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Climate Change: Do We Know the Truth?

Every decade the arctic ice percentage decreases by 12.8%; this, in change, causes a domino effect which increases sea level 3.2 millimeters every year (“Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet.”). If I had to bet, probably less than 10% of Americans have heard of that statistic and are aware of the drastic effects of global climate change. Although, those uninformed are not alone because many people are left clueless- myself included. No one is teaching people the factors of climate change, which leads to further destruction being caused by the entire population of the world. If the concept of global warming was better taught by our higher power authorities, this devastation would not be on such a large scale. The worldwide global climate change may not seem to affect us now, but it really is. Just in 2016, “the number of climate-related disasters has more than tripled since 1980,” and of course that statistic is increasing (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). People need to know this it is affecting us now and it will definitely affect our grandchildren. I may not be very educated on the topic of global warming, but I am concerned that we have put ourselves in a slowly elevating state of emergency. In order to test my knowledge of global warming, I researched the causes, effects, and possible solutions and how public knowledge of these factors will save our Earth.

There are many visible effects of global warming. Coming from someone with not much knowledge of climate change, I am aware that ice caps are melting and sea levels are rising due to this. Although, the public’s knowledge is very little when it comes to this topic because the higher power authorities are trying to ignore that global warming is actually happening. According to National Geographic, it is actually proven that “Arctic sea ice is shrinking, and seas could rise three feet by 2100” (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). This is just one of the biggest and most catastrophic effects of global warming. The melting of sea ice is not the issue here; it is the melting of land ice which is actually raising the sea level. This is information I was unaware of; I thought global warming was causing the melting of ice in our large bodies of water. However, the increase in temperature is so drastic it is melting parts of the land which are meant to remain ice. A continuation of this will cause cities to be underwater much like 125,000 years ago when sea levels were 20 to 30 feet higher due to the rise in the heat index (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). Another effect I was unaware of is the fact that the rate of climate-related disasters is on the rise. The rise in temperature “doesn’t cause a particular drought or storm, but it can make such events more likely or intense” (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). The science is there; analysis has found that many deaths were caused by the heat index rising. The heat is not our only problem, however, “global warming adds moisture to the air” which makes rain more extreme as well as droughts even worse. A great example of how knowledge is power, in this case, is the recent flooding in Farmville. Farmville was recently struck by two hurricanes; the first was less extreme but made to sound like a disaster, while the second hurricane was rarely talked about but when it hit, it hit hard. Our population needs to know of these drastic changes in weather which makes natural disasters that much worse in order to prevent complete destruction.

An uncontrollable cause is humans, and we cannot change that no matter how hard we try. The carbon dioxide we constantly release is one of the big factors of the warming of the planet, and “we’ve increased the amount in the air by nearly half since the 60’s” (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). Therefore, the leading cause of the global climate change is just overpopulation. Along with carbon dioxide, humans also emit greenhouse gases which forms “a thickening blanket that traps heat at the Earth’s surface” (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). This is possibly an unknown cause to our population because I was left in the dark and left to believe the only role humans play in this is air pollution. However, humans are not the only causes of this; there are also many natural causes of climate change. I was unaware of any natural causes because I believed the main cause was pollution and such. Although, “climate change can be affected by forces outside Earth’s atmosphere” (National Geographic Society). One example of this is the small, gradual increase in the amount of sunlight that reaches the Earth. A popular theory is that “the Earth’s climate is related to the number of sunspots on the sun’s surface (National Geographic Society). This is an obvious observation when thought about logically, but many people, like myself, probably do not realize the sun is actually making the Earth even warmer. Along with the sun’s effects, the global climate change is also caused by the impact of meteors, plate tectonics, volcanoes, and greenhouse gases. I think we are taught that greenhouse gases are the sole cause of this all, because, again, I was unaware there are so many causes of this. As far as public knowledge of this, if humans knew the causes of climate change, themselves included, there would be a much better public understanding of global warming as a whole in retrospect to who/what we should be placing the blame on.

My outlook on the solutions of global warming is a very simple one: it is not reversible. This is something that is definitely not known worldwide and needs to be made aware to everyone. Although, I came to the realization, with a bit of research, that I was not completely wrong. According to an international group of climate science, the “window is closing to avert dangerous warning” (Chemnick, Jean). The main way they see fit to resolve this is by removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Two scientists who study the science of climate change stated, “there already exists a 1 in 20 chance that the 2.2 trillion tons of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere could cause existential warning threat” (Chemnick, Jean). Therefore, they believe the leading cause is the increase in carbon dioxide and the best solution is to take it out of the air. Along with carbon dioxide, the scientists discovered that is not their only worry; we must “also rapidly limit super pollutants like HFCs and methane” (Chemnick, Jean). However, there is another hot topic regarding solutions to global warming, and that is the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement simply states 195 countries have agreed to keep the warming below 3.6 degrees Fahrenheit (“Seven Things to Know About Climate Change”). This group is trying to advocate for a higher use in solar power and other renewable sources and evidently it’s working. According to a graph by National Geographic, solar power is now being used more than coal, oil, and gas combined. Of course, this switch is new and just beginning to unfold, but hopefully, with public knowledge of the change, we can slowly begin to save our Earth.

"We are quickly running out of time to prevent hugely dangerous, expensive, and perhaps unmanageable climate change" (Chemnick, Jean). These words spoken by Achim Steiner are blunt, yet true. Activists for this all over the world are trying their best to get through everyone’s heads that we need to do something about this, but unfortunately, no one is listening. The proof is there, global warming was caused by something, global warming is affecting something, and there are solutions for it. If the world continues to be negligent and ignore this huge problem, we will end up in a terrible state of emergency no one can help us out of. My prior knowledge of this issue was very little, however now I feel much more confident of the underlying causes, effects, and solutions that I think the rest of the world should be informed about. Of course, we joke about living on Mars, but at this rate, it doesn’t seem like such a bad idea!

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