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The Time for Pressure is Now: Mitigating the Climate Change Crisis

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The way we perceive climate change depends on both our geographical location and our priorities. For seabound countries, like the Marshall Islands and Vanuatu, climate change is a dire and immediate issue that must be addressed now. Devastating storms ravage their nations, while sea levels threaten to engulf them in the near future. But for many people like us living in the United States, climate change does not seem so drastic. Our urbanized ways of life are less directly affected by quick shifts in temperatures and rising sea levels. We also depend on the companies responsible for creating the emissions fueling climate change; what other reason could explain why a mere 100 companies are responsible for "71% of global emissions"? When people demand these companies' products, products ranging from gasoline to anything plastic, people consent to aiding in the destruction of the environment. Unfortunately, in our modern world, it is impossible to avoid using products manufactured with coal or petroleum. The best that we can do is encourage others to buy from corporations that pursue environmentally-friendly manufacturing methods, and support legislation that pressurizes businesses into investing in alternative energy sources.

What differentiates our generation from generations past is that we are the first generation to recognize the severity of climate change and the damage done to our planet. We now possess the technology to accurately measure and predict climate change patterns, which proves to us that the climate change we are experiencing is not natural but man-made. We can easily learn from news reports that glaciers and polar ice caps are melting, that experts "forecast[] a temperature rise of 2.5 to 10 degrees Fahrenheit over the next century", and that we are already experiencing the sixth mass extinction our planet has ever faced (2). We can feel the environment shifting now, whenever we step outside and see trees blooming earlier than expected, and when each sequential summer is dubbed record-breakingly hot.

Climate change is the world's greatest threat, and our collective generation's heaviest burden. We--Americans in particular--cannot afford to ignore the deteriorating environment any longer simply because we are fortunate enough in having the privilege to do so. It is our duty to support global efforts to combat climate change, save not only Oceanic nations but also the collapsing flora and fauna, and preserve the earth for the generations of humans to come. We are only borrowing this world, after all. It is not our right, nor anyone else's right, to abuse and destroy it as we have. Landry Nintereste, Africa Team Leader at 350.org, best describes this mission in her statement, "As we ponder the dichotomous relationship between development and access to energy, we urge governments to consider to dire implications that real people face when disaster strikes" (3). To help mitigate the crisis we face, we must pressure the aforementioned companies into pursuing other types of fuels to manufacture their products or else entirely replacing the energy sources they create with renewable alternatives.

Footnotes:

1. www.theguardian.com. "Just 100 companies responsible for 71% of global emissions, study says".
2. climate.nasa.gov. "How climate is changing".
3. 350.org. "How the countries most vulnerable to climate change are leading the way".