

The Restoration of Hawaii's Essence

When I was a child, I went to Hanauma Bay and beaches quite often enough to leave me with the worst shirt tans and peeling sunburns. I marveled at all of the beautiful, vivid coral through my old, foggy snorkeling goggles I got as a hand me down from my older cousins. As I got older, I found it harder and harder to get to the beach with my family to bury my toes in the sand and to just see one more time the frightened, flashy fish as I swam up to them. When I had the opportunity to opportunity to go again when I was in 7th grade, I was the most excited out of everyone. I got up early to pack my things and hurried my parents to get in the car. It wasn't until I saw lots more of obscure seaweeds floating around that I knew something was different. I scooped one up and brought it to my father for him to observe. That's where my relationship with invasive algae began.

Invasive species, especially algae are undeniably devastating our native marine biodiversity and biocomplexity in alarming rapid and increasing rates. *Gracilaria salicornia*, also known as gorilla ogo, is one of the main alien invasive species that destroy coral, prevents other fish from obtaining nutrients, as well as other algae and aquatic plants from attaching to the reef. Coral reefs are essential to our environment because oceans make up more than 80% of our planet and they provide they produce more oxygen than trees. They also protect typhoons and tsunamis. By continuously affecting our reefs, which is also the gateway to our ecosystem and aquatic life, in fifty years from now if we don't do anything, all of the reefs, fish, and marine life will perish, leading to a decline in tourist attractions, economy, and biodiversity. To restore and save what is left of our ecosystem, we must take action on extracting these harmful species.

One solution is hosting more algae extract events at local basins and small bodies of water. There are only a few organizations that host such events; however significant change comes in large numbers. We need to advocate for more frequent excursions and in different places around the island. Besides, we can make obtaining algae from our beaches, ponds, and other bodies of water more attractive by repurposing the algae to use in our daily lives.

Algae has many unknown purposes as well. Another solution is to sort, dry, grind the algae into a powder, and incorporate it into hand soap as a beneficial antimicrobial additive. Many varieties of algae contain lanosol, a compound that is proven to kill 99.99% of Staphylococcus Aureus, the number one leading cause of infections in hospitals around the world. Not only will this get rid of the harmful seaweed, but will create a useful and healthy cleansing substance that is safe to use for handwashing. These soaps can be donated to homeless shelters to non-profit organizations, or to communities where sanitary issues pose a health threat.

Hawaii has one of the highest homeless rates in the nation and by providing a basic necessity to those not in welfare, we embody Clarence T.C Ching's caring, inspirational, philanthropist nature. Clarence T.C Ching was a man always lending a helping hand whenever he could. Through his foundation, he donated all the money he earned from developing Kukui Gardens to charity. This project gives back to those as well as fight a current issue we are facing right now. By being the light that guides others, we can also be a model of Clarence T.C Ching and spread his message of philanthropy.

The revival of our coral reefs is not only very crucial to Hawaii, but the world. We are an island after all, and our oceans are what make Hawaii what it is today. I want other people to experience the same sensation of awe when they see our beautiful oceans and reefs. To

experience something so invaluable, it will take an enormous amount of work, but if we are giving back to our roots, having fun, and helping others, shouldn't that be worthwhile? Clarence T.C Ching throughout his life worked hard and dreamed big to make Hawaii a better place and we can too!