

## The Plastic Pollution Predicament By Violet Wexler

In the North Pacific ocean, there is a floating island of plastic. Bigger than three countries and made out of trash. This is only one example of how much of an impact plastic makes on our environment and how much it is affecting our animals. Laurent Lebreton (head of research at The Ocean Cleanup) responded to the urgency of this situation by saying, “We can not get rid of plastics. In my opinion they are very useful, in medicine, transport and construction. But I think we should change the way we use them, especially those that are used only once and objects that have a very short lifespan.”

Plastic has taken over our lives. It’s in our supermarkets, restaurants, pharmacies, movie theaters, hospitals, and our homes. Plastic has become such a big issue that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish.<sup>1</sup> The ocean is filled with gorgeous marine life, but soon it will be completely filled with *our trash*. I will be 43 by then and probably have my own children. Will they not get to see the beautiful ocean for what it really is? Will the plastic in the ocean be “normal” to them?

Plastic didn’t start to become widely used until the 1960s, but since then the plastic phenomenon has grown exponentially. In the 1970s, scientists started to find plastic pellets (what is left over when plastic is left in the sun) in the ocean and in 1979 plastic bags were introduced in America, making the plastic issue worse. As someone who lives in New York City, I see how much trash we used and how trash is littered every day. I see this through overflowing trash cans, trash in the river, and litter all over the city. If we don’t fix our actions by 2030, our damage will be irreversible.

Nevertheless, if we all work together we *can* fix this. Many companies have already reduced their plastic use. “Starbucks started a public campaign to inform customers that all locations will be plastic-straw-free by 2020.”<sup>2</sup> And cities have also banned plastic items, such as New York City. NYC has banned plastic bags starting in March. As big companies like this make change, think about what you could do! Stop using as much single use plastic. Think: do I *need* a bag today? Or could I bring my own cup to get coffee? Volunteer. You can also help out by cleaning up parks and oceans. Make your voice heard. Talk to your congressman about making a change, put up fliers, start an environmental club, make sure your voice is heard.

Because if the future is ours, then this is our responsibility.

### Works Cited:

1. Kaplan, Sarah. “By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the world’s oceans, study says.” *The Washington Post*, January 2016
2. Krueger, Allison. “Do You Really Need a Straw With That?” *The New York Times*, 2019

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<sup>1</sup> “By 2050, there will be more plastic than fish in the world’s ....” 20 Jan. 2016, Accessed 19 Feb. 2020.

<sup>2</sup> “Do You Really Need a Straw With That? - The New York Times.” 7 Oct. 2019, Accessed 6 Feb. 2020.

