

## **A World in Peril**

The gravity of our crisis emerged when I searched up “drought,” and Google suggested, “California.” Outdated encyclopedias, the pictures had captions like, “Drought in Africa,” or “Cracked soil from the drought in South America.” Never before have I seen our society in this way, in the way that the crisis that we are living in is real, and that it is happening around us. Living in middle-class luxury, we’ve always had the clean, filtered water from a switch of the tap, and the paper from the printer was taken for granted. Before, I had never seen the world outside, where trees fell, where rivers grew stagnant with garbage. Our world is in danger, and the only way to save it is to care with compassion and take action for our mistakes.

From then on, I saw the world in a whole new perspective. Trees falling to razor-sharp saws, cutting through the rings of brown trunks. A river, dirty with garbage. A city of perpetual smog. Only then did I see the beauty that became no more. Satellite images of endless brown. Photographs of cracked ground from the droughts that ravaged the area. I saw around me each day the big, sturdy houses of the suburbs, and I saw the squirrels that clung desperately to falling trees. I saw that the houses that surrounded us every day, the houses that made up the neighborhood, were made for selfish pleasure. When I saw the wood framework of the houses still in construction, a forest of stumps flashed images through my mind. I knew that, if we continue like this, one day all the trees, with all their beautiful leaves and tall, dignified trunks, would be gone. If we went on like this as a society, one day the generations to come will never know of trees. To them, “trees” will be as foreign as “dinosaurs.”

We are equal in power to the biting mosquitoes, to the smiling dolphins, and to the gnarled branches of bristlecone pines in the White Mountains of California. Humans are not ever superior over the world, even with our big machines that leave a long trail of red dust as it stumbles down unpaved trails. We should never squish the flea on the carpet, but should instead carry it outside and set it free. Even the littlest of bugs still deserves to be alive, live out their life, and die of natural causes, not because they were flushed down the toilet with a little piece of tissue.

And yet, despite the consequences that we know are coming upon our shoulders - climate change, ozone layer depletion, fossil fuels, drought, and famine, there are still men and women out there in the world that don't care that trees are falling, that there is a huge hole in our atmosphere, 25 million square kilometers in size, that our planet, the one that we call home, is in danger. They cut down the sturdy tree trunks for the paper mills that spew smoke and continue to make the aerosol sprays that deplete the ozone layer. Humans, as well as millions of other living things, will soon be wiped off the face of the Earth by death on our own will, our legacy gone. Just like the dinosaurs, we will be buried deep under the earth.

We can still take action for our mistakes. It is not too late. We must care with our hearts about our future, and we must, as a result, take care of our world. It is our responsibility to make up for what we have done to it. Never should our society see the living things around us each day and think of them as trivial matters when compared to our unsolvable world problems of ISIS, the Syrian refugee crisis, and underemployment. Instead, we should view these matters as equal to the environmental crises in our world - climate change, global warming, deforestation. We cannot save Mother Nature as one person, but instead must band together to undo what we have

done. As a society where everyone shares a common belief that even the blob fish deserve to live, and that something as small and simple as the fly is part of our planet Earth, we can save not only our environment, but also our legacy as a society of caring humans.