

## Refine the Coastline

Picture gentle, glittering waves and powdered sugar sand. The beaches of Hawaii encompass our identity as people of the land. I still remember those silent evenings when my mother used to take my sister and me by the hand down to Magic Island lit up by the soft city lights, where I had taken my very first steps as a child. I would have never thought that discarded trash would be littered on that familiar ground, lodged insultingly between the imprints of my two fumbling footsteps.

Beach littering is a major problem in Hawaii that is not addressed as often as other problems due to its relatively low impact on society; however, it plays a significant role from an environmental standpoint. Washed-up marine debris, human littering, and inland storms can pollute not only our beaches, but all land in general. Statistics affirm our suspicions of consequences that may result from poor regulation of littering. Studies indicate that litter on beaches since 1994 has increased 77% in Hawaii alone, and it has been proven that litter, especially plastic, takes decades to disintegrate. To our treasured *honu*, or turtles, the highly concentrated nitrogen released through plastic waste can infect them with deadly tumors, proving that our actions have a severe impact on wildlife that is special to this island.

Although littering is an environmental hazard, there are many effective and efficient solutions to prevent it from causing further disastrous situations in Hawaii. For example, public institutions, especially schools, should advocate volunteer groups to attend excursions to gather trash from some of the many beaches devastated by waste. If we can publicly advertise the concept of forming service groups, the problem of littering would not be the only one to be suppressed; it will spur society as a whole to offer their service and time to properly care for state

issues in a logical and relatively simple way. A measure that can prompt further involvement in beach cleanup would be to erect stations around parking lots, comprised of reusable, non-plastic bags with quirky, yet encouraging logos such as “Got Trash?” or “Throw Me Away!” and a small tong to be used to pick up trash inside this bag for hygienic purposes. This will give support groups the incentive to use the kit and collect any clutter that they may come across without the trouble of bringing along their own materials.

If this problem continues for the next fifty years, most of our aquatic wildlife will dwindle away, especially the *honu* and monk seals. We might also lose touch with the history of our land, of Hawaii’s rich past, as well as the significant role the ocean constitutes in Hawaiian culture and tourism. Society as a whole may also be economically damaged due to a decline in tourism as a result of copious amounts of trash littered along the coastline and other areas around Hawaii. If we act now, we can boost public morale and secure the longevity of our beaches and their animals. There are many simple alternatives to this issue, however, it requires the support of the entire community to achieve optimal results.

Throughout his life, Mr. Ching dedicated himself to serving his community and restoring the beauty of places with special meaning to him. As he made a name for himself through largely successful construction projects, he never once forgot his roots, as demonstrated when he established a new cultural plaza on the scorched back of Chinatown. Like Mr. Ching, I want to stay true to my values by preserving the memories I have of the many beaches of Hawaii; in this way, the gift that he bestowed to these islands can continue to spread after his passing and into future generations.

My mother once told me that if you gaze up at the skies of Magic Island, just before the sunset, you can see two outstretched arms pulling you in and pushing you away like a tender riptide current. With the solutions I've discussed, the legacy of both Mr. Ching and Hawaii's beaches will continue to take steps, like I once did, to a bright and promising future.