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URL: <http://www.precaution.org/lib/05/rehn830a.htm>

From: Rachel's Democracy & Health News #830, Nov. 24, 2005

CAN THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT REGAIN ITS MOXIE?

By Tim Montague

Today only 30% of Americans say they support the goals of environmentalists. Most people rate jobs and the economy as far more important than protecting nature. Is there a way to bridge the gap, to protect nature, protect communities, and create jobs? There is.

We surely need good-paying jobs. They say we're in an economic recovery -- corporate profits are up and GDP (Gross Domestic Product) continues to climb at about 3.5% per year -- but ask the average American worker how they see it and you'll get a different picture. For 30 years, real wages have stagnated for middle-income workers and have actually declined for low-wage workers. In 1979 the average American earned \$15.91/hr (in 2001 dollars). Twenty years later, in 1999, average worker productivity had grown 42% but take-home pay had risen only 15%. For the 100 million American workers with no college education, the picture is worse -- their average wage dropped from \$6.55/hr in 1979 to less than \$5.00/hr in 2003.[1] In the same period, CEO pay of the ten largest corporations increased 4,300% (from \$3.5 million per year to \$154 million).[2, p.10]

High-wage union jobs -- in which the union worker makes 21% more than their non-union counterpart, and where a person can expect healthcare, a two-week vacation, and maybe even retirement benefits -- have been declining for fifty years. U.S. union membership peaked at 35 percent of the labor force in the mid-1950's and is now down around 13 percent (in the private sector, it's 8%).[2 p. 14] Big

companies are whittling away at medical, overtime pay, and retirement benefits. United Airlines recently wiped out the pensions of 120,000 retirees with the help of a federal bankruptcy judge. The pattern is clear: corporations are shedding their responsibilities for retired workers. Who's going to pay the rent, groceries, and medical bills of all those retirees? In 2003, 45 million Americans had no health insurance, up 1.4 million from the year before and up 5.1 million from the year 2000.[3] It's not a pretty picture.

Increasingly, the U.S. workforce competes directly with low-wage workers in developing countries. This creates a "race to the bottom" for wages, working conditions, and environmental standards simultaneously -- all of which are ways to "externalize" costs of production and thus to move a larger portion of the pie into the domain of the owners. Nine out of ten workers is now an employee -- as opposed to a business owner -- yet Americans overwhelmingly cling to the values of freedom, independence, and entrepreneurial spirit which ring so hollow in today's context of unequal distribution of wealth and power. These are great values -- so let's put them into practice!

Greg Burns of the Chicago Tribune recently reported that when the mayor of Greenville Michigan "got the news that this city of 8,000 would lose its 2,700-employee refrigerator plant to Mexico, he figured that other Rust Belt communities facing the same sort of economic disaster would know just what to do." So he scoured the region for examples of cities that "had turned back the forces of globalization and kept their industrial base intact." The mayor couldn't find a single city that was holding on to its manufacturing jobs.[4]

The loss of high-wage American manufacturing jobs -- one in six of these jobs has moved overseas or south of the border in the last decade -- reverberates throughout the economy. "For every manufacturing job created, 2.7 additional jobs are created in other sectors, resulting in a total of 3.7 jobs," says Dan Swinney, Director of the Center for Labor and Community Research{1}. Compared to factory workers -- who earn an average of \$40,000 per year in Illinois -- service sector and retail jobs don't pay nearly as well or require as skilled a labor force. Chicago area service-sector workers averaged \$32,000, and retail workers averaged just \$17,000, according to Swinney who is spearheading a manufacturing renaissance in the Chicago region.[5]

The global economy is now dominated by enormous multinational corporations that are making mincemeat out of the environment (with obvious effects on human health), violating human-rights, and undermining democratic decision making -- what author David Korten calls the 'suicide economy.' Maybe it's time we innovated from within and

looked closer to home for opportunities to create jobs, build community, and reduce our impact on the environment.

Fortunately, there is a movement afoot that does exactly this. In Philadelphia, Boston, Grand Rapids, Portland, and Toronto -- indeed all across the United States and Canada -- a movement to humanize and green the economy has taken hold from the grassroots and is growing steadily.

Judy Wicks, owner of the White Dog Cafe in Philadelphia says "when I eat the food from my restaurant, I think of the farmers out in the fields of Pennsylvania picking the fresh, organic produce they will bring into town that day. I think of the goat herder, Dougie, who says the cheese is better when she kisses her goats' ears! When I drink my morning cup of coffee, I think about the Indians in Chiapas, Mexico, who grew the beans. Business is about relationships. Money is simply a tool." [6] Wicks' business lies near the heart of a sustainable business movement -- the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies {2} (BALLE) -- an international organization dedicated to strengthening and spreading socially responsible local business -- where people, profits and the planet matter.

In addition to her strong environmental ethic -- she purchases only humanely grown meat and eggs, mostly organic produce, and uses wind-generated electricity -- Wicks' cafe in Philly has become a community center for other sustainable businesses known as the Sustainable Business Network (SBN) -- a local network of independently operated businesses that exchange goods and services with each other while adhering to basic principles that are good for employees, strengthen the community and take care of the environment. BALLE is an international umbrella network for these home-grown networks, which have sprung up all over.

The Birth of BALLE

Judy Wicks' success with the White Dog Cafe -- where she has proven to be a vital catalyst in her local SBN -- spurred her to promote socially responsible business at the national level. "These companies consider the needs of all stakeholders -- employees, community, suppliers, consumers, and the natural environment, as well as stockholders -- when making business decisions," she says. "At socially responsible businesses, employees are treated better and environmental policies are improving. They also serve as a model for other companies that may choose to adopt their progressive policies." [7] Wicks witnessed the birth of the socially responsible business movement that was gaining momentum in the 1990's but then faltered with the buyout of companies like Ben & Jerry's, Odwalla, Stonyfield Farm and Cascadian Farm by large conglomerates like Unilever.

With encouragement from David Korten (publisher of Yes! magazine and author of When Corporations Rule the World),

whom she knew through the Social Venture Network {3}, Wicks teamed up with Laury Hammel who was founder of Business for Social Responsibility (BSR {4}). [8] Together with economist Michael Shuman {5}, author of Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age, they created BALLE which now has affiliate networks in 22 cities throughout the U.S. and Canada with another 20 under consideration. Their mission is to create, strengthen and connect local business networks dedicated to building strong local living economies.

A Local Living Economy Defined

BALLE uses the following guidelines {6} to define a local living economy: "A locally-owned business would be one where the community member has full autonomy and local decision-making authority with respect to their business practices." A business must be privately held. Greater than 50% of the ownership must reside in the local region. The business should be able to make independent decisions regarding name, look, and purchasing decisions (factors which disqualify most franchises). And the business should pay all of its own marketing, rent, and general business expenses without assistance from a corporate headquarters.

Living economy businesses are primarily independent and locally owned, and value the needs and interests of all stakeholders, while building long-term profitability. They strive to:

- ** Buy products from businesses with similar values, with a preference for local sources;
- ** Provide employees a healthy workplace with meaningful living-wage jobs;
- ** Offer customers personal service and useful safe, quality products;
- ** Work with suppliers to establish a fair exchange;
- ** Cooperate with other businesses in ways that balance their self-interest with their obligation to the community and future generations;
- ** Use their business practices to support an inclusive and healthy community, and to protect the environment.

Shuman calls it the 'Small-Mart revolution'. He divides the economic universe into two groups affectionately named TINA and LOIS. TINA stands for "there is no alternative" -- the business-as-usual model of "get big and dominate the market by any means necessary so long as it returns a profit to shareholders." LOIS stands for locally owned import substituting development. TINA requires no further

explanation -- we live under its hammer daily. Let's explore LOIS further.[11]

Import substitution is simply another way of saying "keep your purchases of goods and services as local as possible." According to BALLE, what is 'local' depends on the kind of community -- rural, urban or suburban -- in which the business is based. Local could mean your local tax entity (township or suburb); in a larger city local could mean both the greater metropolitan area and the local business district neighborhood, depending on the situation. In a rural setting, one or more neighboring counties could be considered local.

Ownership can be one of several types as Korten explains, "Living economy enterprises may be organized as partnerships; individual- or family-owned businesses; consumer- or producer-owned cooperatives; community corporations; or companies privately owned by workers, other community members, or social investors. They may be for-profit or nonprofit."

"There is no place in living economies, however, for publicly traded, limited liability corporations, the organizational centerpiece of the suicide economy," says Korten. "This corporate form is legally structured to allow virtually unlimited concentration of power to the exclusive financial benefit of absentee shareholders who have no knowledge of, or liability for, the social and environmental consequences of the actions taken on their behalf. It is a legally sanctioned invitation to benefit from behavior that otherwise would be considered sociopathic -- even criminal." [9]

Advantages of LOIS over TINA

The more times a dollar is recycled (saved, invested or spent) within the local community, the more jobs, healthcare, education, transportation, housing, and other beneficial services that dollar creates for the local community. LOIS is about keeping dollars in the community -- what Shuman calls "plugging the leaks." Shuman gives the example of Borders Books in Austin Texas -- spend \$100 at Borders and just \$13 remain local vs. \$45 -- triple the benefit -- if the \$100 is spent at an independent bookseller; LOIS creates jobs, improves human health and strengthens the community.

So the way to get started down the LOIS path is to survey the local economy looking for places where dollars leave town -- then plug those leaks. It's a new model for local economic development, based on the idea that a dollar recirculated within the community does every bit as much good as a new dollar brought in from outside.

TINA is costly to the community in economic terms. On the front end, cities are constantly offering big tax breaks to large companies in return for future jobs and tax revenue that the business promises to generate. Shuman found that Lane

County Oregon was shelling out \$33,000 for each TINA job created, vs. \$1500 for each LOIS job.

On the back end, driven solely to maximize profits, TINA businesses will pull out of a community as soon as it is more profitable to relocate elsewhere. In July 2005, according to the AFL-CIO, American manufacturing jobs fell to 14.3 million -- lower than in 1945.[10] The U.S. has lost over a million jobs in the last decade due to the 'destructive exit' of publicly held companies -- a scenario that is difficult to imagine with a LOIS business because local ownership means local ties that bind. Take the Green Bay Packers football team. The eighty-six year old team was born and bred in Green Bay and will remain a local fixture in perpetuity because the articles of incorporation require that the proceeds of any sale of the team remain local. The Packers will remain in Green bay forever, pumping millions of dollars into the local economy. There's zero chance the Packers will move to St. Louis.

Ecological and social advantages of the LOIS economy abound. In the LOIS model, all goods and services travel shorter distances. Worker's commutes are shorter so they have more time for recreation, family and community service. People are healthier, happier and more productive which in turn benefits their employer, family and community. There is less pollution and congestion -- the air, water and food are cleaner -- and there are more resources (money and time) for education, entrepreneurial ventures, charity, and community development. These all feed back on themselves to build healthier and stronger communities over time.

Shuman admits that despite its ancient roots -- most human ventures have been LOIS style businesses since the dawn of civilization -- to convert a modern economy to a LOIS model requires planning and investment. And he consistently finds that communities have more financial resources (pension funds, retirement accounts, venture funds, etc.) than they knew -- it's just a matter of being creative and choosing to invest the available resources locally. (This is part 2 of a local survey: figure out where the dollars are leaking out of town, then find out what investment resources reside in the community, then put them to work creating LOIS businesses. It's not simple, of course, but it's definitely doable.)

While LOIS economies should be self-sustaining once they get established, TINA economies have several Achilles heels. Consider developing countries like China that produce much of the stuff we consume. As China democratizes, its workers are eventually going to demand higher wages. Simultaneously, climbing oil and energy prices will drive up transportation costs, so tee-shirts and hair dryers at Wal-Mart are going to become more expensive. "The net result," says Shuman "Will be a double whammy for big box retailers and national chains that depend on cheap foreign labor and cheap oil for transportation." Shuman predicts that many TINA economies will self- destruct when local goods become as

affordable as those made overseas.[11] So long-term trends are favoring LOIS.

If BALLE is such a great idea, why didn't we think of it before? BALLE shares some similarities with both the American Independent Business Alliance{7}(AMIBA) and Co-op America{8}. AMIBA, founded in 1997, is focused on the shared community benefits of networking local independent businesses and does not appear to promote social responsibility. Co-op America is a much larger and older (formed in 1982) network of socially responsible businesses: taking a responsible approach to the environment, community and employees. Unlike BALLE, Co-op America has national social responsibility standards against which applicant companies are screened.

To become a member of Co-op America companies must demonstrate that they:

- ** Focus on using business as a tool for positive social change;
- ** are "values-driven," as well as profit-driven;
- ** are socially and environmentally responsible in the way they source, manufacture, and market their products and run their offices and factories;
- ** and are committed to and employ extraordinary and innovative practices that benefit: 1) workers, 2) communities, 3) customers, and 4) the environment.

Thus BALLE does fill a unique niche with an emphasis on the advantages of local ownership, geographic proximity and social responsibility. There is certainly much overlap between the three organizations and they can all learn from, and support, each other.

There is no doubt that a U.S. economy based on local living economies would be more sustainable than our current system. Industry would not have nearly the incentives it does today to externalize costs to human health and the environment. (Owners of locally-owned business by definition are members of the community, where simple peer pressure definitely comes into play.)

But the fundamental questions of resource distribution and limits to growth remain. If we are going to survive as a species, we must create an economy that lives in equilibrium with the rest of nature -- a steady state economy{9}. To achieve steady state, we must first achieve zero population growth (ZPG). Then we must equitably distribute the resources of the commons{10} so that everyone has a vested interest in preserving the commons -- and we must find a

standard of living (energy throughput) that doesn't borrow from future generations.

The developed world has effectively reached ZPG. And we know from the work of William Rees (see Rachel's 537{11} and 627{12}) that the world can only support about 6 billion people (an ecological footprint of about 4.5 acres [2 hectares] per person. The average American today lives with a footprint of 24 acres (9.7 hectares). Therefore we would have to reduce average consumption five-fold to be sustainable and equitable. This is absolutely doable. We will either make the choice by free will, adopt regulations that force us to do so, or face the natural consequences of social unrest and very likely ecological collapse. It's clear that free will is the most desirable choice. The question remains how to motivate a culture of consumers to see beyond their growing waistlines.

In any case, the environmental movement can regain its luster in the eyes of the public by forging alliances with the "local living economies" movement. The LOIS approach to local economic development can create jobs, stabilize communities by anchoring the economy around locally-owned businesses, protect nature, and improve quality of life. It's a winning combination.

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[1] Jack Rasmus, *The War at Home: The Corporate Offensive Against American Workers and Unions from Ronald Reagan to George W. Bush* (San Ramon, CA: Kyklos Productions, 2005). ISBN 0977106202

[2] Gar Alperovitz, *America Beyond Capitalism: Reclaiming our Wealth, Our Liberty, and Our Democracy* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2005). ISBN 0471667307

[3] Robert Pear, "Health leaders Seek Consensus Over Uninsured," *New York Times*, May 29, 2005, pg. A-1. Available here{13}.

[4] Greg Burns, "The Broken Heartland: Greenville, Mich.; City left in the cold as refrigerator factory closes," *Chicago Tribune*, November 6, 2005.

[5] Dan Swinney, *The Chicago Manufacturing Renaissance*, Center for Labor and Community Research, July 28, 2005. Available here{14} today.

[6] Frances Moore Lappe, *Democracy's Edge: Choosing to Save Our Country by Bringing Democracy to Life*, (Hoboken, NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2005). ISBN 0787943118

[7] Jim Slama, "How enlightened businesspeople are changing the world at the local level," *Conscious Choice*, May 2003. Available here{15}.

[8] Business for Social Responsibility (BSR) was originally a grassroots organization of socially responsible entrepreneurs from companies like Ben and Jerry's, Patagonia and Tom's of Maine. In the early 1990's it was hijacked by big business interests and eventually forced Hammel out according to Russell Mokhiber and Robert Weissman, "Hijacked: Business for Social Responsibility," CommonDreams.org, November 3, 2005. Available here{16}.

[9] David C. Korten, "Economies For Life," Yes! Magazine, Fall 2002. Available here{17}. See also David C. Korten, When Corporations Rule the World (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995). ISBN 1887208003

[10] AFL-CIO{18}

[11] Michael Shuman, "The Small-Mart Revolution," talk given at Loyola University of Chicago, Center for Urban Research and Learning{19}, September 13, 2005. See also Michael Shuman, Going Local; Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age (N.Y.: Free Press, 1998 ISBN 0684830124.) and his forthcoming book, Local First; How to Strengthen Your Community Economy.

- {1} <http://www.clcr.org/index.php>
- {2} <http://www.livingeconomies.org/>
- {3} <http://www.svn.org/>
- {4} http://www.precaution.org/lib/05/hijacking_social_responsibility.051103.htm
- {5} <http://uwadmweb.uwyo.edu/SBDC/SEE/shuman.htm>
- {6} <http://www.livingeconomies.org/aboutus/principles>
- {7} <http://www.amiba.net/>
- {8} <http://www.coopamerica.org/>
- {9} <http://www.steadystate.org/>
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URL: <http://www.eastbayexpress.com/issues/2005-11-02/news/feature.html>

From: East Bay Express, Nov. 2, 2005

THE NEW FACE OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

Van Jones renounced his rowdy black nationalism on the way toward becoming an influential leader of the new progressive politics.

By Eliza Strickland

On the opening afternoon of last month's Bioneers Conference -- the massive gathering of environmental activists held annually in San Rafael -- shiny hybrid cars parked in spaces "reserved for clean-air vehicles." Conferencegoers polished off kale salads and raw cucumber soup while a three-piece band picked out bluegrass tunes in the sunshine. Several thousand righteous souls had trekked here to the Marin Center in search of ideas and enlightenment. But the 2:45 p.m. panel on "social entrepreneurs" was failing to inspire.

The first speaker, a ponytailed environmental philanthropist, subjected his audience to a dry academic talk about the people he calls social entrepreneurs: ambitious visionaries who take risks and seize opportunities. He portrayed such activists as special people, implying that the rest of society should basically get out of their way. Some audience members seemed more interested in getting out of his way, and quietly slipped out of the auditorium in search of more fiery oratory.

The second speaker, a community organizer who works in Mexican border towns and embodied many of the traits her predecessor had catalogued, repeatedly left the room in silence while she struggled to get her PowerPoint presentation working. "I had hoped to show you..." she said, her voice trailing off. "You're not going to get a visual, I guess."

By the time the final speaker addressed the crowd, people shuffled restlessly in their seats as a lone infant wailed. Van Jones, a tall, dark-skinned man wearing a "Kanye was right" T-shirt under his black blazer, seemed to have little in common with his audience of predominately white hippies. Feeling the energy in the room ebbing straight from the stage, he later said, Jones decided to throw out the talk he had planned to deliver about the work of his human-rights organization, the Ella Baker Center. Instead, he asked the name of the squalling baby. "Tavio," the mother replied.

"Tavio is a social entrepreneur," Jones said. "Tavio is changing the rules -- see? Speak when you want to speak."

The crowd laughed, and Tavio's parents smiled beatifically.

Then Jones alluded to what he had heard from some of the other speakers that day. "They're calling out for us to be brave again," he said. "To break out of patterns, start breaking some rules, try some new stuff." He explicitly challenged the ponytailed speaker's notion that social entrepreneurs such as he are isolated heroes. Jones said he personally would be "babbling on a street corner" somewhere if not for the support of his colleagues. He instead insisted that each member of the audience had the potential to light a fire that could change the world.

Jones quickly involved others in his presentation by lobbing questions back at his audience; each raised hand signaled another person won over. "Is there anyone here who has a recurring dream that there's something you're supposed to be doing?" he asked. "You look at your journal and the same idea keeps coming back? Is there anyone here who ever swallowed hard and took a stand for something that you knew was unpopular? Has anybody in this room ever really, really screwed something up, and then tried again? Well, I would say if you answered yes to any of those questions, you are a social entrepreneur."

The activists hung on Jones' words, captivated by the potential that he described within each of them. He finished with an exhortation worthy of a revival: "Our species is struggling to live through you, through that dream, through that journal entry that keeps recurring," he said, his voice quivering with passion. "I beg you, I beg you, embrace that rule-breaking, life-affirming, risk-taking you that the world needs so desperately right now."

He bowed his head, and was greeted with whistles, hoots, and applause. Half the audience leapt to its feet. If it hadn't been a crowd of sedate white liberals, someone might have shouted "Hallelujah." A woman turned to her companion and asked, "Where did this guy come from again?"

Jones came from rural Tennessee, by way of Yale Law School. The self-described former "rowdy black nationalist" is best known as founder of the Ella Baker Center, an Oakland-based nonprofit group with roots firmly grounded in criminal-justice issues that affect low-income people of color. In 1995, he started Bay Area PoliceWatch, a program that assists victims of alleged police brutality. He made his mark as an activist by brashly saying things no other civil-rights leaders would say, such as "Willie Brown's Police Commission is killing black people." The center's second program, Books Not Bars, runs a campaign to radically transform California's youth prisons into rehabilitation centers. As the group gained visibility and a reputation for in-your-face tactics, its annual budget snowballed to \$1.4 million, and its staff increased to 22.

But Jones' personal life has been punctuated with a series of epiphanies, each of which has expanded the focus of his

work. In college, he embraced the fight for racial justice. Then he moved to the Bay Area and embraced the struggle for class justice. When he gained interest in environmentalism, he started searching for a way to pull together all three quests in the service of a better future. Now that he believes he has found that unified field theory -- one suffused with his rediscovered spirituality -- he's out to sell it to the progressive world.

"There is a green wave coming, with renewable energy, organic agriculture, cleaner production," he said in an interview. "Our question is, will the green wave lift all boats? That's the moral challenge to the people who are the architects of this new, ecologically sound economy. Will we have eco-equity, or will we have eco-apartheid? Right now we have eco-apartheid. Look at Marin; they've got solar this, and bio this, and organic the other, and fifteen minutes away by car, you're in Oakland with cancer clusters, asthma, and pollution."

Jones started his first environmental program, Reclaim the Future, only six months ago. Notably, it wastes little time critiquing the negative aspects of society, but rather accentuates the positive. As such, it exemplifies the new concept of environmentalism's so-called third wave -- a movement refocused on neither conservation nor regulation, but investment. Jones envisions West Oakland and other depressed neighborhoods as healthy, thriving hubs of clean commerce. He hopes to "build a pipeline from the prison economy to the green economy" by training prisoners reentering society to help build a solar-powered, energy-efficient future. He believes the flourishing of "green-collar jobs" can give gainful employment to those who most need it, and give struggling cities an economic boost into the 21st century.

But since the Ella Baker Center itself will neither start green businesses nor run job training programs, what precisely does Jones do?

As the staff runs the day-to-day operations of the center's three programs, Jones' job is to raise money, manage personnel, and propagate the group's ideas beyond the office walls. "Van's role and [the center's] role is really to evangelize, to spread the word of this vision," said Juliet Ellis, a member of the Ella Baker Center's board and the executive director of the nonprofit Urban Habitat.

Jones spreads his gospel at every conference, speech, and awards ceremony that finds its way onto his busy schedule, and he has found receptive ears from coast to coast. His rise to prominence has a lot to do with timing. As environmentalists and progressives grope to rebuild their respective movements after years of disarray, Jones is often pointed to as an avatar of Environmentalism 3.0. Lefties have come to one conclusion since the debilitating defeats of 2000

and 2004: that they need to present a positive vision Americans can latch onto and vote for.

"The country is waiting for a movement that inspires people, that doesn't just critique," Jones said. "That's my gut instinct. And when it's resonant, when it's right, people feel how they fit into it. We want a green economy that's strong enough to lift people out of poverty."

It took a personal crisis for Jones to conclude that complaint-based politics can get you only so far. Since 2000, when he watched a budding political movement destroyed by infighting, he has tried to be a voice for solidarity while showing other activists that "there's a path out of this self-marginalizing place without compromising your constituency." But while his vision brings many submovements together under one tent, some of the people who helped Jones devise that vision aren't invited to the revival.

It's been a little more than a year since two of Jones' fellow travelers dropped a bomb on the environmental movement in the form of a paper provocatively titled "The Death of Environmentalism." The paper played an important role in the debate that followed the re-election of President Bush. Shaken progressives had to admit that their best electoral efforts had failed, and began to cast about for the reason. There was "The Death of Environmentalism" with its bold declarations: Environmentalism had defined itself as a special interest, its message was too negative, and it presented narrow technical solutions instead of an inspiring vision tied to values voters hold dear.

Commentators quickly pointed out that all these criticisms could just as easily be leveled at other segments of the left. What was the movement besides a collection of special-interest campaigns? Just like that, the paper became a mirror reflecting back the fears of a disenfranchised movement.

Predictably, there was an angry backlash, which the authors chalk up to the movement's reluctance to admit its failures. "There's a lot of fear," said Michael Shellenberger, one of the paper's authors, in an interview. "We have to come to grips with the fact that our current strategies not only aren't helping, but might even be counterproductive." While Shellenberger said he and coauthor Ted Nordhaus didn't set out to write a generational statement, they may have done so inadvertently. "The responses have been disproportionately positive from young people," he said, "and disproportionately negative from the older generation that's more invested in older ways of doing things."

Although the paper was primarily an assault upon the strategies of the left, Shellenberger and Nordhaus praised a few people and projects. One was Van Jones, whom the authors called an "up-and-coming civil-rights leader," extolling his vision of a broad alliance between

environmentalists, labor unions, civil-rights groups, and businesses. His focus on investment, they said, pointed the way to the environmental movement's future.

The glowing words were no coincidence. Jones and the authors met in 2005 and became close allies who brainstormed ideas for the new shape of the environmental movement. Although Jones says the Ella Baker Center's environmental program isn't based on the ideas in "The Death of Environmentalism," it benefited from conversations he had with Shellenberger. The two worked together on the Apollo Alliance, a national environmental organization that promotes many of the ideas associated with environmentalism's third wave. It was Shellenberger who convinced alliance leaders to include Jones on the national board.

Yet last spring, Jones spoke out against "The Death of Environmentalism" at a panel discussion about the progressive movement's future, where he shared the stage with luminaries of the activist left. "I love the authors, I love the analysis," he said. "It breaks my heart the way that it was brought forward." He thereafter repeated his criticisms in stronger terms, and now calls the paper an "immoral attack."

Jones said his quarrel lay not with the authors' ideas but their tactics. Their critique of the status quo was an assault on national environmental organizations, which leaders such as Sierra Club executive director Carl Pope greeted with anger. "It was a smart document, but it was not wise," Jones said. "You don't ambush allies. You don't shame elders."

Although he concedes the need for discussion and argument within any movement, Jones said the authors of "The Death of Environmentalism" conducted the debate with insufficient respect. "I'm interested in managing conflict with an eye toward maximizing unity," he said. "There's a tradition of very nasty polemics on the left. I've seen it split coalitions, movements, parties. This is my concern: it's easy to start a fight, it's hard to finish a fight."

But from the perspective of Shellenberger and Nordhaus, Jones has merely adopted the same tack as most of the progressive left. He has embraced their paper's feel-good ideas, but renounced the dialogue and arguments that helped get to that point. "There's this culture within the progressive community that everybody has to hold hands and sing 'Kumbaya' before you can introduce a new idea or piece of legislation," Shellenberger said. "People say, 'Oh, you can't criticize your friends.' It's strange that liberals who believe in being small-D democrats think ideas should be talked about behind closed doors and then get so angry about a paper that calls for open debate. It's a symptom of how uncomfortable people are with asking the hard questions about what kind of future they want.... A whole series of fights need to happen on the left before we can become unified."

The authors complain that Jones didn't begin critiquing their paper until he was surrounded by its detractors at the Apollo Alliance, a group whose strong ties to the Sierra Club guaranteed that it would take a stance against the two upstarts. Shellenberger said he saw Jones twice in the immediate aftermath of the shakeup. The first time, shortly after the paper was distributed, he said, "Van congratulated us; he praised the essay. He was very positive to us, privately." The next time, at a meeting of the California Apollo Alliance, Shellenberger remembers Jones saying, "Wow, a lot of people are really angry about this," before repeating his praise of the paper. But in the months after Jones joined the board, Shellenberger said, he began to criticize the paper and its authors. "I think he was worried about politics," the author said.

The Ella Baker Center distanced itself from the rabble-rousers, both figuratively and literally. The controversy erupted just as the center was moving across the bay to bigger digs in Oakland. Shellenberger and Nordhaus were left behind. "There was just too much fire around those guys, and we didn't want to get burned," explained Joshua Abraham, director of the center's environmental program.

Jones' emphasis on solidarity only increased his cachet among environmental leaders. But Nordhaus believes Jones is taking the easy route by avoiding confrontations with the progressive movement's old guard. It may allow him to be a more popular leader in the short term, Nordhaus said, but ultimately prevent the movement from undergoing the self-scrutiny it needs to regain a place in the national debate.

"Van will have a very successful and prominent career as a spokesman of the left," Nordhaus said. "He's a handsome, charismatic, intelligent man who can speak with passion. But Van will have to decide at the end of the day whether he's willing to put all that at risk to take the leap to 21st-century politics that can really go somewhere. In that, he's a fascinating, transitional, and ambiguous figure. Is he going to be part of the vanguard or part of the reaction?"

Jones has taken a keen interest in the vanguard from almost the moment he and his twin sister were born in 1968. "We were in utero while King was assassinated, Bobby Kennedy was assassinated, MLK was assassinated, the Democratic convention was bloody," he said. "And I was born nine months into that. For some reason I was always intensely aware that there had been all this hope right before I was born, and then all these problems."

As a tyke, he carefully cut out articles about John and Bobby Kennedy and pinned them to a corkboard in his room in the specially delineated "Kennedy Section." After that came the Star Wars action figures: Luke Skywalker was JFK, Han Solo was RFK, and Lando Calrissian was MLK.

Although his parents, both teachers, grappled with the desegregation of the school system, the civil-rights movement wasn't a dominant force in his young life. Racism troubled him little in the mixed neighborhood he grew up in. The white and black kids exchanged insults, but it felt no different than the other trash talk boys slung around.

Jones first began his long process of reinvention when he attended the University of Tennessee in Martin. Unhappy with his given name, Anthony, he made a list of possible replacements -- Jet, Rush, Van. "I was, like, 'The coolest people in the world have monosyllabic names,'" he said, citing Prince and Sting. He laughs about his reasoning now, as well as his motive for entering campus politics. He just wanted to impress his girlfriend, who was smart, beautiful, and planned to be a doctor. Her parents were both professors, and Jones worried that she was out of his league. "I really wanted her parents to like me, and think that I was worthy," he said. "So I said, 'Well, I'm just going to take over this goddamn campus.'"

He ran for dorm vice president, and then for student council. Meanwhile, inspired by the crusading editor of his hometown newspaper, he worked toward a career in journalism by starting an underground newspaper. He later followed his mentor to Shreveport, Louisiana, for a summer job as a cub reporter, where he got his first jolt of radical outrage.

A rap concert was coming to town, featuring provocative acts such as NWA. The sleepy city of Shreveport panicked. "They acted like there was going to be a black riot as a result of it," Jones said with disgust. On the night of the concert, police helicopters hovered overhead and highway patrol cars lined the streets, but the audience was peaceful, he recalled. He felt vindicated, until the next morning when he saw the front page of his own newspaper. "There was a picture of a black kid on the ground with a cop on top of him with a gun out, looking over his shoulder," Jones said. "And the headline was, 'Rap concert peaceful, but ...'" Underneath the photo was a map of the city, with every stolen car and noise violation from the day before marked with the icon of an explosion. Jones went in to the editor's office yelling, and didn't stop until the paper printed his response to its coverage.

But that wasn't enough to assuage his anger. Convinced that American society needed a wake-up call on race, Jones abandoned his plan to become a journalist, concluding that he would rather make news than report it. "If I'd been in another country, I probably would have joined some underground guerrilla sect," he said. "But as it was, I went on to an Ivy League law school."

He arrived at Yale Law School wearing combat boots and carrying a Black Panther bookbag, an angry black separatist among a sea of clean-cut students dreaming of Supreme Court clerkships. "I wasn't ready for Yale, and they weren't ready for me," Jones said. He never fell in love with the law,

and at one point contemplated dropping out of school. But he realized that a law degree gave him the credibility to speak out about the criminal justice system, so he persevered.

Jones first moved to the Bay Area in the spring of 1992, when the San Francisco-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights hired a batch of law students to act as legal observers during the trial of Rodney King's assailants. Eva Paterson, who was then the committee's executive director, remembers getting a cover letter that stood out from the rest: "It was this piece of stationery that had little faces across the top, a stencil of little guys with dreads. We said, 'Oh, yeah, we're hiring him.'"

Paterson got to know Jones over the coming months, and enjoyed having the young radical in her office. "He was a kid then, really," she said. "He was brilliant, pretty feisty, pretty in your face, but that's how you are when you're young. Just a force of nature."

When the verdicts came down -- not guilty for three of the officers involved, and deadlocked on the fourth -- Paterson's office, like the city, reacted with disbelief. Paterson said she felt like picking up her office chair and hurling it out the window. The staff hit the streets to monitor the demonstrations that erupted in San Francisco. One week later, while Jones was observing the first large rally since the lifting of the city's state of emergency, he got swept up in mass arrests. It was a turning point in his life.

Jones had planned to move to Washington, DC, and had already landed a job and an apartment there. But in jail, he said, "I met all these young radical people of color -- I mean really radical, communists and anarchists. And it was, like, 'This is what I need to be a part of.'" Although he already had a plane ticket, he decided to stay in San Francisco. "I spent the next ten years of my life working with a lot of those people I met in jail, trying to be a revolutionary." In the months that followed, he let go of any lingering thoughts that he might fit in with the status quo. "I was a rowdy nationalist on April 28th, and then the verdicts came down on April 29th," he said. "By August, I was a communist."

In 1994, the young activists formed a socialist collective, Standing Together to Organize a Revolutionary Movement, or STORM, which held study groups on the theories of Marx and Lenin and dreamed of a multiracial socialist utopia. They protested police brutality and got arrested for crashing through police barricades. In 1996, Jones decided to launch his own operation, which he named the Ella Baker Center after an unsung hero of the civil-rights movement. Jones wedged a desk and a chair inside a large closet in the back of Paterson's office. He brought in his home computer and ran cables through the rafters to get the operation humming.

"Eva was really my saving grace," said Jones. "She understood that I was a little rowdy and difficult to deal with,

but she tried to find a way for me to fit into her system. She finally figured out that wasn't going to work, and then she went way beyond the call of duty helping me start my own thing."

Paterson was surprised by the number of tattooed individuals suddenly passing through her office, but she didn't interfere. "He didn't need a lot of coaching; he just needed a place where he could have a desk and a phone, and a little infrastructure support," she said. She did give him one piece of advice. "I think I counseled him to be diplomatic," Paterson said. "I tried to convince him that you could be passionate, but you didn't have to talk about your opponent's mother. That you could be very, very committed and say what you had to say so that people listened."

The lesson lay waiting in Jones' brain for years, until he was ready to receive it.

Jones began transforming his politics and work in the aftermath of a crisis that coincided with the primary election in March 2000. He was campaigning hard against California Proposition 21, a ballot initiative that increased the penalties for a variety of violent crimes and required more juvenile offenders to be tried as adults. Several activist groups united to organize young people into sit-downs, rallies, and protests. But Jones said the coalition ultimately imploded "in the nastiest way you can ever imagine."

The activists who worked on Prop. 21 had lofty ambitions -- they hoped to create a youth movement as powerful as the antiwar coalition of the 1960s. With a hip-hop soundtrack, they aimed to enlist a generation clad in puffy jackets and baggy pants in the fight against the prison-industrial complex. Yet despite early successes such as rallies covered by MTV and support from rap icons like Mos Def and MC Hammer, the movement fell apart in the glare of the limelight. The groups fought over grant money and over who deserved credit for various successes. When the voters went ahead and approved the proposition anyway, Jones took a big step back.

"I saw our little movement destroyed over a lot of shit-talking and bullshit," he said. "It just seemed like an ongoing train crash that was calling itself a political movement. It was much more destructive internally than anyone was talking about, and much less impactful externally than anyone was willing to admit."

Jones' fixation on solidarity dates from this experience. He took an objective look at the movement's effectiveness and decided that the changes he was seeking were actually getting farther away. Not only did the left need to be more unified, he decided, it might also benefit from a fundamental shift in tactics. "I realized that there are a lot of people who are capitalists -- shudder, shudder -- who are really committed to fairly significant change in the economy, and were having

bigger impacts than me and a lot of my friends with our protest signs," he said.

First, he discarded the hostility and antagonism with which he had previously greeted the world, which he said was part of the ego-driven romance of being seen as a revolutionary. "Before, we would fight anybody, any time," he said. "No concession was good enough; we never said 'Thank you.'" Now, I put the issues and constituencies first. I'll work with anybody, I'll fight anybody if it will push our issues forward.... I'm willing to forgo the cheap satisfaction of the radical pose for the deep satisfaction of radical ends."

His new philosophy emphasizes effectiveness, which he believes is inextricably tied to unity. He still considers himself a revolutionary, just a more effective one, who has realized that the progressive left's insistence on remaining a counterculture destroys its potential as a political movement. "One of my big heroes is Malcolm X, not because I agree with Malcolm, but because he wasn't afraid to change in public," he said.

Devising a new strategy for the left went hand-in-hand with finding a new approach in his personal life and relationships. Jones said he arrived at that by harking back to his roots. Although he had spent many childhood summers in "sweaty black churches," and in college had discovered the black liberation theology that reinterprets the Christ story as an anticolonial struggle, he had pulled away from spirituality during his communist days. During his 2000 crisis, he looked for answers in Buddhism, the philosophy known as deep ecology, and at open-minded institutions such as the East Bay Church of Religious Science.

The last step was learning to ignore critics from within the movement who didn't appreciate his new philosophy and allies. "I'm confused half the time about what I'm doing, but none of the things that leftists use to discipline each other into marginality have any power over me anymore," he said. "It's like, 'Oh, you're working with white people.'" Or 'Who are you accountable to?' A lot of the things that we say to each other to keep anybody from getting too uppity, too effective, I just don't listen to anymore. I care about the progressive movements as they are, but I mainly care about all of our movements becoming a lot bigger and a lot stronger."

Jones has since become known as a guy who actually can get things done, a guy whom the mayor will take meetings with. For instance, last June he worked with San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom on the UN World Environment Day conference about green cities. Some environmental groups boycotted the event, which was heavily underwritten by Pacific Gas & Electric, a perennial environmental nemesis. Jones sidestepped this controversy while pursuing his own goal, the inclusion of a series of events highlighting the environmental issues faced by the poor and people of color.

His efforts led to six days of conversations between environmentalists and crusaders for racial justice. Juliet Ellis, of the Ella Baker Center board, said it was a necessary step for groups that have shied away from collaborating in the past. "We're still not at a place where social justice and mainstream environmental groups believe they're fighting for the same things," she said. "As far as bridging those divides, Van definitely has the skill sets and the experience and the personality to play a role in that."

But Jones also attracted a number of critics. During the conference, many environmental-justice groups were irritated by what they saw as Jones' attempt to appoint himself the leader of a movement in which he'd never before played a role. They also thought his silence on the sponsorship of PG&E compromised his integrity, given that the company's Hunters Point Power Plant is a primary target of Bay Area environmental-justice advocates.

In the aftermath of the event, seven of these groups wrote a letter to Jones expressing their concerns about the perceived glory-hogging of the Ella Baker Center team. Henry Clark, the longtime executive director of the West County Toxics Coalition, and one of the signers, complained that Jones excluded the true leaders of the Bay Area movement. "They jumped out front to put themselves in the lead, to make contact with these funders, in more of an opportunistic way," he said.

"There was concern among many, many environmental-justice organizations who have been working on these issues for years," added Bradley Angel, executive director of the group Greenaction. "But I know we all have the same goals. I'm looking forward to those goals being addressed, since we're all working together."

On the fourth day of the conference, some of the environmental-justice groups that Jones left out organized their own event, a rally across from City Hall protesting the conference's involvement with PG&E. Angel said it was a coming together, "to confront the powers that be, and to show that we will not compromise with those who violate the principles of environmental justice."

"City hall is listening!" a speaker shouted to the crowd. But, in fact, it was Saturday, and the halls of power were empty.

Jones has long displayed a knack for absorbing the ideas of others and then broadcasting them in a way that turns theorizing into movement-building. In the best scenarios, this leads to the harmonious amplification of the message.

In September, he cohosted the Brower Youth Awards for environmental activism with Julia Butterfly Hill, the protester who drew attention to vanishing old-growth forests by living in the canopy of a redwood for two years. Jones and Hill have

been close friends since they met at a conference in 2002. Their alliance embodies the sense of unity desired by many environmental and racial-justice activists.

They met at a pivotal time in both of their lives. Hill said she was reaching out to the racial-justice community, trying to make the connection between "humanoid and planetary rights." Meanwhile, Jones was going through a similar process in the opposite direction. He calls Hill "the Mahatmama," in homage to her earth-mother vibe, and credits her with helping him connect to the environmental movement. "Before I met her, I already had the idea in my head, 'Green Jobs, Not Jails,'" he said. "But the whole idea for a green-collar solution for urban America was something that Julia was really helpful in developing."

Around that same time, the Apollo Alliance was launched in Washington, DC, with a catchy slogan: good jobs, clean energy. Modeled after President Kennedy's famous challenge to America to put a man on the Moon, the alliance is an effort to inspire the country into a frenzy of environmentally friendly inventiveness. But Jones approached the Apollo organizers because he believed that their original formulation of environmentalists plus labor unions wasn't ambitious enough. "I wanted to enrich their framework, which I thought started out with too little racial-justice understanding," he said. He was already working on the Ella Baker Center's own environmental program, but saw the Apollo Alliance as a useful partner, with a national platform. "I was met with absolutely open arms," he said.

The Ella Baker Center was one of the first groups to act upon the ideas espoused by the Apollo Alliance. Jones is talking to organizers about starting a branch of the alliance in West Oakland. He said he believes the down-and-out neighborhood could be a model of urban sustainability through investment, technology, and job creation. Concrete plans for Oakland include a job-training program at a biodiesel company that is starting up a production and wholesale facility this January, and the construction of the "green-designed" Red Star Housing project on the former site of a polluting yeast factory. Developers have promised to include a job-training component to teach environmentally friendly construction techniques to prisoners reentering society.

"We're really curious; we're all watching to see where it goes," said Peter Teague of the Nathan Cummings Foundation, which is funding the center's environmental work. "It's moved from that giddy, imagining stage to trying to make something happen on the ground, which is a lot tougher. But I think Van is making a huge contribution in just showing us what's possible."

But while Jones continues to advance the ideas he developed along with the Apollo Alliance, the organization's cofounders Shellenberger and Nordhaus were both forced to remove themselves from the national board because of the

controversy they stirred up. "When Ted and I put out 'Death of Environmentalism,' we had people coming up to us and saying, 'You're finished in this business,'" Shellenberger said. "Basically, 'You will never work in this town again.'" I was telling my wife that we might have to move to Humboldt County and take up organic farming. We knew it was a risk, but we felt like we had a moral imperative to say it. We felt like we could see what was making the environmental movement ineffectual, and we had to speak out.... If the movement were really strong and robust, people wouldn't have felt the need to go out and destroy us."

Nordhaus agrees that the progressive left is doing its best to avoid looking at the fault lines exposed by the paper. "It is really through debate that a political ideology gets built, not by trying to paper over conflicts," he said. "The irony is how little taste there has been on the left for continuing the discourse that 'Death of Environmentalism' started. The impulse is to say, 'Yeah, we read that, and there were a lot of things I disagreed with, but there were some good ideas, and we're all doing it! It was that easy!' It's indicative of everything that's still wrong with the left."

Jones, with his message of effectiveness through solidarity, has come to embody the reaction against the two heretics, even as he embodies the approach they recommended. "It's not that we've had a lack of debates and controversy, that hasn't been the problem," he said. "Do we really want to do this with this much divisiveness? Isn't there another way we could make the same points?"

He described the Shellenberger and Nordhaus method as "diesel," and said it's characterized by outrage, sharp critique, and the desire to come up with the best ideas. He said his own approach is more "solar-powered," and is distinguished by compassion. "People need to have their higher selves reflected back at them, the part of them that's already aspiring to greatness and deep service," he said.

Jones regrets having ever spoken up about Shellenberger and Nordhaus' work, particularly since his comments have embroiled him in exactly the kind of dispute that he thinks fractures the left. "I don't think people want to read an article where we say mean things about each other," he said. "I think it depresses people." Jones added that his own personal goal is to be "a voice calling for unity and respect," and said he hopes to work with the two authors again in the future.

But in the short term, expect to see Jones more often on the national stage. And expect Shellenberger and Nordhaus' book, now scheduled for publication in fall 2006, to be greeted with a new round of dismissal and outrage. The two authors have a knack for getting people to think, but only the least defensive activists seem ready to receive their message. Meanwhile, Jones' warm-as-sunshine style is winning him far more friends. The progressive movement probably needs all three men: the two apostates nailing their criticisms to the

door to the church, and the preacher inside the tent. Hallelujah.

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URL:

http://www.precaution.org/lib/05/climate_and_health_are_related.051118.htm

From: The Herald (Bradenton, Fla.), Nov. 18, 2005

CLIMATE, HEALTH RELATED

Study: Climate change has adverse effect on people

By Susanne Rust, Knight Ridder Tribune News Service

MILWAUKEE -- Add one more item to the list of things that can be affected by climate change and global warming: human health.

Researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison{1} and the World Health Organization{2} have compiled a series of studies{3} showing that people have been adversely affected by regional and global climate change. They suspect 150,000 people per year, for the past 30 years, have died as a result of a gradually warming planet. They say that annually, 5 million cases of illness can be attributed to it, too.

And they think things are only going to get worse.

But they say governments can play a role in stemming these escalating temperatures. And the countries most responsible for the warming trend, such as the United States -- which contributes the largest share of greenhouse gases per capita -- should play a role in prevention.

Looking across the globe, Jonathan Patz, a professor at UW's Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, and a team of climate and health scientists combed through the scientific literature looking for specific incidences of human-induced climate change and the ill effects it has on people.

They found many.

Examples abound

They cited both broad-scale examples -- such as the 2003 European heat wave that killed nearly 45,000 in two weeks -- and smaller-scale examples, such as the local effects of

"urban heat islands," a phenomenon in which cities register temperatures five to 10 degrees warmer than the outlying area.

In both cases, the warmer temperatures have been attributed to human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels or the design of urban landscapes.

"Climate scientists think that human-induced climate change has amplified the severity of recent extreme events such as Hurricane Katrina and the 2003 European heat wave," which has led to a loss in life, said Tony McMichael, director of the Australian National University's Center for Epidemiology and Population Health, who was not involved in the study.

But there is also "growing evidence that various infectious diseases are changing their geographic range, seasonality and incidence rate in association with ongoing climatic changes," he said.

Indeed, mosquitoes, ticks and sandflies -- common vectors of disease - all react to climate. For example, Patz's team found research that showed an increase in cases of malaria in the highlands of Kenya during periods of extreme heat variability. Another study they noted documented a correlation between warming trends in Ethiopia and malarial infections.

Patz said researchers who have observed West Nile virus' spread across the United States have documented a correlation of its movement with hotter and drier weather -- the peculiar weather of choice for the primary carrier of the virus, the Culex mosquito.

"Climate change is not just another minor environmental problem and incidental health hazard," McMichael said. "A change in Earth's climatic conditions will disrupt many of the natural systems that affect human health," including regional food production, infectious disease agents, patterns of heat stress and exposure to extreme weather events, such as cyclones, floods and fires.

The victims

Unfortunately, regions that will bear the biggest brunt of these changes, such as Africa, not only produce some of the lowest per capita emissions of greenhouse gases, said Patz, but have the least ability to adapt and deal with climate change.

"Herein lies an enormous global ethical challenge," he said.

"This is complex and difficult stuff to study," said Howard Frumkin, director of the National Center for Environmental Health at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. But

he said the paper was important because it covers the "broad range of potential health impacts" caused by climate change.

Moral obligation

According to climate scientists, the Earth's temperature is likely to increase between 2.5 and 10.4 degrees Fahrenheit by the end of the century. As a result, the seas will rise and the number of people at risk from flooding by coastal storm surges is projected to increase.

One of the midrange scenarios that Patz and his colleagues investigated predicts a 15.75-inch rise in sea level by 2080. That rise would increase the number of people at risk from storms and surges from a current level of 75 million to 200 million.

Patz thinks that it'll be communities and regions along the Pacific and Indian coastlines, as well as sub-Saharan Africa, that will be most affected.

On Nov. 28, global leaders will convene in Montreal at the first meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which came into effect in February. The United States has not signed the treaty. But Patz is hoping his work will demonstrate the moral obligation of countries with higher per capita emissions to adopt a leadership role in reducing the health threats of global warming.

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- {1} <http://www.news.wisc.edu/11878.html>
- {2} <http://www.who.int/en/>
- {3} http://www.precaution.org/lib/05/warming_harms_health.051117.pdf

Rachel's Democracy & Health News (formerly Rachel's Environment & Health News) highlights the connections between issues that are often considered separately or not at all.

The natural world is deteriorating and human health is declining because those who make the important decisions aren't the ones who bear the brunt. Our purpose is to connect the dots between human health, the destruction of nature, the decline of community, the rise of economic insecurity and inequalities, growing stress among workers and families, and the crippling legacies of patriarchy, intolerance, and racial injustice that allow us to be divided and therefore ruled by the few.

In a democracy, there are no more fundamental questions than, "Who gets to decide?" And, "How DO the few control the many, and what might be done about it?"

Rachel's Democracy and Health News is published as often as necessary to provide readers with up-to-date coverage of the subject.

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