

## Marine Debris in Hawaii Nei:

### Concurrently Create Jobs and Save the Environment

Hawaii, a beautiful land with crystal clear waterfalls, stunning mountains, and pristine beaches. But according to numerous major media sources such as CNN, FOX News, *The Chicago Tribune*, and *The New York Times*, Hawaii is in serious trouble with ocean pollution and marine debris. Being located in the middle of the Pacific Ocean makes us subject to pollution because of currents and winds. Fishing nets, plastic fragments, plastic water bottles, and many more materials are found washed up on our beautiful beaches (The Editorial Board of the NYT). State officials conclude that Hawaii's overall litter on beaches has increased by 77% since 1994 (Mckinlay). Studies, like this one, have been held to investigate the dramatic increase of debris and oceanic contamination. This issue is one that every resident of Hawaii can relate to, anywhere in the state. In addition to our beaches, canals and streams are in danger; they eventually flow into the ocean, causing more oceanic pollution. Marine debris is a pressing concern for us and we need to approach this problem with creative solutions and open-mindedness, together.

If left untreated, a seemingly manageable affair could very easily and quickly spiral out of control. In a period of fifty years, the Pacific ocean would have conditions similar to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch; a 7.7 million square mile area of trash in the Pacific Ocean. Also, the population of our native species would likely decline along with the majority of marine life. Tourism is the number one source of revenue; tourists come to Hawaii with the expectation of seeing immaculate islands and no garbage whatsoever. For example, imagine hundreds of pounds of trash piling up in Hanauma Bay, causing the water to be highly polluted, prohibiting

beachgoers from lying on the shore, and killing plants and animals. With 1.4 million residents and up to 8.6 million tourists each year, visitors, as well as those living here, would be turned off by the nature of the beaches and the ocean. As the industry of tourism rapidly declines, our economy will with it and we will no longer have a reliable source of income. From the outside, this problem looks one-dimensional but if nothing is done, marine debris can and will have damaging effects on Hawaii. Letting our beaches go to ruin would be ignoring part of our identity as a state. These incredibly low standards would be the norm and would be absolutely devastating to our island's ecosystem and economy.

This problem already has a partial solution, but the people of Hawaii are looking for a whole, complete, permanent solution. Beach clean-ups happen on a regular basis. Flyers for weekend beach clean-ups are common and that is a good thing. But is this enough? We are expecting people to volunteer to clean the beaches out of the kindness of their hearts. It has been estimated that over 169 tons of trash have been removed in the last 11 years from just a ten mile stretch of Hawaiian coastline (The Editorial Board of the NYT). Volunteers at beach clean-ups do an enormous amount of work and give up lots of time in order to help keep the land flourishing and safe. However, if we really want to change now, we need to do more than just this. Sadly it is no longer adequate for us to assume that people will help Hawaii's beaches and ocean.

My proposal is to create jobs in the workforce designated to cleaning our beaches. Unlike volunteers, people who are actually working will provide a steady source of labor. They will be more efficient than volunteers and will have to devote a larger amount of effort towards fixing the problem. Implementing jobs, along with new technology, could help our problems in the Ala

Wai Canal as well as other bodies of water or shoreline. Beach cleaning jobs would likely be part-time and entail fairly low wages but would get the job done, create lots of occupations, and give people paid opportunities to improve Hawaii's well-being.

Clarence T.C. Ching had a mission of improving Hawaii and making it a safer and more beautiful place. My solution is not harmful to our environment and is beneficial for all residents, people, and animals. Possibly, it could help to address the problem with homelessness.

Beach-cleaning jobs would require no prior experience and no qualifications, so they would be a great fit for homeless people looking to earn money or food stamps. Ultimately, this solution will ensure constant maintenance for our beaches and will conceive valuable jobs for people. Ching's legacy will live on through this idea, and if put into action, will assist struggling people and families just like Clarence T.C. Ching would.

In the end, we need to change the way we care for our state; we need to do more. Volunteer beach clean-ups are a great way to spread awareness and improve the cleanliness of our beaches, but that is only getting us halfway to our goal. Unfortunately, we can no longer assume that people will maintain the beaches that we hold near and dear to our hearts, with simply the good-heartedness that they possess. Enforcing a plan with employment options for real people can begin to resolve issues with marine debris and limited job options. This is the way to win the battle against ocean pollution. This is how to make Hawaii a better place.

### Works Cited

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