

plastics

by Sherlyn Illurimo

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Plastics, although considered one of the biggest inventions in human history, have become a major problem curtailing the efforts of environmental management. Plastics due to their durability tend to stay longer on earth even after we are done using them. Many environmental conservationists as observed in this documentary are afraid that solving the menace of plastic pollution may require efforts beyond the conventional measures of clean-up and just handling it as a waste. Moreover, they have argued that the public have not been told enough regarding where these plastics come from. Evidently, based on this documentary, for over 60 years, plastics have been in use by humanity with each passing year contributing to more environmental harm. Evidential information from this documentary indicates that plastics are particularly made from the surplus petrochemicals by the companies dealing in oil and gas.

Observably, the annual plastic production has been constantly rising over the years since the 1950s when humans began to use plastics. It is important to note that as of 2015, the global annual production of plastics had hit a whopping 400 million metric tons, much of it finds its way to the landfills. Statistically, it has been approximated that close to half of the plastics have been produced in the last 15 years with close to 91% of them not yet recycled. Interestingly, from the documentary, it can be noted that plastic pollution is largely influenced by the socio-economic conditions of a society. For instance, companies distributing plastic products globally employ a completely different design across the regions. Unilever products shipped to Belgium are distributed in completely recyclable bottles in contrast to those distributed in the Asian region. Even though the countries that are socio-economically disadvantaged can be blamed for not having the necessary recycling infrastructure, it is also important to note that these companies also distribute their products in observably very low-quality plastic bags that are fully non-recyclable, to consequently perpetuate the problem of plastic pollution.

The film revelation holds that recycling plastics is not a viable option considering the fact that despite having these systems in place, tones of plastics still find their way into the environment. It is evident that most of the polluting plastics cannot be recycled. Multilayer packaging of items such as biscuits, cannot be recycled and end up in the environment. Tiza Mafira argues against the public notion that plastics can be recycled stating that some plastics are actually hard hence making recycling difficult or even impossible.

Data obtained from the World Economic Forum indicates that even though recycling is considered a better strategy to manage plastics, with a potential of up to 14%, only about 2% of the plastic wastes are effectively recycled. In the United States, the effective recycling rate stands at 8.7% against the million tons of plastic waste produced annually. Tiza contends that recycling only attempts to postpone the inevitable plastic pollution arguing that even through recycling, most plastics can only be recycled once before finally ending up in landfills. Shibu states that recycling has only been possible because of poverty. Very marginalized men and women working in the recycling facilities are the only factors making recycling possible.

Based on the information retrieved from this documentary, it is evident that the impact presented by plastic pollution actually stems beyond environmental degradation to consequently affect humans and life in general. Incineration of plastic wastes for instance has adverse impacts on the respiratory health of people. Similar impacts have also been experienced by individuals living near plastic production facilities. Diseases such as childhood leukemia, have been associated with plastics. Landfills and plastics found in water sources have continued to make sources of drinking water unsafe for humans. The smell of compiling plastic wastes also make living in an area quite uneasy.

Single-use plastics have observably put a strain on waste management across the world today. Some of the measures that have been put in place by various countries to address the issue of plastics include banning single-use plastics. This strategy is intended to achieve an over 80% reduction in pollution rates. Mafira is very categorical on this as she states that closing the plastics tap stands to be the best solution. Secondly, coming up with better packaging designs by the companies can also be considered a better option besides making it compulsory for companies to manage their wastes or provide incentives to the government or other facilities to manage the wastes on their behalf.

I have learnt a lot of information from this documentary; however, the most interesting piece of information is the idea that the problem of plastic wastes may not be ending anytime soon if the responsibility of handling the problem is not extended to the plastic producers. Additionally, I feel very motivated after watching the film and I intend to take action by avoiding single-use plastics in the understanding that they are the major pollutants of the environment.

In this view, I will begin by embracing the use of reusable plastics just in case I have to use one. Believably, this simple step would go a long way in reducing the cumulative plastic waste build-up.

References

The Story of Plastic. Retrieved from: <https://www.storyofplastic.org/watch/bugtp4ab9j74>

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