

# Timeline

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**Searching for Answers**

**Editorial by Mac Lawrence**

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Two recent TV programs I saw summed up the unkindly times we're in. The first program was about the closing of more and more hospitals around the country because of limited budgets. Many of the hospitals were funded to serve people who are without health insurance and unable to pay for medical attention. Now these folks are forced to use the emergency rooms of the remaining hospitals for ordinary medical problems, overwhelming the hospital staffs. The program showed lines of sick people waiting for hours to be admitted to the ER. Some never got in and had to come back to try again the next day. City officials were heartbroken each time a hospital shut down, but what can we do, they said; there's no money to keep them open.

The second program reported on the huge new increases in military spending the administration pumped for and Congress approved—all in all, 13 percent more than the military got last year. For 2003 we pay \$2.5 billion to buy a new attack submarine, \$3.3 billion for the Navy's "Super Hornet" fighter plane, \$2 billion for Osprey aircraft, \$8.6 billion for a missile defense system—hardly what you would think of to defeat Al Qaeda.

The disconnect between these two programs should make every American gag. Unlimited money for killing, but not enough for health? What kind of people are we? How did we get to this point? And how do we get our country back on track?

I experienced another disconnect when I saw Michael Moore's latest movie *Bowling for Columbine*. If you have not seen the film, it's a combination of humor, irony, and in-your-face interviews. Moore shows us an America with a murder rate hundreds of times higher than that of similarly well-off countries. It is an America in which far too many of its citizens live in a constant state of fear and keep pursuing, futilely, more and more extreme ways to feel safe. The film asks: "Why so much violence in America?"

Moore, who also produced the film *Roger and Me* and is the author of the best-selling book *Stupid White Men*, grew up with guns. An expert marksman and a long-time member of the National Rifle Association (NRA), he is appalled that in one year 11,127 Americans killed one another with guns. This compares, Moore noted, with 381 gun murders in Germany, 255 in France, 165 in Canada, 68 in the UK, 65 in Australia, and 39 in Japan.

The film has had mixed reviews. The *New Yorker* magazine reviewer called Moore "a left-wing joker with a camera," but admitted "that some of his mocking sallies have a way of hitting their target." The *San Jose Mercury News* gave it four stars. Oprah Winfrey devoted an entire program to a conversation with Moore, plus showing segments from the film. The audience in the theatre I attended was primarily college age; they seemed to respond to Moore's approach, and they seemed to understand the message Moore was trying to get across, which I found hopeful.

In the film, Moore interviewed an intimate of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh who said it is an American responsibility to be armed. He also visited Charlton Heston, president of the NRA, in his gate-guarded home in Hollywood. After a barrage of provocative questions from Moore, Heston finally walked away from the interview.

Moore joked with a clerk in a bank which gave out a rifle with each new account: “Do you think it’s a little dangerous handing out guns in a bank?” He interviewed executives at Lockheed-Martin, the world’s largest weapons manufacturer. He knocked on doors in Toronto to find out if it’s true that Canadians don’t bother to lock their front doors. (It’s true; they seem not to have the fear level that is part of the American culture.)

*Bowling* contains clips taken during the shooting at Columbine High School. We saw the reactions of the students afterwards, learned about the backgrounds of the shooters (who went bowling the very morning of the shooting), and heard observations about the town of Littleton, Colorado, by residents. Moore ended up taking two of the young victims—one paralyzed and in a wheel chair, the other with a bullet still lodged near his heart—to the New York headquarters of K-Mart, whose Littleton store had sold bullets to the shooters.

By the film’s end, there were no clear-cut answers to why so many Americans kill each other. Some people interviewed blamed it on the number of guns that Americans own; turns out that Canadians have about the same number of guns per capita as Americans do. Some said it was the movies U.S. kids watch, plus the violent video games they play; turns out that Canadian kids watch the same bloody stuff American kids watch, and vaporize the same video villains. One person thought it might be due to the number of unemployed in America—but Moore was told that the unemployment rate in Canada is higher than in the U.S. Another person pointed out the history of America has always included violence—but Moore pointed out that violence has been part of every country’s history.

Nor is the answer the mix of races in the U.S.; turns out Canada, which one might think of as pretty homogeneous, is quite racially diverse. And, if you can judge from Moore’s interview with a black visitor to Toronto who lives in Detroit, discrimination is nearly nonexistent in Canada. (Moore included a long segment in his film on the irrational fear whites have of blacks in the U.S.)

Though the film provided no outright answers for the violence in the U.S., it did offer some insights. Several came when Moore compared aspects of society in Canada and the U.S. When he asked to see a Toronto slum, Moore was shown an area with beautifully kept buildings, clean streets, no homeless (there aren’t any homeless, he was told). The Canadian politicians Moore interviewed answered straightforwardly, were polite, interested in what their constituents thought. Refreshing.

Canadians handle health care differently. “How much did they charge you?” Moore asked a man who had obviously had major medical attention. “Nothing,” the man replied. “We have free health care. We consider it a basic human right.”

Moore’s film also included segments on how much the U.S. spends on its military compared to what other countries spend. On the screen were shown some of the expensive weapons the U.S. is buying that seem useless in a post-Cold War world; the audience groaned.

U.S. foreign policy was not spared: When one of the people he interviewed told Moore that America was committed to using peaceful means to promote democracy throughout the world, there appeared a litany of instances where the U.S. has supported dictators (like Saddam Hussein) and military regimes (as in El Salvador), orchestrated the overthrow of duly elected heads of state (as in Chile, Iran, and Guatemala), and invaded countries whose rulers we no longer liked (Manuel Noriega). Again, the audience groaned.

One thing the film does is raise questions: To what degree, if any, does the fast pace of American life and the emphasis on more and bigger add to the violence in our culture? We’ve always been a country of rugged individuals, enterprise, competition: Has that helped sow seeds of violence? Is there a correlation between the emphasis a country places on its military force and the amount of violence its citizens engage in?

Today America is the world’s only superpower: Does that affect how we act as a people? American military supremacy certainly seems to have affected this country’s leaders, who see the U.S. as the world’s policeman. We brook no nonsense from anyone, no disagreement from other nations. (Recall the administration’s reaction when a German politician opposed our policy on Iraq: Our two countries almost stopped speaking to each other.) The American attitude seems more and more to be: We know best; if you don’t like it, lump it. Nukes are good for us, bad for everybody else. If you threaten our access to the world’s raw materials, watch out. If we see you as a potential problem, we reserve the right to attack, and alone if needed.

This approach—trying to force the world to be the way we want it to be—is a loser. In the words of Rear Admiral Eugene Carroll, USN (Ret), the first naval officer to serve as director of U.S. military operations for all U.S. forces in Europe and the Middle East: “No nation in history, no matter how powerful, has ever secured a permanent place in the world order through military supremacy.... Every nation or empire which would subjugate others will ultimately fail if they attempt to base their domination on military force.” The continued success of the U.S. as a world power, he said, “depends on whether we attempt to perpetuate an American global hegemony...or if we seek to exercise constructive leadership as a cooperative member in a peaceful world community governed under the rule of law.”

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## **It's Time**

**by Richard Rathbun  
for the It's Time team**

One of the great benefits of being alive at this particular time is the knowledge that continues to unfold, revealing more and more of the mystery which produced all life, and in which we, as members of the human species, are so intimately embedded.

For the first time in history, we can step back, with awe, and observe the evolutionary journey along which we are unfolding. And as we look back at the past, we discover that each new emergence has produced a more elegant, more complex, and yes, a more conscious stage.

It seems that we are now in another extraordinary moment in time.

One perspective on such moments is the theory that change unfolds gradually, but a time arrives when all conditions converge to create a discontinuity, a stair-step moment—and then a whole new set of conditions emerges.

Albert Einstein said that problems can't be solved in the context in which they were created. That is certainly true now. While the old answers can still appear to be tried and true, and the new seem weak and inadequate, what is emerging now cannot be addressed by the consciousness of the prior era,

So, what do we do with this awareness? There are major challenges to be faced. Unacceptable conditions surround us and urgency moves us to action. But knowing the nature of the moment, we also now know that mere problem-solving based on an old consciousness will be inadequate.

A new consciousness needs to be nurtured, cultivated, and given voice. Social scientists such as Paul Ray tell us that there are many people who are beginning to awaken to this reality, but the emergence of this energy is still ill-formed, and certainly not yet powerful or well organized. And there are grave perils that confront us, not the least of which is the extinction of all life.

Beginning with a series of conversations, a group at the Foundation for Global Community decided to embark on a concerted process to discover a better way to meet the challenges of this moment. The group formed a set of questions to take out to a larger circle, to determine which issues attract attention and energy. After more than 300

interactions, that process confirmed that the first course of action should be to raise people's consciousness that this is a pivotal time.

To reach out to a still larger audience, the group designed a series of advertisements that were placed in local newspapers. These ads stress the need to think beyond the constraints of narrow self-interest—to include both the long term and the wider system as essential elements of the emerging consciousness.

So far, the ads have attracted several hundred people who have attended one or more meetings for further exploration. We are still experimenting, learning, and developing formats, content, and process. The group is determined to nurture and empower this new emergent consciousness. We welcome your help and participation. After all, ***It's Time!***

***WE BELIEVE THAT IT'S TIME . . .***

- to shift from confrontation to cooperation • to build a future on renewable energy • to exercise people power, not economic power • to ensure that everyone has the basic necessities of life • to bring America back from the edge of moral bankruptcy • to re-engage in democracy

***ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO ADD YOUR VOICE TO THIS EFFORT:***

- *Send a postcard to President Bush expressing your views on war with Iraq: The White House, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., Washington, D.C. 20500, or call the White House Comment Line at 202-456-1111*
- *Write your member of Congress, government officials, and/or your newspaper's editor.*
- *Visit our website at [www.globalcommunity.org](http://www.globalcommunity.org) to see copies of the newspaper ads mentioned in this article, and for more information, links to members of Congress, articles, and editorials. You can also join our conversation about America's future, make a donation, or contribute your energy and talent to this moment.*

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## **From Roget's Thesaurus**

**Consumer [n] — person who buys merchandise, services**

Buyer, customer, end user, enjoyer, purchaser, shopper, user.

**Consume [v1] — use up**

Absorb, avail oneself of, deplete, devour, dissipate, dominate, drain, eat up, employ, engross, exhaust, expend, finish, finish up, fritter away, frivol away, go through, lavish, lessen, monopolize, obsess, preoccupy, profit by, put away, put to use, run out of, run through, spend, squander, throw away, trifle, utilize, vanish, wash up, waste, wear out.

**Consume [v2] — eat, drink**

Absorb, bolt, chow down, devour, down, eat up, feed, gobble, gorge, gulp, guzzle, Hoover, ingest, ingurgitate, inhale, meal, mow, nibble, partake, polish off, punish, put away, put down, scarf, shack, stuff one's face, swallow, swill, take, toss down, wolf.

**Consume [v3] — destroy**

Annihilate, crush, decay, demolish, devastate, eat up, exhaust, expend, extinguish, lay waste, overwhelm, ravage, raze, ruin, suppress, waste, wreck.

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## **War Will Not End Terrorism**

### **Editorial by Tamim Ansary**

Whenever I read about destroying the infrastructure of terrorism, I am troubled by the hard fact that terrorism doesn't need any infrastructure to succeed. Indeed, its lack of infrastructure is its main advantage. Historically, terrorist tactics have been exploited by groups without state power, without the capacity to field armies, and without permission to operate in the open.

The same thing is true of criminals at every level, a parallel that ought to give us pause. Our military might, money, and technology toppled the Soviet Empire, but it couldn't stop one guy, or maybe two, from making a bomb out of fertilizer that destroyed a federal building in Oklahoma and killed several hundred people.

Our military might wasn't what stopped the men in Maryland from shooting random strangers with a high-powered rifle.

It couldn't prevent two high school students from slaughtering their classmates at Columbine High School in Colorado. The Columbine shooters then killed themselves, so we couldn't even bring them to justice.

None of these criminals needed their own infrastructure. They used the infrastructure of the society they were attacking.

The same is true of the men who destroyed the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001. They didn't have their own flight schools; they used ours. They didn't have their own airplanes; they used ours. They didn't even make those box-cutters; they bought the ones we made. And they killed themselves in the process of committing their atrocities, so we can't even bring them to justice. To me, they bear frightening similarities to the kids who slaughtered their schoolmates at Columbine.

Why is it then that in our national conversation about terrorism, we use the language of war and not that of crime-busting? I think the war metaphor is based on wishful thinking. Crime is a subtle problem and hard to get a handle on. War, on the other hand, is something we can just declare and wage and win—and we can do it virtually without casualty to our own forces, as we proved in the Persian Gulf, again in the Balkans, and most recently in Afghanistan.

Therefore, wishfully, hopefully, we talk about terrorism as if it were just another nation-state, a monolithic entity. We call it by a single name—Al Qaeda—thereby reducing terrorism to an organization that can be eliminated if only its headquarters and officers can be found. In the first few months after Sept. 11, we even spoke of a single Napoleonic mastermind, Osama bin Laden.

But what if we're operating with the wrong model? What if terrorism is more like crime? The model we're using shapes our assumptions and our specific responses follow as the night follows day.

Take the “War on Drugs,” for example. Merely calling it “a war” suggests the sorts of apparatus needed to solve the problem: infrared night goggles, heat seeking missiles, camouflage outfits, jungle air drops. Has the military approach to the drug problem worked? I'd say the jury is still out.

Repeating the same error with terrorism could be more costly. Again, calling it a war locks us into assumptions about what steps to take. Real war consists of one state going head-to-head with another. Each government tries to destroy the capacity of the other to keep functioning. Whoever loses this capacity first is forced to say, “I give up.”

Our proposals for stamping out terrorism come to us without scrutiny from this familiar model. That's why the buzz phrases are “defeating terrorist states” and “destroying the infrastructure of terrorism.” In practice, these phrases turn out to simply mean “defeating states” and “destroying infrastructure.” The word “terrorism” is just slapped on them to disguise the fact that these are the same old responses to a brand new problem.

After all, suppose we do conquer Iraq and then Iran and then North Korea, and then Sudan and Libya and Syria, and whatever other countries are designated as “terrorist states.” Will terrorism end?

The answer is surely no. Terrorism is born of grudge and grievance. Some say the grudges are invalid and the grievances imagined. Those people should get over it, they say. They might be right. And if wishes were horses, such opinions would be relevant. But in the real world, we have to deal with the fact that terrorism does have sources. And we have to confront the fact that terrorism is nourished by dislocation, chaos, impotence, and secrecy.

Reducing functioning societies to anarchy by destroying their infrastructure and killing great numbers of their citizens is likely to increase whatever legacy of grudge and grievance is already in place. It is also likely to increase the number of dislocated individuals living in furious impotence and stewing in secrecy. This may be a price worth paying if the original threat is a foreign government that is out to conquer our country. Go to war with Iraq? Certainly, if the Iraqi government and its ruler Saddam Hussein think they have a shot at conquering the United States and intend to try.

But if terrorism is the problem to be solved, it's a whole different matter. In that case, making war on Iraq and other nation-states may well be the worst possible policy, because it is only likely to make the problem worse.

*San Francisco writer Tamim Ansary, the son of a former Afghan politician, is the author of West of Kabul, East of New York. Reprinted with permission.*

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## **Zero Waste Campaign: New Zealand**

### **Interview with Warren Snow**

*Compelled by concern for the environment, 25 years ago New Zealander Warren Snow left a successful company that he had started at age 19. "I decided to throw my hat in and try to find out what sustainability meant, and work for that." A major interest Snow has had is recycling. In 1997, he founded Zero Waste New Zealand Trust to promote and facilitate the implementation of zero waste programs, the complete abolition of waste in his country's organizations, businesses, and communities.*

*Snow recently gave a talk at the Foundation and a video interview. The following is based on the interview:*

I began working in the recycling movement, because I saw it as an environmental initiative that would also create work. I felt that the market or the private sector was unable to create the jobs we needed in our country. It seemed that many of the people in the environmental movement were not seeing the social side of it, and I felt that if the two

weren't brought together, you couldn't have sustainability. Recycling offered a way to do that.

The same industrial system that created the waste problem has created two ways of handling it—landfills and incineration. A landfill is a toxic dump that has to be looked after for at least 1000 years. The second method is to burn waste, with all the consequent toxic releases into the atmosphere and dangerous residues still going to landfill. Instead, we've been working for the last ten years on the idea of creating jobs from reducing waste—a dividend—by helping communities to put their hands over the end of the pipe.

The benefits are quite surprising. When you recycle and reuse and remanufacture, you create significantly more jobs than disposal does. And most are entry-level jobs, so we're putting the rungs back on the ladder for those that have missed out in the modern, high-tech knowledge economy.

Now we think it is ultimately possible to create a close-looped, materials-efficient economy where there is no waste at all. When you're working in recycling, you are not impacting the whole system; you are not affecting the way the materials are made that you are trying to recycle.

Three years ago, we started the Zero Waste New Zealand Trust to help achieve sustainability through changing the way materials flow through society, from the front end of the pipe to the back end. Zero Waste means looking at the whole system and supply chain and redesigning it from the beginning—working with business to promote cleaner production, working with industrial designers to design the waste out in the first place, working to help develop businesses that are based on reintegrating waste.

Zero Waste is just a “brand” for a vast set of design principles and activities and behaviors and technologies all the way down the supply chain that everybody can be involved in. Zero Waste means you go back up the chain and design things in a different way so that they can be reintegrated into the economy, or back harmlessly into nature, as you have here in Palo Alto, where green waste is being recycled and made into compost.

However, look at your landfill. (The video interview was conducted at the Palo Alto landfill.) This landfill represents a failure of resource management. Those mattresses over there, because of the way they are designed, they have to be made of synthetic materials. The people that designed these mattresses didn't give one thought to this day, the day at the end of their life that the mattresses arrived here.

All the materials that flow into a society—the plus economy where things are made—are monitored by huge technology called logistics management and supply chain management. A similar technology is needed for the minus economy so that things that leave society can be recycled back into the economy or reintegrated back into the

environment. We're developing this concept of reverse logistics, of discard management. On my way here I met a man from a very large American corporation, and his job is logistics manager. He belongs to a society of logistics managers and they have conferences. He admitted to me that not once had they discussed the issue of what happens to all the stuff that they, with huge skill and ingenuity, bring into the society. We need these guys to put the same focus on discard management as they do on supply management.

We're the only species that doesn't have a Zero Waste policy. Nature perfected Zero Waste over millions of years. It is only in the last hundred years that humanity has moved away from recycling and creating benign products that don't harm the environment. So we're really just getting back on the program.

To this end, the Zero Waste Trust works with government, municipalities, community organizations, institutions, and businesses. Our largest university wants to set up the Zero Waste Institute with us to train people in the disciplines that will enable New Zealand to create a Zero Waste society. We have large international corporations contacting us and coming to our conferences. I think the best thing for me, personally, is that after 25 years of being vitally concerned about sustainability and trying many things, for the first time it really feels like the friction is being removed. Zero Waste seems to be catching on, and I have the feeling of really achieving something.

In three years, we have reached the point where over 40 percent of New Zealand municipalities have signed on for the official target of Zero Waste by 2015. Now this is really significant. It means that they are actually committed to having no waste by the year 2015. Our campaign's goal is to have as a national policy in New Zealand: Zero Waste by 2020.

It also makes me happy that, in communities that are suffering economically, we are helping them to win contracts and to create jobs. One example is a fellow named Alex. He and some of his associates were having brushes with the law and the usual problems of people who don't have work. He now has a job in a recycling program. On one occasion when I returned to that town, I asked how Alex was doing. It was his day off, and he was down at the kindergarten teaching kids about recycling! He has bought a car, he's looking after his family, and he is very proud of the work he is doing. That's the kind of thing that makes me feel great. We have found that frequently, the often-unemployed take to this work with a passion. They really do want a job and they are excited about and believe in what they are doing.

But the most inspiring thing of all is how grassroots and community-driven Zero Waste is. There is no way that we would have the resources to achieve what we have without the many disparate groups and volunteers around the country who are actually creating this movement in their communities.

I get meaning from this. I love what I'm doing and I couldn't imagine anything more enjoyable. I feel very passionate about it. I feel that we have a last chance in the next five to ten years to turn things around so that we are going in the right direction. We may never quite get to Zero; but if, in 20 years time, a community had a target of zero waste and there was still three percent left, who would say they had failed?

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E-mail: [mailbox@zerowaste.co.nz](mailto:mailbox@zerowaste.co.nz). Website: [www.zerowaste.co.nz](http://www.zerowaste.co.nz)

### ***Who else is going for Zero Waste?***

#### **STATES/MUNICIPALITIES:**

- Canberra adopted “No Waste by 2010” in 1996
- Western Australia is in the process of adopting “Towards Zero Waste by 2020”
- USA: Zero Waste targets have been adopted by Del Norte County, the city of Seattle, Santa Cruz County, San Luis Obispo County, and Boulder, Colorado
- Toronto adopted “Zero Waste by 2010” in January, 2001
- Zero waste campaigns are also operating in South Australia, England, Wales, Ireland, India, Egypt, Asia, and the Philippines

#### **BUSINESSES:**

- Ricoh Group
- Toyota
- Interface Carpets
- Bell Canada
- Kimberly Clark
- Dupont Inc
- Hewlett-Packard
- Honda Motor Corp.
- Xerox

### ***Some Examples of Zero Waste Policies***

*With Zero Waste, discards are seen as valuable resources that generations to come will need. Instead of protecting these resources by simply recovering them for recycling after a product's useful life is over, Zero Waste goes beyond recycling and looks at the entire life-cycle of a product, from design phase to recovery.*

**NEW ZEALAND** leads the way. There are now 26 communities in New Zealand that are taking part in a national pilot project with the aim of achieving Zero Waste at the local level. The Zero Waste initiatives include a commitment to dramatically reduce waste sent to landfills and a strategy in which communities decide which Zero Waste activities are most appropriate for their localities. Each community receives \$25,000 from the Zero Waste New Zealand Trust to jump-start its Zero Waste programs. The program was originally designed to fund waste efforts in ten communities, but the popularity of the program resulted in funding for an additional 16 communities.

**EUROPE:** A European Union law requires that all cars made in Europe must be taken back free of charge by their makers (with 85% being reused or recycled), Mercedes is leading the pack. The company has created a process where their cars can be dismantled for recycling in just four hours. By reusing the recovered materials, Mercedes is saving manufacturing costs and reducing their impact on the earth's natural resources.

**FETZER WINE** has the goal of zero waste by 2009 and is already close to achieving it. Fetzer is converting to organic vineyards. By reducing, reusing and recycling, the company has already slashed its garbage by 93%. A big chunk of their waste is composted — mostly grape seeds and cork. The company is also committed to buying recycled to help keep markets alive for the tons of paper, cans and glass they recycle each year. Even the roof on their building is recycled.

In addition, solar energy provides power to Fetzer's buildings and supplies enough energy to fill and cap 1.2 million bottles of wine each year. Finally, all Fetzer products come in recyclable packaging.

**SWEDEN** first required manufacturers to take back products for reuse and recycling. Now Sweden is getting tough on landfills. The environmental agency there is recommending a \$40 per ton tax on dumping in a landfill. The current \$25 tax has been so successful at cutting landfill waste that a higher tax is expected to cut waste even more.

**BERKELEY, CA:** Although many Styrofoam containers are labeled "CFC free," they still contain chlorofluorocarbons. Because Styrofoam production is still a hazard to the earth's ozone layer and contributes to global warming, Berkeley is continuing to ban it in restaurants, fast-food outlets, and city-sponsored events. But these users can't replace the Styrofoam with just anything: 50% of the new eating ware has to be either recyclable or biodegradable.

### ***Producer Responsibility***

*One of the key components of the Zero Waste approach is called Producer Responsibility. It puts the responsibility for materials entering the waste stream on the front end of a*

*product's life, with the manufacturer—not on the back end, with the consumer. A few examples of companies that have adopted this are:*

**KODAK** has taken heat from environmentally-minded consumers for its disposable cameras. In response, the company began a “Take-Back” program in 1990 to reuse and recycle the cameras. Components are reused up to ten times in new cameras, except for the acrylic lenses, which are ground up and recycled into new products. Kodak pays photo-finishers for used cameras, providing a financial incentive for retailers to collect them. (However, consumers should verify that their photo-finisher returns these cameras to Kodak.) Kodak reports that it has saved 20,000 tons of waste by preventing the disposal of 250 million of its single-use cameras.

**XEROX** takes back its office equipment for recycling at the end of its useful life. The program has been profitable and prompted Xerox to design its products for recyclability.

**THE BIOCORP COMPANY** is challenging the notion that “single-use” has to mean “disposable,” by offering an alternative to plastic and Styrofoam food service items. BioCorp cups, plates, and cutlery are made from fully biodegradable cornstarch and natural polymers, and can be composted and returned to the earth within several weeks after use. BioCorp also offers biodegradable leaf collection bags that can be composted along with their contents. (These plastics biodegrade best in a municipal or industrial facility instead of a home compost bin.)

**INTERFACE, INC., 3M, DUPONT, MILLIKEN AND COLLINS & AIKMAN:** Interface, Inc., pioneered the concept and others have followed: Instead of selling carpet to a customer who is then eventually responsible for that carpet's disposal, these companies lease carpeting so that the company can recycle it back into new carpeting at the end of its useful life.

### **Producer Responsibility: Legislation**

*“Producer Responsibility,” or “Take Back” laws, where the manufacturer must take its product or packaging back for remanufacture or reuse, are now on the books in a29 countries. In addition, 15 countries have PR laws for batteries, and nine countries have PR laws for electronics. The concept is popular in Europe, and has spread to Asia and Latin America.*

**MASSACHUSETTS AND CALIFORNIA** have banned cathode ray tubes (CRTs) from landfills. CRTs are commonly found in computer monitors and contain an average of 5-8 pounds of lead per unit. It is hoped that the Massachusetts ruling and others like it will prompt computer companies to find alternatives to the heavy metals currently used in computer manufacturing.

**CALIFORNIA'S** Waste Management Board has adopted Zero Waste as one of its seven goals. California will work with manufacturers to get companies involved in “take back” programs for the reuse and recycling of their products.

**MANY COUNTIES, CITIES, AND STATES** across the country are banning the sale of mercury thermometers and other consumer products that contain mercury. Mercury is a neurotoxin, and can affect neurological functions like walking, talking, thinking, seeing. Thermometers are the leading cause of mercury in the solid waste stream, and digital thermometers offer an environmentally preferable alternative. Some retailers no longer sell products containing mercury. Among them are Brooks, Target, Wal-Mart, Albertson's, Kinney, Toys 'R' Us, Safety First, The First Years, and Meijers.

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## **Shifting Gears: The Joy of (not always) Driving**

*This unusual article by Jeremy Sinek, Editor of World of Wheels magazine, is reprinted with permission.*

Since you're reading *World of Wheels*, I'm going to make a giant leap of logic and assume that you love cars and you enjoy driving.

Not for you the notion of a motor vehicle as merely an appliance or “a tool, personal transportation, for the use of.” Cars, to you, are intrinsically interesting. Driving is an act of emotion, not mere motion.

That being the case, I have a proposal that may shock you.

Drive less.

Am I nuts? The editor of a car magazine telling people to cut back on their driving? No, I'm serious: if you're serious about how much you like to drive, do it less.

What this planet needs more than anything is fewer cars on the road. We need fewer cars crashing into each other, cleaner air in our cities, less carbon dioxide heating up the planet. We need to reduce our dependence on the foreign sources of oil over which future wars may be fought.

At the same time, what we of the auto-enthusiast persuasion need is more quality in our driving, not quantity.

Put these two needs together and what we have is an opportunity for enlightened self-interest. If we're going to benefit from reduced traffic, we who like to drive will have to

do our part. But there are personal spin-off benefits from leaving the car at home, say, one or two days a week. And on the days we do drive, we'll enjoy it that much more. On many of North America's busiest highways, traffic already grinds along so slowly that it would be literally faster to ride a bike to work. How much longer before walking becomes the faster alternative?

It's not an issue only of journey times. The greater the traffic congestion, the nastier the driving experience becomes. The fact that you have zero opportunity to enjoy your car's scalpel-sharp steering and spine-crushing acceleration is the least of it. Stop-and-go driving is tedious, frustrating, and mentally draining. Hell on your car, too.

Worse, you're trapped in the company of people behaving badly. The heavier the congestion, the worse the behavior. I don't know about you, but I normally go a long way to avoid being near aggressive, selfish, boorish people who get what they want by pushing and shoving.

Don't think you're exempt if you're the one who's behaving badly. What do you think is happening to your stress levels, to your heart rate, every time you cut off another driver so that maybe you can get home seven-tenths of a second earlier than if you had stayed in the other lane? Of course, if that's the way you drive, the chances are you're also blowing a wad every year in traffic tickets and inflated insurance premiums.

Let's face it, this whole concept of personal mobility that the automobile represents is a wondrous privilege and luxury that we abuse and misuse shamefully. And I don't mean misuse in the sense of driving badly, though Lord knows there's enough of that going around. I mean it in the sense of driving inappropriately; driving when you really should not be driving.

Last May, on a warm, dry Saturday night, a neighbor invited us to their house party. My wife and I walked the entire 150 meters to get there. Two other guests, each of whom lives less than 300 meters from the venue, drove to the party.

C'mon folks, this is not OK!

Another example. Go to any mall, and even in the nicest of weather you will see drivers circling around looking for parking as close as possible to the mall entrance. Sometimes people even get into fights over empty parking spots. Meanwhile, maybe 100 meters further away, there's acres of empty parking. People spend five minutes burning gas and spewing emissions so they can save themselves a one-minute walk.

Then there are all those rugged, outdoorsy SUV drivers. Have you noticed how it always seems to be SUVs parked illegally in the fire lane right outside the mall entrance because

their “active-lifestyle” (pah!) drivers are too lazy to walk 50 or 100 meters from a legitimate parking spot?

Or how about this for the height of absurdity? Suppose we need to pick up a carton of milk or rent a movie. We put on our \$200 “athletic” shoes, brush past the bicycle in the garage to get into the car, and drive to the plaza 0.9 kilometers away. If we think about it at all, maybe we justify it to ourselves in terms of time saved.

But then, maybe later that same day, we get into the car again and drive a few kilometers to the fitness club, for which we pay hundreds of dollars a year in membership. There, we spend the next hour or two doing totally artificial exercise on a bicycle or a treadmill going absolutely nowhere. And on the way home afterwards we stop to fill up our tank and bitch about the price of gasoline.

Now you tell me who’s nuts.

(Here’s a thought: Imagine how much energy could be saved and pollution avoided if every exercise machine in every gym was hooked up to a generator that fed electricity back into the hydro grid. Remember, you read it here first.)

Quite aside from oil crunches and global warming, there’s another crisis facing our western lifestyles: growing levels of obesity and declining physical fitness. Surveys show that not only are we getting fatter, so are our kids.

Could there be a connection between the obesity epidemic, dirty air, global warming—and the number of mothers I see every morning chauffeuring their 1.7 children to neighborhood schools in nine-seater Chevrolet Suburbans? D’ya think?

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## ***If Jesus would drive a hybrid, who’d drive a Hummer?*** **The Car as an Expression of Values**

**by Walt Hays**

Satirists have been having fun with “What Would Jesus Drive?” Cartoons and op-eds conjure up everything from Jesus on a donkey to his needing a pickup for his carpenter tools. But while the Jesus reference may not speak to everyone, it has called attention to an important fact—that we make an ethical statement in the car we drive.

In November, a broad coalition of religious groups signed a letter to the Big Three auto companies in the U.S. asking them to improve the fuel economy of their vehicles. They based their request primarily on the fact that auto emissions are a principal contributor to global warming, which scientists predict will cause droughts, floods, rising sea levels, epidemics, and greater extinction of species. While that letter made no reference to Jesus, the *New York Times* reports that Paul Gorman, executive director of the group, did support the request by stating that “we are under a commandment to be faithful stewards of God’s creation.”

One of the smaller groups in the November coalition, the Evangelical Environmental Network, made headlines with its ads asking, “What Would Jesus Drive?” Reverend Jim Ball, who directs the Network and drives a Prius, Toyota’s hybrid, asks, “How can I love my neighbor as myself if I’m filling their lungs with pollution?” As reported by Katherine Ellison in the *Washington Post*, the Network is launching a barrage of publicity, mostly on Christian radio stations and cable television, urging consumers and automakers to start thinking of gas mileage as an ethical statement. According to Ball, “Most people don’t think the kind of car they drive has anything to do with their faith. We want to show them it does.”

As the *Times* notes, the religious leaders’ efforts could create complications for Chevrolet, which makes huge SUVs like the TrailBlazer, and has begun a drive to court religious conservatives by such gestures as sponsoring a Christian concert series. The automaker is not likely to be overjoyed by Gorman’s comment: “Chevrolet is encouraging people to buy automobiles which are poisoning God’s creation.”

Jesus’ transportation preference has gained enormous media coverage, but the message has clearly not convinced everyone. On November 19, the *San Jose Mercury News* featured an article entitled “Hummer H2 Is Hot in the Valley.” According to that report, *Silicon Valley’s newest status symbol needs a big parking space. The Hummer H2, the huge sport-utility vehicle shaped like a brick on wheels, is a surprise hit. In October, it outsold all other models in its class, including SUVs from BMW, Cadillac, Lincoln, and Lexus. Hummer dealers can barely keep the \$50,000 behemoths in stock.*

The article notes that dealerships have been surprised by the number of female buyers of the vehicle, which weighs 6,400 pounds and gets only 13 miles per gallon. It quotes one: “You’re up high. You feel very safe. It’s fun to drive. It’s fun to be in. It makes people smile.” As stated by one dealer, “People are just emotional over this truck. I’ve never seen anything like it in terms of the passion.”

Reverend Ball might ask what kind of ethical statement that makes.

Automakers respond that they make many models with better gas mileage, but consumers don’t buy them. Typical is Eron Shoestek of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers:

“We can’t control the price of gas, and as long as gas is an inexpensive commodity, there is no incentive for consumers to use less of it.” While that statement is true, it overlooks at least two important facts. First, when President Clinton attempted to introduce a small energy tax (which would have raised gas prices) at the beginning of his first term, the automakers mobilized all their resources into defeating it. Second, the technology exists to enable even SUVs to obtain better mileage, but instead of developing it, the automakers continue to fight any effort to increase fuel economy requirements. As stated by a spokesman for the Union of Concerned Scientists, “It’s a disappointment they’re focusing on putting out large gas-guzzling vehicles, instead of taking the technology they have to improve the economy of the fleet.”

Automakers aside, however, car buyers do have a choice. Even if it seems daunting to try to influence our political leaders to take action on climate change, our purchases do make a difference. And regardless of speculation as to what Jesus would do, the car we drive does reflect our values.

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## **With SUVs, the Devil’s in the Details**

**by Walt Hays**

In addition to contributing to global warming, it turns out that SUVs are a scam, in more ways than one. On November 26, 2002, the *New York Times* published a review of a book entitled *High and Mighty: SUVs—The World’s Most Dangerous Vehicles and How They Got That Way*, by Keith Bradsher. The reviewer, Jay Rosen, chairman of the journalism department at New York University, says that it is “one of the best books about American politics that I have read recently, although it’s supposed to be about cars.”

The politics deal with the definition of what is a “truck.” Congress originally established fuel efficiency standards in response to the Arab oil embargo of 1973, but the auto industry persuaded them to set lower standards for trucks based on the argument that higher ones would leave trucks with too little weight and power for the farmers and small contractors who need them. Then the automakers charged into that loophole, claiming (successfully so far) that all SUVs, including such luxury cars as the Lincoln Navigator, are really trucks.

That loophole led to enormous profits for the auto industry. SUVs constitute more than half of auto sales by U.S. companies, and account for almost all their profits. The book describes how a single Ford factory in Michigan produced \$11 billion in annual SUV sales (equal to McDonald’s global sales) and \$3.7 billion in pre-tax profits.

But more alarming is the truth about what people are buying. As Mr. Rosen summarizes it, the book's thesis is that Detroit has utilized sophisticated social psychology to convince drivers that a bigger, heavier, taller vehicle is safe because it feels strong and intimidating and looks "likely to demolish other people's cars in collisions." For example, one Chrysler marketing person said that the Dodge Durango is supposed to look like a "savage jungle cat," and another summarizes the psychology by stating that the vehicle is designed to be "aggressive on the outside and Ritz-Carlton on the inside," or as Rosen puts it, "menacing but comfy." In reality, however, Mr. Bradsher describes SUVs as the "world's most dangerous vehicles [and, Rosen adds, the most anti-social]...tippy monstrosities with mediocre brakes."

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The need is not really for more brains,  
 the need is now for a gentler, a more tolerant people  
 than those who won for us against the ice, the tiger, and the bear.

The hand that hefted the ax, out of some old blind allegiance to the past,  
 fondles the machine gun as lovingly.

It is a habit man will have to break to survive,  
 but the roots go very deep.

*Loren Eiseley*

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**CORRECTION:** Through an error of transcription, a quote attributed to Congressman Dennis Kucinich in the Nov/Dec 2002 issue of *Timeline* should have been attributed to Dr. Bela Banathy, the author of the book *Guided Evolution of Society: A Systems View*, which the congressman quoted.

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