

The Impact of Junk Cars

Do you remember your first car? Was it a present, a hand me down, or a fixer upper? Where is that car now? As an underaged minor, I can't say for sure that I know what that feels like, but what I do know is that Hawaii has a junk car problem. Imagine fifty years from now, you are trying to park your car but you can't find a parking spot because all of the parking lots and sideroads are lined with junk cars. For those of you who don't drive, imagine paying higher prices for bottled water since the groundwater coming from your faucet is contaminated as a result of the chemicals seeping into the ground from those abandoned cars. Think about how a tourist would feel looking through the plane window after paying thousands of dollars to visit this paradise only to see junk cars everywhere. I don't know about you, but I definitely wouldn't visit a second time. Do not worry though, there is still time to fix this problem. In the following paragraphs, I will give you a deeper insight on the impact of junk cars, the solutions, and which solution out of those has the most benefits.

How long do you think it takes for a car to fully decompose, maybe 50 or 60 years? The truth is a car can take up to 500 years to fully decompose. Other than a long decomposition period, a junk car also has two other detrimental effects on our environment. Any car in any condition produces gases, one gas in particular called chlorofluorocarbon (CFC) depletes the ozone layer which in turn adds to global warming. Junk cars that also sit in one place long enough will start to leak harmful fluids. These fluids include gasoline, engine oil, brake fluids, and coolants. Over time these harmful fluids will seep into the ground and contaminate one of our main sources of freshwater, groundwater. But we can reverse this effect by clearing junk cars and letting our islands heal.

There are multiple reasons why people leave their cars on the side of the road. One common reason is that residents don't want to pay the high registration fees. Instead they would rather take their chances with the HPD. An easy solution to this problem would be to increase the fine for cars that aren't properly registered. With this solution residents would prefer paying registration fees rather than a fine.

Another solution would be to donate the junk cars that are in decent condition to automotive and sheet metal classes at UH Manoa. There the students could fix the car as part of their courses. After they finish the car they can either sell it and use the profit for their classes or donate the fixed vehicle to charity. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency 75% of a car can be recycled. So other than fixing the car the sheet metal students could also choose to take the car apart and turn the parts into furniture or household goods. They could also sell the metal to a junkyard for money that could be donated to a charity or to use in their classes. This way they gain real life experience and even give back to the community.

My final solution would be to donate the junk cars to the Hawaii Community Correctional Center. The inmates there could choose to volunteer for an educational course where they would be paired with an instructor who will teach them how to repair cars. By completing this course, as a reward they would be given the chance to reduce their sentence by one or two years. After the junk cars are repaired, the city will have the option to choose to sell the car for a profit or donate the car to charity. Another benefit from this solution would be the education and experience an inmate would gain after taking the course. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics about 46,000 automotive service technicians and mechanics will be needed to fill roles through 2026. This means that with this new skill inmates will have a better chance of finding a

job after they serve their sentence. With a job they will have more stability and be less likely of becoming homeless or re-committing a crime. As you now know, this solution has the ability to solve multiple problems and make our community better.

Clarence T.C. Ching was from humble roots. Growing up, his parents insisted that each child in the family should contribute to the family's well being through daily labor. Nowadays most teens don't know the meaning of hard work, instead they consider doing the laundry or taking out the trash as strenuous work. But we can change that by donating junk cars to college automotive courses where students can learn the hard work it takes to repair and maintain a car. Clarence T.C. Ching was an all around nice guy who probably believed in second chances. We can continue his work by giving the cars to prisons where inmates can volunteer and learn how to repair a car, giving them a second chance to start over. With the assistance of the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation and the state government, we can teach Hawaii's youth the meaning of hard work and at the same time give those who want the opportunity to make a new life. As Henry Ford once said, "Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success." If we want to clean our islands we must work together as one ohana.