

The Last Straw

The year is 2069 and ten year old Maile is watching old videos of her grandfather fishing on his boat. Back then, it was 2019 and he was a twenty year old, avid fisherman. Grandpa always respected the ocean and its creatures. He loved catching fish, but was always fair; he only kept the big ones and threw back the small ones. With a heavy sigh, Maile thought of never being able to cast her pole into the water and experience the joy her grandpa once felt, because there the ocean contained no fish. In fact, every species of sea life doesn't exist anymore. Making changes to stop using disposable plastics could create a healthier future for us.

We have created over 9.1 billion tons of plastic since plastic was first introduced. The problem with small plastics like straws and utensils, although they make up a very small percentage of that ginormous 9.1 billion, is their single use, and being too small for recycling machines. Normally, these plastics are thrown in the garbage only to end up in our oceans, which is why we should stop using and making these plastics. For people who need and like straws, there are always other options that are better and safer for the environment: metal, paper, glass, bamboo, biodegradable plastic, and even more if you get creative.

What is the point of using our valuable resources, like water and fossil fuels, for something that will harm our wildlife and will just be thrown out when done with? Along with all that, making these single use plastics contribute to climate change because of the factories and oil we use to make them. We can also stop using other single use plastics, like plastic bottles, soft drink containers, and takeout containers. Although

these larger plastics can fit into the machines, it will still take thousands of years to disintegrate, and even then, the plastic just turns into micro plastic. Think about it, that one straw that you used decades ago still exists right now, and will continue to exist, harming the environment, for over 2,000 years.

Acting now to stop using and producing plastics is the only way we can save our planet and everything on it. The fish we pull from the ocean will have bits of plastic stuck inside them, our land animals will begin to die, and our resources will begin to deplete. We will have to give up using all disposable plastics, like plastic bags, straws, utensils, takeout drinks and food containers, as well as bottles and wrapping, replacing them with biodegradable materials. By offering reusable straws to every customer may reduce the use of unnecessary plastic straws. Rather, have the state of Hawaii offer vendors a small business tax break if they participate in reusable items in their establishments.

The next time you buy a drink and have the opportunity to grab a plastic straw, think about how much damage that one straw will inflict upon our environment. Improving the quality of life for the people of Hawaii has always been the goal for the Clarence T.C. Ching Foundation. He cared deeply for the state of Hawaii and continued to strive to create a better place for our environment and community through educating and promoting schools, companies, and environmental conservation to better our state for generations to come.