

Interview with an FASS Undergraduate

Li Zhe: Hi Person A, thank you for accepting my request to conduct an interview with you. [Laughing]

Person A: No problem.

Li Zhe: To start us off, I wanted to ask. How do you perceive climate change and how would its impacts affect the world?

Person A: To me climate change is quite a detrimental thing that everyone has to be more aware about. What it entails is probably a change in how we live in the future if we don't do anything about it. Common things that I associate with climate change are probably global warming, greenhouse effect and rising sea level. I suppose I think about environmental issues that are not necessarily directly related to Climate Change like the waste issue. In Singapore we put it in landfill and things like that. Environment as a whole I can see certain links between them. How it will affect the world is like as I mentioned before, I think it will drastically change how we live our lives.

Li Zhe: Interesting, so Person A you mentioned the impacts of climate change. How then do you see yourself being affected by climate change and its impacts?

Person A: Off the top of my head its quite apparent that as the world is getting warmer glaciers are melting elsewhere cause rising sea levels which probably threatens low lying countries I don't know if Singapore is a particularly low lying country, probably not as much as somewhere like Venice. Yet it is something we definitely have to be concerned about. Other than those 2 things, there are a lot of things that I think Climate Change can entail but me being affected by it I'm not very sure except for these 2 things that I mentioned.

Li Zhe: Yes, indeed the impacts of climate change are certainly from my point of view becoming more apparent.

Person A: I think I would like to add on that a lot of these impact may not be so apparent or something that I can think off the top of the head. Maybe because we are, rather I'm not in a situation where I have to face many of the impacts just yet. But if you consider the US right now, I think the wildfires and natural disasters like hurricanes and cyclone are becoming more erratic and severe, partly because of Climate Change if I'm not wrong. Also, other low-lying countries are threatened also I guess. Deforestation as part of Climate Change as well, places like in Brazil huge amounts of deforestation that would affect the livelihood of the people there in general.

Li Zhe: Thank you. Now do you see your current lifestyle as one that is sustainable? Could you perhaps share some examples with us?

Person A: I don't think that my lifestyle is a sustainable one because you know I sometimes on the fan, the lights and also my aircon at the same time and I have my laptop and a lot of electrical devices on right now. All these influences energy consumption and this links back to Climate Change. I'm also quite guilty of buying clothes online, a lot from fast fashion brand obviously and there is a lot of environmental repercussions as well. These are the two things I can think of, off the top of my head.

Li Zhe: Do you think that as an individual it is possible to impact such a huge issue like climate change in any meaningful manner?

Person A: I think that meaningful is very subjective. Individual impact like using a metal straw instead of plastic straw. That seems so small, how much plastic can one person really save. But I think that overall yes you can make a meaningful impact but meaningful is really subjective. Um, to me it's meaningful. If you can, you know, save or anything really, like there doesn't have to be any amount, but as long as you put in the effort to do something and like make a conscious effort to, you know, not be so wasteful it's good for the environment. I mean, it's better for the environment. So, I guess that's something to it. And if we don't classify these small little individual action as meaningful, it can become quite negative in that sense that people might not actually want to participate because they feel like they can't actually impact anything in any meaningful way, which obviously makes everything bad. Yeah. And I think I'd like to add it's probably like a herd mentality kind of thing. If everyone starts doing it, you know, like it can become really significant as a movement or hopefully as it leads to long-term behavioural change. So, it's not really good for anyone to think that you don't make an impact on the environment. So of course, individuals, you know, they can make a positive impact in a meaningful way. Yeah.

Li Zhe: What are the obstacles or reasons do you think is preventing you from living a more sustainable or eco-friendly lifestyle?

Person A: Um, off the top of my head, cost is definitely a concern for instance, um, like cost wise, you know, fast fashion is so much cheaper than, you know very environmentally responsible clothing and also convenience, of course. So, let's say if you have a car that's more convenient than taking public transport, which saves on a lot of gas and things like that. And, less emissions, of course. Yeah. And also maybe being accustomed to a certain standard of living that is pretty hard to change, you know, kind of like old habits die hard and maybe you don't really consciously want to like change these habits as well. Some things like oning my fan and air-con at the same time, you know, these things is kind of like a habit since young and hard to change at times, but I definitely have been trying my best. Okay. Maybe not my best, but I have been trying in some ways, and sometimes I feel like the guilt that you feel when you don't actually do something environmentally conscious or like something that protects the environment, that guilt is like a very, uh, like very distasteful. Distaste is not the word, but you know what I mean? It's like kind of like a turn off, you know, it's like, uh, the fact that I use plastic straws instead of metal straws, like, it's like, I don't feel good if someone chastises me because of it. It's like my personal choice and I have to live with the consequences of it. Yes. But I don't know how to explain it, but it's kind of like the guilt, kind of pushed me away, from wanting to do it, you know? Cause I feel like a lot of these efforts must come organically. Like you want to be the one that actually decides that you want to help the environment or, you know, become more environmentally conscious and things like that. It should not be from just like an external point of pressure that people are, you know, judging you or whatever. Cause it just alienates some people even more. So yeah.

Li Zhe: How then do you balance your believe that Climate Change is serious and perhaps your "resistance to make changes in your lifestyle"?

Person A: That is quite a difficult question. As I am answering it makes me reflect on my choices what I think is that I have to be even more educated about how severe the issues are and obviously I feel that would make me do more. Having more like-minded individuals around me that motivate me, not push me but motivate me, kind of in a healthy way through their actions, not their words to be more environmentally conscious. Like I said herd mentality, once someone starts a movement if others pick up on it and it becomes a trend, hopefully a long one, then it can become a habit after all. I definitely think that more actions have to be started off and there is a level of discomfort that I have to become comfortable with though it may be uncomfortable initially. Yet overtime as these

things become a habit it would be easier to be less resistant to these changes and incrementally take more serious steps to environmental conscious behaviour. But I have two interpretations of your question, for the second one in a crude way basically how I am living with myself and my choices even with knowing climate change is so severe. I would say that I don't think about it that much. Climate Change at least in my circle of friends and society, I don't feel it is something that is in your face just yet. So, it's quite easy to avoid thinking of it, of course that's bad I'm not going to deny that. So I think as it's not really in my face I don't have the opportunity or the need to think about it, that said I don't feel like it pushes me or motivates me to make changes in my lifestyle.

Li Zhe: Do you think that corporations and the government have a role to play in making sustainability more palatable in terms of convenience or cost-wise?

Person A: Again a bit difficult to answer as I don't have the knowledge on it. I will just answer based on what I know in terms of convenience. Like in Japan they have vending machines that you put plastics bottles in and you get money. I know Singapore has that but basically what I trying to say is Japan has it's more inculcated than Singapore. I think the government had a huge part to play to make this culture and for it to be cultured in the residents and things like that. This isn't something that can be cultivated in a short amount of time. Somethings that has to be implemented in very small but incremental ways so that it is, as you said more palatable. Overtime increasing its efforts slowly becomes a full fledge movement and habits that people follow and don't think twice about it. I feel that Singapore government has not really done, I would not say they haven't done, anything but it is kind of like putting out the measures but not really inculcating the belief or necessity or emphasise the importance of it as much. Of course, as I said I'm not fully aware of all the measures or campaigns they have. Off the top of my head let's say the recycling bins around HDB flats. The fact is, yes these are there yet we don't even feel the need to use the bins and usually, sometimes it gets abused and improperly used and people throw normal things inside and that obviously hampers the whole process. What I'm trying to say is that maybe the government has provided certain things for Singapore that help make it easier or more convenient but the belief for the need to recycle or the need to care about climate change isn't really there. I don't really see it that much in the media landscape or whatever just yet. You need to kind of have some mental change before behavioural change can continue.

And then for cost wise, definitely corporations come in to play even more. As innovation and tech innovation increase even companies like Tesla. I know they are a very capitalist company, they care about profits and things like that but of course its going to start a movement you know. Companies that focus on renewable energies or electric cars or things like biofuels they are going to be on the rise. So, I think it's going to be very important to have innovation in these companies and corporations. For them to lower the cost, you know tesla wants to lower the cost of producing these cars and pass on these cost savings to the consumers and they have promised 25,000 USD electric cars in the next 3 year. Of course, this is something that would encourage people to take on a more environmentally friendly things. Though I'm not entirely sure if people want a electric car from tesla because it's environmentally friendly or they just want the clout, as its Tesla. So of course, there is pros and cons but they have a role to play in all of these.

Li Zhe: Well, thank you so much for your time. It was very enriching to hear your thoughts and perceptions regarding our Climate Crisis. Have a good day, thank you.