

Editorial
A Deeper Shade of Green?

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As I reflect on my own presence at the birth of the *Electronic Green Journal*, formerly the *Green Library Journal*, I note how my view of "greenness" has grown, or at least changed shape. My idea of "green" was clearly "environmental" and in fact sprung from the recently formed ALA Task Force on Environment. We aimed to focus much needed attention on the state of our environment, both locally and globally, and believe me, we are still far from where we should be in addressing this need. I have written a few commentaries in the past year on the need to at least balance the incredible media emphasis on economic and financial data with an equal dose of environmental data, but that has largely fallen on deaf ears. We must press on, regardless.

The word "green" holds many different meanings for folks here and around the world. Clearly there are hues or shades of green, too. Many people, for example, look at the Green Party or Green Movement as an environmental movement that supports the work of groups like Greenpeace, or Sierra Club, or Earth Island Institute, and so forth. In the early 1990s my research into "greenness" led me to travel to the Clearinghouse of the Green Party, when it was located in Kansas City, to look through their files on the various local green groups active around the country. What I found initially was that all of the green groups in the United States had come to support what they called the Green's "Ten Key Values." To my enlightenment, I noticed that only one of the values revolved specifically around the environment: Ecological Wisdom.

The other values, as you can see from the sidebar, go beyond what most people think of as green. I now see these values as the foundation for "sustainability," another word that like green means different things to different people. I would argue that MOST of the people who are dedicated to preserving and restoring the environment to a healthier one for all of us would adhere to most if not all of the GREENS' Ten Key Values. I stress this not to suggest that anyone align

10 Key Values
Ecological Wisdom
Grassroots Democracy
Social Justice
Nonviolence
Community Economics
Decentralization
Feminism
Respect for Diversity
Personal and Global Responsibility
Future Focus

themselves with the Green Party, (though in journalistic honesty, you should know that in 2000 I collected signatures for ballot access for the Green Party in Michigan and even ran as a candidate for local office as a Green) rather I stress this because we need to think the world together, not apart. We have for the preponderance of our formal education studied the world in bits and pieces-call them academic disciplines. Rarely have we tried like "all the king's horses and all the king's men" to put it all back together again. We who have fought for clean air and recycling and preserving wilderness have too often not thought the world together. We separate out the short-term from the long-term, the environmental from the social, the economic from the spiritual. The fact remains that all that which is alive is interdependent.

One of the best kept secrets of recent years is the emergence of a world effort to develop a shared ethical framework for dealing with the interdependencies across this globe of many ecosystems and cultures. The [Earth Charter](#) was discussed at the recent World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. While it was not formally adopted, you can see from its worldwide list of endorsers that it has a global support base. In fact the process for its development was global and grassroots. Like the Ten Key Values of the Greens, the Earth Charter offers a vision of what a sustainable planet might hold for each of us. Its 16 principles are imbedded in a base of care and respect. The four organizing concepts are:

Respect and Care for the Community of Life
Ecological Integrity
Social and Economic Justice
Democracy, Nonviolence and Peace

We need to continue to make visible the important and essential elements of our ecological health and how our actions are putting our planet's ability to sustain human life at risk to current and future generations. The *EGJ* has been one of those beacons that sheds a small but important light on these elements. But we should take heed that our economic, social, and spiritual well-being are interdependent with our environment. To focus solely on the environment without concern for these other necessary components of a vibrant quality of life will lead us to the equivalent of chasing our tails. Until we can understand and feel the interdependencies of life we are doomed to making choices that will undo our successes. The hope I have in the Earth Charter, or efforts like it, is the importance of process and of commitment to care and respect. We want to take short cuts, to hurry to our destination, but history should teach us that tragedy might await us on that hurried route.

I struggle with the urgency to save human lives from despair and

deprivation and to save our rich biodiversity from extinction. We can't possible save the planet in one fell swoop. It will take millions of concerted actions to turn the ship around, actions that are choices we make every day. They are not often glitzy or substantial in the eyes of a mass media that feasts on sex and violence, but they are what will either pull us apart or bring us together. The choices we make when we shop, when we are in conversations with others, when we go to the voting booth are how we really will change the world. We should realize our ignorance of the magical complexity of life and be willing to entertain that there are other ways to address how we live with one another. We must step back from time to time to question our basic assumptions, and "to speak truth to power" as we understand it.

In our current culture, the conceit of American superiority and the primacy of the individual has cast us down the same trail as the Roman empire. It is not popular today to be tolerant of others, especially if they differ visibly from us. As Michael Moore demonstrates in his recent film "Bowling for Columbine," we are a nation in fear, a nation erecting barriers to protect us from each other. We seem suspicious of everyone who looks different. There is little trust, so we lock our doors, arm ourselves.

Instead we need a culture that allows someone to stand up and say, "Yes, I'm a tax and spend liberal. I believe in collecting taxes to support the common good. I believe in spending money to build schools, and pay teachers. I believe in spending money for police and fire services. I believe in spending money to help us understand how we might better solve our community needs, whether they be health-based or environment-based. I believe we should pay taxes to help others who have not had the good fortune we who have something to tax have had. I think we need to tax more of what's bad, like pollution. I think that excessive wealth comes at the expense of others, often including the earth herself. I think we should use taxes to support the creative arts that add to our quality of life." In short we need to think of the common good. And the common good must be without borders between states or nations, watersheds or foodsheds, humans or animals. The Earth Charter is an example of the path we might take.

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