

Sustainability “ An Issue All of Us Must Solve

Sustainability has become one of the most important issues in our time, and in a hundred years, it may be the single most important issue. We have heard that if we do not sustain our resources, we are on the road to destruction.

On this issue, Winona LaDuke, a noted activist, author and founder and co-director of “[Honor the Earth](#),” spoke at Moravian College in Bethlehem, Penn.

LaDuke’s words were powerful, empowering and enlightening. She emphasized the sacredness of the land and our intimate connection to the land. She provoked the crowd with the idea that we can have a worldview without empire.

Society based on conquest is unsustainable as the 19th-century notion of an economy based on constant colonial market expansion must reach a limit, as there are no more productive lands to conquer.

She laid out some precepts for sustainability:

1. Understanding that the creator’s law is the highest law
2. Understanding our relations whether we have paws, fins, legs or roots
3. Understanding the cyclical patterns of nature
4. Understanding that our deliberation needs to think about the seventh generation into the future (how we are to survive here for the next 1,000 years).

She criticized the United States, saying that, “Man’s laws are higher than Creator’s laws.” For example, she said that the number of pollutants in our biosphere depends on who is in office.

The United States treats pollution like a commodity and trades pollution credits. The interests of corporations, which suffer not one wit from pollution, are treated as if they were natural persons under the law.

As in our modern myths, our inhuman surrogates destroy lands and leave little for our cousins. Unlike a notable quote from "Avatar," sooner or later, the world will run out of trees.

LaDuke pointed out how Western culture thinks linearly. "West" is a state of mind, and we move to a frontier with a view to its resources, which are valuable to us.

We produce 70 trillion pounds of garbage, and 70 percent of our economy is based on consuming things. We continue to waste water, and we continue to waste people.

Our prisons have the highest rate of incarceration in the world. Our linear economy is not sustainable as we continue to think only about quarterly profits and not about what is destroyed.

She reminded us that Americans are time conscious, but we also have a good case of amnesia.

In the year 2100, more than 50 species will not be around. It is not about Darwin's natural course of events in nature; these figures are about our causing the sixth great extinction in the history of life on this planet.

We have become addicted to energy, and addicts do bad things and hang out with bad people.

We cannot continue to consume one-third of the world's resources without replacing them. We need to think differently and come up with solutions.

We need to move from fossil fuel to renewable energy. We need to grow our own crops, build wind turbines and fight against hazardous nuclear waste dumps.

We need to think critically, be thoughtful and mindful. We need to stop drinking bottled water. We must seek efficient use and consume less.

As Americans, we lack caring, and we lack a respect for the information we have. We overvalue old values and undervalue new facts.

Americans suffer from two things: we feel powerless and for that reason we are apathetic. So the big question is, "How do we make people to care?"

I am challenged by this on a daily basis. How do I make my family, friends, students and community care about these issues and do something about it?

LaDuke reminded us that democracy is not a spectator sport. We all need to participate and get involved in the work of sustainability.

Change happens because we do something about it. We need to find some way of living that recognizes how all relatives live. The challenge is urgent.

She also encouraged us all to dream big and think big. She said, "If you are working on something that you plan to finish in your lifetime, you are not thinking big enough."

So the challenge rests on all of us who are part of God's reign here on earth. What will we do to help preserve the earth and make it more sustainable? It may be just taking small steps like using less water and natural resources ... and other bigger things like consuming less.

Whatever it is, I hope that we can each do our own part.

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