The Downhill Slide of Environmental Awareness Campaigns: A Comparative Analysis of Poster and Television Advertisement Changes in the 1970s and 2000s

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The 1970s were hip, groovy and delightfully tacky with a love for activism mixed in. It was a time when people and the arts promoted love, freedom, and peace. People acted against injustice, whether directed toward people, animals, or the environment. Art was serious at the time, as many changes were taking place and a "now or never" attitude was needed to inspire people as a whole to make a difference. Posters and advertisements demanded political action regarding the environment. As the 70s fizzled out, however, these art forms began to take on more of an entertaining role with the use of beautiful colors, fun patterns, and humor. As art changed, so did our culture. The majority of people today fail to pay attention to the news and feel that environmental change is happening on its own. Many feel that little needs to be done to clean up the environment because they feel everything is fine the way it is. We have become a society demanding constant entertainment and instant gratification. If something is boring or requires a lot of thought, we tend to ignore important messages, especially if the effects will not be seen until years later. The switch from seriousness to a more comedic feel has sculpted the way people feel about environmental concerns. No longer are we a group of people who are interested in causes because they are important; we have become people who only take part in the cause of environmentalism if it has entertainment value.

The environmental movement of the 1970s drew upon the activist attitudes many people had left over from previous radical movements. The strong urge for social change began in the 1950s with the Civil Rights movement. Starting in 1954 with a Supreme Court case that banned segregation in school, African Americans and white supporters protested for equal opportunities and treatments. The Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964, which made racial discrimination illegal. Not long after the Civil Rights movement slowed down, people began protesting the Vietnam War in 1965 (The Civil Rights Movement). The main reasons for this were the draft along with the fact that television broadcasts gave them a picture of what the war was truly like. With people riled up about the Civil Rights

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