

Michael T. Morrow Memorial Environmental Scholarship

The Frugality of A Green Mindset

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In today's world everyone is continually aware of the dark economic undertone which plagues us. The fact of the matter is we are living in a reckless manner and to add insult to injury, we are using the current economic climate as an excuse to ignore the ecological crisis. Evidence points to the realization that the economic volatility is far from over, therefore there must be a restructuring in the way we function in our day to day lives. Environmental stewardship in this challenging economic period should be about using conservation and limited consumption as a tool to help fix the economy.

It is the simple supply and demand principle understood by the majority, that the petroleum-based energy we so heavily rely upon will continue to become more expensive over time as the supply decreases. With this matter acting like a ticking time bomb, now is the time to reevaluate the ways in which we live. There are so many simple steps each individual can take to reduce this dependency, if only everyone would take responsibility. Furthermore, should we accomplish this transformed way of living, we may indeed have more safety and security as a nation with less dependence on foreign oil. Limiting our reliance on oil is one way to act as an environmental steward, benefiting a multitude of concerns.

While individuals do not have control over the instability of the oil crisis, there environmentally friendly is an effective means of cutting expenses. In this way environmental stewardship in harsh economic times may be viewed as a principle of conservation. Simple acts such as changing the thermostat when leaving the house, turning off lights and unplugging appliances when not in use, consolidating errands to save gas or shopping in thrift stores, among many other effortless and creative steps may save thousands of dollars. There are also cost-effective benefits of upgrading to energy- efficiency systems (such as hybrid cars, energy star appliances, etc.). The initial investment in these technologies will be offset by cost-effectiveness and achieving environmental sustainability. These actions have the potential to be very effective, but in order to do so they must become both habitual and mainstream.

I experienced an environmentally-friendly type of lifestyle while studying abroad in Athens, Greece for the fall semester of this past year. It is said that Europeans live a very green

lifestyle and I found this to be true. Habitual, everyday routines contribute to their ecological consciousness. Everything is done with the mindset of using only what is necessary from the widespread use of public transportation, to the electrical switches which must be turned on and off in order to use the water heater, the stove and create power for the air conditioner. Simple water conservation exists in common things like the shower heads which are hand held and have buttons to allow the water to flow or to be stopped, so that it will not be wasted while lathering. Even tourists are subject to this frugality. Hotel rooms keys not only used to open the door but also to power the electricity in a room so that when the occupants leave everything is shut off as they must take the keys with them. Even with their current economic strife, tools for daily living are built with the intentions of intermittent use and conservation. It is the design, lifestyle and habits of Europeans which make them constant environmental stewards, a model to be closely followed.

Generally speaking, today's world is not a very green one. Just as government enforces economic sanctions, so to must there be stricter legality towards environmentally related issues. For example, there are drastically different policies for recycling around the country, some states have very strict laws while others are quite lackadaisical. On an individual basis this will not have much of an effect on people's pocketbooks, but on a larger scale something as effortless as recycling can earn money for state governments. However in some states each bottle and can that is purchased is taxed a minimal surcharge. This is a win-win situation as only when the bottles or cans are deposited back into recycling machines is the consumer reimbursed for the charge, otherwise it is collected by the state's coffers.

Most often people don't care for the environment because there is no clear deterrent or immediate consequence for doing so. Few understand just how pressing our global environmental issues are. For years now, the world has been facing difficult economic times in conjunction with environmental troubles, some may even argue our poor economic circumstances are compounded as a result of our environmental instability. Troubles such as sprawl and global climate, etc. increase our dependency on energy and promote wastefulness. In order to successfully meet environmental goals, actions must be taken at several levels, beginning with the individual. Overall there is thriftiness in having a green mindset, as it is cost effective to save green by being green.