

Hawaii is a beautiful and unique place that has been this way for centuries. However, with rising populations, deforestation, and the fact that it is a popular state for tourism, Hawaii has begun to lose some its natural beauty that it once had. One of the major problems plaguing the world, but especially Hawaii is coral bleaching. This is something that has been a problem for many years now, but has gotten continuously worse in recent years. Coral colonies act as a home and food source for a countless amount of diverse sea animals as well as a barrier against wave action. Additionally, recent studies have shown that corals have medicinal purposes which may one day be crucial to improving the human civilization's quality of life. Overall, corals are a vital part of oceanic ecosystems and contribute to Hawaii's beauty. Therefore, the fact that so many corals are being lost to coral bleaching is not only a serious problem, but also one that requires action immediately.

Some of the major causes of coral bleaching include warming waters, sediment build up when washed into the ocean in areas in frequent rain, and certain sunscreens/skin products. The biggest cause out of these three though is warming waters which is a direct result of global warming. Unfortunately, global warming is a worldwide epidemic that humans have caused. Fortunately, that also means that we as humans have the power to do something about it; and if we don't, the world will never be the same. If we continue to let the problem of coral bleaching escalate, our oceans and overall environment will brutally suffer. There will no longer be majestic, lively, and colorful coral colonies. Instead, there will simply be white rock-like figures at the bottom of the ocean with no hope of reproduction. Without these thriving ecosystems, the animals who relied on coral for shelter and food will eventually dwindle, in turn majorly affecting the fish market, economy, quality of our oceans, and overall lifestyles.

Coral contributes to the beauty, economy, and livelihood of the world. Disturbing amounts of coral have suffered at the hands of coral bleaching and will only continue to progressively worsen without immediate action.

The first solution that I, as an individual, can do to help alleviate this issue is to begin using reef-safe products or any type of skin product that doesn't have oxybenzone (BP-2) in it. As a girl and person who puts a lot into my skin's health, I use a lot of skin products. As a person living in Hawaii, I go to the beach quite a lot. This being said, if I were to begin using reef safe products, I would be able to lessen the amount of BP-2 intoxicating the oceans. In fact, Hawaii is already considering a statewide ban on sunscreens that include BP-2 in their ingredients to address this coral bleaching problem. Furthermore, I can help by reducing my carbon footprint to ease the calamity of warming waters caused by global warming. I can car pool at least three times a week, take 7-minute showers (instead of the usual 10 minutes), and unplug my phone charger every time I'm not using it as I usually just leave it plugged in 24/7. These efforts combined will make a small difference. However, if I also tell at least one person a week about coral bleaching and what they can do to help, the support to save corals will improve and grow. After all, the greatest power that every human yields is the ability to spread the word to contribute to the greater good of the world for now and many years to come.

Coral bleaching is not a mainstream problem yet, but it should be. Many people are unaware that this is an even issue; and those who are aware usually do not understand the severity of this issue. That is why I have chosen to speak up and act now. Mr. Ching put a lot of time and effort into making Hawaii the best that it can be. Who are we to taint his work now by neglecting this fatal issue? If we begin to put our efforts into avoiding all causes of coral

bleaching, our oceans will be able to replenish themselves back to health and flourish for a long time—our oceans and Hawaii will be a much better place for it. (Word Count: 732)