

PROMPT #3: In what way have you seen positive changes to help the Earth? Describe what about that inspired you to make a change and what else can be done to develop it further.

Throughout our everyday lives it has become prominent and very common to see recycling bins and trashcans perched on every corner and in every workplace. Friends and families make the effort to recycle their plastic bottles and newspapers, dedicating a certain day of the week for saving the Earth. Littering fines have increased and are being more enforced. People compost, conserve water, carpool and donate on a daily basis as per means to help the Earth. Solar panels are being installed all across the nation to help conserve energy, but in the end there is only a certain extent to which we as humans can prevent the destruction of our planet.

When we think about positive changes to improve the life of our earth we immediately think of cutting back our land based issues such as deforestation and the over-burning of fossil fuels. Very few people remember that we are also responsible for the ocean and the animals inside of it. In fact, a huge portion of our lives is dependent on marine life and their habitats.

Recently, I did a research project on a group of scientists who studied the destruction of coral reefs and the marine life that inhabits it. These scientists blamed the majority of reef degradation on the choices and actions of man. This was very surprising to me. If the majority of our population cuts back on water usage and puts in the effort to recycle their plastic bottles, why are we one of the main causes of marine extinction? Research uncovered that public and man-based waste frequently enters our oceans and can appear as food to some animals while other waste chemically poisons the water and conceals habitats. To combat this problem, these

individuals set up a program where people could come and learn about marine life and uncover new ways to prevent chemical and land based waste from running off into our oceans. They have also set up times for people to gather as a community and clean up the beaches in fun and exciting ways. To me, their effort to make a difference to help improve our world is amazing and inspiring.

My concern and love for the ocean has derived from my birth in the U.S. Virgin Islands where I too was apart of a beach cleaning community. I've witnessed the birth of sea turtles and the release of animals caught and injured by careless fishing. I have wrestled schools of jellyfish, danced on sea urchins and have frolicked with sharks, yet still I share major concerns over their prosperity. I've painted murals and talked to communities of people about our oceans, not because I am a dedicated swimmer or animal enthusiast but because taking the extra mile to save our oceans is a simpler project than that of installing solar panels and yet people still avoid making these small changes. I do not believe it is because they don't care. It seems more along the lines that people aren't very educated on the issue and don't know where to start in order to make a difference.

Since I've moved to Texas, where beaches are not very common, it has been difficult to find a group of people dedicated to the prosperity of our oceans. But since I've been here, I have enrolled in an Aquatic Science class where I learn more about marine life and how to aid in their longevity. I have learned how simple it is to salvage our waters and it all starts with us.

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If we cut back on pesticides and fertilizers in soil it will reduce the amount of harmful chemicals being washed into our waters. The reduction of plastic and other trash near our oceans combined with safer fishing practices will significantly change the future of our marine life. Overall, the most important project we as humans can conduct in order to further develop and solidify change, no matter the issue or project, is to spread knowledge and awareness. The majority of people living on this planet desire to aid in the preservation of it but they simply are unaware of where to start. The spread of knowledge and campaigns can help educate our communities on issues they didn't even know existed or were very harmful. With this newfound information, any community can make a positive difference for our planet.