

Raymond Simpie Smith, 17

South Africa

As we all know, climate change has plagued our Earth. It was pretty much inevitable, but certainly could have been controlled and maintained. Rising temperatures melting the glaciers; thousands of animals losing their homes and dying out because of their inability to adapt to these new environmental conditions. High rising sea levels and ocean temperatures... all these atrocities, and what are you doing as an individual to help?

The last time I saw snow was in 2012, exactly eight years ago. The detrimental effects of global warming have left us with brutal ramifications, as we've been left with aridity in some parts of South Africa over the years.

Climate change has aggravated soil erosion in most areas, making it impossible for plant biodiversity to survive, which in turn impacts local communities and the economy, as this affects the farming industry and food security.

South Africa has experienced several droughts, the recent one in northern KwaZulu-Natal coming to a halt temporarily in the last quarter of 2019 as we received generous amounts of rainfall. This has affected our local farmers so much because of biodiversity loss. The results of this dilemma made it difficult for farmers to plant, and to maintain livestock. With that being said, it had dire consequences for the economy, impacting it negatively.

Over the years, in South Africa, the intensity of climate change has affected the quality of the water supply and there is scarcity due to the subtle changes of precipitation patterns in the country. The country at large has suffered droughts since 2015, resulting in crop losses and water restrictions for everyone. How

would you feel if you had a strong urge to freshen up, and stepped in the shower only to come to the realization that your water had been cut off due to water restrictions in the area? Awful, it is.

These changes in our climate have also resulted in floods because farmers had to destroy wetlands to make space for crops, and essentially wetlands act as sponges during floods.

These are among some of the many personal experiences I have had in South Africa in the midst of climate change.

To world leaders and people in higher positions, those who command power, I pour out my heart to you to please assist climate activists, as we attempt advocacy for our mother planet. Please fund environmentalists to successfully protect our world. We need your cooperation to make our Earth a safe haven for future generations, and our present society. We're fighting a losing battle, being the minority of people who are trying to save the world. Thus, I appeal to you to give climate change activists the platform to preserve and conserve our Earth. I appeal to you to amend the legislation regarding the environment, ensuring full protection of our environment, and to enforce these laws rightfully. I ask of world leaders to stop with the wars, as nuclear power destroys the ozone layer. We can surely all live in peace. I ask of world leaders to fine anyone that litters, to invest more in recycling and reducing. I ask of world leaders to please ban plastic straws and reduce the use of plastic in general.

It brings me great sadness and despondency to see our Earth slowly die like this because of arrogance and ignorance. It pains me to see how much the world is uninformed of the great consequences of climate change, and the ways we can all save the planet. As an environmentalist, my biggest issue has always been the ignorance in society, how everyone has been indoctrinated to believe that just

throwing a plastic wrapper away has little to no effect on the environment. It hurts me to see how people litter and see no problem with that, and me having not much authority to make them pick up their litter.

I have hope and I have faith that the world will heal and it will be glorious.

The many other environmentalists and climate change activists out there, you are all doing a sterling job, and it's commendable. No matter how small you think it is, you're impacting everyone around you in a positive manner. I want every environmentalist to believe that they are changing the world, to continue doing the amazing work and to continue fighting for our planet. The world is a large place, but baby steps at a time can really go a long way, so we are capable, and are indeed changing the world.

I dedicate to you all 'I Was Here' by Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, to empower your inner fighting spirit and to propel your diligence.