

If you were to ask me a year ago what I thought about sustainability, I would explain with no hesitation that it was a term almost foreign to me. I grew up in a city where not many people are concerned about turning off their lights or even living within the boundaries of a recycling facility. Within the past few months, I have been able to go from knowing absolutely nothing about climate change and sustainable efforts to wanting to pursue it as a potential major now in college. At the beginning of this course, my idea was that sustainability existed due to the fact that humans weren't keeping up their part of the deal with mother nature. We waste tons of food, throwing our trash all over the place—which usually ends up residing in an ocean or a landfill, and using our resources at too fast a speed, which doesn't really benefit our growing population. While all of these examples are not wrong, I definitely admit that I had a much more shallow understanding of the troubles that we are about to drown in (no pun intended).

Fast forward to present day, I would probably define sustainability as living how we were meant to. There was a time when humans didn't have to worry about updating their style every 2 weeks or their local produce being sprayed with cancerous pesticides. People were content with what they had, only getting more if they needed it, and communities worked together to create a space for all. Today, we are fueled by overconsumption—which is ultimately going to lead to our downfall. Overconsumption of food, clothing, resources; of technology, land, and water. It's what our society thrives off of, and we are taking up every bit of it we can get. It's been building up since the 1930s, when "Guy Callender could actually measure how temperature had changed since the 1880s due to burning of fossil fuels" (Hayhoe, 2021, p. 41), according to Katharine Hayhoe, a climate scientist from Canada. We have known for decades how climate change has affected the planet, yet we are still waiting to do something about it. Sustainability I have learned is not limited to corporations and big companies, but also making changes to our everyday decisions. In an interview with Paul Hawken, he talks about the various ways to reverse climate change, and almost all of them were very sustainable solutions. He mentions that tons of people are just hoping that things get better, but the reality of it is that 'you can't hope for something to happen because to have hope means that you are fearful of the future' (Sustainability Defined, 2021). Paul explains that we shouldn't be hopeful, but instead to take action against what we've been faced with. We also touched on these changes in class, deciding whether it took systemic change versus individual change, and I learned that if one person were to live a completely

energy efficient sustainable lifestyle, it would only account for 0.0000000001 percent of the population (Sustainability Defined, 2021). This really changed my perspective a lot from what I originally thought, so it has been a statistic drilled in my brain ever since I heard it in the podcast. I feel like I am learning more in this class about important topics that affect our everyday lives, and I feel like I've finally found something that I am passionate about.

As for action in the environment, I haven't personally seen much from primary experience. I live in the city while I'm not at school, so I feel like it is a lot more hidden when a sustainable solution is being put into place. I've heard about some things like grocery stores revoking the distribution of plastic bags in order to limit single use plastic solution, or people putting solar panels on their homes, but at the end of the day these are things that should already be implemented everywhere. Also, after reading some of the book "Drawdown," I have learned that solar panels and reduction of single use plastic is just scratching the surface of sustainability, and it doesn't really have as much of an effect as we all think it does. This book has created a long list of solutions that we should be working toward more, and much of it was a surprise to me because the solutions that they propose "lead to regenerative economic outcomes that create security, produce jobs, improve health, save money, facilitate mobility, eliminate hunger, prevent pollution, restore soil, clean rivers, and more" (Hawken, 2018, p. x). When reading articles like this, it makes me realize that I don't really know what's going on around the world. I have learned that just because I don't physically see all of these changes being implemented, doesn't mean it's not happening. Rome wasn't built in a day, you know?

## Works Cited

Hawken, P. (Ed.). (2017). *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed to Reverse Global Warming*. Penguin Books.

Hayhoe, K. (2021). *Saving Us*. Simon & Schuster.

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