



The Current

Shaming people into fighting climate change won't work, says scientist



Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe says trying to inspire people is more effective

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Greta Thunberg is sailing across the Atlantic to highlight the impact commercial flights have on the environment. She says she's not trying to shame people out of flying, but a movement that does do that has emerged in Sweden. (Ashley Fraser/CBC)

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Activist Greta Thunberg is [sailing across the Atlantic to attend next month's UN climate summit](#), forgoing a flight — and the carbon emissions that come with it.

Her trip has highlighted a Swedish movement called "Flygskam," which translates as flight shame and encourages people not to fly if other transportation is available.

While 16-year-old Thunberg says her intention is to make people consider their choices, her voyage has drawn criticism from those skeptical of her activism.

Climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe says strategies that aim to shame aren't effective.

She told [The Current's](#) guest host Matt Galloway it's better to find common ground, and start a conversation that could inspire change.

"Talk about values that we share, connect the dots to how that matters to climate and how that affects us — and then talk about positive solutions that we can get on board with that make our lives better."



Julia Hartley-Brewer

@JuliaHB1

Hi Greta, I've just booked some long haul flights for my family to enjoy some winter sun on the beach this Christmas.

Level of guilt being felt: 0%



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Hayhoe recalls being told by a fellow climate activist that "every time you turn on your car, you're sinning."

"My visceral reaction to somebody saying that to me was: 'Oh, so when I take my child to the doctor, you're saying I'm sinning? When I go to work to support my family, I'm sinning?'"

She told Galloway "that shaming made me want to just go out and find a Hummer and drive circles around that person."

Accordingly, Hayhoe emphasized that the "most important thing to do is to begin that conversation with what we most agree about, rather than what we most disagree about."

- [Activist urges WWII-level global effort to fight climate change](#)

To discuss Thunberg's trip, her critics, and how to engage people in the climate issue, Galloway spoke to:

- Ken Caldeira, a climate scientist at the Carnegie Institution for Science's Department of Global Ecology.
- Katharine Hayhoe, a Canadian climate scientist who teaches at Texas Tech University.
- Ryan Katz-Rosene, a professor in the School of Political Studies at the University of Ottawa, and president of the Environmental Studies Association of Canada.

Written by Padraig Moran. Produced by Allie Jaynes and Max Paris.

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