

# The Peace That Must End

White Supremacy and Ecology

Problem Animal

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Has anyone ever cared so much about how we live our lives? They want us to drive their trucks, tanks and tractors, build their high-rise apartments, dams and prisons, go to church, vote with their ballot machines, obey our husbands, listen to their radio stations, find a girlfriend with the right bra size, report graffiti (\$500 reward!), upgrade our software, send our kids to school, say no to drugs, fill out our W-2s, drink Absolut Vodka, fill up our gas tanks and guard their valuables. They want every move we make to strengthen the social machinery that makes them kings. They want to tame us until we are part of their machine—until we are so dependent on their technology that we use each other as tools.

Few devices put the rulers on top better than racial hierarchy. The powerful benefit from racism because most are white, because racism keeps dissent split up more effectively than a line of riot cops, and because racism rallies armies to fight wars, defend borders, elect politicians and police the streets. North America would never have been colonized without a social system that devalued indigenous people. One would think that this system would be a principle enemy of all ecology movements. However, there exists a peaceful silence on the subject among white activists. In fact, there are many examples of overlap between white supremacy and ecology.

Most who struggle to defend the Earth are not white. White supremacy, therefore, has a limited hold on the global ecological struggle. Nonetheless, racist ecology poses a danger to the movement as a whole and, ultimately, to life itself. We must confront white supremacy within ecology movements as militantly as we would confront Exxon-Mobil or the US Forest Service; the threat is just as great. We must wage this battle on many fronts: against admitted members of white nationalist groups, against the actions and statements of our own movements and, finally, for white activists, within ourselves. If we lose this battle, white ecologists may, at best, find themselves left in the rubble while the rest of the population decides the fate of the world. Worse, white activists may find themselves as tools in the nightmare of the machine age.

One of the best-kept secrets of ecology is the strength of the green strains of white nationalism. The Nazi party actively supported such tenets of deep ecology as biodynamic farming, worship of Norse gods, anti-urbanism, forest preservation, anti-industrialism and a rejection of civilization itself. The German government enthusiastically funded new ecological initiatives, even at the height of the war. This combination of deep ecology and racism is sampled well by pagan and Nazi leader Alfred Rosenberg: “Today we see the steady stream from the countryside to the city, deadly for the volk [volk translates roughly to a nationalist, proletarian and mystical “folk”]. The cities swell even larger, unnerving the volk and destroying the threads that bind humanity to nature. They attract adventurers and profiteers of all colors, thereby fostering racial chaos.” Rosenberg provided much of the ideological foundation for the young Nazi party.

White nationalist interest in ecology did not die at the end of World War II. The National Socialist Movement, a US-based, Nazi-inspired organization, claims that “being a national socialist is being obedient to nature and nature’s creator.” According to White Aryan Resistance (WAR), the use of chopsticks in Asia is destroying old-

growth forests in the Pacific Northwest, and “the white race cannot be strong if our environment is polluted.” Some white supremacist websites, such as “Folk and Faith,” have links to sites for Earth First! and the Animal Liberation Front. A new wave of groups, like WAR and Folk and Faith, claim to be beyond left and right, embracing an ideology of decentralized nationalism.

Immigration, a hot topic for white nationalists, provides a scapegoat for any social or ecological issue. According to Californians for Population Stabilization, “Virtually all of California’s problems can be connected to the fact that we have too many people, yet our elected officials continue providing numerous incentives that encourage immigration, including drivers licenses and in-state tuition for illegal aliens.”

Overt racists are not content to stay within their own movements. John Thanton, founder and benefactor of several anti-immigration groups, funded the above-mentioned Californians for Population Stabilization. In a 1986 memo, leaked in 1988, Thanton named the Sierra Club as a potential target for infiltration. Thanton’s most recent takeover attempt targeted the 2004 Sierra Club board elections, with Sierrans for US Population Stabilization (SUSPS) and several animal rights groups attempting to push an anti-immigration, anti-overpopulation and animal rights agenda. Like the nationalist Nazi ecology, SUSPS believes that the Earth on this side of the razor wire is more valuable than the rest.

There also exists, within antiimmigration ecology, a logic of hoarding privilege. According to Californians for Population Stabilization, “High consumption rates and rapid population growth work together to degrade the environment. However, reduced consumption is very difficult to achieve on a national basis, and international momentum is toward emulating high American levels of it, not modeling Third World frugality.” This theme emphasizes keeping others poor to compensate for a US-initiated problem, US culture is spreading worldwide, but does the world want to be just like us or is US culture being shoved down its throat? Can’t you smell the upchuck washing up on our shores? Was the 9/11 attack a demand for a new WalMart in Kabul?

The anti-overpopulation movement is saturated in racism deeper than its links with anti-immigration groups. A saying among the elite states that “too many of the wrong type of people are breeding.” In their war against those types, doctors continue to remove or disable the reproductive systems of poor women of color, sometimes under coercion, sometimes without the woman’s knowledge or consent. I was surprised to hear an uncle of mine, a liberal doctor, justifying these actions as “for their own good.” My partner recently inquired about free exams for low-income women, only to discover that the exam would be granted to her only if she agreed to go on, and partially pay for, birth control.

Amongst those responsible for the blitzkrieg against the Sierra Club was board member and Sea Shepherd Captain Paul Watson, who provided a key link between antiimmigration and animal rights groups. While the SUSPS was rejected in the board elections, Watson still has a home in the supposedly more radical *EF! Journal*, where the Sea Shepherd continues to find publicity in almost every issue. Earth First! has

had racist overtones since it dropped its first banner on the Glen Canyon dam. Dave Foreman, a selfproclaimed founder of Earth First! and a member of SUSPS, has long been known for his racist and patriarchal attitudes. Even the name “Earth First!” was, for some such as Foreman and Watson, originally a way of belittling causes that they did not see as part of an ecological agenda. Earth First!, however, has no leaders, so any overarching accusation of it would be untrue. It is more capable of grassroots change because its actions are as diverse as its participants. It is precisely because of efforts to bring an anti-hierarchical agenda to Earth First! that Foreman and flocks of other insecure, alpha, white males have fled. Others, however, are still there.

A number of radical ecologists have found inspiration in the writings of Ted Kaczynski, who, aside from a long bombing campaign, is most famous for his essay collection—“Industrial Society and Its Future” (aka the Unabomber Manifesto)—in which he writes: “Does it make sense to demand affirmative action in hostile or dogmatic terms? Obviously, it would be more productive to take a diplomatic or conciliatory approach that would make concessions to white people.” A call for a less hostile approach from a man who mailed bombs? Kaczynski wishes to pacify those who challenge his privilege while pursuing direct action for his own agenda.

In his short story, “Ship of Fools,” Kaczynski ridicules people of color, among others, belittling race issues as a petty distraction from his liberation. This theme of white activists downplaying race issues as reformist or a distraction holds strength among certain radical ecologists. The most important battlefield against racism, for whites, is within ourselves. Despite our best efforts, we are part of racial hierarchy. The question is not whether whites join the racists or anti-racists. It is not a matter of how many people of color we collect as friends or how many hip-hop records we have. The choice is rather a matter of how many wrenches we throw in the system.

“By visibly hovering near us, [whites] are ‘proving’ that they are ‘with us.’ But the hard truth is that this isn’t helping America’s racist problem. Where the really sincere white people have got to do their ‘proving’ of themselves is not among black victims but out on the battle lines of where America’s racism really is—and that is in their own home communities...” Malcolm X wrote this toward the end of his life when he recognized that a cautious amount of trust could be put in white allies. Just as addicts will forever face their addiction, whites should never see themselves as beyond racism. We must always fight our addiction to power. Too often, whites seek to gain approval from people of color for their anti-racism. People of color, however, are not always interested in patting whites on the back for not kicking them down again.

Even well-meaning people must challenge themselves. For example, those of us wishing to abandon imperialist culture by learning primitive skills need to concern ourselves with how we learn. A white, primitive skills enthusiast could ask themselves, “Who wrote my book about Ojibwa medicine; where did I learn how to make birch baskets; how do I learn religious language such as ‘great spirit?’” These questions are simply a star to follow in the quest to destroy privilege. No magic formula guards against

cultural imperialism; there exists disagreement among communities of color on this subject. They are, after all, as diverse as any community.

As activists, it can be hard to admit fault. Whites, however, must learn to take criticism from people of color, even when we don't agree. Whites must learn that when non-white people criticize us, the most revolutionary thing we can do is to respectfully think and listen. The perspectives of people of color come from generations of oppression at the hands of whites and our ancestors. "Who is right?" is subjective. "Who is speaking?" and "who is listening," that's real. Healthy debate is Important, but our mouths have issued enough orders. Our cold ideologies can at times treat lives as chess pieces. We must never again treat those who share this planet with us as tools. Then we are rewilding.

*Problem Animal inhabits the South Shore of Lake Superior, though his exact location has not been known since his tracking collar was found destroyed 20 miles southeast of Duluth.*

## Stupidity and Critics of the Ecology Movement

BY JOHN JOHNSON, KaTUAH EARTH FIRST!

Problem Animal's (PA's) recent attack on the Earth First! movement is a poorly written, ill-informed, politically correct propaganda piece (see *EF!* March-April 2005). It starts off well enough, with a nice rant against consumer culture and white supremacy. But then PA says, "There exists a peaceful silence on the subject [racism] among white activists."

What movement are you paying attention to, PA? There has been an article in at least every other issue of the *EF! Journal* for the last three years challenging racism and other -isms within and/or outside of the EF! movement (see *EF!J* September-October 2004). The *Journal* is constantly running articles about non-white environmental struggles across the planet.

Before we go any further, let me state clearly that there is *a lot of work still needed* in EF!, the ecology movement, broader social movements and society as a whole when it comes to racism, sexism, classism and the lot. Regardless, PA's little hit piece is representative of what is stupid and wrong with many critiques of the radical ecological movement.

If PA had any knowledge of EF!'s history, he would know that when Dave Foreman and Miss Ann Thropy printed dumb, racist comments in the *Journal*, it sparked the debate that changed EF! forever. Every national EF! gathering I've been to in the last 14 years has had at least one (usually more) discussion circle or workshop about the issue, and they have not all been peaceful. Now, maybe some in the movement are not living up to PA's standards of action, but there is most certainly not a peaceful silence on the subject.

But now for the really brilliant part of this so-called “article”: deep ecology equals Nazism! PA, you better understand both before you compare them! PA states, “The Nazi party actively supported such tenets of deep ecology as biodynamic farming, worship of Norse gods, anti-urbanism, forest preservation, anti-industrialism and a rejection of civilization itself.”

First off, none of those things are “tenets” of deep ecology (worship of Norse gods? Where did you find that bit of nonsense?). Second, what is wrong with them, even if they were (‘cept for the Norse god part)? Does anyone expect us to give up important worldviews, frameworks and ideas just because some Nazi scum paid lip service to them?

The Nazis may have had some weird, mystical rhetoric about loving the Earth, but their praxis was industrial; it was urban, it was Christian and they thoroughly and proudly proclaimed it to be the epitome of civilization. Just because some racist dipshit tries to borrow some ecological rhetoric, that does not mean there are links between these groups or worldviews.

I think maybe PA should get his understanding of deep ecology from the people who write about it and live it, not from neo-Nazi morons who are trying out some new rhetoric as a recruiting tool. According to the Church of Deep Ecology, “Deep ecology is the radical idea that all life has the right to exist, that no one species is more important than another” (see *EF!J* November-December 2003). What part of that did the Nazis practice? Oh yeah, calling gays and Jews subhuman and killing them all, that’s really recognizing the inherent rights and intrinsic value of all life. I guess PA missed page 70 of *Deep Ecology* by Devall and Sessions, where the *first* principle of deep ecology is that “the well being and flourishing of *human* and *nonhuman* life on Earth have value in themselves” (emphasis mine).

Or maybe, PA, you’ve missed the last 10 to 15 years of the *EF! Journal*, where attention to human needs in environmental and social problems has grown to the point of almost crowding out nonhuman wilderness issues. Maybe you’ve missed all the rhetoric coming from wilderness activists about how humans *need* wilderness for survival, or how there are more *jobs* and a better economy in areas with lots of protected wilderness.

Maybe you’ve missed where many of the hardcore biocentric activists have abandoned EF! for other groups. PA, if you are going to level critiques such as this, then may I suggest that you please do some research and pay attention to what is actually going on in the EF! scene?

And what, exactly, are we supposed to do about the Nazis linking to our websites? Would you have us form a corporation and sue them? Give me a break. At least two active EF! groups (Idaho and Katuah) have openly challenged Nazis in the streets, and that has been covered extensively in the *Journal* (see *EF!J* May-June 2004). It should be obvious from what is printed in the *Journal* that nobody, *nobody* who is currently publicly active in EF! has any shred of sympathy for a Nazi point of view. Again, do you want us to incorporate and issue a policy statement?

EF! activists have run off overt racists from our ranks. I witnessed it in 1993, at the Round River Rendezvous on Mt. Graham. I remember the Winter EF! meeting in '97, when the principles of environmental justice were brought up, and people liked 'em. Again and again, EF! activists have been challenging racism and sexism. Granted, it is mostly people of color and womyn who are forcing us to deal with these issues. Granted, if slacktivists would stay committed to the cause instead of doing the trendy, movement-hopping thing, we might get a little further in our work to undermine white privilege and patriarchy. Granted, EF! has a long fucking way to go in challenging our internal privilege, racism and sexism. Granted, so do I. But let's have some meaningful discussion on the matter and not a reprise of what happened in the early days or some bullshit link with the Nazis.

PA cites not a single instance of EF! racism—and there *are* well known instances of such. My point is that PA is basing his writings on broad generalizations and stereotypes, not on reality. Yes, EF! needs to continue to hear a broad critique of our privilege, discuss it and act on it. No, we do not need to hear or read critiques that are dated, dumb, insulting, and that are poorly written.

PA implies that animal rights and deep ecology are somehow problems for the environmental movement. What's wrong with animal' rights? What's wrong with deep ecology? These are not inherently perfect worldviews, but they are not inherently flawed, either. If you don't like deep ecology or EF!, then don't fucking work with us. I would say stop reading the *Journal*, but it's obvious that you are not doing that anyway

What we really have here is a thinly veiled attack on our ideology and praxis, the kind that has been going on for the last 25 years. Some of these attacks are not about making us better activists or helping us challenge our middle-class -isms—they are about diluting our movement's message and guilting us into working on human-centered campaigns with human-centered ideologies.

By all means, call me a racist; challenge my loud, boisterous drinking habits; and tell me to shut up so that folks with less privilege than me can speak up in a planning meeting. But *don't you dare* tell me what issues are more important to work on. I know what's important to me. I know what is important for the survival of non-humyn *and* humyn life in my bioregion and on this planet. I will act accordingly, and I have. If you don't have enough people for your urban-centered, social justice campaign, it is not the fault of those who are actually doing something to save wild nature. Maybe you should try recruiting from the general public and stop trying to get other activists to work on your issue by baiting them with guilt and racism. *All of these causes are important. They need all of us working on them. You are doing nothing helpful to your cause by attempting to make me feel guilty about mine.*

Before I became a full-time participant in the EF! movement, I spent a lot of time attempting to support the struggles of people of color. In some of those struggles, I was welcomed as an ally and I tried my best to offer service, and to follow their lead. I participated in semi-successful anti-police brutality and environmental justice

campaigns in Chattanooga, Tennessee. In other struggles, I was met with open hostility, so I straight up asked what could I do. The leadership of some of those groups told me, roughly, “We [blacks] need to do our own thing. The best thing you can do to support our struggle is to go and organize amongst your own people. Promote anti-racism and engage in struggles that are meaningful to you and that work toward some of the same goals—overthrow of the racist, imperialist, capitalist US death machine.”

EF! is where I found that. When I came to the EF! movement, it was in turmoil. The old guard (Foreman and company) had left, and all this new, exciting organizing was happening. Integration of deep ecology with social ecology and anarchy and social justice struggles was all the rage.

While the work over the last ten years or so has not been perfect, there are attempts to have a more holistic approach and to reject the more ciassist, racist, anti-human strains of deep ecology that are promoted by a very distinct and identifiable minority within radical ecological circles.

I think most of us on the EF! scene welcome thoughtful critiques. But if y'all are gonna engage in sophomoric attacks, call us Nazis and undermine our work, I think by now you know where you can stick that kind of argument.

*john johnson doesn't capitalize his name, 'cause he doesn't believe in capitalism. He is doing the best he can to destroy the bad parts of his privilege and to use the rest for the good of the Earth and the cause of revolution. He is currently engaged in a campaign to protect the land and the people from the ravages of mountaintop removal strip mining.*

See [www.mountaininjusticesummer.org](http://www.mountaininjusticesummer.org) for details.

## The Bullshit Must End

by Captain Paul Watson

*Hominid Triviality and Ecology*

The number one problem that I have with the article “The Peace that Must End” is that it was written by a coward (see *EF!J* March-April 2005). The writer hides behind his pseudonym of “Problem Animal” as he sits in the shadows, bushwhacking people he knows little about.

For example, he makes an unsubstantiated accusation that there was a link between anti-immigration advocates and animal rights advocates running for the Siena Club Board. That bogus conspiracy theory originated with Sierra Club Executive Director Carl Pope, who pulled the race card to discredit candidates who would have most likely fired his ass.

In fact, I am not aware of any anti-immigration directors connected to the Sierra Club. There is a movement to stabilize human population in the US, and that would include restrictions on immigration. It would not mean eliminating immigration. I say to Americans who want to see more immigrants coming into the country: You should

sacrifice having kids to make room for people from other nations wanting to come here and have their own kids.

The population of the US is growing by 1.3 percent each year through legal immigration. This will give us a population of 500 million by 2050, and close to a billion by the end of this century. This does not even include the illegal immigration figures.

By the way, every new American is the equivalent of 25 new citizens of India. And most immigrants can hardly be described as environmentally sensitive individuals.

But for all you politically correct, open-border types, the cost of immigration is massive sprawl, damming up every river and using every square foot of land to feed and more and more people in the materially comforting style that they expect to enjoy in this most materialistic of nations.

I want more immigrants myself, but I'd prefer more grizzlies, wolves, birds and other species.

But enough of this.

I don't particularly care what Problem Animal says about me. He can make unsubstantiated accusations against me as much as he wants. His words have about as much impact as a fart in a windstorm.

But when he makes ridiculous and unwarranted accusations against my friend David Foreman, that is another matter entirely.

Dave Foreman is one of the most inspirational, passionate and dedicated wildlife and wilderness defenders in

the world. He did not flee EF! as this coward from the south shore of Lake Superior states. Dave simply did not want to involve himself in petty

human triviality. Instead, he plunged into the task of creating wildlife corridors and has dedicated himself to the objectives of conservation biology. Dave still remains one of the most dynamic environmental speakers on the planet. He is an articulate writer, a role model and a thoroughly biocentric activist.

The only person who would describe Dave Foreman as an insecure, white, alpha male is someone who does not know him or has not bothered to research what Dave Foreman has contributed to the environmental movement.

Problem Animal is a racist. He automatically assumes that white men are insecure, arrogant, dominant and all sorts of mean, nasty things. He suggests that all the problems in the world have been caused and are caused by white males.

My opinion is that white males share guilt equally with all other males and females of all other races and cultures.

Did white men carry out a policy of genocide against American Indians? Absolutely. But how was this different from the genocidal policies of American Indian tribes against each other, both before and after the European invasion? Some of the imperialistic exploits of the Aztec in Mexico or the Thule in Labrador rival the Romans for sheer ruthlessness. Even the Makah of present day Washington State originally drove their war canoes across from Vancouver Island to wage a bloody war of extermination against

the Ozette peoples, hundreds of years before Europeans arrived. They took the land by conquest. There are no Ozette left to reflect on that injustice.

The truth is that the Europeans did not have to teach genocide or land stealing to the Indians.

It would have been racist for us to have not opposed the Makah whalers, because we would have been discriminating against them based on their race and not their actions.

Racism works both ways. When a person is restricted from involvement in a society based on race, that is racism. When a person is given special privileges in a society based on race, that is racism.

The Farley Mowat

Speaking for myself, I can honestly state that I have little affection for the species *Homo sapiens*. However, I don't discriminate—I dislike all *Homo sapiens* equally. I like some of them as individuals when and if I get to know them. I certainly don't trust many of them, and I expect people to treat me in the same way.

I have met the enemy and it is us.

There are tens of millions of species on this planet, many of which are threatened by our own, and they are my primary concern. I don't get overly passionate about the trivialities of the human species, especially the relative trivialities of sexual and cultural politics.

I am guided by the three primary laws of ecology: the Law of Diversity, the Law of Interdependence and the Law of Finite Resources. These laws do not allow me to discriminate. I believe in diversity and I believe in interdependence. This holds as true for human movements as it does for natural ecosystems. Strength lies in diversity, and that is why I am a member and/ or supporter of groups ranging from the Sierra Club to the Earth Liberation Front. Because of the law of Finite Resources, I am a strong advocate of reducing human populations and human consumption.

I also recognize that—as a human being living in these incredibly fucked up, human-designed, political and economic systems—I am a hypocrite. We all are. You cannot exist in the world we have created without being a hypocrite. We all are guilty of driving in cars or eating meat, consuming resources, and so on.

All we can hope to do is to minimize our ecological footprint. The sad reality is that relatively few people are doing so. Less than one thousandth of one percent of the six billion hominids on this planet even give a shit about the rest of the living species.

The Sea Shepherd Conservation Society is an international marine wildlife conservation organization. We have projects on every continent. We have volunteers from around the world on our ships. We do not exclude anyone from participation. We are colorblind and gender-blind, and that is a fact.

We are working in Senegal and South Africa to protect fish and seals. We don't work with specifically black or white Africans. We do work with people who are black and white and are concerned about conservation. We work with individuals.

We work in Ecuador, Colombia and Brazil. We don't work with exclusively Ecuadorians, Colombians or Brazilians. We work with individuals who are citizens of these countries, but their citizenship and ethnic affiliations are irrelevant.

Problem Animal seems to have a problem with racism, but I suggest that his problem is his own racism, motivated by guilt and his obvious lack of moral fiber.

Quite frankly, my priority is saving this planet from the likes of ourselves.

*Captain Paul Watson is the founder of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society and a founding director of the Greenpeace Foundation.*

## The Tales We Are Told

The impossible task is a common theme in fairy tales. An idealistic, young comoner seeking to escape a life of poverty and toil is confronted by a sly, immoral and tyrannical king. This king promises to fulfill the hero's wishes if the hero can complete a series of seemingly impossible tasks. Of course, the hero is able to succeed where no one else has—solving puzzles with creativity, taming monsters with compassion and approaching feats of strength with unexpected ingenuity.

Although the hero returns triumphantly each time, the king always breaks their original bargain and assigns new and increasingly difficult errands. The hero masters these as well; he never complains as the king bends the rules in his own favor, but merely trusts that determination will benefit him in the end.

And of course, it does. Eventually, the king is so overcome by the purity and dedication of the hero that he can resist no longer. The hero is granted his just reward, and everyone lives happily ever after.

It might seem odd to suggest that this fairy tale is an accurate reflection of the mainstream model of social change, but I'm convinced that this is the case. Time and time again, we are told that the only acceptable, moral or civilized way to effect a change is through a series of inane tasks: petitions, ballot initiatives, elections and even peaceful demonstrations.

Those in power know these tasks to be impossible—that's why the trials are assigned to us in the first place. And whenever we get close to a victory, the rules are suddenly changed to render our victory void. Yet, even those who acknowledge the futility of the process still expect us to operate by its rules. Better to petition forever and fail than to embrace an unsanctioned method and succeed, they say. We are told to abide and hope, to await the arrival of some messianic figure who can succeed at the impossible: a victory against the status quo, achieved by following its own rules.

We need to recognize that this hero will never come, that he is a myth told to keep us docile and disinterested in our own liberation. Yes, his idealism, dedication and ingenuity are his greatest weapons, and we must embrace them accordingly. But to attempt victory by methods that are known to be impossible is the same as never trying at all.

It's time we accept what we've known all along: The king is cruel, selfish and sly; his game benefits no one but himself; and he will not yield without a fight. We cannot win on his terms. It's time we make our own.

—Josh

## Two Responses to “The Bullshit That Must End”

### 1

by Clover

I read the article “The Peace That Must End” by Problem Animal (see *EF!J* March-April 2005). I agreed with John Johnson and Paul Watson that this article could have been put together more responsibly and with more respect for the work that Earth First! has done in dealing with social justice issues. However, I am completely shocked that the *EF! Journal* printed the response by Paul Watson, “The Bullshit That Must End” (see *EF!J* May-June 2005). This was arrogantly written and provided a reactionary criticism that was anything *but* healthy for the Earth First! community.

As an anti-oppression activist and queer radical environmentalist, I have been impressed with Earth First!’s ability to bring up issues of social oppression within the radical environmental movement. This initiative was what brought me into the movement, creating a space for me to identify with putting the Earth first. One of my major activist priorities is understanding queer identity, and how queer folks can network to challenge homophobia and to empower each other. I also realize that the very Earth on which I live is being destroyed by the same power structure that inflicts oppression on me. Taking responsibility for the social dynamics of our community is not “human triviality,” but rather a way of making our movement stronger.

One of the most revolutionary influences in my life is the criticism I receive from my peers and comrades, but criticism needs to be approached carefully, and people need to be respected. Watson’s article did not just attack Problem Animal’s ideas, it was loaded with attacks on many other activists and allies. Watson made huge, unsupported claims, many of which fall in line with the nationalist and fascist rhetoric that Problem Animal was talking about—for example, “The truth is that Europeans did not have to teach genocide or land stealing to the Indians.”

Not only does Watson’s response create an unhealthy and disempowering debate within our own community, it is an embarrassment to the Earth First! movement as a whole.

We must respect each other’s priorities and never invalidate or silence anybody who is resisting oppression. I will be an ally to anyone who takes a stand against an oppressive power structure. And if I personally stand in the way of their liberation, then I will accept criticism and take responsibility for understanding how I can change myself and become accountable for my actions. When I first became involved in eco-

radical theory, I was confronted with personal shit that I needed to change. I felt defensive at first, and I wanted to push it aside and enjoy the privilege of ignorance and consumer comforts. But I realized that environmental issues are more important than my comfort and that I needed to take responsibility for my behavior. Luckily, Earth First! created a space where I felt comfortable exploring these issues, and it provided me with the empowerment that I needed to make connections and get involved.

I honestly respect Paul Watson for being a militant, driving force in the movement to challenge environmental abuse, and he has inspired me with his actions. Yet his experience is shaped by social privilege, and he has no business invalidating the experiences or priorities of peoples who are rising up against their oppressors. Perhaps Watson can push aside social justice as “human triviality” because he is a white male who receives privileges that affect his priorities.

It is important for us to admit the ways in which our social location affects our worldview. It also important to challenge issues such as “white guilt.” Guilt is not productive, and it can usually lead to denial. Taking responsibility for your socialization means understanding the effects of society on your ability to have healthy relationships, socially and environmentally. I am passionate about environmental issues because I feel responsible for my culture’s abusive domination of nature. However, it would be ridiculous for me to feel guilty for my role within this system. Instead, I’ll rise up to challenge industry and exploitation. Just as this society gives me a human privilege to ignore pollution, animal abuse and extinction, it awards me with white privilege that allows me to ignore the struggles of immigrants whose very existence is illegal.

It isn’t easy to get people to challenge their own power, but when we create a community based around respect and the understanding that “none of us are free until we’re all free,” then perhaps we can finally form a united front against the destruction of the Earth.

## 2

by Kris Lynch

There were many thoughts that ran through my head as I read the responses to Problem Animal’s “The Peace That Must End.” To me, the articles by John Johnson and Paul Watson read like the perfect montage of covert and overt racism.

I originally got involved with Katuah Earth First! (KEF!) because I was inspired by the few anti-racist activities that it engaged in when I first moved to the region (supporting the Cherokee nation in a land swap and showing up to disrupt a Ku Klux Klan rally). But these actions alone are not enough to end racism, let alone sexism, genderism, ableism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, speciesism and so forth. And participating in two solidarity actions over the course of two years does not nullify the oppressive acts carried out every day by Earth Firsters.

There was a very important part of Problem Animal’s article that seems to have been overlooked by Johnson and Watson: “Whites must learn that when non-white

people criticize us, the most revolutionary thing we can do is to respectfully think and listen.” It seems to be a common theme amongst Earth Firsters to react by defending themselves and then by marginalizing or completely devaluing any criticism.

I recently came across this behavior at a KEF! meeting when I delivered a letter from the local Anarchist People of Color (APOC) chapter. Acting as an ally, I called out KEF! for rescheduling its Solstice campout for the same weekend as the Southeast APOC conference. While some members of KEF! were responsive to what was said, others were deceitful and defensive. The initial reaction of most local KEF!ers was to justify their actions and decision, rather than to take a moment and listen to the criticism at hand. To react defensively to criticism is deeply founded in traditions of hierarchy and patriarchy, and it is a prime example of entitlement.

As to Paul Watson’s article, I’m unsure why the *Journal* even printed it. It would have been different if Watson used the space provided to renounce his past decisions, but instead he spends hundreds of words explaining how unapologetic he is for supporting the messed-up policies of groups like Support US Population Stabilization. While Watson starts off by saying that he is unaware of any anti-immigration sentiment in the organizations he supports, he then goes into explaining the negative costs of immigration. We do need to question what roles humyn populations play throughout the world, but what questions are asked, who is asking them, and who feels entitled to answer? Paul Watson and other anti-immigrant environmental and animal liberation activists must ask what it means to be radical.

When most white people in the US think about immigrants, they conjure up images of Mexicans. I’ll stick with that stereotype, but first I want to point out that a large number of immigrants flock to this country from Europe every year. Let’s ignore, for a moment, the fact that a war of attrition turned thousands of families into instant illegal immigrants when a group of white men signed a piece of paper annexing what is now the southwestern US. So why would so many Mexicans cross the border, risking their lives and livelihood?

Imagine that you work full-time in a US-owned factory in Mexico, but you aren’t able to feed yourself enough, let alone your loved ones. If you ask for a raise, you are immediately fired. If you try to organize a union, you may be killed. Maybe, as the patriarchs of anarcho-primitivism tell us, you should move into the forest and live off the land. The problem is that Starbucks kicked your family off your land to start a coffee plantation, and if Monsanto finds you wild-crafting medicinal plants, you could be sentenced to prison.

I don’t think that people should have to travel thousands of miles away from their loved ones and their land just to survive. But I will never advocate for the closing of some imaginary border. Those borders only exist to create a global economic system where labor is cheap, environmental protection is weakened, and everyone and everything is a possible target of violence. If we want to stop massive immigration, we must be radical; we must hack at the roots. The only way to stop forced immigration is to

stop the global systems of violence that force people from their homelands. If we close borders, we create a death sentence and enforce a policy of genocide.

To simply say that millions or billions of people are going to have to die for the Earth to survive is insanely simplistic. As someone from the APOC caucus at this year's National Conference on Organized Resistance said, "They are saying that billions of people have to die. Well, [people of color] know who those killed will be, because we are being killed every day." It is largely white people that create the policies that destroy our planet. It is largely white people that initiate and carry out policies of genocide.

Racism implies a system of power. White people are those that hold global power. This doesn't mean that all white people are evil or that all white people should die. It means that we live in a world dominated by a culture of white supremacy. If we are to create a better world, we must not lash out at those who are the victims in this culture, we must fight against all systems of hierarchy.

*Although many people, including editors of the Journal, use pseudonyms to protect their identities, Kris likes to pick fights and uses zi's real name to prove to Paul Watson that he won't find a coward here.*

## dear shit for brains

Dear Editors,

I must politely disagree with Paul Watson regarding the reasons he gave for the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society (SSCS) firing Dr. Jerry Vlasak from the Board of Directors (see *EF1J* September-October 2005). The fact is, the controversy regarding Jerry Vlasak's personal statement to the press (one that Jerry made clear was *not* shared by SSCS) simply kept the media interested in covering the seal hunt after the slaughter had ended for the year.

Jerry Vlasak stated to the press that, in his own "personal opinion," violence against the seal killers would be morally justifiable, and he would be in support of that if it were to happen. As soon as this was quoted in the media, SSCS phoned Jerry and told him that they had received a call(s) from a donor who was also a scientific advisor, who threatened to pull out of SSCS if Jerry did not resign. Then SSCS stated to Jerry their fear of possibly not being allowed to dock their boat in Bermuda if Jerry didn't resign. But Jerry refused to resign, believing that he had done nothing wrong.

Twenty minutes after refusing to resign from the Board, Jerry was told via cell phone that he had been fired.

Jerry enjoyed very much his time with SSCS. He volunteered for over two years helping them with office and managerial issues, and went aboard the ship as often as he could. He took a punch by a seal killer and was arrested protecting film footage exposing the seal slaughter, then ably represented himself and the other activists arrested on the ice in Prince Edward court.

Jerry still considers Paul a friend, and understands that Paul Watson and the Board did what they felt was right. Time will tell if what they did was right; I think they were wrong. Meanwhile, remember it's the fight against the seal killers who club to death baby seals for profit that should be occupying our thoughts and actions.

—Pamelyn Ferdin

Dear SFB,

Hey, I read in the last issue of the *Journal* the article by that person who was saying Katuah EF! (KEF!) moved our campout on top of ze's anarchist gathering in Asheville. FYI, Solstice and Equinox has been our camp/meeting period for over 10 years—ze scheduled on top of us, not vice versa. We have been meeting on that date for over 10 years. Never met the chap myself though.

And ze was dead wrong about saying two solidarity actions—it's been nine so far. And they aren't solidarity actions—we are doing it purely for self-survival. No one else is organizing these counter-rallies—it has been KEF!. I haven't been doing the counter-rallies in solidarity really—it's been purely personal. The Klan is a knife at all our throats—anybody who studies their history can see that. I just got an impression that ze was implying we do it cause we hope black and other folks of color will like us and that ain't it at all. And I am only counting nine rallies of just one faction of the Klan we have been fighting—before that was a major Klan counterrally that KEF!'s Mountain Faction was in the middle of. It wasn't two, they aren't "solidarity" actions, and it's just history here—the Klan was never very popular in east Tennessee.

—John Conner

Dear SFB,

The recent discussion on "Problem Animal" and racism has served, if nothing else, to highlight the importance of the US population problem (see *EF!J* September-October 2005). Paul Watson clearly understands its severity; if anything, he underestimates its extent.

As he says, the US is currently at 300 million, heading toward one billion by the year 2100. But this is only half the ugly picture.

The math is pretty basic. The burden on the land is the product of "number of people" and "rate of consumption." According to the World Wildlife Fund, our ecological footprint (resource use, development, waste disposal) is around 25 acres of land per person. Three hundred million Americans thus use about 7.5 billion acres of land—which might be fine if we had that much. Unfortunately, the continental 48 states constitute only two billion acres, so we are using a whole lot of other people's land. This in itself indicates a major injustice; certainly it is not unreasonable to expect each nation to live within its ecological means.

But it gets worse. Clearly we cannot pave, plow and dump on every square inch of land. Purely for the sake of sustainability, we need to leave a very large portion untouched; as true wilderness. Some have suggested that each bioregion needs fully 50 percent preserved as wilderness, to give adequate space for large predators and to

allow the broader processes of evolution to continue. Half for us, half for nature— what could be more fair? It is a clean and articulate ecological vision.

So, with half wilderness, that leaves us with a billion acres for direct human use. At 25 acres per person, this will support *only 40 million people!* Today we are at 300 million. Five hundred million by 2050. One billion by 2100. Forty million sustainable. These numbers should be etched into our psyche. They should guide all our thinking and actions.

Unless we can convince people to radically lower their scale of consumption, we are stuck with this conclusion. Advocates for social justice neglect the root causes of our crisis: too many people, a system of techno-industrial capitalism run amok and a mindset in which the Earth is a machine for wealth creation. These root causes are blind to race, sex, religion and sexual orientation.

Regards,  
—David Skrbina

Problem Animal  
The Peace That Must End  
White Supremacy and Ecology  
March 2005

Earth First! Journal.

<[www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key\\_docs/ef\\_25\\_3\\_3.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/sites/default/files/key_docs/ef_25_3_3.pdf)>,  
<[www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef\\_25\\_4\\_3.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef_25_4_3.pdf)>,  
<[www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef\\_25\\_5\\_3.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef_25_5_3.pdf)>,  
<[www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef\\_25\\_6\\_3.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef_25_6_3.pdf)>  
& <[www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef\\_26\\_1\\_2.pdf](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/.../ef_26_1_2.pdf)>

With regards to the letter response at the end by David Skrbina, people should know Skrbina is a virulently anti-semetic anti-tech vanguardist who was attempting to do entryism into the leftist Earth First! movement. Obviously EF! editors couldn't have had the foresight to know the politics of this person, it's just novel history. For further reading see: a text dump on David Skrbina.