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My View: Freedom of choice on saving the planet

By My View (<http://buffalonews.com/author/my-view/>) | Published November 13, 2017 | Updated November 13, 2017

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By Lynn Magdol

To save the planet, we have choices in how we live our daily lives. We pride ourselves on being a free country, and in fact we do have

choices. However, they are not entirely free. Whoever once said there is no free lunch was right – every choice comes with a price.

When I think about my own choices, this is crystal clear. Take transportation, for instance.

I tend to use the bus and train, for environmental reasons as much as anything. What price do I pay? I have to plan ahead, rather than just jump in the car and expect to be there in a few minutes. Transit schedules sometimes are not convenient, getting me there too early. The trip itself takes longer, eating up time I would have for other important activities if I took the car. When I'm not using transit, I am often on my bike. Price to pay for this choice? Dealing with weather, trying to predict rain. Wearing comfortable cycling clothes, even when heading for a business meeting. These require careful compromises.

Moving on from transportation, I think about my consumption of culture. I rarely buy books, choosing instead to borrow them from the library. I see no point in adding to my paper collection, wasting trees and possibly ending up in a dump. Here, there is also a price. A recent best seller often requires waiting in a queue. A dense or long book will be due back at the library before I have finished it, requiring attention to renewals before fines kick in. Note, too, that I don't use an e-reader,

which for some is the more environmentally sound option. I still like to hold the pages and turn them when I am reading. It's my choice.

In the realm of food, there are many choices, probably too many. Unlike some environmentalists, I am not a locavore. I've grown to love Asian and Middle Eastern restaurants, and the spices that can be bought for home cooking, too much to give them up. I do, however, eat and cook seasonally whenever I can. The price is small for this choice, just an occasional pang of regret when strawberries and cantaloupe from far away show up on winter buffets. It takes a little extra time to shop and prepare meals, another price to pay.

I am also not a vegetarian, a choice I've made, although I do enjoy vegetarian and vegan meals as often as I enjoy animal flesh.

The claim that there is no free lunch definitely plays out in the context of lifestyle choices for social change. But it is totally worth it.

Someone else said the personal is political, and that was also correct.

However little I am contributing with my choices and their accompanying costs to myself, it is hoped that my actions, when added incrementally to those of other like-minded individuals, will have some impact on the politics of change: In this case, a more environmentally conscious society.

To paraphrase Arlo Guthrie: if three people do it, it may be an organization and if 50 people do it, it may be a movement.

From there we still have a long way before we can stop worrying about the death of our planet. Only when governments legislate changes and when big corporations voluntarily amend their practices will we start to see improvements on a meaningful scale.

Our free choices are constrained by the limits of individual power and we pay a large price if we don't extend our daily practices to more encompassing policies and actions on a societal level.

Lynn Magdol lives in Buffalo and works for a better environment as an advocate for transit, cycling and walking.

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5. [BN] Blitz newsletter: Is the Bills' offense handcuffing Tyrod Taylor?
(http://buffalonews.com/2017/11/15/bn-blitz-newsletter-is-the-bills-offense-handcuffing-tyrod-taylor/?utm_term=Autofeed&utm_campaign=puma&utm_medium=social&utm_source=Twitter#link_time=1)



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