***Opinion Piece***

Amongst the multitude of problems that the world faces today, the topic of sustainability or how I see it, protecting our environment from further brutalisation is often brought to the forefront of the conversation. As a young adult who intends on living on this planet for at least a few more years, watching the current world leaders and older generations ignorantly murdering our planet and its environment for future generations is of slight concern to me. Most humans have the wish of achieving financial freedom, supporting our parents and future generations of our family, but if future generations aren’t able to enjoy life on Earth because we turned it into a timebomb, what can the money do then?

Even with Singapore’s reputation of being a green nation alongside countless efforts to educate citizens, we still fail at something as basic as recycling. A common mistake you might make is when disposing an unfinished box of food, a pizza box for example, you think to yourself, “The box is made of cardboard, I’ll throw this in the recycling bin.” While you had good intentions you have inadvertently contaminated that batch of potential recyclables.

40% of our recycled waste is contaminated by food or water (Trang, 2021) resulting in waste that should have been recycled to be sent for incineration instead. The ash is dumped into Semakau Island, Singapore’s only landfill, which at the current rate of incinerating waste will be full by 2035 while requiring a new incineration plant to be built every 7 to 10 years (Hicks, 2019). Singapore is hot enough as is, I’m sure no one wants to live on an incinerator littered island that gets progressively hotter from global warming, so here is my solution.

In 2019 , while I was living in Shanghai, a new policy was implemented by the Chinese government which I strongly believe could be used here. The new policy dictated that residents of Shanghai were to sort their waste into categories, hazardous, recyclable, food and residual waste before disposing of them into the appropriately labelled bins. Failure to comply would result in a fine between 50-200 Yuan per individual (Zhang, 2019).

In the beginning, it seemed like an unnecessary hassle, questions were asked within communities regarding the necessity of the rules. However, it really wasn’t that big of a deal, simply leave a bin in the kitchen for wet or food waste and just like that you have uncontaminated recyclables. Even now while living in Singapore, my family still practises separating our dry recyclable waste from our wet waste and disposing them accordingly.  
  
The results were overwhelmingly positive, despite the discourse within communities to begin with, Shanghai’s recycling rates increased by 4.6 times (Hou et al., 2020) showing the willingness of the people to abide by the new laws even if they didn’t fully understand the rationale or felt inconvenienced by it.

The policy would kill not two but three birds with one stone for Singapore, our recycling rates would significantly increase, less incinerators would be needed resulting in reduced cost and carbon emissions and we would slow down the rate at which we fill Semakau Island. According to a study assessing the policies implementation in Shanghai, they concluded a country specifically mentioning Singapore, whose government actively supports recycling initiatives and has existing recycling infrastructure will be able to more efficiently adapt the waste separation policy (Chu et al., 2023). I believe by following the example set in the case of Shanghai, Singapore has the opportunity to forge a better future for the youth and sustainability of our planet.

Word Count: 597

Reference List

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Reflection

While writing the opinion piece I managed to add my own personal voice by addressing the audience with a frustrated and sarcastic tone to begin the essay. I believe this allowed me to set the tone for how I felt about the problem and its importance to me. I also looped in the audience by addressing their human nature and giving them examples of how they may have contributed to the problem. I also contextualised the problem within Singapore providing the stats based in Singapore. I chose to bring up the points and evidence that I chose as I felt they were all very relevant to the problem, most of them being either explaining the problem, explaining the solution or proving how the solution works.