

Pushing myself to take a foreign medium was important to me. I wanted to try something ambitious, so I chose to learn how to write computer code. The point of the project was to build a website. The idea is simple: start a brand and launch it through the publishing of a website. The brand itself is real but somewhat farcical. The idea of the brand, abbreviated as TIPA (The Ignorant Presence of America) is to persuade a younger audience, specifically older teenagers and young adults, to do more for climate change prevention. The catch is that the brand directly does nothing to help. All it does is promote its branding, gaining a reputation throughout a population. The concept of persuasion is to have people buy items of the brand. That's all they have to do. 80% of net income from TIPA is donated to NRDC.org, whose mission statement claims, "We combine the power of more than three million members and online activists with the expertise of some 700 scientists, lawyers, and policy advocates across the globe to ensure the rights of all people to the air, the water, and the wild." Young people tend to never donate to a cause, but they do like to buy clothes and trendy items, that is actually what I am doing, with a twist for good.

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An Inconvenient Truth was released in 2006 - 14 years ago. The 2000 presidential candidate, Al Gore, a major public figure, addressed climate change in a major documentary in 2006 and has been addressing it far before. It took three years after that documentary, and nine years after Al Gore ran for president, for the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen to call for a global agreement on climate. Everyone born from around 1995 to now, has grown up with climate change as if it was second nature. People assume it is just part of life. The number of people I have heard say “we are going to see the world end in our lifetime” is incredible. No human should ever grow up in such an environment to think that. I have spent much of my life thinking there was nothing wrong with the climate, I was just living life without any worries. I was in an airport about three years ago, watching the TV, and a CNN report announced that an iceberg, roughly the size of Delaware - one trillion tons of ice, had broken from Antarctica. I was terrified by the magnitude of the iceberg and the fact that we put ourselves in this position. Humans had invoked this occurrence. This was a slap in the face. We have not only grown up around climate change but have not been taught to do something about it. It is a topic so relevant, but even so, no one teaches us about it. Who is telling us that climate change is real and right now, who is telling us to do something about it? We assume the government is going to take care of the issue - Individual action is almost always downplayed. Indirect individual action due to COVID-19 lockdown is creating tremendous benefits for the climate. When there is not a lockdown binding us to our homes, how are you directly and consciously helping the climate?

The importance of properly recycling, consumer habits - the daily things we do, all have an effect on the climate, usually negative. They have been stacking up from the day we were born. Now, present-day, what do you have to offer to the climate? Are you recycling properly? Are you aware of the coal and fossil fuel industry? Do you avoid supporting it? Do you drive an electric car? What are you doing? How are you helping? The past is the past, now, we have ten years before climate change is irreversible.

So our time frame is set. We need to know that maybe we will not see the end of the world in our lifetime, all we have to do is do our part and the climate will do it's own.

This is the ignorant presence of America, and it needs to change.

It is not only the ignorance of America, but the manufacturing culture built by corporations that feed it. Nowhere in the world is this ethic of ignorance more clearly visible than in the way that the western world manufactures, markets, consumes, and disposes of personal waste. The amount of non-recyclable waste in packages and the improper disposal of compostable and recyclable material is jaw-dropping. According to the [NRDC.org](https://www.nrdc.org) in July of 2019, “The United States is the Most Wasteful Country in the World.” the article states “Each American produces more than 1,700 pounds of [Municipal Solid Waste(trash)] a year, the report's authors found, adding up to 239 million tons annually”. [Gallup.com](https://www.gallup.com) proclaims in a related article titled, “Average American Weighs 17 more pounds than ‘ideal’”. The average

American weighs around 175 pounds. We are wasting more than 8 times the average American body weight, which is apparently “17 pounds more than ‘ideal’”.

What has turned America into a country so unfathomably wasteful compared to any other country? Some would blame it on Republicans, some would blame it on capitalism, but blame without action is not really important when it comes down to the wire. If you are just going to sit and blame corporations and capitalism, and not do anything, you should blame yourself. Blame yourself because you are not perfect, you should focus on you, and become a better you. Better your self-awareness, your consumer practices - do better.

Focusing on becoming more self-aware in your waste and consumer efforts is an easy feat, it just takes repetition. Buying a metal straw and then calling yourself an advocate is not nearly enough, and deep down inside, you are lying to yourself. You first should learn about what is recyclable and what is not. Before you brush that accusation aside, you would be surprised. According to rubicon.com in the article, “What Can I Recycle: A Guide to What Makes Something Recyclable”, “Paper including newspapers, magazines, and mixed paper Cardboard (OCC) Glass bottles and jars, Rigid plastic product, Metal containers, including tin, aluminum, and steel cans” can all be recycled. It is important that any recyclable material that has food or food scraps should not be recycled, or else it is liable to contaminate other recyclables, also turning them into trash. According to onegreenplanet.org the top ten products that are killing the environment are considered to be: paper coffee cups, boxes of tea bags, plastic water bottles, disposable cutlery, plastic bags, produces bags, disposable single-use razors, menstrual products, disposable cleaning cloths, and food packaging. Uspirg.org provides recycling stats from November of 2018, writing, “While a recent survey says that 94 percent of Americans support recycling and 74 percent say it should be a priority, the national average recycling rate is only 34.7 percent.” According to pewresearch.org in October of 2016, recycling systems are readily available to 94% of Americans.

If 94% of the American population has access to recycling, why are we not using it to our advantage? Why is the recycling rate 34.7%? If you have a recycling bin available at your home, use it, and use it correctly. If it is readily available and you are in support of recycling, what is so hard about recycling? Nothing. Do not put that pizza box with the crust still in the box into the recycling. If we are able to make the change and avoid these materials, or reuse and repurpose these materials, as well as buying more permanent replacements, the amount of daily waste each human would cut down on is significant.

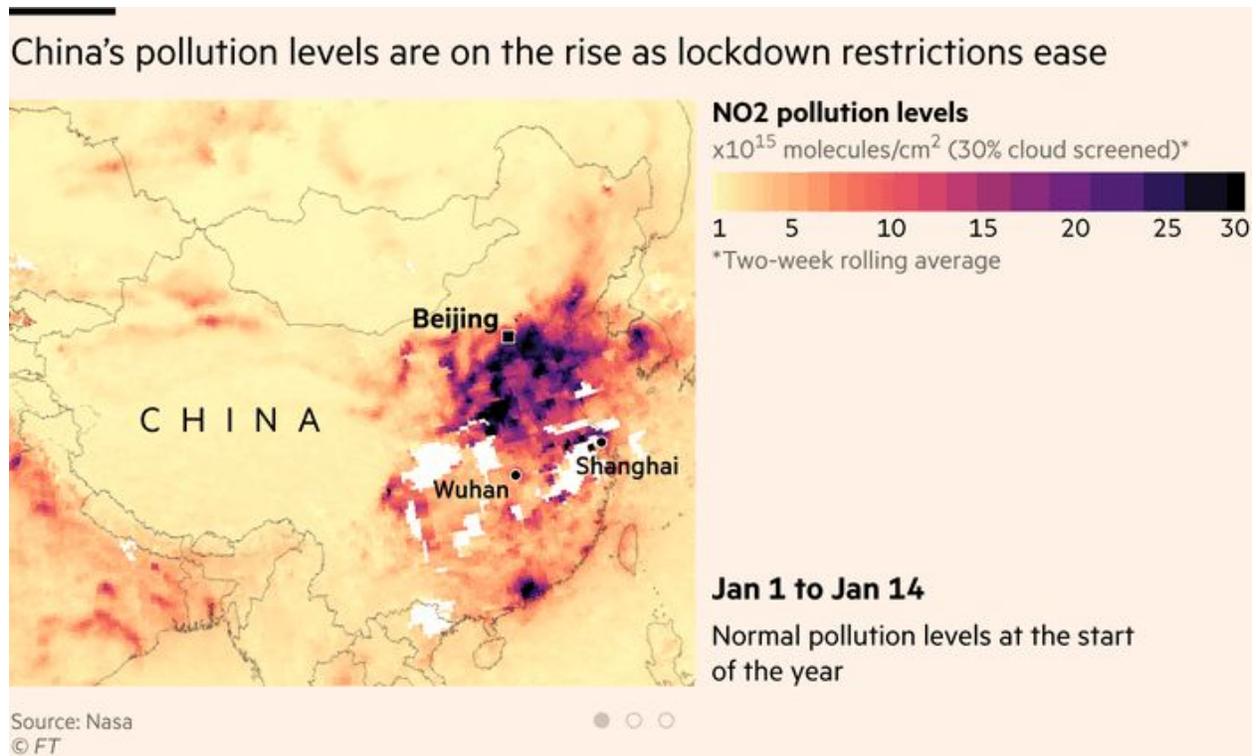
In the U.S, around 400 million cups of coffee are consumed every day, and each disposable cup weighs around 18 grams. Assuming that every cup is disposable, we are wasting nearly 8000 tons of just coffee cups, every single day. If every single person that drank coffee bought a reusable coffee cup, the amount of waste that is decreased would be extreme - by about 8000 tons daily - and that is just in the U.S. This is just one instance of many. If you think you are not making a difference by avoiding or replacing destructive products, you are mistaken. They add up, very clearly. Focus on yourself, and encourage others to make the change.

The issue is not so much the corporations as it is the people. It is unfortunate that the American public has been wired by a certain lifestyle to need corporations to survive. As history has proved, the best way to protest is to boycott. In an article written by ethicalconsumer.org titled, “History of Successful Boycotts”, reported that in 2000: “Nike committed to independently monitored social audits across its supply chain and began publishing audit details on its website, after a boycott call caused its revenues to fall by 16% and its share price to drop by 57%. The boycott call followed claims from the company that the notoriously poor conditions in its supply chain were not its responsibility.” A less recent example and a more widely known example is the Montgomery Bus Boycott. History.com claims that: “Approximately 40,000 black bus riders—the majority of the city’s bus riders—boycotted the system the next day, December 5. That afternoon, black leaders met to form the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). The group elected Martin Luther King, Jr., the 26-year-old-pastor of Montgomery’s Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, as its president, and decided to continue the boycott until the city met its demands... On June 5, 1956, a Montgomery federal court ruled that any law requiring racially segregated seating on buses violated the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That amendment, adopted in 1868 following the U.S. Civil War, guarantees all citizens—regardless of race—equal rights and equal protection under state and federal laws”.

Non-violent, non-invasive, perfectly legal. If more and more people have the means to avoid practices and products that are detrimental to the climate, the corporations responsible for the products have to adapt to the only thing that keeps their income flowing - the people. You do not have to publicly enforce your climate-friendly lifestyle, it does not mean you are an advocate, and it does not mean you are encouraging others to become consciously climate-friendly - in fact, an aggressive and assertive attitude towards the public usually discourages them from making that change. The change comes from a welcoming and normalizing approach of you spreading the word, making a climate-friendly lifestyle the new norm.

It might be hard for humans to accept this, but we are inherently lazy, and once a lifestyle is built-in, it becomes very difficult to change. Bigthink.com writes: “Why is it often so hard to get off the couch and go to the gym? While you can certainly point to your lack of will power for the inaction, you can also blame evolution for this predicament. Your brain prefers to minimize effort because that's how it's been trained to do it for millennia... This battle in the mind comes courtesy of our ancestors who aimed to do less to increase the likelihood they would survive”. But let this be said without objection: it is better to lead a life of change than not to live at all. The urgency is not well conveyed - We have ten years. And that may seem like more time than it is, but the amount of damage we have done to the planet does not reverse itself in a day, or a year. You need to change your living habits sooner than later. And that sooner is now. Change before it’s too late. These changes are not hard. Just do it. The more people that start to become conscious of a climate-friendly life the more fluid it becomes to live a climate-friendly. You have the potential to start the trend. The trend to live better, to have your friends envy your lifestyle. You are the better person, feel the superiority.

Amidst a pandemic, rooting us to the floors of our homes, pollution levels are greatly decreased. Cars are not out driving around. [Ft.com](https://www.ft.com) provides a date comparison of pollution levels in Wuhan: One before lockdown, one during the lockdown, and one as people start to emerge from it.



It is completely unrealistic to ask for pollution levels to stay as low as they were and are during quarantine, but a head start has been gifted to us - how do we use it to our benefit? COVID-19 is a tragedy worldwide, but it is also a blessing - a reset button. Such an occurrence happens once every lifetime, let's come out of this with positivity in hand and ready- that is what the world needs the most right now.

How do we move forward with a climate-friendly future? A few things could be predicted about shifts in energy usage. A very possible prediction is a shift from fossil fuel to electric automobiles. [Bloomberg.com](https://www.bloomberg.com) makes a statement, titled, "Exxon's Humbling Fall From Oil Juggernaut to Mediocre Company". And writing in it: "Exxon produces about 4 million barrels a day—essentially the same as 10 years ago, despite repeated vows to push the number higher. Meanwhile, the company's debt has risen from effectively zero to \$50 billion, and its profit last year was a bit more than half what it was a decade ago." If this just does not convey a failing business and company, according to [cnn.com](https://www.cnn.com), "Exxon posts its first loss in decades... of \$610 million during the first three months of the year." Today, May 1st, 2020, Exxon is trading at around 47 dollars - the last time its stock was trading this low was in July of 2004. It would not be farfetched to assume that different sources of energy would emerge from this. This would not only be beneficial for the air, but for the future potential for oil spills. Looking back to the

2010 Deepwater Horizon rig oil spill, wilderness.org reports, “the resulting spill covered 68,000 square miles of sea surface and killed approximately 1 million coastal and offshore seabirds, 5,000 marine mammals and 1,000 sea turtles.” The time, technology, energy, and resources that are pumped into a finite mineral does not seem to make logical sense. Those tens of thousands of people and those billions of dollars would be better spent making resourceful energy more efficient and practical.

Until we were forced to stay home, we were a consumer of their product, gasoline. It is hard to avoid; how else do you move around? Now look at Exxon when we indirectly neglect their product: they spiral out of control, into massive debt, into massive historic quarterly losses, their value is meniscal to what it was pre-COVID-19. Individual action is very clearly proven extremely powerful, do not let it fool you. Anytime you think your actions are powerless, let this time be a testament to the contrary. If you are happy with the climate action during this, let it drive you to continue the good once COVID-19 is not here to do it for us. This is our rude awakening, we can do good. There is nothing keeping us from doing so. Let’s do better.

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