

A Conversation with Laurie David

Laurie David is the accidental environmentalist. She read up on SUV emissions after her first child was born 13 years ago, then plunged into global warming research. A former TV executive, David produced Al Gore's Oscar-winning *An Inconvenient Truth*. "Knowledge is a burden," she says. "You have to speak out." David discussed her fears with *Condé Nast Traveler's* Dorinda Elliott.

CNT: You're launching an online campaign on global warming?

David: The goal is to make so much noise that government does something.

CNT: So does that mean your campaign is a political movement?

David: I started it with Senator John McCain and Bobby Kennedy Jr.; it's nonpartisan. Here's the thing—we're all guilty. So we all have to be part of the solution. Democrats, Republicans—everyone. We all have carbon footprints.

CNT: The Arctic ice cap is melting at record rates. Is that an omen?

David: You can't turn on the news without seeing a severe weather event. It's happening in Texas, in the Midwest, and on the East Coast. The experts thought the impact was going to be felt by the next generation, but the fact is, we're all feeling it now.

CNT: What can we do?

David: Going green will have to be part of our consciousness. This movement will infiltrate every aspect of our lives, because the way we're living now isn't sustainable. Think about whether or not you take a plastic bag at the supermarket. Some 100 billion plastic bags are thrown away every year, and only about one percent are recycled. Do we need to live like that? Or am I going to get used to having canvas bags in my car? Are plastic bags going to be banned? Will the old lightbulb become illegal? As people start to demand this, a shift will take place. We need to elect someone who will raise the fuel economy standards of our cars.

CNT: You drive an electric Toyota but fly on a Gulf Stream jet. How does that work?

David: I don't have a Gulf Stream jet, okay? The majority of my personal air travel is commercial. This is a personal thing. Everybody has to look at his or her own footprint and do the best they can. It's not about being perfect, it's about doing something. If we're looking for perfection, we'll never, ever get there.

CNT: What makes you really mad?

David: Some 2.5 million plastic water bottles are thrown away every hour. We have a generation of kids thinking that's the only way to drink water. I can't take it anymore. I'm never carrying a plastic water bottle again.

CNT: What do you say to kids so they don't get too alarmed?

David: You tell them the truth, and then you empower them to do something about it. Kids have to start realizing that

the chargers for all those iPods and phones are connecting to coal-burning power plants. Maybe then they will unplug their chargers when not in use. About ten percent of every electric bill is for wasted energy that we're not even using.

CNT: So it's in the details?

David: Is it acceptable to keep cutting virgin forests to make paper plates that we use for five seconds and then throw away?

CNT: What can the travel industry do?

David: If a hotel gives you the choice to not wash linens, that's something: They're educating people—and saving money. Changing to energy-efficient lightbulbs will save them a fortune. In Europe, hotels have motion detectors so when you leave the room, the lights go off. Why are we so far behind?

CNT: What scares you most?

David: I'm terrified that we're not going to do what we need to do fast enough. The window is closing.

CNT: Where do you go to forget your worries?

David: Martha's Vineyard, where I have solar panels on my barn. I love the water. I'm outside from the moment the sun comes up to the moment it goes down. That makes me happy.

To learn more, go to stopglobalwarming.org.



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