Saving Our Environment

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Growing up watching C*aptain Planet* and taking “Humane Treatment of Animals” type classes*,* we were introduced to a world of environmental issues at an early age. Sadly very few people in the world seem to care of the disastrous situations that will erupt in our lifetime. The world is growing so fast because of science and technology that one has little time to notice green grass, let alone plant any. No one has the time to notice the world is changing and is becoming unable to sustain life. If these destructive behaviors don’t change, where will the world end up? We all need to do our part and lighten our carbon footprints. Of all the environmental issues today, the biggest and most threatening issue is us humans. Human expansion has caused a great deal of the issues of today.

Progress is something that cannot be stopped. Many attempts have been made to limit the amount of human progress and expansion, though development has been halted. The human spirit and instinctive tendency to create and achieve more than those who have come before has created mass environmental damage and destruction along the way. There are approximately 7 billion versus 183 million square miles of Earth, and the humans are winning. Everyone has a gas guzzler, does not get car serviced regularly emitting many pollutants, and hunts and kills exotic animals endangering their species. Solutions are going to be needed to correct issues or stop irreversible damages not only to the Earth but also to our health.

Before industrialization and urbanization, no reports of any major environmental problems that stemmed from people, only from mining, illnesses and pollution. These days the use of certain products is hazardous. For example, the use of water bottles was a great idea until they land up in the landfills where it would take them almost forever to biodegrade. But on the downside, water conservation has not gotten better; therefore water bottle waste will be a problem for a while unless they make the bottles out of something else. However that seems unlikely as well since retailers went from paper bags to plastic bags that will, too, be found in the landfills not decomposing.

Humans are so wasteful; many Americans have never been exposed to surroundings where resources were not abundant, so there is a lack of appreciation for the resources that are easily accessible. The United States of America generates hundreds of million tons of solid waste per year. Waste is stored in the United States mainly in landfills. The entire landfill process is detriment to the environment both positively and negatively. Positively, the US saves large amounts of money by using landfills; they are currently the cheapest way to dispose of the trash and garbage. In a modern landfill, the garbage is spread in thin layers, each of which is compacted by a bulldozer before the next is spread. When about ten feet of waste has been laid down, it is covered by a thin layer of earth or soil, which is also compacted. In essence, the garbage is being packed and pressed down into the ground. Negatively, as described of the landfill process, “we reap what we sow”; we are burying mountains of trash into the ground and very unsanitary. “As organic matter decays, it releases methane gas. In older landfill sites, this gas is released as a small trickle that it is not currently viable to trap and use for biofuel as a result goes up into the atmosphere, where methane is a major contributor to the greenhouse effect”. (earthtimes.org) It is very important that when choosing a site for a landfill that the location is not easily subjected to flooding. Lingering trash and garbage produce deadly disease that can be spread to the people through pest such as mosquitoes and other insects and is unsafe in the environment. “Greenhouse gasses from landfill sites could be treated with bio-filters to reduce their impact on global warming” (earthtimes.org)

There are also other institutions of American wastefulness have also affected the environment. In some places, logging companies’ greed leads them to cut down an excessive amount of trees while it takes many years to regrow. Trees that are made way for farming are burnt up releasing deadly amounts of carbon and thus leading to the problem of global warming. Global warming is self-explanatory and has many causes. The ozone layer is part of the Earth’s stratosphere that protects it from ultraviolet rays from the sun. Because this layer is thinning, we receive extra amounts of the UV rays from the sun and in the winter we receive chilling cold. This will be a continuous problem because of the cutting down of trees, not making “new ozone (O3)” and pollutants to the air by man. If ever the ozone layer is depleted, it would not only kill all food sources but also all life! There would be too much exposure for anything to sustain itself. (oar.noaa.gov)

We often can count out the problems but rarely does anyone do anything to remedy the situation. It is everyone’s responsibility to help out so there should be a proposal that would set forth stricter laws and regulations created for individuals to participate as the law forces businesses and organizations. The government could only go so much; individuals should be held accountable as well since they make up more of the communities than the number of businesses present in a community. Companies are also giving consumers who are participating in their recycling programs to opportunity to receive store discounts. Some retailers like Target gives reward to those who participate in its recycling program for recycling bags (pressroom.target.com). Wal-Mart has created an eco-friendly internal design with wider aisles in stores and provided massive lands for endangered animals and using recycled materials for pet supplies like beds and scoopers (walmartstores.com). Yet if recycling programs become part of everything and is everywhere, the problem would be more evident and would develop environmentally-conscious communities and for penalties to be imposed to those who choose to damage the earth we live on. For example, since there is already a large fee on recycling used tires and batteries, they should also add an extra tax to suppliers whose products are solely in plastics and change the material of the infamous “garbage” bags since people primarily place trash in these types of bags. More cities should have curbside recycling or a common area to help consumers recycle. Legislation should release money to encourage recycling and protecting the planet as money is good motivation for anything and should be on “small-scales” like recycling cans not just making your home “greener” then people would see their place in the plan.

With rising concerns about the long term damage that development and industrial progress is having on the environment, master planned communities and the developers in places like extreme temperatures have started creating these neighborhoods and doing their best to minimize damage and to preserve the natural habitat. The components of an environmentally friendly community consist of many different aspects. When one looks at the components of new residential communities, the environmental impact should be a top concern. Developers who create communities that are environmentally conscious should be rewarded for their effort in the form of tax breaks. This form of legislation would definitely be a motivation for development companies to take the first step in creating a cleaner environment. This task is fairly easier as the residential real estate and the automotive industries are a crucial part of the nation’s economy. During the economic recession of the early nineties, the real estate market was a key contributor to restoring the economy. These industries are also good indicators of the economy. The industry helps create numerous jobs within the economy—the more jobs there are, the more consumers that are able to purchase, especially with great incentives from the government.

 According to the advances in ‘green technology’, there are many approaches to save the Earth. For instance, luxury amenities in lavish homes made strictly with eco products. A company that calls their homes/designs “Earthship” and they are unique in its own way, as each is built by hand to the prospective owner’s design. They can range from Spartan to lavish in their beauty and can be any size desired, depending on the wishes of its builders. They are extremely resistant to temperature-change and the very same house is able to provide surprising comfort in either the hottest deserts or the coldest climates. This is accomplished using a perfect mix of “earth”--geothermal, ambient, wind, solar, and water in temperature control; even the direction the house faces plays a crucial role. (webecoist.com)

More volunteerism could set the revolution in motion. We could start in our homes by reducing the use of energy by using CFL bulbs and shutting everything off when not in use. Replanting of trees or even the creation of gardens, farms, or orchids increases oxygen and provides homeostasis for animals that live in trees. Making separate compartments for recyclable waste would be valuable for recycling day or drives in the community. Reducing the amounts of trash having to be taken to the landfills helps reduce global warming. Less trash in landfills means fewer landfills resulting in decrease in emissions from landfills. Hybrids, well-maintained cars and carpooling all also help reduce effects of global warming as there would be lesser emissions due to fewer cars on the road. Legislation has raised the standards of fuel efficiency. “The difference will save Americans $80 billion a year at the pump. It will reduce our oil use by 3.1 million barrels per day by 2030. It will cut automobile carbon emissions in half. And it will create up to150,000 American jobs, as Detroit shows the world how to build the next generation of energy efficient cars” (nrdc.org). As Lehner continues on he explains, “On the environmental front, this is a giant leap forward. Our cars and trucks belch out 1.7 billion tons of climate-warming carbon dioxide emissions each year, accounting for 28 percent of our national carbon footprint. Cutting those emissions by nearly half is huge.” With these recommendations, along with educating others, we could make the Earth a better and safer place for all.

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