

The Environment in France and America

It was 6am. Groggy and disoriented from an early awake, I climbed onto the morning bus and slipped my headphones on my ears. It wasn't a day I was looking forward to. I had forgotten to print surveys in French and my meial French wasn't ready to be spoken. I was anxious to verbally present my research to a class. The anxiety was tagged along with the subtle insecurity I had for a potential lack of interest and apathy towards my project. But the bus rode on, and I arrived at school.

After I got through nice hellos and some awkward hugs from my host sister's friends, the time came for the *sondages*. The teacher split the class in two for me and another American fellow. My research was over environmental perspectives in France versus America. Pen and notebook ready, I prepared myself and planned only to ask a few simple questions. "Make it quick and easy," I thought. Just ask about recycling. But, before I knew it, I was no longer standing in front of the class, they gathered in a circle around me. They went back and forth between global warming, the environment, politics, education, and back into global warming. Some students came from the other side of the class to join. I was surprised. They not only answered my questions with inquisitiveness, but it seemed like they cared. I left the classroom excited and grateful.

Before France, I conducted similar surveys here in Oklahoma. Unfortunately, the results hinted at disinterest but more so at a lack of knowing. Some were familiar with global warming and others simply couldn't answer survey questions. I didn't know what to account it to. So, I decided to shift the direction of my research slightly and I started asking why.

After an interview I had with peers, I learned they were never taught. They didn't reach out to news media, but their school also did not engage the subject. I didn't think too much of this, it was an undermined topic in the American educational system. So, along with general U.S. interests vested in natural gas sources (especially Oklahoma) and its little representation in education, I justified the answers of my peers.

However, upon further inquiry, American students stated they wished to be engaged, and despite not being fully informed, one stated from a survey, "the US should be responsible for the environment that is being harmed through industry." I believe awareness is growing but education needs to grow with it.

Back to France, I found substantial evidence their educational system has already grown. My host school had solar panels outside of their buildings, and the library in town had a children's section full of environmental books, ranging from global warming, deforestation, and sustainable energy. They were meant for primary schoolers, but I learned these things in late middle school and early high school. The gap between us and France was significant. It was noted in their answers.

In France, there is general responsibility to recycle, and they mentioned the U.S retreating from the Paris Climate Treaty. However, with solutions come other problems. French upperclassmen noted the taxes they have to pay. And in some cases, people left trash on the street because they don't want to take the extra steps to dispose trash in a specific way.

Solutions are needed and my inquiry for the environment continues. I believe a relationship between Oklahoma and France would be fruitful. Global issues and concern are

growing, and an evolved education is the solution. I hope to continue and expand my relationship with France.