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Footprints on the Sands of Time

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The human footprint impacts all of nature's elements: earth, water, air, and the species with whom we share the planet. Every step we take tramples Earth's beauty, but still it finds the valor to bear, and forgive. It's time to move from EGO to ECO.

Pesticides. Antibiotics. Bio-magnification. Resistance. Toxins. As we attempt to make our world more livable for ourselves we neglect the affect we have on many organisms and their ecosystems. Our carbon footprint affects organisms and their ecological food chains due to the large amount of toxins found in the atmosphere; caused by pesticides. As the cycle sustains its energy, bio-magnification continues to haunt the top consumer; humans. As the dangers of the human footprint increases, so does the invasion of many harmful species that do not have an impact on chemical toxins; this is caused by pesticide resistance. Prevent this contortion by sustaining organic products as a regular utility. Using a compost bin to create compost material, produces non-toxic fertilizers, needless the use of harsh pesticides. This organic matter produced from the compost bin, is a great use of natural garden soil which will produce fresh toxin free food right from your backyard. For healthier choices; grocery shopping is a great way to identify organic food. Organic products are generally more expensive, but very useful. To make a difference, my family consumes organic products for the great health benefits and the conservation of the Earth.

Deforestation has led to 60% of the original forests in Canada to be cut. Fewer trees causes an increase of carbon dioxide in the air. We can protect our Earth by reducing and preventing clear-cutting of forests, by making sure we use less products containing wood. By my influence of technology, I make sure to inform my peers to reduce the use of paper and continue with our use of technology. I feel it's important to buy recycled wood products and support brands with zero deforestation policies. By getting others to do the same thing, we can inform companies to produce a deforestation-free future, which will reduce the impact on our human footprint.

The water is a transparent layer of underlying truth which reveals the harmful truth of our human footprint. The Chennai 2015 Flood, may seem like an unbearable natural disaster that killed more than 250 lives and crippled buildings, but the disaster started due to the impatient greed of humans. The negligent drainage systems and numerous structures to support the population, was the leading cause of destruction for the flooding in India. Worldwide, our human footprint continues to haunt bodies of water, through coral reef, animal habitat and niche destructions. An average of 353 million gallons of oil flows through runoff, into our lakes and oceans per year. Oil spills harm many organism by contaminating their homes. Acid rain is another harmful factor of destruction for our Earth, through atmospheric pollution caused by the burning of coal and fossil fuels. Using car washes instead of washing cars at home, can prevent dangerous toxins found in soap and cleaning supplies to flow down the drain into our sewage system. A variety of these situation may seem miniature, but the final impacts would turn out to be colossal.

The air surrounding the Earth has stimulated powerful punishments by the abuse caused by humans. Factory pollution is a gargantuan conflict in the world and is the number one source of pollution in the United States. Air pollution leaves an inerasable imprint on our carbon footprint. It's odious how air pollution in China is related to around 656,000 deaths every year throughout the country. Prevent air pollution by walking or biking instead of using cars. I admit the fact that I have a drive when I go to school, even though I could bike or take the bus; this is something I should change to help decrease my impact on our human footprint. The human footprint continues to destroy our ventured galaxies as well. From space sciences to water on mars; humans destroy our whole Universe through pieces of space machinery that harms the Earth. A hunk of space junk was expected to fall to Earth in a spectacular light show near my native home of Sri Lanka on Friday, November 13th, 2015.

An abominable fact proves that electricity used in a single home contributes to 12% of effects on our carbon footprint. The liberty of a gas emission free Earth, starts with the maintenance on an immensely relied resource; electricity. Decrease the use and temperature of air conditioners and heaters. Remember to take into consideration, the use of low energy lightbulbs. As the inhabitants in the era of technology, I believe it's important to consume our time into an invention that prospers our world for the decrease of our human footprint. I will take on leadership and host conferences and events for the sustainability of our carbon footprint, and inspire many people to do so as well. To reduce the rocketing of our carbon footprint, it's important to consider it upon our individual values to unplug all electric appliances when not in use.

A date that should definitely be marked for the history of Canada; November 30, 2015. The climate change meeting was perished with the summit of France, through the help of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The young leader vowed to inspire Canadians into identifying their full potential to reduce our carbon footprint. Actions have been taken, and as a pleased Ontarian, I am proud to say that Ontario is building transit friendly cities to cut down on vehicle emissions and helping businesses, to reduce their carbon footprint. Most importantly, we've ended coal-fired electricity generation in the province.

Let's dispose our ignorance and believe in the importance of moving from EGO to ECO. Let's pay respect and assistance for our home, by concealing the assassin of our human footprint.



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Life in Colour

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I closed my eyes and took a deep breath. I let the warm air fill me, the birds sing into my ears, and the blades of lush grass tickle my hands. Satisfied by what seemed like a truly immortal moment of ease, I opened my eyes and marveled at the sight before me. The summer sun lit up the field a glowing emerald, the summer breeze made the creamy roses dance, and the air made everything shine, as if happiness had a colour too.

Colour is too often taken for granted. Would this memory smoulder into my mind, in all its Technicolor, if the grass was a desiccated brown or if the dead roses crunched beneath my feet, cracking into pieces of tan? If life was devoid of vibrant colour, would life itself lose its lustre?

I pondered this for the rest of the afternoon, too distracted to resume reading on my picnic blanket. I was too shaken to think of anything else besides the image of a dying Earth, an Earth drained of all its natural beauty because of the human folly of arrogance. As a species sharing the same planet with so many others, it is selfish to take and take and take and not give in return. So this summer, I consumed articles and documentaries voraciously, learning about what I can do to manifest my sudden shift in principles into action that can make a change. It became a personal goal to improve my lifestyle, and perhaps even influence those around me.

After my summer-long crash course on the environment and my footprint upon it, I came across movements that aligned with the same sentiments that I held. My first drastic lifestyle change was to go vegetarian. According to the World Watch Institute, 51 percent of total annual greenhouse gas emission is caused by livestock and its byproducts. That trumps the amount of exhaust released by all forms of global transportation combined. While this diet change is environmentally sound, it is also ethically compliant with my long-time desire to veer from an animal-based diet. As I said, we share this earth with other animals, and this continuous exploitation is something I could no longer agree with. Soon, I will transition into veganism and will cut out animal products altogether.

Although I could not convince my Filipino family to change their diets (a seemingly impossible task, considering our ethnic cuisine), I was successful in asking them to limit energy use at home. According to the David Suzuki Foundation, all forms of electricity are harnessed through resources that contribute to environmental destruction, “from air pollution and global warming to habitat loss and nuclear waste”. We promptly changed our bulbs to energy efficient ones, changed our shower heads to water-conserving ones, and sealed up drafty crevices around the house. A little more challenging was changing our rates of consumption. We vowed to unplug any devices that were not in use, were mindful of which lights we actually needed on and which we could forego, and cut down on using plugged-in devices in general. While I cannot fully attest to my brothers' online gaming habits, I found that mindful “unplugging” has left more time for me to pursue my creative passions, like art, reading, and writing.

Finally, I discovered the budding lifestyle movement of minimalism. While definitions vary from blog to blog, and minimalist to minimalist, the general sentiment conveys the need to cut down in many aspects of one's life that put up the facade of “value”. What most newcomers to the movement take from it is that minimalism is connected to materialism and the admonition of it. As a capitalist society, we put too much value on owning things. We are too often emotionally dependent on the brands we wear, the model of car we drive, the bag we tote. We work for our money and “treat ourselves” for working so hard. However, minimalists point out that this feeling of satisfaction is fleeting in the long run.

I stepped back and analyzed my life and saw that I was proving every single tenet of minimalism correct. I had once-worn clothing overflowing from my drawers, cheap broken shoes lying around, and stress every morning trying to figure out what to wear amidst an overabundance of stuff. I thought I was happy, earning and owning all these things. But they didn't make me happy; none of it did. I realized that spending time with family and friends brought me joy, that these memories, like lounging in a lush field on a summer day, are the memories I would remember.

So I began to live life minimally. As I took these nascent steps, I realized the environmental impacts of my actions. I no longer contributed to the ludicrous system of fast fashion, an exploitative industry that sells low-quality products at the expense of sweatshop workers' wages and lives. If I required new additions to my closet, I shopped second hand. By doing this, I no longer contributed to the squandering of fertile lands for the demand of cotton for new garment production. My grocery shopping ways also faced a paring down. I insisted that my parents reduce their consumption of packaged foods, and instead opt for reusable produce bags and fresh fruits and vegetables. Plastic clamshell containers and paper cartons seldom find themselves in our bins these days.

It would be a bleak life to live without colour, and that might just happen if we don't treat our planet right. This earth blesses us with the breathtaking greens of forests, the infinite shades of ocean blue, and all the colours in between. As temporary tenants, we have an obligation to leave our home in the same state we entered it; as human beings preceding countless other generations, we must have the compassion to leave it in a better state.



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Human Footprint on Earth

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The cool ocean air breezed past Kairi as she walked along the beach. Soft sand stuck to the bottom of her feet as she walked, occasionally dusting it off only to have to back on her feet. As she continued walking, she noticed a small shape near her. Kairi squinted. The night sky made it difficult to see but luckily the brightness of the stars provided the light needed to identify the object. She bent down. It was a seashell. A yellow cockle seashell, to be more precise. Kairi wasn't sure if the shell was occupied or not, so she decided to leave the shell alone.

She decided to rest by the shore, making sure to be some distance away from the tides. Kairi crossed her legs, and sat next to the seashell. Closing her eyes, she breathed in the pure air. She listened to the waves gently crashing against each other. The ocean side was so peaceful. It was untouched by society, void of any distractions. Kairi then tilted her head upwards, and opened her eyes. A million stars sparkled above, each star having its own unique and special twinkle.

The night sky expressed such beauty that left Kairi mesmerized. She saw the starry night so many times and still couldn't believe there were so many stars. They were dotted across, casting a shadow onto the ocean and shore. Kairi gathered a fistful of sand and let it slip between her fingers. She never felt so at peace before. At school, she was always stressed and tired. But she always felt relaxed when outside. From listening to ocean waves to star gazing, Kairi adored being outside. She wanted to keep this peace and tranquility preserved. Not only that, but for other people to experience something so special. To be able to see more than just an ocean and stars. To be able to know that there's a place where you can just look up and realize that there's so much to see in the world.

Kairi looked around the ocean. Off to the far left in the distance, were parts of the island. Tall trees and hills were masked by the darkness. Kairi reminisced of times when she would climb the trees with her friends and hike on the hills. To this day, those trees were still there. Unfortunately, people from other islands wanted to occupy the one she lived on, and wanted to turn it into a resort to make money. Of course, the fellow islanders refused, but were harassed constantly. It sadden Kairi to think that some people and turn nature into some sort of money maker. She believed the right thing to do was to give back to the environment, or at least to minimize our effects on the environment. An ethical way of doing this would be planting back trees after cutting one down, reducing waste, something along those lines.

Suddenly, Kairi felt conflicted. Not everyone would agree with her green way of thinking. Some wouldn't even care. How could she persuade them to help preserve the environment? Thinking hard, she tried to come up with a way to solve this problem. One thing we all could agree on is that pollution was not good at all. It finds its way into the oceans and air. When in the water, it damages the ecosystems and can kill the marine animals. And when that happens, it throws off the balance in the ocean. Because if the animals die, who will take care of the ocean? Who would take care of the water for when we need it?

It was then the answers dawned on Kairi. She could help educate people on how the oceans and the environment were important to society and let people know. For example, how the Great Garbage Patch was a collection of litter that finds its way into the ocean and was very hazardous to the water because the garbage can be toxic. These toxins and other pollutants can affect food webs by collecting together and blocking sunlight for plankton and algae from getting nutrients, which would then lead to the animals who eat them have less food to eat. And when that happens, the apex predators such a sharks and whales wouldn't have their food. Ultimately, seafood would be inaccessible due to its high price.

Pollution in the air wasn't good either. It can lead to respiratory problems like asthma or chronic bronchitis. It's important to have clean air because smog can lead to inflammation in the lungs and affect the heart and blood vessels. It would affect the blood vessels by contaminating the blood with the pollutants, and carry it to other organs.

Kairi trusted in her vast knowledge to help those understand and care for the environment. She would persuade them to care. It wasn't an easy task, but she would do it. She wanted to tell others how important the oceans were, but to tell society why she wanted to protect them. The world was such a big place and given so much to people. It was home to everyone. There was so much to see and do and would be such a shame to not see them because of negligence to the environment. Helping the world's ecosystems would help educate people and give them a broader sense of understanding of helping others. But only if humanity could get their act together.



A Foot Too Deep

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A footprint; unmatched and unique while being parallel with its own existence. On the new sidewalk that is being built in my neighborhood, it appears that my neighbor stepped on it with her heels clicking the bare ground while the cement was moist. At the horrific sight of this footprint, I, the generation of year 2050, have a teardrop fall out of my eyes. I shut my eyes to remember the luscious green grass that shone under the bright sun and the beautiful blue sky with shades of purple and orange during sunrise. If only my fingers could paint my thoughts, I would fill the black and white world with colour. My eyes open and see a letter on the hard earth beneath me and it reads;

"Mother Earth's moisture is allowing our feet to sink deeper and deeper into the depths of despair leaving an imprint of our footprint on the earth beneath us. The deeper our foot sinks, we let it go further because we fathom the experience of something new but something new is not always something good but rather a threat to the future generations to come. Our foot has sunk so low that our CO2 emissions from cars and consumption of non-renewable resources has depleted the existence of polar bears in Greenland and Alaska."

Memories of my trip to the Beaufort Sea race in my mind. I remember running away from the massive polar bears despite the fact that they were harmless beings. Scientists had come up north to conduct research. They established that the arctic ice was thinning at an exponential rate and knew that the polar bears would not be able to adapt to this change thus, created proposals to receive subsidies for the research as it required expensive technological gadgets. Unfortunately, failure to convince enough supporters that this was a priority resulted in a decline in the population of polar bears.

"We have already entrenched the fact that the global temperature is increasing and acidic oceans have affected the population of marine sub-species however, our footprint has increased the concentration of carbon in nutritious plants which has also decreased the amount of minerals and nutrients that human bodies can extract from the plant"

In the summer of 2009, I saw families rushing into apple orchards, vegetable patches, and several others farms to collect their grains and vegetables. On a trip to the local farm, the grade 12 biology teachers insisted that everyone should reduce, reuse and recycle for it has a positive externality on the environment, meanwhile, the science students' rationale behind throwing things in the garbage instead was either "Who cares? It's just one item!" or "Carbon helps plants grow so it must be okay to throw it out" Ultimately, crop growth went up by 15% when carbon concentrations increased by 50%, however the amount of protein proportionate to the crop dropped by 5%-14% in rice, wheat and potatoes. Being a culprit of witnessing this and not doing anything made me burn with guilt.

"Some of these impacts cannot be undone. Nonetheless, we can reduce the carbon emissions in the world by taking small steps. Think twice about where you're putting your waste and where it should go. Take an extra 10 minutes to walk to school instead of getting a car ride. Buy local produce so we don't emit pollutants during transportation. Don't let your foot sink any deeper now because once the moist cement of Earth hardens, it will be too late to take your foot out."

These words hit me with a hard realization that I can't swallow. I must warn my friends, 2016 and 2017 that they must change their actions, laws, habits and life to align with and personify environmental friendliness.

"But, my dear child, abolish our footprint and make your mark! Let carbon be an element on your periodic table and influence your generation such that carbon emissions go from your science textbooks to those of history. When I was your age, we all thought, what difference can 1 person make amongst a world of more than 7 billion but just remember that a world of 7 billion started with only 1. Do not allow laziness to engulf you in its possession for the state of your own future is at your discretion."

In the mid 1900's, children imagined the world to be filled with shades of gray as films had a mixture of only black and white. If we continue our current practices and leave our footprint behind with our feet sunken deep into the layer of moist cement, the unfortunate imagination of shades of gray may become a reality after which, we may never get the chance to fill it back with colour. Take this time, wherever, whenever and with whoever to do whatever it takes to match each other and bring back the colour to life for me, 2050. If we start caring, the world will be cured by itself.



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Activism & Recycled Art

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Today, when people look at contemporary art they usually do not think where the artist gathered the materials to create their art. Surprisingly some artists create art from materials they find at landfills or garbage sites. Materials such as cassette tapes, newspapers, old circuit boards, etc. are often used by artists. The cost of material for these pieces of art may be minimal, but their meaning is powerful (Schiller, 2014).

Leo Sewell is an artist who grew up in Annapolis, Maryland, and as a child he would often go for hikes to the U.S Navy dump to look for garbage (Conway, 1997). Sewell began to create art in his father's wood shop, building objects out of garbage (Conway, 1997). He used objects such as police badges, barometers, belt buckles, dog toys, etc.

Sewell decides what he wants his sculpture to look like and then finds garbage to build it. He creates a skeleton of the object and then adds soft materials to the frame until he reaches the surface. Leo calls this stage, adding the muscle. After he completes the muscle stage, he adds garbage to the outside of the sculpture. An example of one of his works of art is Teddy Bear. This work was made from garbage and is a sculpture of a teddy bear sitting with its arms wide open.

Kyle Bean was born in Exeter, England and as a child he enjoyed creating models and drawings (Moore, 2012). He was influenced by Thea Jansen, M.C. Escher, Fritz Kahn and Cornelia Parker (Butler I, 2012) and was inspired by science and technology. Despite the fact that he uses a large variety of materials, he prefers to use paper because it is easily accessible and comes in many different colours and texture.

The process in which Kyle Bean goes through in order to create a sculpture is that he begins by reading an editorial brief and simplifying it until all that remains of the brief is just the visual concept (Butler I, 2012). He then decides what he should create and what materials to use. He also sources the materials needed for the project, and then creates the sculpture (Butler I, 2012). One example of his art is "What came first?". This sculpture is a chicken which is made out of eggshells. It is an interesting use of discarded eggshells to make people think about what came first; the chicken or the egg.

Steven Rodrig was born in Havana, Cuba in 1963 and worked in a circuit board factory (One DS, 2013). Ever since he was a child, he was interested in creating art from unique materials. He uses circuit boards for the majority of his creations (One DS, 2013) and gets his inspiration from everyday life. An example of one of his inspirations is Steven was making his son breakfast and broke an egg. The egg white and yolk started to ooze out, and he was struck with the relationship between manmade and organic DNA. In other words, Steven Rodrig believed the egg had data (Clark, 2011). This incident gave him the inspiration to create one of his masterpieces which is called *Attempt at Transferring Data into the Organic World V.9*. This sculpture is made out of circuit boards and egg shells. When the egg shells are cut open, the manmade mechanisms are trying to connect with the egg (Clark, 2011). For Steven Rodrig the most challenging part of creating his works of art is cutting the circuit boards due to the fact that some of the circuit boards are soft and some are rough and stiff. Some of his artwork has been presented at the Rouge Space in New York (One DS, 2013). The message Steven tries to send to the public using his art work is that beautiful art can come from discarded items and we should use them. With some imagination and determination, a piece of art can live in your home and not in our landfills (Rodrig, 2013). Using garbage to create art is important since it shows us that even items we believe have no use can be beneficial to artists. This benefits the environment as much as the artist since it is cost effective and sends a message to society to reuse and recycle. When artists use garbage, it reduces the amount in landfills and garbage sites allowing us to live in a greener and cleaner planet.

These artists have inspired me to not limit myself to traditional art, but rather explore various other interesting and creative ways to express myself. Items I could use from garbage, or in a junk yard could become my canvas and my tools to create new forms of art. Art that is vivid, versatile and stimulating. As a student in my school, I can suggest using garbage and recycled items to the art teacher to create lesson plans. In the past students have made jewelry from newspaper, clocks from discarded soccer balls and basketballs, or purses from plastic bags. We can create displays in our school to show other students that the possibilities to create art from recycled materials is endless. This is how I can help effect change in my school.



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North America Activism in Art

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This essay is about activism in art and will discuss advertising methods used by the non-profit organization People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA, 2015). PETA is the largest animal rights organization and PETA2 is their youth program (PETA, 2015). In order for PETA2 to spread their message of animal rights, they attend major music festivals and interview bands such as *Silverstein* and *Fall Out Boy*. The interviews discuss different ways that the bands help animals and how youth can help. These interviews are then made into videos and shared online with YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, in order to attract youth. PETA2 posts tweets on Twitter, to give advice, videos, contests, and links to join their "Street Team" which is a group of youths that gets free PETA2 merchandise in return for sharing their media campaigns. By giving away free merchandise, it gives youth a reason to want to share PETA's message. Celebrities such as Noah Cyrus, Lady Gaga, Boo Boo Stewart, Fifth Harmony, and Justin Bieber have all been featured in one or more of PETA2's advertisements. When youth are able to see somebody that they look up to on a poster, it automatically attracts their attention. The three advertising campaigns that will be discussed in this essay are *Dissection Kills*, *Seaworld of Hurt*, and *Be an Angel for Animals*.

Before PETA existed, there were two things people could do to help animals; volunteer for a local animal shelter or donate money to the Humane Society. While many of these organizations did valuable work to bring comfort to animals, they did not question why we kill animals or why we use them to test new products (PETA, 2010).

PETA was founded in March of 1980 by Ingrid Newkirk and Alex Pacheco in United States (PETA, 2001). In 1980, PETA organized the first World Day for Laboratory Animals Protest in United States and their first demonstration was against chicken slaughter at Arrow Live Poultry (PETA, 2008). From 1981 to 1983, PETA launched undercover investigations in laboratories and slaughter farms, and exposed footage of animal testing and animal abuse in North America. These videos were "released to the public in 2000" (PETA, 2008, page 2) and went viral very quickly. Since then, PETA has been working towards banning animal testing worldwide, and persuading people to become vegan.

PETA2 has created campaigns such as *Dissection Kills*, *Seaworld of Hurt*, and *Be an Angel for Animals*. Noah Cyrus is the younger sister of the famous pop singer, Miley Cyrus. Noah is also a supporter of the PETA2 campaign called *Dissection Kills*, a campaign that is persuading high school students to opt out of dissecting animals in the classroom. PETA2 believes that students should have the right to choose if they want to participate in dissection. Noah went through a full day of photo shoots, and a video was produced at the same time. In the video, "she explains why she decided to join PETA2 and why it's so important that animals are not dissected" (J-14 Magazine, 2015, page 1). In the poster, Noah is lying down on a dissection table, with her chest cut open revealing her organs. Her skin is pale to suggest that she is dead, and her face appears stiff. Her eyes are open to signify that even if an animal is dead, their spirit is still alive. The animals that are dissected are killed in order to be dissected in a classroom. This image was an inside look at the disturbing reality of animal dissection. PETA 2's poster is graphic and used a catchy slogan, "I am not a classroom experiment" (PETA, 2015, page 2).

Seaworld has been under pressure since PETA 2 released the campaign entitled *Seaworld of Hurt*. The campaign began in 2011 and its purpose was to persuade people not to purchase tickets for Seaworld (Seaworld of Hurt, 2012). The poster used a graphic cartoon image of an Orca whale, tied up in rope and bleeding. This symbolizes the pain that animals go through when they are held in captivity. Being in concrete tanks is equivalent to a human being forced to live in a bathtub for the rest of his/her life. All the images that were produced by PETA2 showed the disturbing reality of captivity, exploitation, and abuse that sea animals experience. The colour scheme is dark, to symbolize the depression animals experience when outside of their natural habitat. In total, at least 58 beluga whales have died at SeaWorld locations proving that belugas cannot successfully be bred in tiny concrete tanks where they are denied everything that is natural and important to them. (PETA, 2015). If the act of capturing animals for entertainment is to continue for much longer, these marine animals could become quickly endangered.

Fifth Harmony has been raising awareness with their new campaign, *Be an Angel for Animals* by working with PETA2 to send the message to their fans to adopt animals and not to wear furs. The group posed for a poster standing together in support of animals using darker yet vibrant colours in the outfits the girls wore, with a contrasting background. There is a faded illustration of wings and halos on all of the girls. They are to represent the actual title of the campaign. But if you dive deeper into the meaning of the poster, it also means that they are doing their part to help animals.

The way I can help animals is by being vegetarian, adopting animals, not wearing animal furs, and raising awareness in my school. I urge family, friends, and schools to try vegan-friendly food choices such as tofu or vegetables. I believe that schools should have posters on animal adoption. I suggest that students do not purchase any clothing made using animal furs.

Finally, schools should stop attending zoos as field trips, as it only encourages the captivity of animals. Rather than visiting zoos, schools could visit a science centre, an adoption centre, or a museum. These are the things I believe schools and teenagers can do to help save and care for animals.