

TRANSCRIPT:

Another World is Possible

a BYkids film
THEIR WORLD THEIR FILMS



Rinzin: Everyone talks about 'climate change' or 'global warming'--it means we are pumping too much carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and it warms up. And it warms up at a pace that is unprecedented, and that leads to a very rapidly changing world. The true scale of the disaster is that it could put the actual existence of our civilization on the brink. So maybe 100 years from now, there will be no stock market, there will be no companies, there will be no schools to get good grades from. There will be some survivors, of course, but they will be catapulted back into the stone age.

Helena Marschall: Hi, My name is Helena Marschall, I'm 20 years old, and I'm a climate activist from Germany. I think the climate crisis often feels big and scary, and as young people we often feel powerless. I've seen how much power we do have, how we can rise up, how we can truly change the status quo! This film tells that story. It tells the story of a climate crisis, what movements are doing to fight it, and what it means to be a climate activist.

Today, I'm meeting my dad. He's a scientist. We are going to talk all about how I grew up, how I became a climate activist, and a filmmaker, as you can see.

Young Helena: You might wonder why the film stops in between. It is because the batteries run out from my camera. And film me!

Horst Marschall: Helena was born as a very outgoing active social person who was very interested in the world around her. Then, she started to realize that there was some really big problem with the world--the problem of climate change--and started thinking about what she could do. And then when Greta Thunberg started her activism, I was among the first protesters. And this whole thing now today, she talks to leading politicians, she is not afraid of speaking out to these people.

Helena: I was born in Germany, but I actually grew up in both Europe and the United States, because my parents are both scientists and they worked at different universities. And living on different continents has really shaped my view of the world. My parents always gave me this sense that I could become anything I wanted to, and they were supportive of my activism, thankfully. Even though I am now officially a student of economics at university, I spend most of my time on the fight for climate justice.

Horst: That's what most people never see. It's Cape Cod in winter, and you have snow right up to the waterline.

Helena: And while we were living there, there were strong hurricanes, extreme storms, power outages, and really, really cold winters that broke a bunch of records. And that made it very very concrete what the climate crisis looked like.

Horst: So what Helena's activism taught me is that you can actually make some change in the world if you put some action into play, you take the protest to the streets, it actually matters that to see that starting from 2018, 2019, the topic of climate crisis has climbed to the top of all newspaper and television reports and it's in people's minds. I mean that's very clearly because of not just Helena but the Fridays for Future movement and had brought this change about.

Helena: I like to think I almost have 2 families—the one I grew up in, and then my family of Fridays for Future activists who inspire me so much. In 2018, when our movement started, it was just Greta Thunberg striking in Stockholm, Sweden. But soon, people all over the world started to follow her example, to strike school and take to the streets for climate justice.

I became connected with young people all over Germany, and we decided to do the same thing. The movement has grown. I do a lot of national organizing, and actually we meet quite regularly, but today, we're discussing our next big climate strike day, which is the first climate strike to happen post COVID lockdown. We've been sending out fliers, we've been hanging up posters, we've been using social media in order to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people. And it's worked! In the last year, Fridays for Future has become one of the largest climate movements in the world.

So, emissions are rising, right? The climate crisis is escalating all around us. Every continent in the world is feeling the effects of a climate that is changing at a rate that has never been seen before. And we need to stop that. And the way we stop that is by changing the very systems we are living in, like by large, systemic level change. So what we do with the movement is we create a political and social environment that forces our leaders to act. It's so clear what needs to happen, right? You need to reduce emissions. By 2035 they need to be at zero. We can't be polluting anymore. We need to create a 100% renewable energy system by 2030, so that all the energy can no longer be connected to emitting CO₂ and other fossil fuels. We need to stop all substances of these fossil fuels; we need to exit coal by 2030 at the very, very latest, that's the limit. But at the same time, we, as Germany, have such a unique responsibility. We are the largest brown coal producer in the world per person, and we are the fourth highest historical emitter in the world.

Clara Duvigneau: No one really took care of the climate crisis, and I think that that is the moment when Fridays for Future was born.

Helena: Our climate strikes are some of the biggest demonstrations—like, single day demonstrations since the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Linus Steinmetz: I think that's like half the story. Germans will topple an undemocratic system because a lot of people go into the streets and there is self consciousness that if enough people go to the streets you can change the political system fundamentally. I think that often fuels us in a way.

Clara: And I think we all can do this because it is from our deepest heart to realize how many

people we can mobilize if we want to.

Linus: But I think that social media is so crucial right now, because especially within the last days right now, getting people actually to commit to doing something, to going on strike on Friday, via social media, via our channels, and to just get the content out there—I think that is really important, because without that, nobody is going to come.

Greta Thunberg: Join the global climate strike in Germany on the 24th of September. This is a global climate emergency, and we are just in the beginning of it. We have seen its effects during the summer with more intense and frequent extreme weather events, and in order to stop this from getting worse we need to mobilize, we need to go out on the streets, because we know that the changes will not come from the politicians, it will not come from negotiations, it will come from people on the street demanding climate action. So please join the movement.

Helena: We really try to keep pressure up on the government any way that we can. When my friend Linus was only 17, he actually took the German government to court over its climate policies together with other activists, and they won.

Linus: Essentially the reason why we sued the government was that they had passed a climate law that was completely insufficient. As young people, we've got the right to protect ourselves, we have the right to die, and we have the right not to be harmed. What the court actually said is that the German government had to move their numbers up, and that was a real success for us, and I think the reason why this decision was possible is that we, as young people, started protesting and making clear that this is really fundamental to us. This is setting precedent for what is happening with climate lawsuits around the world and what we can see now hopefully is that other courts around the world can do the same.

[Captions]: The past eight years have been the warmest on record. In 2022, global carbon dioxide emissions reached a record high. Today's international negotiations on climate change are based on the Paris Agreement, adopted by 196 countries at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in 2015. The treaty includes the goal of limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit). Already the planet has warmed an average of 1.1 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial times.

Helena: We've been saying "unite behind the science" since our very first demonstration, so talking to scientists is an important part of our work.

Mojib Latif: So if we look at the temperatures since 1850, then we see already this warming, but why are we worried? Because the warming has consequences. Heat waves become more frequent, flooding becomes more frequent, sea water rises, and this is a threat to many coastal communities. This is why global warming is so dangerous, and why it already affects millions and millions of people.

Helena: Where are we now in this process?

Mijib: Now we have reached a level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere that is unprecedented in man's history. The carbon dioxide concentration today is higher than in any time during the last 3 million years. As a consequence, the planet warms. Earth's temperature has risen already

by just above 1 degree C, within a relatively short period of time. Normally it takes many many thousands of years to see several degrees of warming and if we continue to emit greenhouse gasses in the future, then we may have a warming of 4 degrees by the end of the century. And we have about 1 decade before we reach the 1.5 degree warming if we emit the same amount of greenhouse gasses that we are currently emitting. So the living conditions of our planet will become worse and worse. Deserts will expand. Other regions will become so hot—50 degrees and higher—that you can't really live there anymore. Many, many species will be extinct!

Helena: Can you explain the concept of tipping points?

Mojib: What a tipping point means is that you cross a certain threshold—so for instance the Greenland ice sheet. If all the Greenland ice will melt, the average sea level will rise by 7 meters. Then we couldn't anymore stop the melting of the Greenland ice sheet, even if we then stop emitting greenhouse gasses. This process will continue until all of the melt-water is in the ocean, giving rise to sea level.

Helena: What are the things that need to happen right now in order to give my generation a livable future on this planet?

Mojib: Well, the solution of the problem is very simple. If you have a problem with CO₂, don't emit it. So what does this mean? Where does this CO₂ come from, right? It comes basically by the way we produce energy; we burn coal, oil, natural gas. Cars, right? I mean, there's so much solar radiation, we have wind power, we have geothermal heat, and so why don't we do it?

Because there are small interest groups that have so much power that they can basically inhibit governments to make this transition from the fossil fuels to the renewable energy. We live in the wrong system. Our economic system basically supports environmental destruction, so we have to change our economic system so our economy must become a social, environmental economy.

Helena: But I'm on the street with other activists, we are saying we don't have time. What is this sense of urgency?

Mojib: We have been talking about these things for decades now. This cannot go on forever, because at some point, it may be too late. When it comes to climate change, this time is almost upon us.

Helena: Today, we're going to Lützerath, a town in western Germany right at the edge of one of the largest carbon sources in the world: the open pit coal mine [Garzweiler II](#). Because of this, Lützerath has become an epicenter in our fight for climate justice.

Right behind me is one of the largest CO₂ sources in the whole of Europe. It's the open nugget coal mine Garzweiler where every day, more coal is pulled out of the ground in order to burn in German coal power plants, even though we know that it's bad for the climate crisis, that coal is one of the leading fuels for the climate crisis and for rising CO₂ in our atmosphere, even though we know that over 300 villages and towns have disappeared into this hole, over 120,000 people have lost their homes due to this form of fossil fuel infrastructure. RWE, which is the company digging here, one of the leading contributors to the climate crisis worldwide, wants to expand

this coal mine even further, even though they know in order to stay in line with 1.5 degrees we need to exit coal at the very latest in 2030, and that means that all of these villages need to stay and the coal mine cannot expand farther, because that, in the end, will be bad for the people living here and it will be really really terrible for people all over the world who will feel the effects of the worsening climate crisis.

Christina Schliesky: You see nothing but dust and coal and big steel diggers.

Helena: I mean the hole, it just goes on to the horizon. I mean these are towns as well, and the coal that was underneath it.

Christina: Do you see the digger there? My cousin lived there before, and yes, she was expropriated and had to move away. It's sad.

Helena: And I think for me, the terrible thing is that we don't need to do this anymore, because we have renewable energy, and studies show that we don't need to dig up more coal in order to transition and meet the energy demand.

I also wanted to speak to Vanessa, an incredible activist from Uganda, all about how the climate crisis is a global justice issue.

Vanessa Nakato: I think that Germany in particular has a responsibility to take climate action because communities like mine who did not cause the climate crisis are on the front lines of the climate crisis right now. Because of the rising global emissions, the weather patterns in my country of Uganda are changing, and we are experiencing more extreme weather conditions, we are seeing extreme floods, extreme landslides and all, and this means massive destruction of people's homes, people's farms, people's businesses, and loss of lives.

Helena: So right now, we're walking into the camp right at the edge of the coal mine, where, over the last few months, activists and kind of the climate movement has converged all over Germany to protect the town of Lützerath and to stop the coal mine from expanding further. People are essentially putting their bodies on the line here to fight the climate crisis. I'm really excited to talk to some of the activists who know what's going on and have thought this up.

So do you mind telling us what is happening here? Why is it so loud?

Indigo: We are building up structures to defend this village and to defend 1.5 degrees. I think in this time, we are not just facing a climate emergency, and that can be the question, if we can grow old on this planet, but also the question comes up of how are we living on this planet right now? We are not just struggling for the coal to stay in the ground but also for a society that's worth living in.

Right now, Lützerath is like a focal point for the climate justice movement. Digging out all this coal and burning it means fueling the climate crisis. Especially in the global south, lives have been threatened for years. People are dying, ecosystems are collapsing. We are active here in order to basically do our bit. We build structuresAnd in the trees—treehouses, towers. We don't want to take this. Germany needs to basically act right now. If we are successful here, and there is a chance we are, then they'll have to stop.

Helena: The climate crisis is a global issue, so it's so important that we stay connected with activists all over the world. Today's Zoom session is going to be a conversation between Fridays for Future Germany and the Sunrise Movement from the United States.

The climate crisis is happening on such a large scope, so we are mostly focused on exerting public pressure on governments, and that's on every kind of level. You hear a lot about, like climate tipping points and climate systems, and they are very much there and they are very scary. But at the same time, we can also see tipping points in our social systems, where at a certain point, when we've marched enough times, and we've kind of been there enough times, then suddenly a lot will be possible that didn't seem so before.

Lauren Maunus: We know that there is—just like Helena said—so many people already on our side, but we just need to activate them and make them feel their power and know where to direct that.

Helena: There are people suffering at the moment all over the world already, and losing their homes and their livelihoods.

Lauren: When we are fighting for climate justice, we also need to be fighting for broader economic justice.

Helena: At the end of the day, the promises don't count if we are not actually, realistically reducing emissions. Our job as movements is to not give up before it is utterly too late. I see it as our responsibility to keep hope alive for as long as possible and to keep action alive as long as possible, because that is—in the end—what we need.

[Captions]: The Big Day is here: Climate Strike with Greta Thunberg.

Helena: It's happening. It's Friday. It's global strike day. Despite the hard times and global crises, people mobilized. It's going to be big. Join us.

This is our first big post-COVID lockdown strike. Our strikes in Germany have become some of the largest in the world. We are in this fight, heart and soul.

Clara: Ladies and gentlemen, dear kids and young people, what we do today determines what tomorrow will bring. Together, let's make every moment count.

[Band Playing]: Stop coal, hop hop hop!

Cordula Weimann: Never before has the future rested in our hands as in this moment. We are burning the future of our children and for this earth. And now I am counting on you.

Clara: What do we want?

Crowd: [unintelligible]

Clara: When do we want it?

Crowd: Now!

Clara: Are we gonna fight for it?

Crowd: Yes!

Clara: Are we gonna get it?

Crowd: Yes!

Clara: So what do we want?

Crowd: [unintelligible]

Clara: Greet with me... Greta!

Greta: Hello Berlin! I am really delighted to see so many people! Today, we are striking all over the world under the hashtag “uproot the system” because that’s what we want to do. The climate crisis has never once been treated like an emergency. It is clearer than ever that no political party is doing close to enough. We are not only stealing the future from our children and grandchildren, we are also stealing the present from the most affected people in the most affected areas. We need to become climate activists and demand real change, because remember, change is now not only possible, it is also urgently necessary. But when enough people demand change then change will come. And that is why we have to continue fighting for as long as it takes. If we want to ensure a safe presence in the future, then we need to be active democratic citizens, and go out in the streets like we are doing today.

Helena: Seeing these large crowds is incredibly moving. It reminds me of the first demonstration I went to with my grandpa. And it reminds me that we are not alone, that there are so many people that are fighting alongside us.

Crowd: We are here, we are loud, because you are stealing our future.

Helena: It’s important to remember that every large societal shift, from civil rights, to women’s right to vote, to LGBTQ rights, has been fought for by regular people who take to the streets, stand up for what they believe in, and demand change. Every single day, I’m so inspired by the people who are in this fight with me and all that we’ve accomplished. And I really hope that by sharing this story, I can help other young people to realize their own power and join us, because we need to keep on fighting if we want a livable future on this planet. Because another world is possible.

[Captions]: In exchange for agreeing to phase out coal by 2030, the German energy company RWE was allowed to raze the town of Lützerath to make way for its coal mine expansion. In January 2023, after a days-long standoff and demonstrations, any remaining activists were removed from the area. According to activists, the fight is far from over. The war in Ukraine has created a global energy crisis. As a result, governments are looking to make new fossil fuel deals, undermining the climate goal to keep global warming within 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Helena: I’m in Egypt at the 27th UN climate summit with a group Fridays for Future activists. It’s the most important forum where leaders of all the countries as well as civil societies and scientists come together to work on solutions for the climate crisis. This year’s outcome was

mixed—a landmark deal on mustered damage was reached. It means that the richest countries are gonna give money to the most vulnerable countries to help them pay for climate disasters. But the underlying issue is rising emissions was not addressed, and that's even though we are in the midst of the make or break decades, where global emissions actually need to be cut in half within the next 10 years. In the end, UN secretary Antonio Guterres summed it up best.

He said, "A window of opportunity remains open, but only a narrow shaft of light remains when it comes to climate action."

I've spent the last 2 weeks here in Egypt at the UN climate summit. I've seen lots of world leaders make lots of empty promises, there are hundreds of fossil fuel lobbyists here trying to make dirty deals, and I've met people who are suffering right now daily from the climate crisis from droughts and floods and storms. And I have seen us. I've seen civil society, I've seen young people, I've met them from all over the world who are fighting as hard as they can. And what has become clear is this: The climate crisis will not be ended because world leaders decide to end it. The climate crisis will be ended by us fighting as hard as we can, by us fighting for our lives everywhere, all the time, and taking to the streets. We have a really small window of time left open, so the deciding question is this: What are you going to do in that window of time?

[Credits roll]