

Speak Out

JUNE ISSUE



HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE TOL3IT RI7ETKON MOVEMENT?

An analysis and interview with the Member of Parliament, Mr. Elias Hankach, and Ministry of Environment's advisor and UNDP consultant, Mr. Edmond El-Esta.

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CORAL BLEACHING: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

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Credits

Adviser:

Mr. Chadi Nakhle

Editor-in-Chief:

Gabriella Nakleh IB1

Co-Editors:

Yasmina Yared IB1

Adriana Goraieb IB1

Contributors:

BHS Students

HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE TOL3IT RI7ETKON MOVEMENT?

JAD EL GHOUL - IB1

An analysis and interview with the Member of Parliament, Mr. Elias Hankach, and Ministry of Environment's advisor and UNDP consultant, Mr. Edmond El-Esta

Humans have done a lot throughout their stay on Earth: discovered the wheel, set foot on the Moon, found cures for pandemics... and also, managed to ruin their own home. Pollution is a practice which everyone – regardless of any factor – is well aware of, as everyone is being affected by it. Rates are rising continuously, on account of human activities which are harmful in ways of wide variety. But to what extent are citizens really the ones to blame? Could the causes behind the accumulation of pollution, in all its forms, be due to politics and the wrong doings of governments?

Lebanon has been struggling with a pollution issue for a long while now, and overlooking it is not an easy task, at least not since the grand garbage crisis of 2015. The disaster, happening around 5 years ago, sparked turmoil and caused several shifts within the nation. With the summer of that year being around the corner, meaning temperature levels on the rise, one can only imagine the horrifying stench caused by the trash, turning each and every road into a mini landfill. The situation was a huge threat to public health, and obviously the environment. The reason behind this issue is quite simple in fact; no substitute plan was set after the elapse of the exploitation contract of the Na'ameh landfill – the biggest in the country – in 2014.



Led by several factors and motives including governmental corruption and ignorance, a movement broke out on the 21st of July 2015, under the name of *Tol3it Ri7etkon* (translated to “You Stink”). The movement quickly escalated as it turned into a revolution, where citizens demonstrated in front of the Lebanese Parliament in Beirut, as well as expressed their anger using a multitude of methods including dumping garbage in front of governmental headquarters.

In an interview with both Mr. Elias Hankach and Mr. Edmond El-Esta, the governmental and technical aspects behind the situation were made clearer. They were both asked about plans adopted since the revolution to present day, ideal plans and solutions that could potentially come into action, root causes, and governmental recognition.

In his interview, Hankach mentioned the fact that after the outbreak there was more than just the *Tol3it Ri7etkon* movement, as it was quite significant a national event and initiatives were coming from several sides. Out of desperation to fix the situation, relying on external initiatives, such as the Waste Management Coalition, was put into action in order to treat the critical situation appropriately and effectively. In spite of such, implementing the suggested plans was difficult and remained theoretical, which is what put the garbage situation at a nonchalant state. When asked about solutions, Hankach also provided several concerning the issue, including decentralizing the garbage treatment to several locations nationally, alongside recycling garbage from its source, as it aids with making the pick-up process easier. “In Lebanon, most waste collectors are paid based on the weight of wastes specific regions produce”, he said. “Since there is not much we can do about that type of system, recycling from the source will lead to a lighter weight, making the service cheaper on citizens, meaning paying less”. He continued to explain that the government is in dire need of plans for such a nationwide crisis, in order to recover all the lands and shores which were ruined by the wastes. There is currently no plan to make Lebanon greener in terms of treatments, but there are initiatives, locally and in partnerships. An example of an initiative by ‘Make Your Mark’ was called ‘Make Lebanon Green Again’ and involved planting on Beiruti rooftops, among other plans. “We are also trying to issue a law to reduce plastic bag usage, hopefully for a greener Lebanon”. Finally, in his closing statement, he mentioned that an economic boost cannot take place without environmental consideration. “Lebanon has signed many international conventions and agreements, including the Barcelona agreement, but just like the rest, none of them are respected. Turning Lebanon into a greener country is not quite the priority today, with all the financial instability and turmoil in the country. But there are initiatives coming from private NGOs and deputies (such as the plastic bag reduction law). The plans are independent from the government. But will they be hard to implement due to today’s situation? Yes and No. Today, people have other priorities, but when Lebanon receives funds to aid the economy, they are usually given with a set of conditions, especially if the funds are from Europe. Some of these conditions opt to encouraging a greener behaviour and a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. I believe that when the funds are provided, whether coming from the IMF or CEDRE for instance, some conditions will be set to save the environment”.

On the other hand, Mr. Edmond El-Esta’s interview gave us more insight into the effects of poor maintenance and bad environmental conservation, and went deep into specifying root causes for such a crisis. He commenced by mentioning that there are several actions that should be taken before carrying out environmental plans. “Take the Zouk Mosbeh electricity suppliers for example. They release emissions without being monitored. It all goes back due to weak maintenance. If we were to take this small example and multiply it on a larger scale, taking all the wastes produced by the Lebanese, if the same methods of treatment were applied, imagine the chaos and emission rates then. Which is why, proper maintenance and concrete techniques are required before taking action”. He also continued to stress on the fact that the ministry always had plans, but as established, they remained theoretical, due to causes like political division taking place in governmental institutions and even Lebanon as a whole. “Why can they not be implemented? It all goes back to politics”. As for solutions he discussed very basic steps each and every person could do individually, through segregating our wastes from the source before sending them off: recyclables are recycled, produce is composted, and inert items are treated appropriately, using techniques such as the usage of incinerators. “Burning is the riskiest, because if it was manufactured in a false way, it can create a bigger problem than the one at hand. For example, the incinerator in Mount Lebanon was shut down around 2 years ago due to weak usage of technology and poor manufacturing”. Wrapping things up, Esta then went on to describe the situation back in 2015 and current upcoming plans. “We were and always are open for all initiatives”, he said. “Today, we require bodies like the UNDP since we might not

always have an abundant number of personnel to complete tasks on our agenda. We also resort to other organizations, including the IMF for funding. Everything has a solution in today's world. But it is up to the person with the solution to work in a transparent manner. Unfortunately, this is quite rare today. The movement might not have caused such a wave back in 2015, but it did create a ripple. It allowed the government to start reconsidering positions of ministers and moving into a Technocratic system. But noticing an awakening from the population and Lebanese citizens concerned was definitely considered a step towards a greener Lebanon, although we still believe that the distribution of blame was unjust. As a ministry, we assess the impact that our plans can have on the environment, but the outbreak was something that each and every municipality should have taken responsibility for, hence the Ministry of Interior Affairs. We were blamed for something that we did not cause. The reason behind this? Don't be shocked. It's politics".

When both interviews are put up for comparison, there is a noticeable pattern in both perspectives, where several points are agreed on. Obvious enough, the suggested solutions regarding properly managing wastes from the source were what both Esta and Hankach suggested, as it was a plan that most municipalities around Lebanon enforced on their residents in the summer of 2015. Plastic bags of different colors were assigned to different groups of waste which facilitated the recycling and pick-up process. As for root causes both had quite different responses as to what could have caused such a crisis, subsequently leading to a significant national uprising. One thought that it was due to corruption because of lack of transparency in parliament, where another made it clear that it was political involvement, leading to further corruption. That is, definitely considering their positions, as Hankach is a Member of Parliament, therefore at the end of the day belonging to a political party, and Esta is an advisor in a ministry which takes part in a Technocratic cabinet, giving him a bird's eye view on the legislative committee. It is quite intriguing, as it depicts how people having different responsibilities but working in the same system could have different views on a specific topic. Moving on to the plans that the government had set throughout and after *Tol3it Ri7etkon*, both ends agreed that they remained theoretical and were never applied and put into action, due to political involvement and lack of transparency in solving the situation, consequently leading to further corruption. Finally, answering the query this article is aiming to reach, both agreed on the fact that this was a step towards a greener Lebanon, as hoped for, as according to Hankach it did give opportunities for several initiatives to rise (including the examples he gave regarding the plan "Make Your Mark" set for planting rooftops in Beirut, and organization formation such as the Waste Management Coalition). Esta also regarded it as a steppingstone as it did aid in "awakening" the government in a way (alongside the ongoing October 17 Revolution) to adopt a Technocratic system. What we can conclude from the analysis is toxicity in politics and unnecessary involvement in affairs such as the environment, for the sake of recognition and propaganda, could potentially lead to worsening a situation, rather than ameliorating it. As we can see, these factors kept the environmental situation at a stalemate, and our priorities have shifted towards other affairs. Let's say that the environmental situation in Lebanon was dealt with back when the *Tol3it Ri7etkon* movement started, which could have probably increased job opportunities and number of tourists in the country. Would it have led to the Lebanon today, in high debt and with the poverty line rising to 50%? Have we reached the stage where even the environment is politically involved?

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A special thank you to the interviewees for making this article possible.

CORAL BLEACHING: EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW

NATALIE ASHKAR - IB1

What are corals?



Corals are animals that live in colonies of tiny tentacle-like animals called polyps, which excrete an exoskeleton near its base made of calcium carbonate. Corals get their food from the photosynthesizing microscopic algae in their tissue and reproduce asexually. They exhibit a wide variety of colors, shapes, and sizes, and are classified as hard, reef-building corals, or soft fleshy ones. Coral reefs therefore consist of millions of tiny polyps on carbonate skeletons

and make up the largest living structure on the planet, and the only one visible from space.

Why are coral reefs important?

Located in tropical shallow waters, coral reefs allow islands, coastal forests, and mangroves to grow, as well as protect coastal cities from waves, storms, erosion, and floods. As 25% of carbon dioxide emissions are absorbed by the oceans, corals serve as the lungs of the planet. Although they only occupy less than 1% of the ocean floor, coral reefs house 25% of all marine life and have the highest biodiversity of all the planet's ecosystems. Millions of species depend on coral reefs for the carbohydrates that their tissue-algae produce through photosynthesis, for shelter, and for spawning grounds. Not only are corals crucial to marine life and the planet as a whole, but they pose numerous benefits to humans as well. Reefs serve as a primary protein source for 40% of global population, and generate 30 billion \$ annually through tourism, coastal protection, and fisheries. They are also vital sources of substances used to make drugs that treat leukemia, HIV, cardiovascular diseases, and ulcers. For example, prostaglandin and byrostatin are both cancer-fighting drugs that come from sea fans and coral rhizomes respectively.



What is coral bleaching?



Rising water temperatures, pollution, and ocean acidification all cause corals to expel the algae from their tissues. The polyps eventually die from lack of food leaving the white exoskeletons apart. This disappearance of the colorful polyps is known as "coral bleaching," and leads reduced growth, hindered reproductive ability, increased susceptibility to diseases, and eventually death if not reversed. As a result of climate change and a global temperature rise of 1°C above pre-Industrial levels, 75% of the world's coral reefs are suffering from coral bleaching and a looming death. Some corals are producing a chemical

sunscreen to protect themselves from the heat, but bleaching has become inevitable as climate change worsens.

How does it affect us?

Small island countries such as the Maldives or Kiribati are most vulnerable to coral bleaching as their livelihood depends on reefs. Coral mortality thus hinders their food supply, medicinal resources, tourism industry, as well as exposing them to rising sea levels and natural disasters. The destruction of this ecosystem also reverberates across the globe through the disappearance of natural barriers and resources, the dismantling of food chains, and increased vulnerability to climate change.



How urgent is this problem?



Unfortunately, there have been several mass coral bleaching events, the latest being in 2016 and 2017 caused by extremely warm sea temperatures. 30% of the world's coral suffered from deadly bleaching in the past decade with 75% projected to follow suit over the next few years. The most recent bleaching events are considered the most destructive in history, with over half of the Great Barrier Reef bleached. Scientists estimate that 90% of the world's coral reefs will be gone by 2040 unless drastic action is

taken to slow down global temperature rise.

What can you do?

Coral reefs are essential to a healthy planet and sustainable future, and all positive action can play a role in impeding coral bleaching, including:

1. Practicing safe and responsible diving and snorkeling, and sustainable ecotourism (avoid contact between reefs and boat anchors, fins, or other harmful objects)
2. Using reef-friendly sun protection
3. Recycling and disposing of trash properly, picking up litter at the beach
4. Reducing the usage of harmful fertilizers that are washed into the oceans
5. Avoid purchasing marine life or products made of coral
6. Eat seafood sustainably
7. Be conscious about energy consumption and carbon footprint
8. Learn more about coral bleaching (watch *Chasing Coral* on Netflix)
9. Support ocean conservation organizations, climate action, and reef protection initiatives such as coral farming, sunshield development, and research



ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

JOYA KHOURY - IB1

Environmental racism is a concept that was developed in the United States throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It describes environmental injustice occurrences in practice and in policy within a racialized context. Environmental justice is defined as the degree to which people are treated equally and meaningfully involved in the creation of the human environment. One of



the earliest examples of environmental racism occurred in Warren, North Carolina in 1982. There was a dump of tons of cancer-causing PCB waste along North Carolina's highways and as a toxic waste facility, the government chose Warren - a predominantly African American town. The government thought that because the area was poor and rural the people would not fight or understand the gravity of the situation. That was not the case however, the people did fight for many long weeks (resulting in 500 arrests) and even after the battle was

over, the scars remain. It was an awakening; the people realized that race and class do come into play when they decide who has to live near toxic waste. Although the civil rights movement of the 1960s ended long ago, such practices are not part of the past. Pahokee, a town in Florida whose residence consists of 56% African American and 29% Hispanic residents, has seen the effects of the Sugar company. Their water has been contaminated, their health at risk, and even a decrease in their property values took effect. There are countless other examples, so much so that it is estimated that around 70% of contamination sites are located near low-income housing, and because of that people of color are more targeted. In general, African American communities are subject to water and air poisoning, cancers, severe asthma, low birth weights, and high blood pressure. Hispanics face rates of chlorine exposure, which leads to degrading cardiac function more than double those of whites. Conclusions from scientists at the National Center for Environmental Assessment confirm that blacks are exposed to 1.5 times more particulate matter than whites. Hispanics had about 1.2 times the exposure of whites. People in poverty had about 1.3 times more exposure than the people above poverty. But the most interesting finding of all is that the magnitude of emissions from individual factories appears to be higher in minority neighborhoods. Researchers have also found the presence of benzene and other dangerous aromatic chemicals to be linked to race. Environmental racism is a controversial topic; however the unfair treatment of people is unquestionably an example of racism. No matter one's race or class, their health and safety should never be put at risk, especially in such an unjust manner.

WHAT IS ORGANIC FARMING?

LARA EL HELOU – SEC. 3

Organic farming is a farming method that involves growing and nurturing crops without the use of synthetic based fertilizers and pesticides. Additionally, GMOs (genetically modified organisms) are not used at all. Foods from organic farms are loaded with nutrients such as vitamins, enzymes, minerals and other micro-nutrients compared to those from conventional farms. Organic farming is much better than other methods of farming because it protects soil quality using organic material and encourages biological activity and biodiversity. It is more caring to the larger environment and conserves natural habitats and wildlife. In addition to that, it reduces exposure to pesticides and chemicals, fights erosion (by which natural forces like water, wind, ice, and gravity wear away rocks and soil) and global warming effects, encourages biodiversity, and supports animal health and welfare.



There are two types of organic farming: pure organic farming and integrated organic farming. Pure organic farming uses manure and bio-pesticides, completely avoiding inorganic chemicals and pesticides. Integrated organic farming combines nutrient management and integrated pest management is used. The development of crops from natural resources produce the complete nutritive value that prevents the crops and plants from being infested by pests and weeds.

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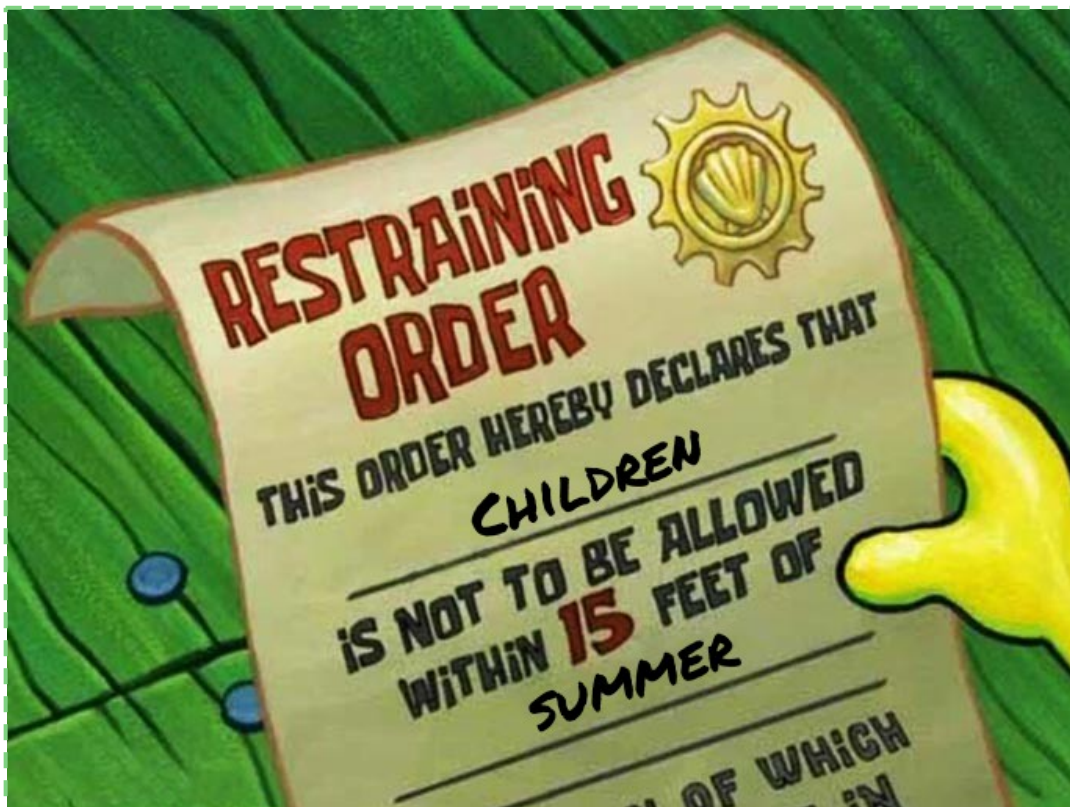
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COMICS



Doing the homework

Acting like your mic isn't working

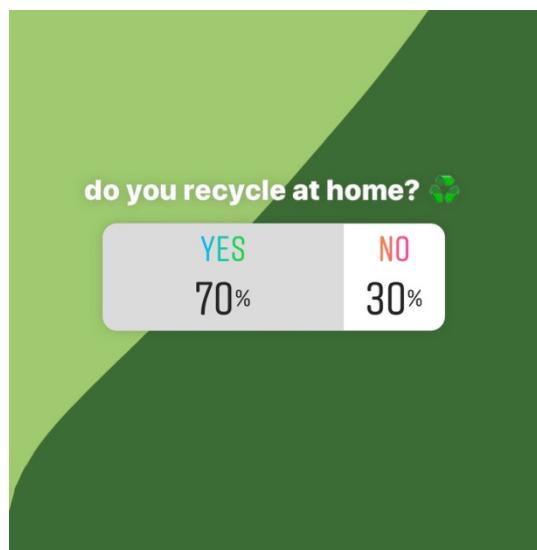
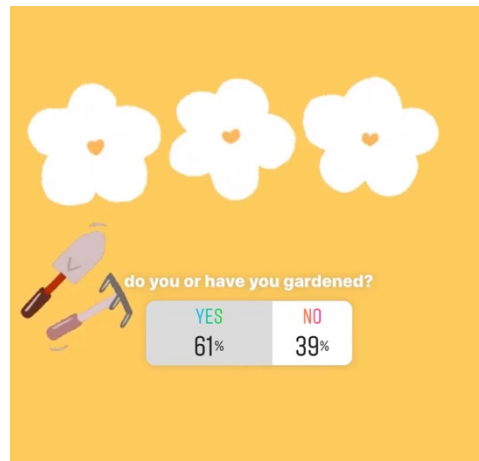


INSTAGRAM POLLS

AYA ZEIN - 9IP

In this issue, the Instagram polls and questions were all about the environment. The environment is one of the most important topics to discuss today and we wanted to know what our followers thought about it, how they are doing their part to better the earth, etc...

The first question was: "How long are your showers on average?". Some people don't know how detrimental long showers can be to the environment but fortunately only 2-3 people who answered took showers that take over 35 minutes. Approximately 80% of our poll-takers take showers in under 25 minutes. The next question was simply if the students and their families recycle at home. We are glad to say that approximately 70% of students that responded do recycle at home. The next question is about doing more for the environment in a fun and active way. We asked if students have been gardening and 30 out of 50 students that responded said they have. The following question asked students what their favourite eco-friendly product is. Many responded with reusable bottles and straws. And we agree that reusable and durable products, like metal straws and bamboo toothbrushes, are definitely better, as an alternative to single-use plastic products. Unfortunately, we produce over 300 million tons of plastic every year and 50% is just single-use products. We proceeded to ask the students what they think the



school can do to become eco-friendlier. The responses were to get rid of circulars entirely to reduce paper consumption and rely on emails, to have more awareness assemblies to inform other students of their parts in helping the environment, and to stop using plastic straws and/or cups. The next question asked what students think they could personally do to be eco-friendlier. The responses were to reduce or stop their participation in the consumption of plastic products, take shorter showers, and use less electricity. The final question was about how much time students are spending on electronics and unfortunately, due to current at-home circumstances, many students spend a lot more time on their phones, tablets, online games, etc.... Many students said they spend about 6-7 hours on their electronics daily with a few exceptions under 3

hours. We highly recommend finding a healthy balance between staying active and indulging in electronics.

To conclude this article, we'd like to remind you that all this happens through the newspapers' Instagram, @bhs.speakout. We encourage you to participate in these polls and questions. And you can reach out to us through the Instagram page to suggest new article topics or share something of your own piece of writing. Thank you to those who participated and shared their thoughts. Stay safe and happy quarantining!

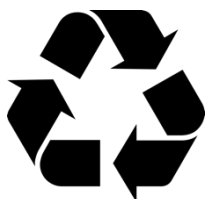
HOW TO LIVE SUSTAINABLY IN QUARANTINE

ANNA YAGHI - IB2

1. Do Some Late Spring Cleaning?

Staying inside is a great opportunity to declutter your home or wardrobe. While doing so, organise the unwanted items into sections for either: repurposing, recycling, and donating/selling and get creative with what you have!

2. Start Recycling!



Use separate bins with labels for different materials. There are great online resources for learning to recycle that can help turn your home atmosphere into a more sustainable/ eco-friendly one. Here is an article on 10 do's and don'ts to keep in mind while recycling: <https://ecowarriorprincess.net/2019/10/recycling-tips-dos-and-donts/>

3. Use Re-usable Masks While Out of The House.

When you're out on a grocery run, having reusable masks is a good alternative to disposable ones as it reduces waste and saves the medical masks for those on the front lines.

4. Set A Timer for Your Air Conditioner.



As summer approaches and days start to get hotter, limiting the usage of air conditioners is a great way to conserve energy. Be sure to set the timer so the AC will turn off while you are asleep. You can also alternate to the fan mode once the optimal room temperature has been reached to save electricity.

5. Say No to Napkins and Cutlery.

When ordering food by delivery, make sure to tell the restaurant to not include the disposable utensils and napkins. Though it may be a small gesture, using what you have at home can make a big difference in reducing plastic usage and overall waste long term.

6. Prepare A Meal Plan Before Buying Groceries.

While grocery shopping, you can go into the store knowing exactly what you need and therefore avoid buying unnecessary products. This will also help reduce the number of trips you take to the market.



7. Support Small Businesses.

In this critical time, it is important to buy products that will support local farmers/ store owners whether it be in food or clothes. It is also a great way to be healthier, and source local and sustainable products rather than those with excessive packaging.

8. Take Up Gardening!

Grow some vegetables on your windowsill or your garden (if you have one), this is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and ensure good produce for a reduced price.

9. DIY Non-Toxic Products.

Quarantine can be a great time start making your own sustainable products that include all-natural ingredients. These products can range from deodorant, non-toxic cleaning supplies, or soap. Not only will this help save money, but it will also reduce the harmful waste that would normally be a problem with these store-bought products.

10. Learn to Be More Environmentally Aware.

Take some time to watch the amazing documentaries available on Netflix or YouTube to be more educated on the current ecological crises that we face today. Some examples of Netflix informative documentaries include Our Planet, Minimalism, and A Plastic Ocean.

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