

The devastation of deforestation essay sample

[Environment](#), [Earth](#)



According to National Geographic, forests cover about thirty percent of the Earth's land area. This percentage is falling drastically. Deforestation is the process of forests being cleared through logging and/or burning to use for timber or to use the area for other purposes. Many estimate that the Earth's rainforests will be completely wiped out in 100 years. The World Wildlife Fund is the leading organization in the fight to prevent deforestation. Along with protesting, petitioning, and working with companies and governmental organizations to fight deforestation, the WWF has over the years created a huge amount of activist- art; ads with the aim to raise awareness about various issues concerning nature, with deforestation being a primary focus. Deforestation is not only harmful to plants and animals, but is also negatively impacting human life as well.

This devastating issue has numerous other consequences that many are not aware of. The World Wildlife Fund has created through the medium of photoshop a plethora of ads that are both deeply moving and clever, with the goal in mind to heighten our consciousness and raise awareness about the devastating effects that deforestation has on our planet. Some of them simple, and some of them being more complex, these ads are posted all over the world. An ad that I found particularly fascinating was one that showed "a cut down tree having fallen on the WWF mascot- a panda; with the panda expressing a face of pain and discontent. In the corner a quote says " Deforestation in China threatens giant pandas." Deforestation has a major impact on climate change. Deforestation is responsible for about twenty percent of greenhouse gas emissions every year.

The World Wildlife Fund addresses this impact of deforestation as well, focusing on REDD+ (reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation); a mechanism that serves the dual purpose of reducing emissions of greenhouse gases to mitigate climate change, and removing greenhouse gases through enhanced forest management in developing countries. Many don't realize the extent to which deforestation is responsible for climate change. An article on the website for Greenpeace explains this correlation: Mature forests store enormous quantities of carbon, both in the trees and vegetation itself and within the soil in the form of decaying plant matter. Forests in areas such as the Congo and the Amazon represent some of the world's largest carbon stores on land. But when forests are logged or burnt, that carbon is released into the atmosphere, increasing the amount of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases and accelerating the rate of climate change. (Greenpeace)

The amount of carbon released from such forests is so great that it contributes up to one-fifth of the carbon emissions produced by humans globally. Although many believe that automobiles and various other forms of transportation are the leaders in "carbon emissions, deforestation is actually a greater contributor to carbon emissions. Deforestation has such a profound effect on climate change that Indonesia and Brazil are now the third and fourth largest emitters of carbon dioxide on the planet, purely due to deforestation. The majority of the deforestation in Brazil comes from burning and clearing areas of the Amazon rainforest. Up to seventy-five percent of Brazil's carbon emissions come from deforestation alone. By making a strong effort to prevent deforestation, the global community could easily drastically

lessen the amount of carbon released into the atmosphere, therefore slowing down climate change.

Rhett Butler, the founder of mongabay.com (one of the world's most popular environmental science and conservation news sites) explains that Indonesia has displaced Brazil as the largest deforester in the world, which has a huge negative impact on the climate because Indonesian forests release amounts of carbon that are far greater than most forests. Indonesia is the world's 3rd greatest greenhouse gas emitter, even though it is not a major industrial economy. Another example that Butler gives is that research has shown that rainforests in Brazil and Central America can directly affect rainfall in the U.S. "If you clear those forests, then a soy farmer in the Mid-West may see less rainfall, so there's a direct economic impact" (Butler).

The World Wildlife Fund works directly with companies to tackle the root cause of deforestation- logging. The WWF has created the Global Forest and Trade Network (GFTN), a network that spans over 30 countries; linking forest-dependent communities, non-governmental organizations, companies, and entrepreneurs with the goal in mind to create a market for environmentally friendly forest products. The GFTN also fights to "fight to encourage the demand for "good wood" – wood and paper products that are made from forests that are well managed. GFTN minimizes the demand for products from forests that are illegal sources of logging, and helps members of this network benefit from sustainable forest management. Due to the Global Forest & Trade Network, the WWF has successfully preserved habitat

for many endangered species such as great apes, orangutans, and borneo pygmy elephants.

Deforestation is clearly a problem that effects not only plants and animals, but humans as well. This issue threatens nearly 60 million indigenous peoples who live in forests around the world. The invasion of outside deforesting intruders causes devastation to the traditional lifestyle of these indigenous peoples who live in such forests, and causes a drastic loss to their culture and social institutions. Many of the indigenous cultures of the Brazilian states of Rondônia and Amazonas have been devastated by ranchers, slashand-burn farmers, and gold miners. Alongside creating art through the medium of ads, The World Wildlife Fund has collaborated and endorsed various other artists with the goal in mind to raise awareness about deforestation.

On March 1st, 2014, The Centre for Sustainable Development hosted a unit blanche, a night time arts festival displaying music, poetry, and visual art; all with the aim to raise awareness about various issues, with the main emphasis on climate change, human rights, and deforestation. The WWF was a main contributor to the festival, producing artists such as Catherine Plaisance. Plaisance's exhibition entitled Désolation displayed a series of collages on wood, evoking landscapes devastated by climate change and deforestation. At the festival, the WWF also had various "informational booths providing festival-goers with tools on how to prevent deforestation and help preserve our natural world.

Many assume that by reducing the amount of deforestation, the world would suffer a financial loss, but this is not the case. The economic gain of deforestation is actually very short term. " In economic terms, the tropical forests destroyed each year represent a loss in forest capital valued at \$US 45 billion." (Hansen, 1997) The destruction of such forests causes the loss of potential future employment and revenues. " One of the problems with deforestation is that it often doesn't really generate that many benefits, so it may generate very short term benefits for a logger, but if you look at the long term impacts it doesn't really make economic sense" (Butler). The positive financial impact of deforestation is on a very small scale. A local logger or company might make financial gains, but in the broader picture it will only harm the greater economy. The loss of biodiversity due to deforestation is tragic.

Seventy percent of our planet's land animals and plants live in forests, and due to deforestation millions of species have experienced a loss of habitat. The areas most often subjected to deforestation are some of the most bio-diverse on the planet, and this causes the loss of a plethora of species. Literally thousands of species of plants and animals are being wiped off the face of the earth due to the sheer narrow-mindedness and shortsightedness of deforesters. Some estimate that 50, 000 species of plants and animals become extinct each year due to deforestation. Reduced biodiversity will almost certainly lead to food supplies being more susceptible to disease and pests and fresh water becoming scarce. The loss of biodiversity has a devastating effect on our planet. Not only is it destructive to the communities of the immediate areas that are surrounded by the

deforester, but it also affects the entire planet. The Rainforest Conservation Fund explains this negative impact on its website:

Losses in biodiversity in rainforests cause significant changes in ecosystem functioning. About ecosystem functioning in tropical rain forests we know very little, but we do know that ecosystems are affected by changes in the number and kinds of species which they contain, an idea originally conceived by Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace. Intact ecosystems function best, since the organisms composing them are specialized to function in that ecosystem to capture, transfer, utilize and, ultimately, lose both energy and nutrients. The particular species making up an ecosystem determine its productivity, they affect nutrient cycles and soil contents, and they influence environmental conditions such as water cycles, weather patterns, climate and other no-biotic aspects. (Rainforest Conservation Fund)

There are two main causes of deforestation. One cause is the conversion of forests for other land uses such as for palm and soy plantations, for raising cattle and other livestock, and to build roads and other infrastructure. The second cause is forest degradation; for purposes of logging, fuel wood harvesting, and natural causes such as fires. Almost all of these causes can be prevented and are not by any means immanent.

We as a global community can prevent the escalation of the clearing of forests by pressuring various companies, industries, and governments as a whole to implement stricter enforcement for the regulation of forests that are susceptible to the issue. The World Wildlife Fund explains the main causes of deforestation thoroughly on their website:

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Conversion of forests – from South America’s tropical forests to Russia’s temperate forests – to meet worldwide demand for consumer products is leading to deforestation and a range of ecological and social impacts. As a result, agriculture is widely believed to be one of the main causes of deforestation. Around the world, forests are giving way to plantations for oil palm, soy, rubber, coffee, tea, and rice among many other crops. Of increasing concern is the soaring popularity of bio-fuels. Bio-fuels are generated from oils extracted from plants such as oil palm – which are often grown on land cleared of natural forests.

(World Wildlife Fund)

In hope of reducing carbon emissions, many industries are turning to bio-fuels. In contrast, many of the sources of such bio-fuels are causing the clearing of various forests, which in turn causes even more damage to the issue.

Causing a drastic reduction in deforestation would not be very difficult for society as a whole, and would bring many long-term benefits. The world needs to unite as a "global community and realize that stopping, or at least slowing down deforestation is what is best for us and our planet. I believe that the main problem with raising awareness about deforestation is that many communities feel detached from the problem; they feel that they are not directly affected by it. After conducting all of my research, I realize that everyone on this planet is directly affected by deforestation. An example of the correlation between this issue that seems so far away and the first world that we are privileged with in the U. S, is the origin of various medicinal

drugs; many have been synthesized from plants in the rainforest, such as vinblastine.

Vinblastine is a drug that is used to treat leukemia and is directly derived from plants in the rainforest. If a mother of a child with leukemia were to be made aware about this fact, I can almost be sure that she would want to do her part to raise awareness about the issue and help prevent deforestation, if she knew that it would help her son directly. We need to raise awareness about this issue in a direct and personal manner because that is the only way that people will respond to the issue of deforestation.

I believe that art in general is about raising awareness. Whether it is spiritual, emotional, or physical, I believe that all art has this common goal in mind. I think that art is a way for many people to be introduced to various issues; whether it's through lyrics, the contents of a painting, or an artist speaking about the subject directly, fans of an artist are often prone to investigating and exploring an issue just because of the artist at hand. One artist that I focused on in connection with the issue of deforestation is Konstantin Dimopoulos. Dimopoulos is a sculptor, installation and performance artist with origins in Australia. Throughout his career the artist has delved into various global issues in his "work, such as the 1989 exhibition, *Mind at the End of It's Tether*, oil paintings that depict the poor working conditions and struggles of men working in the printing room of Wellington's daily newspaper.

In recent years, Dimopoulos has delved into the issue of deforestation with his project *The Blue Trees*, in which he paints over real trees in various cities

with blue paint, in order to raise awareness about the issue of deforestation. This project was first created in Melbourne, Australia in 2005, and the artist has since continued to paint trees in Vancouver, Virginia, Sacramento, Seattle, New Zealand, and many other locations. Dimopoulos uses a natural water-based pigment to color the trunks and branches of trees blue, transforming them into living works of art, with the goal in mind to raise awareness about the issue of deforestation, and how vital trees are to our existence. On his website, Dimopoulos describes his project and his mission clearly and concisely:

In my environmental installation, The Blue Trees, the colour and the Tree come together to transform and affect each other; the colour changing the Tree into something surreal, something out of this world. While the Tree, rooted in this earth reflects what we may lose. This change is important not only as a means to highlight ecological issues, such as the ecocide of our forests, but also that it may effect a transformation in the psyche of people by raising our social consciousness. With The Blue Trees, the colour and the Tree become a sculptural work referencing people's lives, their daily existence and how individually and collectively we shape the "world we inhabit. I have always known that art is and has always has been an extended part of nature and that art can effect social change. (Dimopoulos)

I believe that what Dimopoulos is doing in painting trees in various first-world communities is precisely what needs to happen for this issue to be brought to light; that the communities who believe that they are not directly affected by deforestation are confronted with the issue, and realize that they

are in fact negatively impacted by it, along with the rest of the world. Art is a medium that connects people around the world like no other thing. We as a global community need to realize this and use it to our advantage in order to prevent the destruction and devastation of our planet, with deforestation being a subject of focus.

Some organizations that are tackling the issue of deforestation are Greenpeace, The World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth. These organizations all share common ideas and reasons for their involvement with the issue. From peaceful protests, to petitions, and various other ways of raising awareness about the issue, these organizations are making progress in bringing the issue of deforestation to the forefront of the global community. In writing this essay much of my research came from the World Wildlife Fund, which has proven to be quite concise and resourceful.

The organization was conceived in Morges, Switzerland on April 29th, 1961, and has since become the world's leading conservation organization spanning their work in 100 countries, with 1.2 million members in the United States and almost 5 million supporters globally. The WWF focuses on the conservation of nature and protecting the biodiversity that the Earth "has to offer. The prevention of deforestation is a main component of this focus. The WWF issued this image portraying a forest as a lung, depicting the vitality of forests to our world.

The WWF is doing a huge amount of work globally to prevent deforestation. The WWF created the Global Forest & Trade Network (GFTN), a network

designed to prevent illegal logging and to promote safe, responsible foresting. The WWF explains the GTFN on their website:

GFTN links hundreds of companies, forest-dependent communities, nongovernmental organizations and entrepreneurs in more than 30 countries around the world with the goal of creating a market for environmentally responsible forest products. (wwf. com)

As a result of this network that the WWF created, many species have been saved through the preservation of their habitat, including great apes, the orangutan, and the "Borneo pygmy elephant. The World Wildlife Fund is in my opinion the leader in the global fight to preserve nature, and more specifically to prevent deforestation. Many people in the world, especially in the U. S, believe that they are detached from the problems of deforestation, and that they are unable to do anything about it in the first place. This is false. There are numerous ways that one can help prevent the clearing of forests, even just purely as a consumer. One can be aware of the products that they are purchasing, and make a conscious effort to purchase products and purchase from companies that are less " harmful". On their website, the WWF lists specific ways in which an average member of society can help prevent deforestation:

Make sure that the forest derived products you buy are made from 100% postconsumer content materials

Buy only from companies that have a commitment to reducing deforestation through an environmentally friendly purchasing policy

If you are buying products made from virgin forest fiber, make sure that it bears a seal from a credible forestry certification system, like the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Read more about the FSC and false forms of forest certification

As a consumer ask questions about how the products you buy impact the forests.

Educate your friends, family, and community about how our actions here can impact forests thousands of miles away.

Deforestation is a main component of the devastation that is overwhelming our planet. If we hope for a somewhat healthy, balanced, and natural environment for our "grandchildren and the generations to come, we must face this issue now. Deforestation has already displayed many horrendous effects, and this will only continue to grow if we as a global community do not unite and confront this issue firsthand.

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