

AN OPEN LETTER TO GMB, FROM THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Dear GMB team

On your show yesterday (16 April) you seemed concerned about the 'inconvenience' of civil disobedience by climate change protesters in London.

Inconvenience? What about the inconvenience of entire communities collapsing under environmental shocks associated with climate change (Beira; Cape Town, etc)?

As a journalist and science writer, who has spent nearly two decades grappling with this issue here in South Africa, I'm absolutely staggered at the cultural and political inertia that I see reflected in this GMB interview. The civil disobedience talked about in this clip - a bit of disruption to the traffic, some spray painted walls and broken glass - is an utterly inconsequential disruption, compared with a city like Beira in Mozambique, which recently lost *ninety percent of its entire* infrastructure owing to cyclone-driven flood waters. This kind of event is going to come harder and faster and globally. Climate scientists can already make links between the likelihood of this kind of event happening, and human caused climate change.

Let me describe 'inconvenience': Cape Town nearly ran out of water in the summer of 2018, following the worst drought in over a century of record-keeping. The municipality was three months away

from cutting off water to suburban homes and businesses outside of the immediate city centre. We would have had to suspend our day jobs, while we spent most of our time queuing at 200 distribution points around a city of 4.2 million so we could collect a ration of 25 litres of water per person per day. The police and military were told they would need to be on standby to deal with any outbreaks of violence at these points. Our sewerage works would have shut down. What do you do with the human waste of 4.2 million people? What about the jobs implications - how many poorer households would lose income as the economy ground to a halt, even if just temporarily?

This was the local expression of the global crisis that is three hundred years in the making. Cape Town and Beira and so many other examples in the Global South demonstrate what happens when normal urban development challenges meet an environmental shock like a drought or flood or cyclone. The word for this isn't 'inconvenience'. It's much more catastrophic.

We have been warned about the climate-altering effects of GHG emissions for decades. *Decades*. People like me have been writing about this almost our entire adult lives. We've been unemotional and rational. We've used polite language. The scientists have even toned down their message to be more politically palatable. And yet here we are, on the verge of societal collapse.

Your guest Peter Bleksley - where has he been for the past few decades? How is it that he has somehow missed the years and years of rational, polite engagement from climate science and social activism. And GMB, how is it that you seem blind to the emergency? That you're more concerned about the inconvenience of traffic disrupted traffic, than you are about the political economy underlying why the climate is unravelling around us?

It's hard for me to not want to say 'for fuck sakes people, wake UP!!!!!!' - but language like that only gets one dismissed as emotional and hysterical.

Half a century ago, the Club of Rome released the now famous report that reminded us that we can't have infinite growth on a finite planet. That was in 1972 - the year I was born - and yet our political-economy has still not internalised this fundamental law of nature.

We can choose to ignore gravity, but the apple is still going to hit us on the head. We cannot outrun the laws of nature. We can't

escape the extreme events that are already coming with climate breakdown. This is a wildfire 300 years in the making. This wildfire is what's going to be truly inconvenient, much more so than a bit of graffiti on your walls in London.

I shake my head in utter exasperation. How can Londoners not get it? How can a responsible broadcaster like Good Morning Britain not get this? Right there, in Britain, there are areas where homes will become uninsurable because of the likelihood of flood damage in future - but you'd rather have a more polite chit-chat about this, instead of screaming 'fire, fire' and calling all hands to the pump?

Sorry if this inconvenient bit of news curdles the cream over there.

Regards from the Global South,

Leonie Joubert

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Science writer [Leonie Joubert](#) has spent the better part of two decades writing about climate change, energy policy, invasive species, and the hunger-obesity poverty-paradox in our cities. She's now turning her pen towards two new journalistic 'beats': the likely decline in mental health as communities face the existential threat of societal breakdown and climate-capitalism collapse; and 'solutions' journalism, because she's tired of spending her days doing what feels like a doomsday audit as the climate emergency unfolds over the course of her lifetime. She is based in Cape Town, South Africa.