

# THE ECOZOIC REVIEW

News, Muse, Reviews, & Practices for an Ecological-Cultural Age

November-December, 2019

[View this email in your browser](#)



*20th Anniversary of CES*

## Contents

<b>NEWS &amp; ANNOUNCEMENTS</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<a href="#">Herman Greene</a> - TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTER FOR ECOZOIC STUDIES .....	2
ANNOUNCEMENTS .....	6
<b>MUSE</b> .....	<b>7</b>
<a href="#">Alice Loyd</a> - THE TREES OF OUR LIVES.....	7
<a href="#">D. Paul Schafer</a> - MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN—A CANADIAN’S PERSPECTIVE.....	11

---

<a href="#">Drew Dellinger</a> - THEN AS NOW . . . HOPE!: CHRISTMAS 1968 AND THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT CHANGED THE WORLD .....	19
<a href="#">Betty Luceigh</a> - CREATIVITY AND CHAOS—AS CREATIVITY BIRTHS NEW FORMS IT MAY APPEAR CHAOTIC .....	23
<b>PRACTICES</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<a href="#">Laurie Cone</a> - STEP BY STEP – CAN WE MAKE NEW DECISIONS?.....	25
<b>BECOME A CES MEMBER, DONATE, VOLUNTEER</b> .....	<b>27</b>

---

## NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

---

### TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CENTER FOR ECOZOIC STUDIES

By Herman Greene

Twenty years ago, I sat at the kitchen table of David Cook and Joanna Haymore, the leaders of the Piedmont Bioregional Institute, and asked if I could form the Center for Ecozoic Studies as a program of PBI. Thankfully, they said yes. The ideas for the Center for Ecozoic Studies had come from work I had done with Sue Tideman and Albert Hardy and I have always thought of the three of us as the founders of CES. On January 1, 2000, I invited supporters to a dinner at my home with Thomas Berry speaking. This was the official beginning of CES.



**Center for Ecozoic Studies**  
*Seeking Integral Community in an  
Ecological-Cultural Age*

There is a backstory to CES. I met Thomas in 1982 when he preached in a church I belonged to in Brooklyn, New York. At about the same time I read his paper on “The Spirituality of the Earth.” My life has never been the same since. At the time I was engaged in an intense practice of law in New York City and had a young family. I had little time for outside efforts.

In 1992 I moved to Raleigh, North Carolina. I had decided it was time for me to move back to my home state. In Brooklyn I had also met Jim Berry, Thomas’s brother, and I knew he lived in Raleigh and ran a center with the unusual name of “Center for Reflection on the Second Law” (CFRSL) that was related to Thomas’s work. I was eager to meet Jim and was able to do so a year or two after I arrived. Through Jim I was able to meet Thomas when he retired to Greensboro, North Carolina, in 1995. This began a long friendship, one in which I was able to meet with Thomas almost monthly for the next fourteen years.

I joined the board of CFRSL and that was the base for my ecozoic work for several years. In early 1996, I wrote Thomas a letter suggesting the formation of “The Berry Society.” I had been a member of the Jung Society for quite some time, and I imagined a similar society focused on Thomas’s work. Thomas would not hear of this and cautioned me not to “push the river.” Still game, I soon wrote another letter to him where I suggested the formation of “The Ecozoic Society.” In response to this, Jim Berry reported to me that Thomas said “The ecozoic society is not some little group in Chapel Hill.” Still game, I worked with Sue and Albert in 1997 to develop a handbook for “Support Groups for an Ecozoic Society” and distributed it. The handbook contained a design for a periodic meeting where people could share their experiences with nature, engage in an ecozoic study, and end with reflections on what actions they would take after leaving the meeting. A few support groups formed.

In the summer of 1999, the idea came to me to form a center for ecozoic studies. I wrote a paper on what the center would do and with only a few changes it still guides our work. The original paper is available [here](#). As described above, the center began on January 1, 2000.

Our first project and the one CES is perhaps best known for was publishing *The Ecozoic Reader: Critical Reflection, Story and Shared Dream Experience of an Ecological Age*. The first issue, that of fall 2000, had this nifty picture on the cover:



Further the issue had one of our most important papers in it, “Thomas Berry’s Great Work,” a review of *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*. We continued publishing *The Ecozoic Reader* until 2007. Our final issue was on “The Wisdom of Women,” which was our most popular issue ever.

In 2008 we began publishing *The Ecozoic Journal: Reflections on Life for an Ecological-Cultural Age*. We have published five issues:

1. Cosmology and the Ecozoic Society;
2. A Tribute to Thomas Berry (containing 151 Tributes to Thomas, an obituary by Margaret Berry, reports of Thomas's Three Funeral Services, and an intellectual biography of Thomas);
3. What Is Ecozoic?;
4. Thomas Berry's Work: Development, Difference, Importance, Applications (containing 26 scholarly papers based on presentation given at an academic conference by that name held at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill); and
5. The Ecozoic Way: The Foundational Papers of the Center for Ecozoic Studies (published earlier this year and containing the key idea that CES has worked with over the last 20 years).

The sixth and perhaps final issue of this journal will be published early in 2020 on "The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry: Stories for the Great Work."

In addition, CES has published an online magazine since 2007. From 2007 to 2017 it was called *Ecozoic Musings: Chronicling the Transition from Economic-Industrial to Ecological-Cultural Societies*. Since 2017 it has been called *The Ecozoic Review: News, Muse, Reviews, and Practices for an Ecological-Cultural Age*.

Over two hundred authors have published their essays, reviews, and poetry in our publications. This is consistent with one of the early tasks we set for CES: "To enable the sharing of critical reflections, stories, and dream experiences concerning the Ecozoic Era."

CES has also held numerous events including events with Joanna Macy, Matthew Fox, and Barbara Marx Hubbard.

Herman Greene has made many ecozoic presentations in the United States and also in China (six trips), Korea, Japan (two trips), India (two trips), Austria, the United Kingdom, Poland, the Azores, and Brazil, and he has published ecozoic papers in several academic journals.

Officers, directors, volunteers, and members of CES have engaged in myriad activities. We have limited our email list (approximately 1,100 people) to those who have active interest and engagement in work that is



*Alice Loyd and Herman Greene*

related to Thomas's teachings. Most of our constituents have a connection with one or more of the following communities—Thomas Berry people, the process-relational philosophies community, Teilhardians, Earth Charter people, spiritual ecology people, and people who are working on deep sustainability. We believe our most important task is sustaining people in the Great Work.

For some time we have conducted our work based on four categories: (1) publications, (2) education and events, (3) arts and action, and (4) global services (constituent services and internal operations). The third category has largely concerned activities we undertake in connection with other groups. This has become increasingly important as we are now working closely with the Earth Law Center, the Institute for Ecological Civilization, and the International Process Network. We have one current project of special importance which is working with the Earth Law Center on the first legal casebook on Earth law.

I fear to single out anyone for their contributions to CES because so many have helped. I cannot resist, however, thanking Alice Loyd for her long, faithful, inspired work and remembering with special fondness Susannah Tuttle, who volunteered full-time for a whole year with as an intern CES when we were first getting started. I am also especially appreciative of what I have learned from working with Arturo Escobar, of the generous support and counsel Jim Peacock has given, and of Bill Peck's sage advice. I am also very thankful for Laura Baldwin and Sandi Greene who have handled the administrative parts of CES and for the design work of Katie Irons Dyer and Martha Kelder who together gave us our logo.

On December 7, 2019, 23 people gathered in Chapel Hill to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CES and the work of Alice Loyd.



A good time was had by all.

---

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Still Time to Submit Stories for the Great Work

We have re-scheduled the date of publication of our next *Ecozoic Journal* on “The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry.” It will be published in early 2020, rather than late 2019. If you would like to submit (i) a story of how you have lived and will live his legacy, or (ii) a comment on his legacy, there is still time to do so. The new deadline for submissions is January 15, 2020. While we have extended the “final” deadline several times, this is likely truly the final deadline. Submissions should generally not exceed 4-5 pages (2,500) words. Send them to [ecozoic.studies@gmail.com](mailto:ecozoic.studies@gmail.com) as Word documents.

### New Three-Minute Video on Thomas Berry

Many Evelyn Tucker and John Grim have prepared a new three-minute video on Thomas Berry that is excellent. It is available [here](#).

You will enjoy this video and many of you will find places to show it. We have received word from Mary Evelyn Tucker that no permissions are needed for the use of this video.

### Videos of the Georgetown University Conference on Thomas Berry’s Great Work” Are Available

On October 30-31, 2019, the President of Georgetown University and the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs hosted the above-referenced conference. Videos of all six sessions of that conference are now available [here](#).

The Six Sessions were:

1. The Life and Legacy of Thomas Berry
  - a. Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Yale University*
  - b. John Grim, *Yale University*
  
2. Thomas Berry’s Intellectual Journey: Cultures, Religions, Ecology
  - a. John Borelli, *Georgetown University*
  - b. Gerald Carney, *Hampden-Sydney College, emeritus*
  - c. Kusumita Pedersen, *St. Francis College*
  - d. Peter Phan (moderator), *Georgetown University*
  
3. Thomas Berry, and the Journey of the Universe
  - a. Kathleen Duffy, S.S.J., *Chestnut Hill College*
  - b. Catherine Amy Kropp, *Yale University*

- 
- c. Dan Scheid, *Duquesne University*
  - d. Frank Frost (moderator), *The Teilhard Project*
  - 4. Thomas Berry and “The New Story”
    - a. Brian Thomas Swimme, California Institute of Integral Studies (via Zoom)
    - b. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (moderators), *Yale University*
  - 5. A Vision Takes Shape: Laudato Si and “The Dream of the Earth”
    - a. Leo Lefebure, *Georgetown University*
    - b. Nancy Wright, *Ascension Lutheran Church (Burlington, VT)*
    - c. Heather Eaton, *St. Paul University*
    - d. Katherine Marshall (moderator), *Georgetown University*
  - 6. *Concluding Discussion: “The Great Acceleration” and the Challenge of “The Great Work”*
    - a. John Robert McNeill, *Georgetown University*
    - b. Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Yale University*
    - c. John Grim, *Yale University*
    - d. John Borelli (moderator), *Georgetown University*

---

## MUSE

---

### THE TREES OF OUR LIVES

By Alice Loyd

It is appropriate to think about trees as we enter this particular holiday season. They hold an important symbolic place in religious and secular traditions, and now their role in nature is rising to prominence. “Of all the solutions to climate change, ones that involve trees make people the happiest,” writes Bill McKibben in a recent [article](#).

We know that loss of trees is part of the climate problem, but McKibben’s article is about the complexity of climate solutions, including tree conservation. For example, the European Union classifies wood as “renewable” energy equal to solar or wind power. Thus trees in North Carolina’s forests are being turned into wood pellets that burn up in the furnaces of European power plants, on the assumption that as these forests grow back, they will recapture carbon. Adam Collette of Dogwood Alliance responds, “that could take a century.” A tree must mature in order to become a significant carbon sink, and, further, when trees are cut down, roots left in the ground decompose and become a source of CO<sub>2</sub> release. Collette says, the soil will still be releasing carbon for years after the forest was cleared ([npr.org](#)).

Even the planting of more trees is not a simple solution. On the one hand we are encouraged to plant. A 2018 [report](#) by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says curbing

global warming would require planting one billion hectares of additional forest. A July 2019 [study](#) by researchers in Switzerland, Italy, and France found the planet can accommodate a trillion more trees—all outside agricultural areas, cities, and existing forests. Some very ambitious tree-planting projects have been announced. In March 2019 the United Nations set a target to restore 350m hectares of forest—an area bigger than India—by 2030. India has pledged to plant 13m hectares by 2020, Latin America is aiming at 20m hectares, and African countries 100m hectares by 2030. China’s aspiration is to plant an area of forest as large as Ireland every year ([theguardian.com](#)). Ethiopia's minister of innovation and technology announced 353,633,660 seedlings were planted in 12 hours on a day in July 2019 ([aljazeera.com](#)). A recent tree-planting campaign started by a YouTube personality set an ambitious goal: by January 1, 2020 raise \$20 million to plant 20 million trees ([nbcnews.com](#)).

On the other hand, we are cautioned to plant trees wisely. The authors of a 2019 IPCC [report](#) tell us, “Widespread use of land mitigation measures such as bioenergy crops or afforestation at the scale of several millions of km<sup>2</sup> globally could increase risks for desertification, land degradation, food security and sustainable development.” The risks include reducing the food supply by pushing agricultural operations onto less-suitable land ([nytimes.com](#)). “Reforestation needs to be part of the solution if we’re going to succeed, but we need to understand that trees everywhere isn’t always a good thing,” said Peter W. Ellis, who co-authored a key 2017 [study](#) about the benefits of reforestation and other natural climate solutions ([nbcnews.com](#)).

Further, the locations we choose for planting should be appropriate for growing trees and the trees we plant should be suitable for these locations. “You want a tree that is going to survive in your climate with the minimum amount of maintenance,” said Peter Del Tredici, senior research scientist emeritus at the Arnold Arboretum at Harvard University. Short-lived trees such as poplars would not serve as good climate sinks. To have a meaningful effect, Tredici said, a tree must live at least 10 to 20 years. “It takes that long for a tree to build up enough foliage so that it can have a substantial impact on the environment” ([nytimes.com](#)). And if we plant trees, we need to water and otherwise protect them until they are well established. That means we either follow their progress ourselves or find reliable caregivers.

We also need to choose trees to fit a site that may be much warmer in the future than it is today. And people in snow-covered areas need to realize that adding trees can change how that land absorbs or reflects energy from the sun. At high latitudes, such as in parts of Canada and Siberia, snow-covered ground is more reflective than darker, tree-covered areas. “The concern is if you start planting trees where you have snow, you’re changing the color of the land surface and making it darker,” Poulter said. “Dark surfaces absorb more energy than lighter surfaces, so you’re actually going to warm the environment” ([nbcnews.com](#)). For this reason most large tree planting projects should take place in temperate and tropical regions.

Overall the studies show our first task is to protect the trees we already have. Most greenhouse gas emissions from land use come from deforestation. “I do think eliminating deforestation is

more important than planting new forest,” says Stanford University professor Rob Jackson, who chairs the Earth System Science Department and Global Carbon Project and is an author of a forthcoming study on the ability of forests to store carbon as more CO<sub>2</sub> enters the atmosphere. But, he says, “It’s not an either-or, of course. We can do both” ([motherjones.com](http://motherjones.com)).

In some places reforestation has become urgent, and not just for the climate. One example is mangrove forests, one of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. Over the period from 1990-2000, mangroves were estimated to be disappearing at a rate twice as fast as rainforests, causing serious economic, social, and environmental impacts, especially for the poor, who use the mangrove forests for shade, fishing, firewood, building construction, and charcoal production. Mangroves serve as breeding grounds for fish, prawns, and crabs, and on a global scale, they absorb up to 50 times more carbon than any other type of ecosystem. They act as natural buffers against flooding by reducing the force of storm surges. Dense, healthy mangrove forests can decrease the height of waves by up to 66% ([rethink.earth](http://rethink.earth)).

Mangrove planting has become quite popular, but the Wetlands International website tells us the majority of planting efforts are failing. All shorelines are not suitable for growing mangroves, and as with other trees, the species must be matched to the conditions it will face ([wetlands.org](http://wetlands.org)). “There is a learning curve here,” says Arne Jens of that organization. “If you try to adopt or copy nature—planting the right front species—it will survive. But if you manipulate nature and choose the wrong (non-typhoon-resistant) species, then there is almost a 100% guarantee that when you have a strong typhoon, it will die.” Involving local communities, especially the women, also makes a planting project more likely to succeed long term ([rethink.earth](http://rethink.earth)).

Of course trees deserve more respect from us than to employ them as climate mitigation. In 2005 Duncan Macqueen of the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) wrote, “Trees also have ends of their own, a pattern of genetic coding geared to survival and reproduction. Trees and other living organisms therefore have moral status all of their own” ([policy-powertools.org](http://policy-powertools.org)). Industrialized humans are only beginning to realize how little we’ve known about how trees function. In 1997, University of British Columbia forestry professor Suzanne Simard put in place the first pieces of research to demonstrate that Douglas fir and paper birch trees transfer carbon between them by means of mycelia. Later she postulated that large trees help out smaller younger ones by using this fungal network ([interestingengineering.com](http://interestingengineering.com)). The latest scientific studies, conducted at well-respected universities in Germany and elsewhere, confirm and expand on her findings. We are gradually proving to western minds what indigenous cultures have long known from close observation in forests: trees are alert, social, and intelligent. In the best-selling book *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate*, author and forester Peter Wohlleben has brought those understandings to a wider audience ([smithsonianmag.com](http://smithsonianmag.com)).

---

Tree planting and conservation, then, should take into account—to the fullest of our current knowledge—the purposes of the ecosystems with which we engage. Driving down to the Home Depot to find a tree to plant in the back yard with the kids on Saturday morning is probably an activity unworthy of the “ends” of the trees. A few hours of research about tree-planting projects will help us make worthy choices about this most revered of species.

So. Given their innate value as wise beings and their importance to Earth’s ecosystems, what kind of trees are appropriate for “planting” in our homes during the Christmas season? Natural or artificial, or none? The percentage of households putting up a Christmas tree fell from 90 percent in 1989 to 76 percent in 2018. The percentage of real trees dropped even faster: from 47 percent in 1989 to 21 percent in 2018. An Agriculture Department report conveys the challenge this poses for the natural tree industry: In 2002, farmers harvested close to 21 million trees. By 2017 that figure fell to near 15 million ([washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com)).

A real tree requires considerably fewer resources to create and get to the customer than an artificial tree, according to a 2017 peer-reviewed study by WAP Sustainability Consulting in Chattanooga, Tennessee. If people reuse their artificial trees, however, the artificial tree eventually becomes more environmentally benign. The most conservative estimates suggest it takes nine years of use for an artificial tree to be a better choice than buying a real tree every year. WAP says six years is probably a more reasonable guess ([latimes.com](http://www.latimes.com)). It is the manufacture of the plastic tree, from oil, which creates most of its carbon footprint; around two thirds, according to Dr. John Kazer of the Carbon Trust. Another quarter is created by the industrial emissions produced when the tree is made. They are also often shipped long distances before arriving in the shop and then a home ([theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com)).

The Guardian story also examines what happens to the tree after Christmas. When it comes to disposal of your artificial tree, there are more negative impacts—even if you have kept it ten years or more. A real tree that is recycled – by chipping – or is kept growing in a pot or the garden, can have negligible or even negative emissions, according to Kazer. But a 6.5-foot-tall real tree could result in a carbon footprint of 16kg CO<sub>2</sub> if it ends up in a landfill because the tree decomposes and produces methane gas, which is 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than CO<sub>2</sub>. When buying a real tree, Friends of the Earth advises to look for one that is locally produced. Another good option is a tree grown from seed in a pot. These can later be planted in the ground and are different from potted or “pot pressed” trees in which the root system is pruned, which lessens the chance of survival.

Whatever we decide about a seasonal tree or about joining a tree planting project, during this December we might spend time with a special tree in our neighborhood, or take walks among trees in nearby woods. We might go further and engage in “forest bathing,” the practice of relaxation surrounded by woodland. It comes from the Japanese “shinrin-yoku,” which means taking in the forest atmosphere. Originally conceived as a means of staving off work exhaustion, the practice of spending significant time in nature is believed to have a wide number of health

benefits: from lowering blood pressure and stress levels, to improving mood and strengthening immunity ([standard.co.uk](http://standard.co.uk)). Our species began in the trees, we lived underneath them for most of human history, and our survival now is tied to theirs as truly as it ever has been. As we celebrate any good thing rare or common during this season, let us honor the trees that came before us and we hope will remain with us all our days and beyond.

Now for the quiz: “What kind of tree is best for a Christmas tree?”

Answer:

One you can hug, of course!

## **MAKING AMERICA GREAT AGAIN—A CANADIAN’S PERSPECTIVE**

**By D. Paul Schafer**

*D. Paul Schafer is director of the World Culture Project based in Markham, Canada. He has worked in the cultural field for more than fifty years and is the author of many books on the arts, culture, and Canadian culture, including “Culture—Beacon of the Future,” “Revolution or Renaissance: Making the Transition from an Economic Age to a Cultural Age,” and “The True North: How Canadian Creativity Changed the World.” More information on this can be accessed on the World Culture Project website at: [www3.sympatico.ca/dpaulschafer](http://www3.sympatico.ca/dpaulschafer). See a video on Dr. Schafer’s work [here](#). See an interview with Dr. Schafer [here](#).*

It all started when I was very young. My father, who was born in United States, talked often about what a mistake it was for his family to leave the United States, when he was nine or ten, and come to Canada.

He also talked often about the remarkable contributions Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and others made to the development of democracy, politics, and governance in United States and other parts of the world. He was especially proud that he travelled to the United States many times when he was older to watch Grover Cleveland Alexander pitch, Ty Cobb steal bases, and Babe Ruth hit home runs.

He loved Vermont and New Hampshire, which explains why we spent most of our summer holidays there, as well as making many trips to this beautiful part of the world in the fall. We also took several trips to Washington, DC, and always looped south to enjoy the Great Smoky Mountains and North Carolina. I looked forward to our summer holidays in the United States so much because they provided me with an opportunity to stock up for the year on Hershey chocolate bars, Tootsie Rolls, and Reed’s butterscotch and root beer candies.

When I was older, we talked frequently about the United States, not only politics and sports, but also about economics, education, the sciences, international affairs, the arts, and a great deal else. Since my father had a keen interest in classical music, he purchased many records of performances by the New York Philharmonic, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Paul Robeson singing “Ol’ Man River,” and Marian Anderson singing “Ave Maria” and “He’s Got the Whole

World in His Hands.” We also discussed world-class universities like Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and Berkeley, famous museums and galleries such as the Smithsonian, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Art Institute of Chicago, and national parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone, as well as the seminal contributions Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Ansel Adams, John James Audubon, and Ferde Grofé made to activating and generating interest in the natural environment in the United States through their books, photographs, advocacy, and musical works like “The Grand Canyon Suite.”

Later in life, I found myself on the receiving end of a steady flow into Canada of American goods, ideas, and cultural products, much like all Canadians and people in other parts of the world. There was hardly a week went by that I didn’t watch several American movies and numerous television programs, see paintings by Andy Warhol and Jackson Pollock, read books by Mark Twain and Ernest Hemingway, enjoy poems by Robert Frost and Maya Angelou, enjoy songs by Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Dolly Parton, and listen to jazz performances by Ella Fitzgerald, Aretha Franklin, Louis Armstrong, and Duke Ellington.

I also found myself on the receiving end of much information about America’s involvement in the two major world wars as well as the Korean and Vietnam wars, the success of many American companies and industrial, technological, and communications giants such as the Ford Motor Company, US Steel, Standard Oil, IBM, Exxon Mobil, Walmart, Microsoft, Apple, Amazon, and Facebook, as well as businessmen, entrepreneurs, and philanthropists like John Rockefeller, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and Warren Buffett. This information contributed to expanding my knowledge of the phenomenal growth of the American economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as did the trips I took to many American cities, states, and historic sites. It was easy to see from these activities, and others, why the United States made such an incredible contribution to improving living standards and the quality of life for millions of Americans and billions of people in other parts of the world during this time, as well as making the world a better and safer place for all people, countries, and the world as a whole.

While these developments and contributions, like many others, were fueled by a variety of factors, most of them would not have been possible without a large, diverse, and constant flow of immigrants into United States from other parts of the world. Starting from modest beginnings, some of these immigrants went on to become famous in the United States and other parts of the world, such as Bob Hope, Edward G. Robinson, Maureen O’Hara, Ayn Rand, Andrew Carnegie, Kahlil Gibran, and Audrey Hepburn in earlier times, and Christiane Amanpour, Arianna Huffington, Elon Musk, and many others more recently.

What was true for immigrants in general was true for Jewish immigrants in particular. During the late nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century after experiencing the horrors of the Holocaust and being denied entry into the United States for many years, many Jewish immigrants were admitted into the United States and made the most of it. They assimilated well, and many of them or their descendants made important contributions to American culture and

the American way of life, especially in the arts, sciences, television, and film. Included here would be Albert Einstein, Charlie Chaplin, Leonard Bernstein, George Gershwin, Irving Berlin, Richard Rodgers, and Aaron Copland with such musical favorites as *West Side Story*, *American in Paris*, “*God Bless America*,” “*White Christmas*,” *The Sound of Music*, *Appalachian Spring*, *Billy the Kid*, and *Rodeo*.

What strikes me most about these developments and contributions, and many others like them, when are added up and considered in totality is how profuse and imaginative they are, as well as how symbolic they are of American culture as a whole. Not only did they come from many different sectors of American society—young and old, rich and poor, male and female, and different ethnic and racial groups—but also most of them benefitted people and countries in other parts of the world and not just Americans and the United States.

No person has contributed more to our understanding of this than Ken Burns, the documentary filmmaker. He has demonstrated an uncanny knack for selecting people, events, achievements, and contributions that are not only significant in their own right, but also highly representative of American culture and the American way of life in all their diverse forms and manifestations. This is evident in all of his films, but most especially in “*The Civil War*,” “*Baseball*,” “*The West*,” “*Jazz*,” “*Country Music*,” “*The Roosevelts*,” “*The Statue of Liberty*,” and “*The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*.” These films go right to the heart and soul of what United States and American culture are all about, as well as what Americans have contributed to the world. It is like reading an encyclopedia of “*Who’s Who*” and “*What’s What*” in the United States and the world.

It would be a mistake to conclude that there is only a positive side to this and not a negative side, which is true for all countries and peoples in the world. In the case of United States, there are the countless historical and contemporary injustices done to Indigenous and black people as well as other minority groups, as is the case in Canada as well, adverse experiences with rampant capitalism and the industrial-military complex, incredible inequalities in income and wealth, high rates of pollution and environmental abuse, and many others. However, on balance, there is no doubt that countries and people in other parts of the world have benefitted immensely from the multitude of contributions the United States, Americans, and American culture have made in the past—and are making at present—to other people, countries, and cultures in the world.

With this in mind, you can imagine how anxious I was to watch the American presidential elections in 2016, especially when Donald Trump talked about “making American great again.” With all the different activities and achievements that made America great the first time, I was excited to hear what Trump had to say about making it great a second time. It seemed to me that this provided a unique opportunity to take a long, hard look at what made America great initially, and what could be learned from this that would make America great once more.

This was about far more than the American economy. While the American economy had a very valuable role to play in this, it was really about American culture as a whole or total way of life,

and how this manifested itself in the world in the all-encompassing, holistic sense. This is because countless people and most countries in the world have been strongly influenced by American culture and the American way of life and wanted to be an integral part of this and personify it in some way. They wanted to sing like Frank Sinatra or Lady Gaga, play basketball like Michael Jordan or LeBron James, walk tall like John Wayne, act like Clint Eastwood or Meryl Streep, compose adagios like Samuel Barber, dance like Ginger Rogers or Michael Jackson, laugh like David Letterman or the Smothers Brothers, and share Martin Luther King Junior's enticing dream. Living next door to the United States, I was fully aware of this. Like all Canadians, I was exposed to United States, American culture, and the American way of life daily and in every conceivable way.

During the 2016 presidential campaign, I listened attentively to speech after speech and debate after debate to hear how America could be great again. All I heard, however, was that America could be great again by growing the American economy, increasing the rate of economic growth, and reestablishing America's presence as the number one economic powerhouse in the world. There was no mention of the indispensable role the arts, sciences, humanities, education, sports, recreation, and other activities played in making American great the first time and could also play a second time. It was to be achieved solely by focusing on the American economy, generating as much corporate, commercial, and financial activity as possible, creating countless employment and investment opportunities, curbing the rise of China as America's principal economic competitor in the world, preventing American companies from relocating in other parts of the world, and bringing an end to the practice of other countries exploiting the United States through unfair trading policies and not paying their fair share of the cost of maintaining the United Nations, World Bank, NATO, and other organizations.

I came away from the 2016 election campaign feeling that a unique opportunity had been lost to take a broader, deeper, and more all-encompassing approach to what was required to make America great again. While economics and growing the American economy were obviously a very fundamental part of this—they always are—many other factors had to be taken into account if America was to be great a second time, especially as many changes had taken place in the United States and the world since the previous presidential election was held.

My concern over this intensified when I heard virtually nothing said about climate change, global warming, and the environmental crisis during the 2016 election. What was most disturbing about this was the fact that a great deal of empirical evidence and factual documentation had been assembled by the world's leading scientists and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that there really was an environmental crisis in the world and it was being driven by climate change and global warming. By then, this crisis was being experienced in the United States and not just in other parts of the world, as manifested in more frequent and severe hurricanes, floods, forest fires, tornadoes, and the sinking of coastal areas.

---

And this wasn't all. Empirical evidence and factual documentation was also accumulating rapidly with respect to the huge disparities that existed in income and wealth in United States and other parts of the world, growing shortages and higher prices for strategic natural resources, basic staples, and fundamental foodstuffs, and escalating tensions, hostilities, and open conflicts between people and counties with very different worldviews, values, customs, beliefs, and ways of life.

If United States wants to be great again, I have concluded it will have to deal with challenges as complex, immense, universal, and life-threatening as these, as will any country in the world with similar aspirations. It will also have to play a leadership and proactive role in the world. In specific and concrete terms, the United States will be required to:

- reduce climate change, global warming, and environmental devastation in the United States, as well as provide an evocative example in this area for people and countries in other parts of the world to follow;
- decrease the huge disparities that exist in income and wealth in the United States, and play a pivotal role in helping other people and other countries to deal with these disparities as well; and
- improve relations between the diverse peoples in the United States and assist other countries, cultures, and civilizations in creating these relations as well.

What is most obvious about these challenges—which are looming larger and larger as three of the “greatest challenges of the twenty-first century”—is the fact that none of them can be dealt with effectively by taking an economic approach to them. This is because the economic approach is designed to produce goods, services, and material and monetary wealth, and is not designed to deal with challenges as vast, vital, complex, and multidimensional as this.

For this, a cultural approach is required. In the case of United States, this means seeing and dealing with American culture in the holistic sense and not a partial sense. Not only does this approach focus on American culture as a whole and therefore the need to achieve balanced and harmonious relationships between the parts of the whole—from economics, politics, industry, and technology to the arts, sciences, humanities, education, and recreation—but also it is concerned with making the changes in American values, lifestyles, and ways of life that are imperative to come to grips with these challenges. Interestingly, more and more people and organizations in the United States and around the world are embracing and applying this cultural approach. When they talk about the need to “change their culture” today, they mean they must prepare themselves for dealing with their greatest challenges and coming to grips with their most pressing problems.

---

Take the environmental crisis as the most obvious example of this. What is seldom recognized is that during the entire time America was becoming great in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the natural environment was ignored. This can't be allowed to happen a second time, which is why a cultural approach must be taken to dealing with this dangerous and debilitating problem. The most important step in this regard is to admit that there is an environmental crisis in the United States and in the world, as well as that the present economy and the natural environment are not compatible. The more the American economy grows and the rate of economic growth increases, the more pollution is produced, the more resources are used up, and the more damage is done to the natural environment and the lives of people and other species. This is not a viable scenario for the future.

It follows from this that a fundamental change is required in American culture and the American way of life if the environmental crisis is to be dealt with effectively. Exactly this same problem confronts Canada, Canadians, and people and countries in other parts of the world. Not only are Canada and United States two of the world's largest polluters on a per capita basis, but also they make one of the biggest ecological footprints on the world in per capita terms. This problem is compounded by the fact that both countries have had many environmental activists and pioneers over the course of their history, such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, Rachel Carson, Al Gore, and Thomas Berry in the United States, and Grey Owl, Jack Minor, Farley Mowat, Maurice Strong, David Suzuki, and several founders of Greenpeace International in Canada. Clearly it is time for these two countries to step up to the plate and make the changes in their cultures and ways of life that are necessary to deal with the environmental crisis successfully. There is a tradition to maintain.

What is needed in both countries in concrete terms to achieve this? First and foremost, they must devise and implement the panorama of preventions, protections, safeguards, and transformative techniques and technologies that are needed to reduce climate change, global warming, and resource depletion, develop clean, green, and shared economies, realize the balance that is required between the material and non-material dimension of development and life, and ensure ecological sustainability as a practical necessity rather than a theoretical ideal.

In order to do this, it is necessary to put a price on carbon, institute carbon taxes, and negotiate tough and rigorous agreements on carbon emissions; become carbon neutral as quickly as possible; phase out the use of fossil fuels; decrease greenhouse gases and toxic substances; capitalize fully on renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, and tidal power; shift to electric cars and trucks; exceed the targets established at the Paris Conference on Climate Change in 2016; and reduce the purchase of products that are high in material inputs and outputs and replace them with activities that are low in material inputs and outputs such as the arts, humanities, and spiritual pursuits. This can be achieved—as the United States and Canada have repeatedly demonstrated in the past by rising to the occasion and overcoming the major challenges that have confronted them—by manifesting even greater creativity, ingenuity, innovation, and determination in the future.

This same kind of response is needed with respect to the huge inequalities that exist in income and wealth in the United States and other countries in the world. While this problem came to the attention of the world initially during the Occupy Wall Street movement that took place in Zuccotti Park in New York on September 17, 2011—exactly 10 years and 6 days after the tragic bombings of 9/11/01 took down the Twin Towers in that city—many of the conflicts and protests that have occurred since that time in Iraq, Chile, Pakistan, Haiti, Ethiopia, Honduras, and many other countries have manifested a similar concern over income inequalities as well as other issues of fundamental importance to the world. There is a rapidly escalating fear among millions of low and middle-class families and wage earners that they will not be able to “pay their bills” and cope with the huge debts racked up by their governments in recent years. When 1 percent of the population of the world has as much or more wealth as the 99 percent and this is increasing, it is a very unhealthy situation for all people and all countries going forward into the future.

If the United States is to deal effectively with this challenge and provide an evocative example for other countries to emulate, it will be necessary to use the full spectrum of policy tools and administrative vehicles that are necessary to do this at present and create many new ones in the future. This includes increasing the minimum wage substantially, creating many more income possibilities and financial opportunities for working-class people and poor families, investing more heavily in education and especially cooperative education, eliminating tax shelters for the rich, and, most emphatically, putting in place a much more progressive tax system. The biggest tragedy of all in this respect is that tax rates for those at the very top of the income pyramid have been declining while their share of income and wealth has been steadily increasing.

What is required most in this area is for all political systems and parties to take several bold and major steps to the left. This is needed to help millions of people in the United States and billions of people in other countries who are suffering and struggling to deal with increases in the cost of living and huge inequalities in income and wealth that are threatening to escalate out of control. This would do more than anything else to provide people in the United States and elsewhere in the world with a much better break in terms of their oppressive tax loads and inadequate income-earning potential, as would the ability to write off a reasonable portion of their escalating accommodation, living, and health care expenses against their income. What a marvelous message this would send to the rest of the world if this badly needed political initiative and governmental breakthrough occurred first in the United States.

Finally, there is the challenge of improving relations between the diverse peoples of the United States and people and countries in other parts of the world. With all the intermingling going on between different peoples, races, religions, ethnic groups, and cultures today, this is a categorical imperative in the future. Without this, the world is destined to become a more volatile, unpredictable, and chaotic place rather than a safer, more secure, and stable place.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the role artists, arts organizations, and the arts can play in addressing this final challenge. Not only do music, plays, paintings, literary works, and other artistic activities possess the potential to broaden, deepen, and intensify our awareness, understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of worldviews, values, value systems, and beliefs that are different than our own, but also they bring people from diverse cultures and civilizations together rather than splitting them apart. Over the last few centuries, artists and arts organizations in the United States have manifested an incredible ability for achieving this, as well as for assimilating people with very different origins, backgrounds and roots, thereby enabling them to enjoy artistic experiences that transcend their cultural differences.

Rather than cutting funding for artists, arts organizations, and the arts in the United States, it is time to increase it. This is where the programs, projects, and works will be created, produced, and presented that will enable Americans from a variety of cultures, classes, interest groups, and walks of life to achieve unity in diversity and live as one.

What is true for artists, arts organizations, and the arts is also true for educators and educational institutions throughout the United States. It is time for these individuals and institutions to create the courses, curriculums, audio-visual materials, and digital technologies that are needed to broaden, deepen, and intensify knowledge and understanding of American culture as a whole, as well as other cultures and civilizations in the holistic sense. With many of the most outstanding educational institutions in the world, United States possesses the historical and contemporary experiences and institutional capabilities that are required to achieve this. Not only would this make it possible for all people and all countries to learn much more about their own culture and the cultures and civilizations of others, but also it would make it possible for them to capitalize on the profuse benefits and opportunities that can be derived from this.

This is undoubtedly what Rabindranath Tagore, the great Indian cultural sage, had in mind when he said, "it is time for all the great cultures of the world to come together and give and take from each other. This is the keynote to the coming age." This may also be the key to making America great again, especially if it is combined with building on the remarkable insights of past and present generations of American environmental pioneers and activists as well as America's well-known capacity for charitable contributions, generosity, and compassion when it is required.

In order to realize this, it will be necessary for Americans and American culture to open wide to the world rather than close off to the world. While United States has exhibited phenomenal economic capabilities, it has only scratched the surface of the rich potential American culture possesses to make far greater contributions to the world in all fields of cultural endeavor. To do this may not only make America great again, but also achieve this at a very troubling and crucial time in the history of the world.

## **THEN AS NOW . . . HOPE!: CHRISTMAS 1968 AND THE PHOTOGRAPH THAT CHANGED THE WORLD**

By Drew Dellinger

*“If we are to have peace on earth . . . we must develop a world perspective.”*

–Martin Luther King Jr., December 24, 1967

*“Oh, my God! Look at that picture over there! Here’s the earth coming up. Wow, is that pretty!”*

–Commander Frank Borman, Apollo 8, December 24, 1968

Forty-one years ago, on Christmas Eve 1968, an astronaut orbiting the moon took a photograph that changed the world. As we remember one of the most heart-breaking years in our history, it is worth remembering that the year of trauma ended in triumph.



As '68 dawned, the Tet offensive dispelled illusions of easy victory in Vietnam. On April 4 of that year, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of the world's most visible and visionary activists for justice was shot down in Memphis, triggering waves of outrage and sadness as more than 100 cities burst into flames of despair and rebellion. Two months later, Bobby Kennedy was shot and killed in Los Angeles.

Throughout '68, student protests and general uprisings broke out in Europe, the Americas, and elsewhere. In Mexico City, the Summer Olympics set the stage for the raised-fist defiance of John Carlos and Tommie Smith. In August, police and demonstrators clashed violently at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago.

This was the troubled world that the crew of Apollo 8 left behind in December, as they became the first humans to journey around the moon. Just as it seemed the world was falling apart, the astronauts on Apollo 8 took a photograph that would bring us all together, and forever change our image of the planet and ourselves.

In 1948, the British astronomer Fred Hoyle predicted that "once a photograph of the Earth, taken from outside, is available . . . a new idea as powerful as any in history will be let loose." The earliest attempts at such a photo were not particularly impressive. The first photograph of Earth from space was transmitted by a US Explorer satellite in August of 1959. The picture was badly blurred. Other images were better but were never shared with the general public.

In 1966, a visionary college student named Stewart Brand created and sold buttons which read, "Why Haven't We Seen A Photograph of the Whole Earth Yet?" Apparently Brand's "Photograph of the Whole Earth" campaign played a role in spurring NASA to procure high-quality photos of the planet from distant space. In November 1967, *National Geographic* magazine published the first color photograph of the whole Earth ever taken. In the fall of '68, Stewart Brand would publish such an image on the cover of his influential *Whole Earth Catalog*.

But the photograph taken by the Apollo 8 astronauts on Christmas Eve of '68 would have a special resonance in the world's imagination . . . perhaps because it was taken by human hands and not a satellite . . . perhaps because it included the edge of the moon in the foreground, thus providing the element of Earth as seen from the perspective of another celestial body.

A year before the Apollo 8 mission, on December 24, 1967, Dr. King, had stood in his pulpit at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta—his last Christmas Eve on Earth—and proclaimed that "if we are to have peace on earth . . . we must develop a world perspective."

"As nations and individuals, we are interdependent," preached King. "It really boils down to this: that all life is interrelated. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied into a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. We are made to live together because of the interrelated structure of reality."

One year later, Dr. King's prophetic call for a "world perspective" would be realized, as the three crew members aboard Apollo 8 captured an image of Earth that the world had never seen.

Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and Bill Anders were the first humans to see Earth from space in its wholeness, as a unity. The astronauts were astonished the first time they saw Earth emerging around the edge of the moon's horizon.

During their fourth orbit around the lunar sphere, the crew, scouting out landing sites for later Apollo missions, was engrossed in photography of the moon's surface when Frank Borman glimpsed something. "Oh, my God!" he exclaimed, "Look at that picture over there! Here's the Earth coming up. Wow, is that pretty!"

"Hey, don't take that, it's not scheduled," joked Anders.

As the crew laughed, Anders asked Lovell to pass him a camera with color film inside.

"Hurry up! Got one?" Anders, growing impatient as Lovell searched, repeated.

"Anything, quick," said Anders again, and then, "Well, I think we missed it."

Finally, Lovell got the color camera to Anders, but soon Lovell seemed to wish he had kept it for himself as he had had an excellent vantage from his window.

As Anders photographed the Earth emerging from around the moon all three men grasped the significance of what they were seeing.

"You got it?" asked Lovell.

"Yes," replied Anders.

"Well, take several of them," chimed in Borman.

"Take several of them!" repeated Lovell excitedly. "Here, give it to me."

"Wait a minute, . . . just calm down," Anders responded.

"Calm down, Lovell," said Borman.

"Well, I got it right—Oh, that's a beautiful shot," said Lovell, longing for the color camera. "Vary the exposure a little bit."

"I did. I took two of them," said Anders.

“You sure we got it now?” pressed Lovell.

“Yes,” Anders replied.

The crew of Apollo 8 had successfully captured an image that would alter human consciousness. There it was: The radiant, living Earth; resplendent in space; juxtaposed against the barren lunar landscape and the dark expanse; floating; infinitely beautiful; sunlit against the black cosmos; wet with oceans and alive with swirling clouds. The iconic “Earthrise” picture would later be called “the single most influential environmental photograph ever taken.”

That evening, the crew did a live Christmas Eve television broadcast, and up to a billion people around the world tuned in and saw the Earth as they never had before. Days later, when the Apollo 8 capsule splashed down, television reporter David Brinkley said, “The human race, without many victories lately, had one today.” After the mission, Commander Frank Borman received a telegraph from a stranger that simply read, “Thank you Apollo 8. You saved 1968.”

And just as Fred Hoyle had predicted, a powerful new idea was unleashed—a new era of ecology and environmental consciousness was born.

In 1970, the nascent “Earth Day” erupted into a national event with 20 million participants. Joni Mitchell’s song “Big Yellow Taxi” flooded the airwaves with its cautionary tale of trees in a museum, birds and bees decimated by DDT, and foolish humans who “don’t know what they’ve got ’til it’s gone.” On late-night television, Johnny Carson joked about a man fishing from a pier into water so polluted that when he turned around, “His worm made a break for it.”

In 1971, Marvin Gaye released his album “What’s Going On,” with the song “Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology),” perhaps the most poignant environmental anthem ever penned. Gaye’s haunting lyrics evoked poison wind, fish full of mercury, radiation, oil spills, overcrowded landscapes, and dying birds and animals. How much more abuse from humans can the planet stand? asked Gaye.

In 1972, the first international conference on the environment was held in Stockholm, and the Club of Rome issued its ground-breaking report, “The Limits to Growth.” In 1973, the Endangered Species Act was passed.

Clearly, something had shifted.

But four decades after that revelatory “Earthrise” photograph, our precious planet is more imperiled than ever. Though the impact of the photograph of Earth from space is undeniable, we have yet to fully integrate its lesson.

As in 1968, unexpected surprises/breakthroughs may yet redeem us. May we bathe ourselves in the message of Earthrise . . . then as now, hope!

---

An earlier version of this essay appeared on [Drew Dellinger's blog](#).

Drew Dellinger ([@drewdellinger](#)) is the founder of Planetize the Movement and the author of Love Letter to the Milky Way. [drewdellinger.org](#)

## CREATIVITY AND CHAOS—AS CREATIVITY BIRTHS NEW FORMS IT MAY APPEAR CHAOTIC

By Betty Luceigh

*Perhaps what we call Chaos is actually Creativity in the process of birthing new ordered forms.*

Throughout the history of the universe, changes have been ongoing. Common cyclic themes include birth/death, order/disorder, and evolution/devolution. Space and time needed for identifiable change vary. For Earth and life on it, when the process is slow enough to allow for adaptations along the way, such as a bird changing its beak shape, the changes appear to proceed smoothly and there is less urgent stress on the systems involved. When the change is catastrophic, such as a volcanic eruption, adaptation must happen afterwards, often under desperate conditions. Implicit in these changes are roles for Creativity and Chaos.<sup>1</sup>

One way to describe change is that Creativity is *continuously* in the process of birthing new ordered forms and within that process there are temporary periods of apparent disorder required. Another way to describe change is that Chaos is necessary first so that Creativity will then have separated components available to choose from to connect into new ordered forms. Either way, or some other, Creativity and Chaos are intimately related.

In our current times, it seems that chaos is often the prevailing condition. Has Chaos captured Creativity to use it for creating more chaos? I sometimes feel it has, such as when I learn about refugees fleeing from the impact of climate changes, brutal terrorism, widespread corruption, and other states of disorder. I can get discouraged witnessing current events that make the whole world appear chaotic and unbalanced. I've even asked if my own Creativity has been kidnapped and held prisoner by Chaos so that I am stymied to act. I refuse to accept that as true, however, and search for a clearer view space.

*Creativity's greatest moment to act is in this time of mounting confusion, for the energy to make the change is lessened by the dislodging that comes from our frustration.*

I regard Creativity as an essence of existence that assists in the evolution of the universe. It is ever-present and ready to participate in the generation of novel forms. As humans, we can

---

<sup>1</sup> Chaos has different meanings for physics, common use, or Greek mythology. I use it here in the general sense of local disorder and, when capitalized, as a state of being of energy/matter within the universe. Creativity is capitalized to indicate it as a universal driving force toward order

express new forms through words, material works of art, designs for renewable sources of energy, and so much more. Creativity is like a silent guide originating from our unconscious. We need only the intent of listening to her to bring her designs into our conscious awareness. Once there, we have choices about whether and how to bring something new into being.

There are more options for new connections when there are more parts available from which to choose. Frustration or dissatisfaction can be feelings evoked by old patterns being broken into parts. If we try to hold on to parts that must break away, it is likely to be futile. Instead we can view those parts as subcomponents for our inner Creativity to choose to use. Creativity's expansion of novelty through imaginative connections can influence the expansion of our own awareness for the process breaks old neuronal connections and forms new ones. We can convert frustration to elation through creative action.

When I sense the chaos being promoted by the intentional corruption, cruelty, or greed of others, I find myself feeling broken in both mind and heart. I am especially devastated by the ravaging of Earth. Some primitive part of me rises up to take action without knowing what action to take. It's like goodness and truth and beauty are being razed one after another. I have to believe it is only past *structures* that are being razed and not the fundamental essence of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. I believe these can always be creatively expressed in deeper and broader new forms.

With this belief I reflect on the nature of Creativity and what it offers. Rather than weep over the chaotic dismantling of what brought me comfort in the past, I can choose to see all the broken parts as pieces to be converted into new forms. I think especially of piles of discarded ideas, philosophies, standards of relationships, roles of groups of people, ways of treating Earth, and so on. Forms that were effective at one time in history may now need to be recreated into forms prescient to the emerging Ecozoic era. This is the challenging task at hand that impacts us all and drives us to identify common themes of natural processes.

If I am confused now by the potential loss of my previous way of life, if I am anxious about ruthless destruction of my preferred surroundings, if I am fearful of dictators setting brutal rules, there is still something no one can take away from me even in the midst of chaotic times. I will always have an inherent freedom to choose from whatever material or ideological remains are available. I will always have what still resides in my mind and heart to create what renews my inner way of life. I will always be able to send an intention to my unconscious for Creativity to play with until its answer rises into my consciousness for me to enact.

It may require more courage, humility, and persistence to make choices under chaotic circumstances. Perhaps that is one pathway to increase the inner dedication and personal strength required to express creatively. Both Chaos and Creativity may be needed in order to offer one's finest gifts in service to the humanity of which one is a member.

---

*I am Creativity waiting to serve in the darkness of your Chaos . . . to affirm my presence as the ordering principle that empowers you to reform anew.*

© B. A. Luceigh, 10/2019

*An earlier version of this essay first appeared in Betty Luceigh's blog on Psychology Today.com called ["Is It Beautiful?"](#)*

---

## PRACTICES

---

### STEP BY STEP – CAN WE MAKE NEW DECISIONS?

By Laurie Cone

As we all know, shifting away from the dominant culture of consumption can be overwhelming. Our brains are wired to stick to habits with which we're familiar. Our friends and family have expectations of us being a certain way. But it's clear that we need to make big changes. We need the individual actions that lead to larger societal shifts. Recently I had a chance to wrestle with just a small piece of my individual transition—making a decision about a vacation—and I wonder how others are making similar choices.

As background, a year and a half ago I "cashed out" of my contented urban environmentalist life and put the equity from my home's appreciation into a communal living/food growing project with eight other households in a small town in central North Carolina. My 82-year old mom did the same, and together our resources allow us to live simply, but comfortably. While monthly expenses are tight, I recognize I have the luxury of money set aside for emergencies and special needs, which occasionally include travel.

Recently several incidents came together to shine a light on how I, and maybe we all, are being faced with new dilemmas about how to engage the world in which we now live. First came the courtesy call from an airline saying I had a lot of miles that were going to expire if I didn't use them. Then just as I was learning about the work of an activist whose current projects connect nonviolence to effective climate action and cultural transition, I ran into a friend whose husband was partnering with this same activist to give a weeklong retreat immersed in Northern Ireland's history, landscape, and peacemaking experience. I investigated and found that the timing coincided perfectly with the ending of two large projects of mine. Surely all these signs indicate this would be the trip for me!

But the nagging feeling of "it's too late for experiences like that" kept coming to mind. How would I weigh the opportunity to interact more personally with two very thoughtful inspiring people with my work in shifting our culture to less resource consumption? Do I say no to any opportunities for renewal that aren't on an Amtrak route?

Many readers know about ecological footprints and may have taken a quiz to quantify the land area needed for different aspects of their lifestyles including food, energy, housing and waste. When I used this with my high school students it was surprising to find even the simplest lives needed the equivalent of at least three Earths; four to five was more the norm. The question that arose occasionally, after the chagrin of complicity faded, was this: “What would a life look like that required just one Earth, and further, a life that allowed Earth’s many ecosystems to *thrive*?” Those conversations led to what became my overarching goal when I moved to this community: to discern and adjust my standard of living to match the capacity of one Earth.

Another conversation I often had with my students was a reframing of the golden rule. Given large population sizes and large consequences for the environment, the “Do unto others” formulation no longer feels adequate as a guide for how to behave. “Would it be okay if everyone did that?” recognizes the bigger context we need to acknowledge going forward.

So what does this have to do with deciding about an Ireland retreat? So far, pursuing a simpler life has taken the form of making most of our food from scratch with homegrown or local ingredients, buying second hand whenever possible, moving toward zero household waste (always carrying reusable hot and cold drink cups helps!), and generating more electricity for the grid than we use. But moving beyond those straightforward changes and continuing to examine other habits, habits which to a privileged middle-class person always seemed “normal,” has been both discouraging and energizing.

I want to be able to tell unborn kids of the future how I recognized the precariousness of their lives and did what I could to end the harm to and increase the health of all the Earth’s ecosystems. I dream of a world free of violence toward people and the natural world, a world where each of us uses more of our creative talents and feels an animating connection to the ancestors and the places we call home. And it seems essential to me to find that way forward with a joyful, imaginative spirit rather than focusing solely on what’s being given up. Discerning which choices are still fine, and which no longer make sense taking this long view is hard work, but work that we’re each called to do.

How are you looking at *your* choices differently? How are you putting in place the building blocks of more loving community and a just economy that thrives without growth? It’s past time to simply compost or carpool or recycle ever more items. Our situation now requires much more countercultural action. Have you tried to stop using products that come from mining, or food from outside your bioregion? Have you taken plastics out of your life? How are you building bridges with those who look and vote differently than you? Are you doing more than planting flowers to help restore the insect populations in your area (some studies indicate we’ve already lost 80% of insect biomass in the last 30 years)? How have you maintained relationships with people who feel judged or threatened by the changes you’re making?

---

Well, I didn't choose what could have been a life-changing experience in Ireland. And I still wonder if I missed out on new skills and relationships that could have furthered my own activist work. But I did gain experience with self-restraint and weighing values that sometimes conflict. My hope for all of us is that instead of continuing down our current paths with our familiar habits, we deepen our commitment to making choices that reflect the conditions we currently face. May 2020 be the year we look back on as the point when we recognized that what initially felt like sacrifice allowed a more powerful coming together in service to generations past and future and all the beings on Earth.

---

**BECOME A CES MEMBER, DONATE, VOLUNTEER**

---

You may become a member of CES online [here](#). Or, you may send a letter to CES at 2516 Winningham Road, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27516, USA, with your contact information (name, address, email, and phone) and dues. Annual dues for regular membership are US\$35 (individual or family) and annual dues for a sustaining membership are US\$135. Alternately you may become a member (and pay by credit card or PayPal) by contacting [ecozoicstudies@gmail.com](mailto:ecozoicstudies@gmail.com).

*CES also accepts members who pay lesser or no dues.*

People who become members or renew their membership after November 1, 2019, will be 2020 members and will receive a complimentary copy of *The Ecozoic Journal* 6 (2020) on "The Living Legacy of Thomas Berry: Stories for the Great Work."