

[Global change: by disaster or by design?](#)

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From her first moments on the Dixon Hall stage, exuding an aura of informed informality, Annie Leonard, creator of the animated documentary *Story of Stuff*, was armed with a message bursting to be shared. Leonard's environmental activism has allowed her to pursue her "obsession with stuff" worldwide to investigate our addiction to consumer goods and its consequences.



"It's up to you to decide what future you want to create for yourselves," activist Annie Leonard tells a Tulane audience on Monday (Oct. 3). (Photos by Paula Burch-Celentano)

In Leonard's view, three major problems undermine the validity of today's economic paradigm.

"First, we're trashing the planet," she explained in her "[Story of Stuff](#)" talk on Monday night (Oct. 3) on the Tulane uptown campus. "We're consuming 1.5 planet's worth of resources every year ... draining our stockpiles of resources ... disrupting global climate patterns. We will change one day; the only question is whether we'll change by design or by disaster."

Even excluding human impact on the planet, our trajectory doesn't bode well. "We're trashing each other," Leonard said, discussing toxins used in everyday goods that eventually seep into our bloodstreams, even those of newborns.



Students (from left) Jacob Winkelman, Nick Stracco, Kasey Youngentob and Kaiti Tasker discuss issues with speaker Annie Leonard.

"When our babies come pre-polluted," Leonard asked, "doesn't that mean we've crossed a line?" Excoriating a further social ill, she highlighted the "obscene" and ever-widening gap between rich and poor, nationally and globally.

Despite the escalating costs of this paradigm, we're still "having no fun," said Leonard. "What truly makes us happy are strong interpersonal bonds and a sense of working towards a common cause."

While these bonds are stifled by a worldview defined by an endless IV drip of "stuff," they are amplified by social activism aimed at creating a "fair, fun, environmentally just future" through reforming taxes, empowering regulation and outlawing unjust practices.

In a final clarion call, Leonard issued a challenge to students. "Band together," she urged. "Change the rules of the game. It's up to you to decide what future you want to create for yourselves."

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