

WHAT IS THE RADIUS OF YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE?

By Asher Jay

I'm going to ask you a series of questions that might take you out of the comfort zone you have retreated into out of habit and ignorance. It is my hope that you will answer these questions for yourself, honestly and with awareness of one simple premise - what you consume now will change the world you live in forever. Every choice you make today results in consequences that will outlive you. Every choice you save a penny on today was pinched out of another's pocket yesterday and will end up costing you more tomorrow. Making an informed, inclusive choice in the present tense will help you account for the past and ensure a future. Thinking about the following questions will help you choose the healthiest shopping aisles and the most rewarding checkout lanes in the global market place. You will feel like a whole new person, I promise you that.

Ready to question your choices?

Walk over to your linen closet and scan the inventory. What brand of detergent do you use? Why? Do you use bleach? Softeners? What do they contain? Do you know where each of those ingredients ends up? The largest organ on your body, your skin, absorbs every one of those hard to pronounce ingredients from every clean article of clothing you choose to wear. It also accumulates in every living organism it comes in contact with, once it rinses out of your washing machine. Now walk into your bathroom, examine your line of toiletries, what made you buy the brands you own? When you brush your teeth, do you ever wonder about the impact the ingredients will have on your health both directly and indirectly? Does your toothpaste, scrub or shower gel contain micro beads? When you shower off the shampoo you've lathered your hair in, ever stop to ponder how far your shampoo choice travels, from drain to aquifer or river, to ocean? Will knowing more inspire you to make informed, responsible consumer decisions? What propels your purchases now? Did you carry your purchases home in a plastic bag? A paper bag? A cloth bag? Do you know where the produce you purchased was grown? How far did it have to travel to get to your store? To your home? Do you care enough to take a moment to question? Questioning the impact of every choice you make with your wallet every single day of your life might be utterly inconvenient but it is absolutely necessary. Why? Because the answers not only improve your life, and wellbeing, but also assures a sustainable, holistic future for lives beside your own.

Every decision you make as a consumer in this globalized world economy results in the erosion and destruction of our home planet's finite resources. Make no mistake, while we take the earth's bounty for granted, it is finite, and it will run out, and since our lives depend on it, it will result in our demise. Are we each intelligent enough to fight for a healthy future? Can we choose to live a socially, and environmentally conscious life that will allow for a future that isn't deprived and divisive?

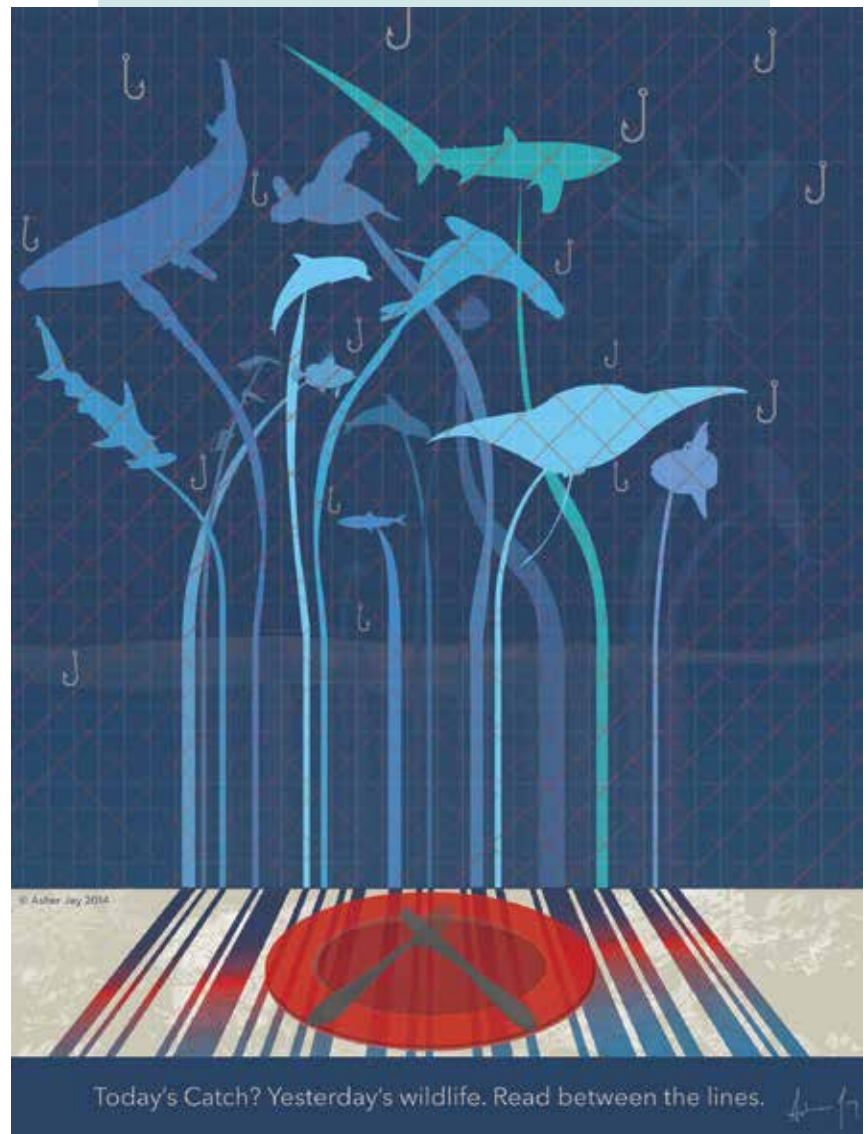
Our modern houses and structures are fitted with plumbing systems that hide both the source of our fresh water and the destination of our dirtied water. A few clicks on your phone gets food delivered to your door in disposable plastic containers that will outlast your time on earth. We close our trash up in bins and tie them up in bags so we don't have to see or smell it. We disconnect. We take the trash "out" — but where are we taking it to? Who is picking up after you, daily?

As a conservationist I work to raise awareness for issues I believe to be of catastrophic importance on a global scale. Wildlife trafficking, marine plastic pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change etc... But I often come across people who are disempowered, who have resigned to being victims of a failing system. They believe that many of the realities in our world are wholly beyond their control. Why fight for rhinos or elephants or lions today, they are all the way in Africa? You have never seen an elephant but managed to get on just fine, so why lend a voice to the voiceless? I'd argue compassion, and appeal to your humanity, but it's more than that. By shirking your responsibility, you are choosing to remove this reality and your role in perpetuating it from your awareness. You choose to disengage because you can get away with it, and you can get away with it because no one is holding you accountable, not even you. I have heard numerous friends say, "I'd rather focus on what I can do in my life — I can't control anything else."

You can't control it, but you can be conscious of it, and you can care. You can even care enough to acknowledge your contribution to the problem and choose to be an active participant in discovering a solution. In the 21st century, you just cannot hide from the fact that you are connected to everything that is happening in the global narrative, because you're biologically and evolutionarily connected to all living things and because your personal habits directly affect all living things.

Irrespective of your awareness of the impact you have, you have impact. You impact the world around you even in your sleep; with every breath you inhale and exhale. Grow conscious of your life, start with your breath.

Our food systems, our technology production, our jet setting vacations: all of these things are affecting the energy and ecosystems around us, as well as across the world. You can choose to be blind to these truths, but you can't choose to be immune to them.



"Code Blue" by artist-activist Asher Jay

"YOU IMPACT THE WORLD AROUND YOU EVEN IN YOUR SLEEP"

The micro-beads in your toothpaste and scrub, that tumbled down the drain with the day's dirt this morning, your disposable razor blade clicking off into the trash can, tampon applicators and beverage bottles. All of these plastics you use and shed in the name of daily convenience will eventually bio-accumulate in marine ecosystems everywhere from sardines to Blue Fin Tuna. And in a perfect example of karmic design or the boomerang effect, these plastics end up back at your doorstep every time that delicious sushi is delivered in a plastic take out box. Bon appetite.

Yes, it is easier to leave some of the harsh realities in our world shrouded by a veil of darkness, but that does not mean we escape the ramifications of our poorly thought out choices. What we do, comes back to affect us, within our lifespan, sometimes within a matter of months. Personal responsibility does not end with the impacts that are obvious, and a blind eye can't erase the damage we have thus far wreaked on our planet through our daily choices. Ultimately all the chain reactions of a badly designed paradigm result in the collapse of the paradigm itself, and since the paradigm is us, we will, as a culture and civilization, collapse under the weight of the problems we propagate. It comes down to your personal sphere of influence, and where you think your sphere ends, which defines what your sphere encompasses and what it excludes. Your sphere ends where your ignorance begins. For me, that sphere of influence, or sphere of responsibility extends to the entire world. I am not afraid to face my impact and I am not afraid to expand my sphere to let more life in. To be held accountable as a guardian is a privilege, hold yourself accountable.

YOU CAN'T FUEL LIFE WITH DEATH

- ASHER JAY

When Asher Jay is not thinking of rhinos, she's thinking of elephants. In particular she's a persistent voice of truth, even in the midst of misguided good intentions - like the crushing of elephant tusks a year ago by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Denver. They were following in a worldwide trend that started in Hong Kong - the complete destruction of ivory from elephant tusks. But the U.S. version jumped the track. when they only smashed the tusks into shards which they say will now be used to make a sculpture calling attention to the issue. Doesn't work. She says it is, "as ill informed as whaling for research and offers as much educational output as Orcas in tanks at Sea World." Ouch. Those are words to bring the issue home to Malibu, where Kirra Kotler received national attention for her protesting of the orcas at Sea World. same deal. As Asher says, "You can't fuel life with death." And she has a final loud message to everyone who owns ivory made from elephant tusks and dismisses what they are doing by believing the lie that tusks are just like teeth. - discarded from time to time, no big deal. That's wrong. Tusks have to be sawed off an elephant, and that usually only happens after they have been slaughtered. If you are wearing the elephant ivory, you are supporting the slaughter. So cut it out. TUSKS ARE NOT TEETH! - Randy Olson

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National Geographic Emerging Explorer Asher Jay

LOCAL ACTIVIST

KIRRA KOTLER

Local Malibu student Kirra Kotler was so moved by the documentary "Blackfish" and the treatment of Orcas in captivity, she protested the annual school field trip to Sea World. The protest lead to worldwide attention landing Kotler in Sacramento to lobby for the fair treatment of Orcas.

The Assembly Water Parks and Wildlife Committee began discussing Assembly Bill 2140, The Orca Welfare And Safety Act back in April. The bill would end the practice of exploiting orcas for entertainment purposes.



Photo by Dana Fineman for 90265 Magazine