***Prompt 2 - Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side. (350 words max)***

One barely used bar of soap x 70% occupancy rate x 300 hotel rooms x 365 days = 76,650 bars of soap are wasted annually in a hotel in Jakarta. This was the reason I founded Bumi Bersih, an organization that strived to make our Earth more sustainable. Gathering eight friends, we started our first project recycling used soap bars from hotels.

We scoured the internet and found a method to recycle soap by boiling it to remove bacteria and re-molding it until cooled. The results of our first batch were encouraging. However, after attempting to upscale the project, we realized having only two stovetops hindered our production speed. Hence, I was on the lookout for a different solution.

Inspiration struck one day as my dad and I went out for lunch. We stumbled upon a cafe that specialized in hand-made chocolate bars. Sitting down, we got a clear view of the chocolate-making process. Crushing cocoa beans then adding sugar, water and milk, a viscous liquid was formed and molded into bars of chocolate - a process perfectly applicable to soap! ~~That night, I called my friends and arranged to meet the next day.~~

~~We hunkered down in the kitchen and set off to work.~~ The methodology was straight-forward. My friends and I collected and disinfected our families’ used soap bars. Using graters, we shredded the soap and added chlorine and water. We mixed them together until the soap diluted and strained the solution into the moulds. Repurposing cake presses traditionally used for Indonesian layer cakes, we flattened the clumps, shaping them into bars.

The real difficulty lies in the preparation. The ratio of water to soap adjusting viscosity, the amount of time spent disinfecting, the conditions that allowed the soap to set - all important details that were fleshed out through trial-and-error. After a week of experimentation, we emerged victorious with the perfect batch. One successful pitch to the Intercontinental Hotel later, our small project was surprisingly accepted and implemented.

Creative thinking entails unconventionality. That serendipitous cafe inspired a solution to a seemingly irrelevant problem. It was creativity that resolved my problem and allowed me to contribute, however small, to a more sustainable future.

Hi Brian,

The hook of your essay is definitely engaging since you give a substantial number, and it shows the urgency of your mission.

However, I feel that you need to provide a transition that ties the importance of repurposing soap and your core values about sustainability. Giving a stronger context behind your reason of repurposing soap would make your mission more believable. I’ve left some questions in the comments above to help you elaborate on some details.

Your 4th and 5th paragraphs  focuses a bit too much on how you recycled the soaps. Though many of these detail your creativity in use, some of the sentences could be restated to make the connection to creativity clearer (see below):

*“To mimic the chocolate making process, we optimize the preparation process by using graters and repurposing cake presses to mold the soap bars. Our household items now serve a new purpose!”*

Make sure to avoid talking about the steps of making soap so much that your essay loses focus on how your creativity helps you move closer to your passion about being more sustainable.