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Dear Mr. Gore:

I have read your essay on the environmental crisis and have found it highly enlightening. However, I feel there is a more important issue at hand. This issue is the dramatic increase of the human population which, like the environmental crisis, concerns the entire world, not just our country.

How ironic it is that America, with only a small percentage of the world's population, consumes more than two-thirds the available amount of food, natural resources, and home furnishings! We are in some way connected to this growing problem; our population is also increasing, and we demand more for our standard of living than other countries. The population explosion is not a new concern, but one that has been ignored, and now it is making its presence known.

Immediately in my neighborhood I see peers who have recently gotten their licenses go to get some gas. Each day the price increases. More people are buying more cars, which use up more gas. There simply is not enough gas available to go around, and we are paying for this loss with our paychecks. For a family of four, the price of food for one week has doubled in the last two years alone, from near two hundred dollars to four hundred. When I go shopping, I see gallons of orange juice costing three dollars, loaves of bread and simple bottled water for two, apples going from sixty-three to eighty-five cents a pound all in the same year, at the same store, with no proportionate increase in the size of the fruit.

The land, which includes natural resources and living space, is being taxed at an exponential rate. People are being forced to live closer to each other than ever. In any city or neighborhood, whenever crowding occurs, problems arise. Why is violence so high in large cities? It is because there are too many people in competition for the same necessities. Some people may reject the idea that violence occurs mostly in large cities, and they are correct. The urban population has reached such an intolerable rate that people--citizens and criminals--have begun migrating to smaller townships.

The worst effect so far has to be the insatiable demand for food. Our country complains about the four hundred-dollar a week grocery bills, but we truly are better off. People on "Christian charity" television ads present their plight mostly to an ignorant audience, although we see the effects of overcrowding and famine caused by too many people depending on the same piece of earth for sustenance. People die from starvation, their bodies becoming straggly and emaciated while scientists genetically engineer rice and bean crops to grow better in third world countries. To grasp the extent of the population overload, thirty thousand strains of rice have been developed and planted in India--thirty thousand varieties all suited to grow in different conditions, and people are still starving.

Other effects may seem more important to precede the population crisis but, Mr. Gore, this issue must take first priority. If our population is not controlled now, it may prove more difficult in the future. Countries may choose to enact population control methods which may be inhumane; India today still practices killing baby girls in some areas to avoid the high cost of raising and marrying their daughters. Our country will be forced to turn to alternative energy resources earlier than expected if people continue to run down gas, coal, and oil as fuel. Housing will become a problem; besides cutting down trees which is an environmental crisis by itself,

homes and buildings will continue to grow more crowded. Violence will escalate because of this newer proximity and competition over necessities and amenities.

Then comes the greatest risk of all. The world has a dead limit fancifully termed its "carrying capacity:" when the human population reaches such a number that it cannot be supported by available natural resources, something must give. As with the AIDS epidemic, influenza outbreaks, the bubonic plague of the Middle Ages, disease is given every opportunity to infect in a crowded society. Like what happens to a row of wooden houses when one of them catches on fire, the infection of one person by a single bacterium or virus would cause more deaths in an urban area than it may in a suburban area.

Perhaps none of this is enough to validate the priority of this crisis, or maybe it may not seem important over other issues as economics, politics, or national defense. However, I must stress that for every new addition to the population, one more person must be handled by the federal government. One day the citizens of America are going to overwhelm the 432 odd members of the House of Representatives because there will be too many people in each state for our congressmen to handle. The federal bureaucracy will no longer be able to work. The national government will be like a machine that has received too many instructions at the same time--it errors. What about health care, not to mention nursing homes for our newly elders, and jails?

Somehow, this problem must be addressed and taken care of by someone who is committed to it, not someone who wants to make up for lost campaign dollars. I have read your article, the passion with which you defend the environment, and I believe that you can help create a better future for me and all of us.

Sincerely,