

Learning to confront the climate crisis

Confronting the climate crisis is a major leap for most people; they have other things to think about ... like food on the table and electricity bills. I started to reflect on this when a passenger went to throw a plastic bottle out of the car.

“No, don’t do that,” I said. *“I can use it again at home.”*

“OK, if that’s what you want,” came the blank reply (as if to say: *‘it’s simpler to chuck it!’*).

In truth, we were both adding to the climate problem: me driving a petrol guzzling motor, emitting noxious fumes; she, adding her bit to the man-made mountain of single-use plastics. I knew I should buy a bike, but she had no idea she was doing wrong. Engrossed in keeping her kids alive and healthy, my thirty-something passenger had lived an ‘off-the-grid’ life regarding such worldly things as climate change.

Our actions are governed by mindset, based on things we learn from an early age. Recently, I spent time with a friend and kids at a wonderfully alternative restaurant in Nairobi. For a start it was a bit of a learning curve for kids (and adults too!) that staff couldn’t hear or speak; but *hakuna matata*, you point to the menu or write down your needs. Thumbs up for contended!



THE PALLETT RESTAURANT



Images: Duncan Gregory

And so, the learning begins

Looking around the environment of the restaurant and its surrounds, you begin to notice that the seats and tables are fashioned out of old oil drums, or made from wood in the shape of a boat ... recycled goods which are not all uniformly honed, direct from the factory. The light shades are created from old glass bottles and there are plants all around this fantastic space, growing in re-used plastic bottles (Yes! we're back to the bottle-out-the-window story, once again). My three-year-old said to me: *"Wow! papa, I can grow flowers like that in plastic bottles at home, can't I?"*

It's interesting to note that my bottle-throwing lady of yesteryear has now become a bottle-recycling champion. She started a business, blending and freezing fruits in the evening, to sell the following day. Tourists on the sun-drenched beaches welcome the cool juices like manna from heaven.

And in an amazing turnabout, my previously unaware passenger spends an hour or two each day sterilizing once used 500ml containers, collected from local schools. She even implores her customers to return their empty bottles for a third term of use ... to help fight the climate crisis!



BOTTLING THE JUICES



Images: Duncan Gregory

Remarkable at times, how our world can turn full circle!.