

# Earth Manifesto

**“The pen is mightier than the sword.”**

--- Baron Edward George Bulwer-Lytton

The goal of this manuscript is to contribute to the improvement of the condition and prospects of the world by shining the bright light of awareness, observation, reason, clarity and common sense into the arenas of human thought and activities on Planet Earth. This Earth Manifesto consists of Soliloquies that advocate far-sighted intelligent planning and positive change for healthier societies and a better future. It aims to be a provocative exploration of ideas and principles --- a passionate, authentic, caring expression in poetry and prose striving to promote a legacy of realized ecological sanity on Planet Earth.

A Soliloquy is “a literary form of discourse in which a character talks to himself or reveals his thoughts in the form of a monologue without addressing a listener.”

This Earth Manifesto consists of 121 Soliloquies, each page its own separate compilation of ideas. The author intends that this manifesto be perused from its beginning to end. Readers may use the Index as an overview, or to locate specific Soliloquies.

**“Perhaps the truth depends upon a walk around a lake.”**

--- Wallace Stevens

Life can be a rich and miraculously wonderful adventure, and the natural world outdoors can be experienced as a marvelously beautiful place. Note that Odes to this beauty and to the potentially lovely mysteriousness and spiritual wonder of existence are in short supply herein. So are verses celebrating the extensive and extraordinary triumph of human understandings, of exalted accomplishments, of the astonishingly diverse nature of creativity, and of the ineffable depths of noble feelings. And little is included of the great appreciation the author has for the extraordinary good fortune that is enjoyed living in the United States, a country that is still blessed with wide freedom of expression, with great opportunity, and with rich public lands and extensive natural resources. These things have largely been left out, principally to provide a sharper focus to the critically important ideas explored in these pages --- but please be well assured that they are hereby emphatically acknowledged as being included in underlying intention.

This work is evolving. Post your comments to contribute. And thank you to all whose ideas are quoted, paraphrased, or plagiarized in this Earth Manifesto!

**“Ideally, the Earth Manifesto is destined to become the most influential manuscript of the 21st Century.”**

Tiffany Twain  
Hannibal, MO.  
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## Earth Manifesto Invocation

Oh, **Muses of divine Inspiration**, your evocative powers are summonsed  
Nine daughters of the Greek god and ruler of the heavens, Zeus,  
And of fair and notable Mnemosyne, the wise goddess of Memory  
Please provide us with Insight, and all understandings we can deduce.

Let the passionate Soliloquies of this manuscript address the basic question  
Of how our societies can balance today's needs and tomorrow's well-being  
For it is quite critical that we accomplish this vital and necessary goal  
Achieving true perspective, salvation, security, and sane-seeing.

Realism is a doctrine asserting that the external world really exists  
Independently of perception, and that it exists substantially as we perceive  
Yet life and knowledge today are seen to be so complex and bewildering  
That often it is quite difficult for us to know exactly what to believe.

Truth generally lies in the coordination of conflicting opinions  
So free and open-minded discussion is needed to allow us all  
To pick our way through prejudices, propaganda and shortsightedness  
To achieve a clear understanding of Nature's increasingly cogent call.

One of the primary truths of ecology is that everything is interconnected  
So every attempt to understand humanity's relationship to the environment  
Naturally stumbles into sociology, philosophy, and alas, political controversy  
But, so be it --- Let us explore every aspect fairly, reasonably, and without lament.

A new integral morality is needed to allow humanity to prosper and survive  
A natural reverence for the vitality of individuals, communities, and ecosystems  
A cooperative respect for competing interests, bound by a bold movement  
Towards environmental sanity, international peace, and other basic wisdoms.

Myriad are the difficulties of effecting positive social transformation  
And inadequate is our awareness of the urgency with which it is needed  
Obstacles are daunting, with powerful forces arrayed against change  
But the risks to civilization and basic justice mount until it is heeded.

It is better to err audaciously on the side of hope than in favor of despair  
Though optimism is presumptuous in our current challenging day  
And the stakes of sticking with the Status Quo are prohibitively high  
So we must set our sights on a positive, sustainable future, and enter the fray.

Please join Tiffany Twain in her exploration of thoughts and ideas  
In grappling with true perspective and larger human concerns  
Let us look at the Planet Earth and humanity in a broad context  
Recognizing what is best for our well-being and future, as the world turns.

## Earth Manifesto --- Putative Purpose

**“Sail forth --- Steer for the deep waters only,  
Reckless O Soul, exploring, I with thee, and thou with me,  
For we are bound where mariner has not yet dared to go,  
And we will risk the ship, ourselves, and all.”**

--- Walt Whitman

Planet Earth is bountiful with life, and remarkably resilient, with wonderful natural capacities. Its natural systems are a life-sustaining marvel, with an amazing complexity, diversity, and dynamic, ever-changing balance that transcend full comprehension and understanding. Yet, it is becoming increasingly obvious that biological, mineral, and water resources on Earth are limited --- and fragile in the face the wide-ranging scope and growing escalation of human activities in harvesting, exploiting, consuming, degrading and polluting the natural world. These activities damage the integrity, productivity, and aesthetics of Earth's natural systems.

**We all realize, at some level, that humanity must live sustainably. It will eventually become critical that we give greater respect and protections to the health and ecological integrity of the systems upon which we are ultimately 100% dependent. The sooner, the better, in my opinion!**

**“The first rule of intelligent tinkering is to save all the parts.”**

--- Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold

**The human race must focus its attention and energies on the greater context of our existence and on the importance of our interconnectedness with the biological foundations of life. We must channel creativity, imagination, and resolve into a revolutionary effort to achieve more effective, sound and conservative ways of living on the planet, addressing the monumental environmental and social problems that confront us. Simultaneously, we must strive to resolve conflict between individuals, competing interests, and nations more fairly, honorably and peaceably.**

We have an increasing responsibility to ourselves, and our descendents, as we increasingly come to dominate the natural world, to more wisely plan our activities and impacts on the Earth. We must strive to improve our societies and institutions to better ensure that our health and chances of survival are not diminished.

**The purpose of this Manifesto is to create a clear, reasoned and cogent summary of ideas about the plight of life on Earth, and to illuminate steps to improve our fate.**

**“In the following pages I offer nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments and common sense; and have no other preliminaries to settle with the reader, than that he will divest himself of prejudice and prepossession, and suffer his reason and his feelings to determine for themselves;”**

--- Common Sense, Thomas Paine, 1776

Thomas Paine further expressed his hope that the reader would “generously enlarge his views beyond the present day.” The Earth Manifesto offers readers the same preamble, and in keeping with today's more expansive sensibilities, expands the gender of readers to include all women!

**Join me, and please pause and reflect on the thoughts and ideas contained in this Manifesto!**

**“We make our destinies by the gods we choose.”**

--- Virgil

## Fleecing the Future

The human race appears to be sacrificing the foundations for a good quality of life for future generations. We are creating this negative legacy as a result of an impulsive expediency: we find it easiest as a society to avoid making difficult choices, evading the need to deal today with the great social, economic, and environmental challenges facing us.

**Think of the absurd legacy that we are creating for our children and grandchildren:**

- (1) We are wastefully using up vital minerals and resources at the fastest possible rate, wantonly subsidizing the production of non-renewable fossil fuels, driving gas-guzzling vehicles, failing to invest in conservation, pursuing unwise energy policies, and demonstrating a careless, undisciplined disinclination to moderate our consumption.
- (2) We are eagerly developing, subdividing, and fragmenting the land, allowing urban areas to deteriorate, encouraging suburban sprawl, paving over farmlands, reversing protections of wild lands, and pandering to logging, mining, and fishing interests to unsustainably harvest forests, minerals, and fisheries worldwide.
- (3) We are degrading fresh water resources almost everywhere, using up aquifers, damming free-flowing streams, polluting both surface and underground water sources, and allowing water to be privatized, monopolized, and made into a commodity by Corporate interests.
- (4) We are dumping great quantities of wastes and toxins into the soil, landfills, waterways, oceans and the atmosphere. We are damaging the living conditions in the Earth's biosphere, altering the composition of the atmosphere, harming the health of the environment, and diminishing biodiversity by causing extensive habitat destruction, as well as mass extinctions, upsetting the beautiful balance of Nature.
- (5) We are strenuously defending the selfish privileges and prerogatives of the rich and the powerful by protecting the Status Quo, and by obstructing national and international initiatives for social justice, fairness, and equality of education and opportunity.
- (6) We are allowing religious fundamentalists to influence our societies in formulating policies opposing sex education, the availability of contraceptives, good women's healthcare, and family planning services worldwide --- helping to assure that there will be a growing population of people to exacerbate all of these deleterious impacts in the future.
- (7) We are allowing proponents of reckless, hardnosed military actions to make international conflicts worse --- and giving greater impetus to terrorism --- by using Imperial Hubris, obstinately justifying attacks on entire countries and disdaining conventional diplomacy, multinational institutions, and international law; and at the same time we are failing to truly address the underlying social causes of conflicts and terrorist acts. The so-called Bubble of American Supremacy is likely to burst sooner rather than later, increasing the need today for us to redouble efforts to embrace progressive actions and the establishment of peaceful coexistence.
- (8) We are pawning the assets critical to future needs by borrowing from the future, indulging in deficit spending year after year, leaving American citizens with the largest national debt in world history. And we are allowing the overindulgent, undisciplined federal government to get bigger and bigger, and to spend an increasingly large part of national income.
- (9) We are sacrificing our democracy by allowing the Vested Interests that benefit most from these unsound, shortsighted activities to dominate politics, convincing us that we must follow such misguided and irresponsible policies without interruption; and we are further allowing our democracy to be diminished by accepting the increasing concentration of television and radio stations in the hands of the narrow interests that support the policies encouraging these unwise retrograde activities.

Don't it always seem to go That you don't know what you've got  
until it's gone? Oh, they paved paradise and put up a parking lot.

--- Lyrics from Counting Crows

## Social Action, Tone and Tenor

The free enterprise system has been extraordinarily successful at utilizing resources, producing goods, creating wealth, feeding additional billions of people, lengthening life spans, and enlarging the range of human desire and need. Unfortunately, it has been socially and environmentally irresponsible, externalizing enormous costs and damages onto society, creating great inequalities and inequities, and at the same time consuming, polluting, and damaging habitats and ecosystems without adequate regard for the consequences of these activities.

**Every living system on Earth is in decline. We have decimated 97% of ancient forests in the continental United States. We use 20 billion gallons of fresh water from aquifers each year in excess of the amount replenished by rainfall. We lose billions of tons of fertile topsoil annually across the world. We are overfishing the seas, polluting the atmosphere, and destroying wildlife habitats. Our policies are clearly shortsighted, favoring narrow Vested Interests at the expense of people and of the natural world.**

“We have the capacity and ability to create a remarkably different economy, one that can restore ecosystems and protect the environment, while bringing forth innovation, prosperity, meaningful work, and true security.”

--- The Ecology of Commerce, Paul Hawken

**It is simple: We must work to change our economic system so that doing the right thing is easy, natural, and desirable --- where the natural, everyday acts of life and work and play actually accumulate into a better world. We must redesign our economies so that they will accomplish this vital goal as a matter of course, not as a matter of conscious altruism. Healthy, beneficial, restorative choices and actions must be made less expensive; and harmful, wasteful, excessively polluting, degrading, and destructive choices and actions must be made more expensive. This should be accomplished using effective Incentives and Disincentives to influence both consumers' and businesses' daily choices, rather than relying on burdensome, costly, and sometimes ridiculous regulations and red tape.**

The global economy is behaving in certain ways like a malignant cancer, growing out of control, advancing the colonization of the planet's living spaces by a sprawling, rapidly increasing population of needy multitudes and greedy rich people and powerful corporations and financial institutions. Human prosperity arguably depends more on a community-based, people-centered alternative that transcends the failed extremist ideologies of communism and unregulated capitalism.

We must now recognize and acknowledge the shortcomings of capitalism, and demand that business and government be required to act more responsibly, to account for their actions more fairly and truthfully, to act in a sustainable manner, and to embrace social values, reasonable environmental protections, and more intelligent long-term planning.

A North American native Indian chief noted that their tribal elders always made important decisions taking into account the impact of their actions on the Seventh Generation to come. We must begin to think farther ahead than our own immediate needs and our own short-term interests, as individuals and as a society --- and to think of interests beyond our own.

## Earth's Carrying Capacity

The dynamic balance of Nature provides a limited Carrying Capacity of natural systems for every species of life. Most species are limited to specific habitats and ranges. Nature's balance is NOT a static, unchanging, rigid stability --- no, it is much more a flexible, dynamic, adaptable state of evolving equilibrium between interdependent plants and animals that are coexisting, either in competition, or cooperative symbiosis, or impartial harmony.

The versatility of human ingenuity, of reason, imagination and creativity, together with our ability to make shelter, clothing and tools, and utilize a wide variety of sources of energy, has allowed us to extensively expand the variety of places we can live, and to temporarily mask the limits on our population and our consumption. But we are already utilizing 40% of the total annual biological productivity of Planet Earth, according to the book The World According to Pimm. This means that between foraging, agriculture, timber harvesting, wildlife hunting, animal husbandry, and our fisheries, we are taking 40% of the total annual bounty of the planet for ourselves. Stuart Pimm: "The extent of our impacts is too obvious to miss, and the consequences too serious to dismiss."

**We are simultaneously:**

- (1) Consuming the non-renewable resources upon which we depend;**
- (2) Destroying ecosystems through over-utilization, unsustainable exploitation, erosion, pollution and depletion; and,**
- (3) Increasing our demands on natural systems with our increasingly effective exploitive technologies and the dramatic increases in our human numbers.**

We are thus altering the ecological conditions to which every kind of plant and animal on Earth is evolutionarily nearly perfectly adapted, consuming an increasingly large proportion of living things and of available resources, ever more extensively destroying a wide range of habitats, and insidiously upsetting finely balanced interdependent biotic systems. **In other words, we are steadily diminishing the Carrying Capacity of the Earth to support us!**

Hello!?! We have a choice: whether as a species we will recognize the wisdom in that rare commodity, common sense, and proactively choose to transform our economy and our activities to healthy, ecologically sound, and restorative ones --- or whether we will wait until we are forced to change by scarcities, social strife, worsening international conflicts, or ecological collapse.

**"I believe that eventually, perhaps within a generation or two, they will work out what must be done to earn a living and what must be done to restore health to the earth, air, and water."**

**--- Wallace Stegner**

Here lies the next step in our social and cultural evolution. It is a necessity: we must overcome our society's resistance to progressive change, and embrace ecological principles, redesigning our economies and our institutions to dovetail with understandings of sustainability, environmental health, and natural balance.

**Refer to the Earth Manifesto Soliloquies that follow (see Index at the end) for concrete ideas on accomplishing positive change, such as those contained in "Primary Principles", "Intelligent Investment", "Fairness and the Greening of Taxation" and "Articulated Actions for a More Sane Humanity."**

# A Fishy Tale

Tuna are species of fish that could be described as having made an “evolutionary bargain with the devil”. Their streamlined bodies, warm-bloodedness, and powerful tails allow them to swim faster than any other fish, but their correlated high rate of metabolism mandates that they continue swimming at all times, never stopping, in order that they get adequate oxygen and not die of suffocation.

**Free-market capitalists urge us to continue pursuing our own bargain with the devil, a voluntary one of our own choosing.** They insist that we must not deviate from our policies that have brought such astounding material success, that we must always stimulate economic growth, increase consumption, expand our resource exploitation, and encourage human population growth. “So far, so good,” they claim, and damn the limits; technology and resource substitution will save us when we’ve used up all the fossil fuels and non-renewable resources.

Suppose they are dead wrong?

It is a conviction cogently communicated from beyond today, beyond ourselves, that we are being confronted with an urgency to invest much greater value in wise planning, efficient use of natural resources, conservation, moderation in consumption, and greater caring for intact ecosystems and undisturbed natural areas. Positive steps must be taken to mitigate the reckless gamble that the Earth can support 9 billion people at ever-higher levels of per capita consumption. Desperate, desperate problems will otherwise arise.

The self-centered, shortsighted, Special-Interest Litany of trusting that there are no foreseeable limits disregards the value of healthy forests, wilderness areas, protected wetlands, healthy coral reefs, marine sanctuaries, free-flowing rivers, undeveloped lands, undisturbed wildlife habitat and an undiminished diversity of biological species on Planet Earth. The poor stewardship of the More/Bigger/Better/Newer materialistic ethic is obscene in its wastefulness, its addiction to more and more consumption, its apparent love of stylish obsolescence, and its lack of concern for the deleterious impacts of human activities on other forms of life and natural systems. **TRANSFORMATION IS REQUIRED!**

Human nature does not change. Our institutions change only slowly. Ideas and economic systems and governments can change drastically and quickly --- though it usually takes a crisis to achieve such change. Circumstances, however, change continuously, and we must adapt to survive. Sticking our heads in the sand, being inflexible, insistently sticking with Business-As-Usual, or reacting with aggression and obstinate selfishness are all very dangerous responses to change.

**In times of great uncertainty, we seek the solace of certitude, of faith in leaders who promise to assuage our anxieties with strength, order and discipline; who give our lives meaning by striving for dominance, who project certainty of conviction, of moral goodness, of self-righteousness, who divert our attention from economic and social problems with bold militarism, who inspire nationalism and patriotism and ascendancy over others. Is this not what Adolph Hitler did? Shall we choose to learn, and not follow in those footsteps?**

## Conflicting Contentions

Bjorn Lomborg, in The Skeptical Environmentalist, argues that the world is basically headed in the right direction, that "we are actually leaving the world a better place than when we got it," and that there is no ecological catastrophe looming. He disparages environmentalists as believers in a false doomsday "Litany," contending that humanity "is not likely to experience any significant scarcity of raw materials in the future." He outlines historical trends and analyzes statistics extensively, forcefully arguing his own spin, a Litany of optimism and great trust in economic growth, in free market mechanisms, in private ownership, and in the capacity of resource exploitation to indefinitely create wealth, thus helping to solve the challenges facing humanity.

Lomborg's Litany is provocative and intelligent, and it emphasizes our true need to rationally set priorities in determining how to best allocate our energies and resources. He tries valiantly to convince readers that the problems facing humankind are really not so bad, and that we should not worry so much about environmental degradation, consumerism, overpopulation, deforestation, resource depletion, pollution, global warming, fertilizer and pesticide use, or biological extinctions.

An extremely valuable counterpoint to Lomborg's Litany is the brilliant businessman's insight into the world in The Ecology of Commerce by Paul Hawken. Yes, free-market capitalism has been remarkably successful in feeding billions, harnessing resources, creating wealth, engendering materialistic freedom and lengthening life spans --- but unremittingly optimistic projections that it will continue to do so without greater regard for natural systems seems to be an enormously presumptuous and risky gamble.

Tiffany Twain wants to go on record as not being a worrywart, but believing strongly in intelligent planning that takes into account the whole comprehensive breadth of human knowledge and understandings, not just the concerns of profit-oriented or power-hungry opportunists whose actions are detrimental to the welfare of people today and in the future.

Complexity beyond comprehension underlies all great issues facing human beings. Not only is there a wide continuum of perspectives concerning the many facets of problems, but also there are untold depths of influences and impacts, and distinct uncertainties of unintended consequences of human courses of action (and inaction!). To oversimplify issues is in itself a distortion, as for instance in the dominant doctrines of our government painting things sharply in terms of good or evil, black or white, right or wrong. (Tiffany Twain asks the reader to consider ideas herein with care, on the probable "off chance" that oversimplifications in her thinking skew arguments upon occasion.)

Our striving must be for our best understanding, our wisest courses of action, and a noble fairness and farsightedness of purpose.



## Tumult in the World of Ideas

Environmental ideas and policies began to significantly influence the world only in the 1960's. Ideological struggles, security anxiety, competition, war and prevailing social concerns dominated human attentions in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, preventing a healthy ecological perspective from achieving adequate sway in human affairs.

Orthodox ideas tend to become entrenched in social and political systems long past the point that they remain utilitarian, and well into the new era when they become clearly detrimental and costly. The economic status quo in the last 100 years has been characterized by a worldwide obsession with growth at almost any cost; this was practicable as long as the planet had available arable lands, vast forests, seemingly limitless stocks of fish, a cornucopia of natural resources, and plenty of fresh water, ozone, unpolluted air, and places to dump wastes. Today, however, ecological buffers like frontiers, wild lands and wetlands are rapidly disappearing, and real costs are mounting --- yet ideological orthodoxy and business-as-usual practices remain the most powerful determinants of economic and political policies.

Far-sighted planning can address problems while good solutions are still manageable. It is dangerously unwise to allow problems to become so exacerbated, from lack of foresight, that they become critical, urgent, intractable, and extraordinarily disruptive to remedy. We must elevate environmental concerns and peaceful coexistence to a higher priority. It is prudent to address serious problems SOONER rather than LATER!

### Deliberating Imperatives

“You must bet.  
You have no choice.  
You are in the game.”  
--- Pascal

All predictions about the future are essentially wagers, are uncertainties, are assessments of PROBABILITY --- and are potential illusions. Our obligation seems obvious --- to wager with the best odds!

The BET SITUATION confronts us, due to the simultaneity of the facts that (1) there is uncertainty, and (2) it is critical that we make decisions about the important issues that affect us, and our best courses of action.

To formulate our opinions and to try and understand our relative truths, we are wisest to first pay attention, looking closely and thinking clearly --- and to take into account our observations and our intuitions, checking them against likelihood, before believing in the doctrines and urgings of vested interests such as business, politicians, dogmas, and our own anxieties and self-centeredness.

## Bet Situation One

- 1) We can gamble that natural resources on Earth are inexhaustible --- or we can bet that using them conservatively and less wastefully, and sparing some for future generations would be wiser.
  - 2) We can gamble that resource limitations do not matter because technology will save us --- or we can bet that moderating our demands is a safer choice, choosing to protect fresh water resources, ocean fisheries, arable lands, rainforests and old-growth temperate forests.
  - 3) We can gamble that we are not assaulting biodiversity to an extent dangerous to our own well-being --- or we can bet that we should spare some habitats to ensure that most other forms of life on Earth survive this century.
  - 4) We can gamble that extinctions being caused by humanity will not affect us adversely in the future --- or we can bet otherwise, and act to make a difference, taking steps to protect biodiversity worldwide.
  - 5) We can gamble that laissez-faire capitalism and policies designed to endlessly increase consumption are best for the robustness of the economy --- or we can bet that regulations, intelligent incentives and disincentives, and moderation of consumption and waste are necessary for a sustainable future.
  - 6) We can continue to gamble that the distorted market doctrine of Crony Capitalism is the best economic system, and defend and protect it, allowing Big Business to prosper at the expense of society and the environment --- or we can bet that a transformation to Green Capitalism is our only salvation, and enact intelligent initiatives to achieve sensible and sustainable ecological integrity, creating a healthier society and a safer world for ourselves and our children.
  - 7) We can gamble that spewing billions of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually will not cause climate change and severe ecosystem disruption --- or we can bet that we must begin to aggressively adopt efficient, conservative energy policies, fossil fuel alternatives, and innovative ways to sequester man-made carbon dioxide emissions.
  - 8) We can gamble that unmitigated social injustices and policies facilitating the further concentration of wealth are not a threat to social stability and societal well-being --- or we can bet that the most sensible and safe investments of all are in peace, equality of opportunity, and social justice.
  - 9) We can gamble that allowing and enabling the rich to become richer, while the poor become poorer, through regressive tax policy and exploitative economic policies, will not result in heightened insecurity, greater crime, terrorism, or revolution --- or we can bet that it will, and enact more progressive and socially fair policies.
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