

Let's Turn Down the Heat

Climate change is a global phenomenon that affects all of us, including future generations to come. The biggest cause of climate change is the number of greenhouse gasses we emit into the atmosphere daily. As our technology advances, we start to eliminate the number of those gases floating around trapping the sun's heat. This progression into a safer future isn't enough to prevent our world from becoming a giant sauna. We need to work together as a community to help put this threat behind us.

First, we must know how climate change works. Solar radiation heats the Earth's surface and all the greenhouse gasses that get trapped in the atmosphere act like plastic wrap around the planet keeping in all the heat. That heat warms up the oceans, ice caps, and the surface. The increased temperature in the ocean forces the sea animals to adapt, but sometimes they just move away entirely and it affects the oceanic food chain. When the ice caps melt, the sea levels rise and the animals in arctic regions lose their habitat. In 50 years, entire cities will be underwater unless we get this under control. Heat exhaustion will increase as the temperature rises. It will get harder to go outside and animals that thrive in cold environments will suffer. There are so many causes of climate change. There are also so many kinds of things that we can do to counteract the damage that has already been done.

People believe that carbon dioxide is the strongest chemical that contributes to climate change, but methane is nearly 30 times more potent than CO₂. Methane is produced from food waste and fossil fuels. The production of methane coming from cars is already being controlled. We are slowly switching from cars that emit methane and carbon dioxide at the same time into using electric cars. The production of electricity also airs out methane. Hawai'i is already on the path of eliminating that by using wind turbines and solar panels for renewable energy.

Government policies address our issues with fossil fuels but food waste is something any one of us can change. Landfills are filled with methane. Whether it's the broccoli that kids don't eat, or the leftover salmon from last week, or school lunches, they are all sitting there releasing methane. We have a natural way of turning the food waste into healthy fertilizer which gives you delicious home-grown vegetables.

Composting is something every household needs. It doesn't require a huge effort, all you have to do is add soil into a container with a drip tray and worms if you choose to have them. You add things like banana peels, potato peels, onion peels, carrots, and other veggies without seeds. The worms eat the organic material and expel nutrients into the soil. After all the waste has been decomposed, you are left with healthy fertilizer that you can use for even more organic vegetables and fruits. It is a natural circle that benefits the entire planet. Composting will get rid of one of the most threatening chemicals that gets trapped in the atmosphere. Through this process, waste that would otherwise emit harmful methane gas is instead turned into something useful.

If we educate ourselves about the benefits of composting and reducing food waste in landfills, the production of methane will slow down. School presentations, pamphlets, and parent forms can spread the word at lower costs. Schools can hold workshops where students can build composting bins for their cafeteria and offer students the opportunity to manage a community garden. These organic foods that they grow can be given to local food businesses or food banks in order to contribute to the community. The plants can be used for science lessons and they expel oxygen that also reduces methane. Earth Day conventions funded by environmental advocates and groups can create fun activities that stimulate and entertain children and their families while also teaching them the importance of this problem we are working on. Compost

starters or plant starters can be given out to help encourage beginners to help contribute to the long term goal of having every household using a self-sustaining garden fertilizer and a composting bin for organic waste.

Mr. Clarence T.C. Ching's mission was to assist in the care of the needy and that mission has turned into his legacy. Hawai'i is grateful for the work that Mr. Ching has left for us and our future generations. His work has benefited our islands and I hope that my plan will be as successful and beneficial to the Hawaiian islands and the world. If the ideas that I've expressed here are taught to our keiki, then they will be able to continue living healthily in a Hawai'i where they may follow in our footsteps. The oceanic animals that we know and love can continue their lives in their normal habitats, Waikiki won't become an underwater city, and we won't have to worry about sweating profusely during a winter day. The effects of methane in our environment are dangerous. We need to act now and cool down the globe, one household at a time. If not, winter and summer will be too unbearable for every species.