ashamed." In New York, where public schools excused students with parental permission, tens of thousands of mostly young people marched through lower Manhattan, briefly shutting down some streets.

"Sorry I can't clean my room, I'm busy saving the world," one protester's sign declared.



Staten Islanders Alexandra Greco, left, Molly Driscoll, Rachel Driscoll and Elizabeth Valouch wear matching shirts to the NYC Climate Strike.

Photos by Rebeka Humbrecht, Staten Island Advance

Aboard the Staten Island Ferry, young people could be seen wearing pro-earth outfits and holding signs. "I feel that the environment needs our help and our leaders aren't doing anything to help it, so if they won't act like adults, we will," said Rachel Driscoll.

"We're continuing to read stories that the ice caps are melting, among other things, and if no one will do anything, maybe the kids have to," added Molly Driscoll.

Wagner College student Catie Sheley told the Advance, "This is the single most important issue facing our world. It's an existential threat that is going to destroy us if we don't change everything now."

Many students explained that this is a push to make the government realize that this is an issue many care about. "I want the government to really understand that this is a really big deal and actually listen to science," said Emily Lagace.

Students Stacey Petrov and Kamila Szandrowski are part of the non-profit Sand Up Gals, which hosts cleanups on Staten Island beaches. They attended the rally to demand change based on what they've seen on our beaches.

"People need to be aware of how much trash they leave around," said Szandrowski. "When you see it and you're fully immersed in it, it's like, 'Oh, I use that, and it's right here on my beach.'"

Added Petrov: "We need to educate people that there is a life without creating trash and without creating unnecessary material. A lot of people are just too comfortable and too used to using plastic, but there are other alternatives."

"We don't have enough room on this Earth for the plastic anymore," said Szandrowski. "We don't even have enough room for the plastic we've already created." — *Associated Press material was used in this report*

More inside

For more on the Global Climate Strike, see page A6.