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(2011) Farewell My Subaru

One Book One Community

Fall 10-2011

[A Revolution to Save the World]

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Recommended Citation

Sorrells, Holly, "[A Revolution to Save the World]" (2011). *(2011) Farewell My Subaru*. 2.
https://repository.wcsu.edu/oboc_2011/2

I am sixteen, a junior in high school, and it feels like I've heard it all. Years of the ever-echoing drill, "You are the future," and "You are the only ones who can make a difference. But, much like prophecies of raptures and the end of the world, a future without gas or power as we know it seems unfathomable. Most kids my age can't even go a few hours without checking Facebook or Twitter. How can we think about a world where New York City is underwater because of the melted ice caps? How can we prepare for an Earth that sounds more like a bizarre science fiction novel than a reality? Doug Fine is one man who pioneered ahead into this vision of a world, showing the rest of us what it is that we can do.

It's almost comical to think about how little most people are educated about energy and in general, the technology that makes up our modern world. We don't really think about where energy actually comes from. We plug in our many appliances into a seemingly magical socket in the wall that spews the technological fountain of life, and then sit in our fluorescent-lighted, electrically-heated homes and complain about the huge bills coming in. Energy is something we take for granted everyday. In my home, we are pretty good about turning off lights when one leaves a room and not leaving the faucet running or letting the T.V. entertain an empty room. However, it's a flawed system, with 75% of our sockets still filled by unused appliances. Phone chargers, stereos, and amps, still litter all the shelves, floors, and countertops surrounding any mini power plant. At least all those at CL&P are getting paid for our negligence. Money isn't even enough to get people to use less energy. I try my best to get my already scattered mind to remember the mundane task of finding and unplugging every camera, phone, and laptop charger that's idling away before I leave in the morning. I even save energy in the air conditioning department too, thanks to a broken window and faulty radiator in my room. I'm far from perfect as far as Mother Nature is concerned, but in reading about the radical changes made by some, it makes me think more about what I can do. Odds are that it'll be a lot of small things. I know I don't have thousands of dollars to equip my house with solar panels, but I can spend a little more and get rechargeable batteries (making sure I unplug them after, of course), and use cold water to do my laundry as well. I may not have the resources to convert my entire lifestyle yet, but I'd like to believe that every little thing helps, and it's just the beginning after all.

Unlike Mr. Fine, my car doesn't run on leftover oil from those oh-so-delicious fast food joints. I do drive a Prius, though...well, my mother drives one. I'd love to say I don't drive yet because I am such a down-to-earth hippie that I don't believe in the giant metal contraptions. The truth is much less honorable and is just a case of sheer laziness. However, growing up with a father who owns a bike shop and takes 6,000 calorie-burning bike rides for fun, I've found that I'm quite content walking or riding to my destination. On a day to day basis, there are not too many places I need to go that require too much fuel consumption. Even taking the bus in the morning with 50+ other kids can be sugarcoated with the thought, "At least it's a big group of kids riding one bus." Although, after noticing the black "DIESEL" on the gas cap, I wondered whether it'd be possible to run all these school buses on "veggie" oil as an alternative fuel source. All you need is someone to lead the battle, and enough people to follow, which could be a daunting task. The truth is, when you look at the population, especially in more urban areas, nearly everyone drives and everyone eats, so everyone uses oil, and that's before we begin doing other things like heating our homes with it. There are wars going on over gas as we continue to exponentially

increase the rate at which we consume it, and people drive around as if it's a source that will always be on demand and under five bucks. The truth is not so appealing. It goes back to the ignorance of where energy comes from. The farther down in generations we go, the more we forget, or just never learn in the first place. We live in a world of technology, and it scares me. At this point, I don't know if I'm more afraid of the Earth breaking down and saying, "No more," or what people will do as a result of this. I don't want to be lost just because I've left the world of chrome and gadgets; I'd like to find myself with a happy compromise in the world of green that we started out with. So I'll walk to the store today, or meet my friends at the mall by bike, and take the Prius for longer trips with my family. Maybe I'll lead the war to get our school buses running on veggie oil. It's not too much of an effort to help out.

I think that the most important thing anyone can do to try and protect the environment is to talk about it and spread their knowledge. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to unplug their phone or limit their car rides- it just takes enough people doing these things. By sharing knowledge, we get to hear what other people have learned and we also get to reduce the ignorance that is out there. Like Fine says, instead of handing kids gameboys or turning on the television, show them how to grow and maintain a garden, teach them something about the world they live on. We can educate ourselves, too. My family has a share in a local farm, and in addition to selling local eggs, veggies, and meat, they also have a school. I am planning on attending their sessions soon to learn more about cooking and growing local, organic food. It's open to everyone and looks to be an eye-opening experience. I may only be a junior in high school, but the more I look, the more I see everyday opportunities to change things. I can plant a garden. I can recycle bottles and cans, I can join the school's green club, I can, and do, eat vegetarian. I can't vote and I don't drive, but I do have a voice, so maybe I can change the way someone else sees the world. Maybe I will tell three people and then they will tell three people, and before you know it, we've got a revolution. A revolution to keep the world spinning. A revolution to get us all to live sustainably but also comfortably. A revolution to save the world.