



Heart of the Earth

Making a difference in the Red Hills and Gulf Coastal bioregions

Winter Solstice 2003

Voluntary Simplicity: The Antidote to American "Affluenza?"

Doesn't it often feel like we live in a culture that celebrates nearly continuous consumption? Everywhere we go, we are bombarded with messages telling us to buy, buy, buy. Whether it's a new car, a bigger house, or an over-the-counter



In actuality, we know what's truly priceless. It has more to do with genuine love and caring, and less to do with glitz. For a growing number of people, pursuit of the American Dream—as it has been defined by economic interests—is not a satisfying way of life. At Heart of the Earth, we've been wondering if we can't add more meaning to our lives, without consuming more stuff, perhaps, even by consuming less. And some of our members are taking on the question of how to fulfill our essential needs without buying stuff at all, suspecting that it might also be possible to pursue more happiness with fewer environmental consequences.

medication, Madison Avenue would have us believe that security, health and happiness can only be achieved by first reaching for our wallets.

But here's the thing: the average North American already consumes five times more than a Mexican, ten times more than a Chinese, and thirty times more than a person from India. We are the most voracious consumers in the world... a world that could die because of the way we North Americans live.

Have you seen the "Priceless" ad that MasterCard has been airing lately? You know, the one in which you've maxed out your credit card setting up the most perfect possible birthday party for your child, complete with clowns, pony and hot air balloon rides, the works. All of this, to achieve that smile on your child's face when he or she blows out the candles on the birthday cake, the moment which MasterCard calls "Priceless."



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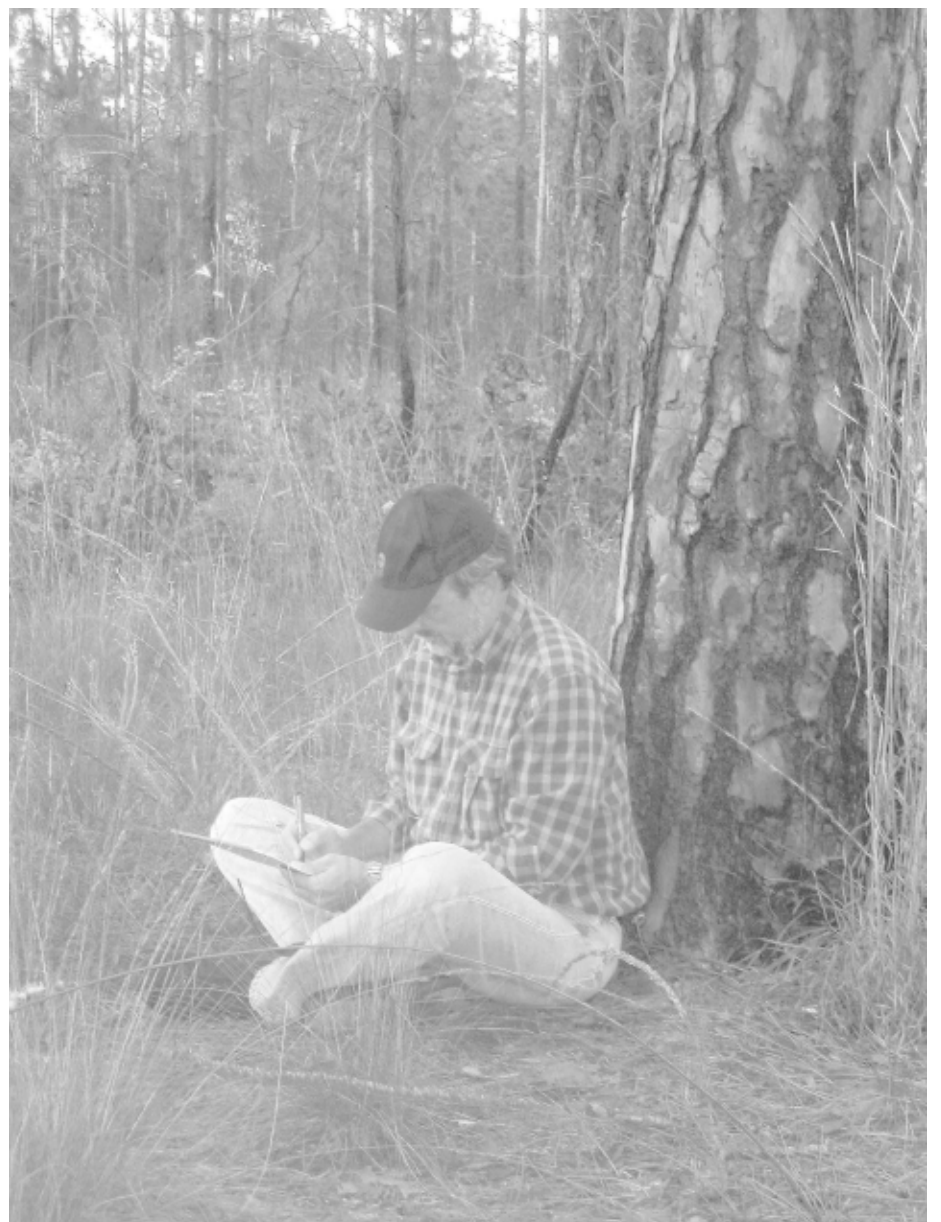
Why are America's consumption patterns Heart of the Earth issues?

*Great trouble comes
From not knowing what is enough.
Great conflict arises
From wanting too much.
—Lao Tzu, Tao te Ching*

The third part of the Heart of the Earth Pledge (pg. 4) asks us to measure our purchases, travel, lifestyle and desires in part against the following question:

Is it sustainable?

To this end, we're particularly interested in reducing our use of fossil fuels, and living within the ecological realities of our Red Hills and Gulf Coastal Lowlands bioregions. It's hard to really quantify what we use, but consider the following. The world's population currently exceeds 6.3 billion, and is growing by roughly 3 people per second; we have but about 5 acres of productive earth available for each of us. Environmental social scientist Mathis Wakernagel has calculated the "ecological footprint" of a typical American to be on the order of 30 acres, more than twice as much as an Italian and embarrassingly more than a typical Chinese citizen. With only 5% of the world's population, Americans consume over 30% of the world's resources, well beyond our fair "earthshare." It's safe to say our lifestyles are not sustainable. At Heart of the Earth, we believe our best, most practical handle on this scary situation is to encourage among ourselves, and everyone we can reach, the practice of living simply. Maybe even much more simply. Won't you join us?



Dodge the shopping madness. Join Heart of the Earth for 3 calming hours of nature study, walking, personal reflection, and group conversation at Leon Sinks on December 6 (see calendar, pg. 4).

Getting a Grip on Globalization

By Crystal Wakoa

"The World Bank is coming to our country, The World Bank came to our country, Soon we will be hungry."

Chant sung by coastal Senegalese women

I watched a Bill Moyers interview the other night called "Globalization and Women." The video was about things I already knew—sort of—but which I choose to keep on the periphery of my awareness, lest I lapse into despair.



But listening to Thai teenage girls and young mothers who board a bus at 5:00 am to travel to the Nike factory to sew shoes for 15 hours a day for \$3.50 with no benefits did not hit my hopelessness button this time; instead, I got angry. The Thai women weren't complaining about their work conditions; they were thankful to have work, even under abusive conditions. They knew that if they missed one day because of illness, they'd be replaced by another woman desperate to join the force of paid labor in Thailand. What upset the women in the interview was that the Nike corporation closed the factory suddenly, without notice, and denied them two weeks of earned wages, as it moved on to cheaper labor elsewhere.

How do such conditions come about? Who would ever claim responsibility for policies that abuse the world's poorest people, only to leave them even more disenfranchised?

Later on in the Moyers show, a Senegalese woman explained that in the early 70's, shortly after her country attained its independence from colonial rule, Senegal was Africa's role model for its economic and social policies, especially health care and education. Then Western banks moved in, luring the Senegal government into borrowing money so that they could "grow" faster. Senegal borrowed

too much too fast and could not pay back the loans, so borrowed more money to bail themselves out. This time the loans were from the IMF and World Bank, two institutions headquartered in Washington, dominated by the U.S. government and powered by the world's corporate elite. The loans had strings attached in the form of "structural adjustment," a confusing label that means international corporations get to decide Senegal's economic policy. The public school system was deemed too expensive, and dismantled. Now, to

send their children to privatized schools, families must pay for chalk, notebooks and teachers. Many hospitals and medical clinics have been closed; to receive services patients must pay for needles, operating kits and masks for doctors. The IMF promised that when Senegal's budget became balanced the country would attract foreign capital, leading to growth that would eventually benefit the poor. Sound familiar? Instead, it has led to the opposite. The corporations grow wealthy, while the Senegalese children, girls especially, drop out of school by age 9 to "work." Yet, the IMF counts Senegal among its many successes.

Listening to these women cast their personal stories within the larger stories of their countries' economic policies, I realized that they, as marginalized and poor as they are, know more about the World Bank and the IMF than I do. Sure, I've done

some reading, but these institutions are so huge, so nameless, faceless, and so pervasive in their world reach and influence, I've felt that learning about them is useless without action, and what action could possibly influence such megalithic powers?

The day after watching the video I went shopping at a local outdoor shop for a raincoat, the kind that's breathable. On a recent trip to the Canadian Rockies, I had been happy to learn that many Canadian hikers are loyal to a company called Sierra Designs because most of their products are manufactured in Canada. But the first brand of jackets I came across in the store, a highly reputable and popular brand in the sports world, was made in Viet Nam. My mind instantly went to the Thai women who were mistreated by Nike. Are all companies with overseas operations as grossly abusive as Nike is? Is the company's presence in Viet Nam ultimately helpful or hurtful to the people who actually sew their products? I don't know exactly, but since I do know that companies use overseas labor because it's far cheaper in terms of wages and benefits (lack of) and environmental protections (lack of), I'll continue to shop for products manufactured in countries that at least have enforceable laws regarding safe labor practices.

On to the Sierra Designs rack. I found the raincoat I wanted—only to find a label reading, "Made in China." I returned the jacket to the rack, outraged as the clerk explained that almost all the companies are going to overseas labor. Then I watched my mind waffle. In a split second, my thought process went something like: "What's the use, if even Sierra Designs is doing it...I looked in Canada and couldn't find the right jacket, and this one is even the color I want!...It's hopeless to think one little purchase can make a difference." Such is the nature of mind. If I really believed the fulfillment of desire creates true happiness, I might have caved. But it doesn't. What I do know is that the further removed my purchase is from the actual social and economic reality of the human being who manufactured it, the easier it is for me to plead ignorance in contributing to a system that deprives that human being of the most basic necessities for a decent life.

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"Globalization has come to mean different things to different people. But stripped to the bare bones, it's about capital. Money. Roaming the world looking for the best deal. These days it's accompanied by some abstract sounding words like financial deregulation, privatization, and trade liberalization.

One in four young women in Thailand works in a factory producing goods to be sold abroad. They are the fuel on which globalization runs.

Take a look at the sneakers you're wearing, or the shirt you have on. Your own connection ... may be closer than you think."

Bill Moyers, NOW



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What is Heart of the Earth?

Heart of the Earth is a movement fostering practical actions to reduce global warming and provide more sustainable lifestyles in the Red Hills and Gulf Coastal Lowlands bioregions.

Heart of the Earth Council

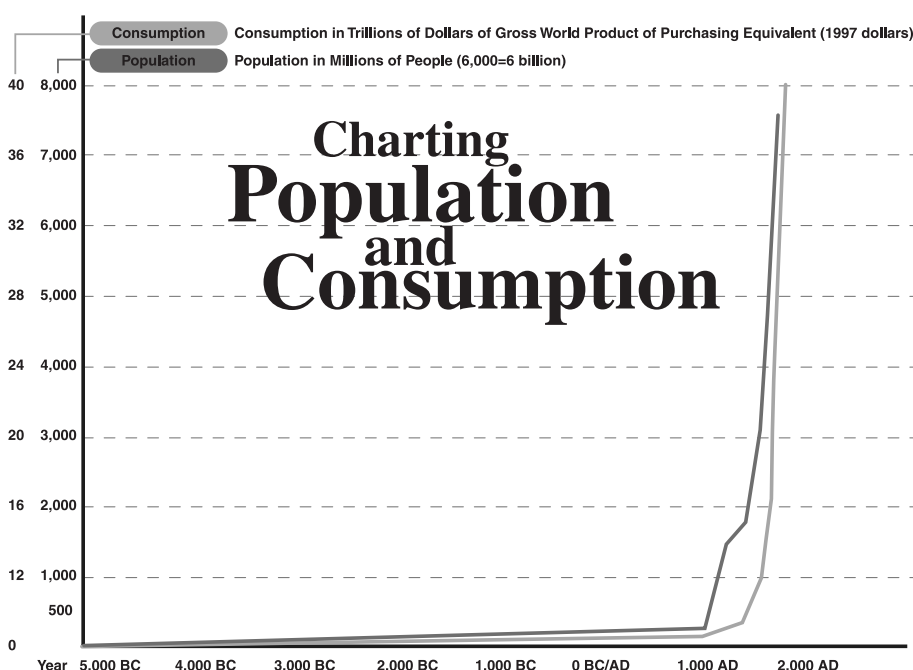
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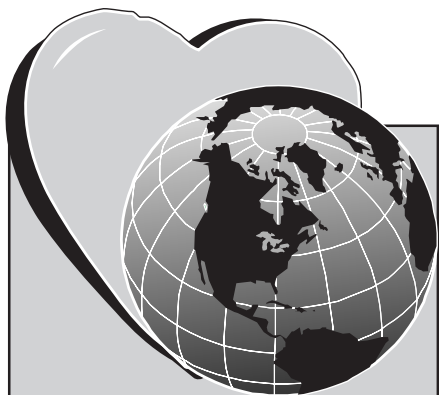
Need a break? November 28th is Buy Nothing Day!



Simple Pleasure Garden

Martha Weinstein

I began a simple garden thanks to “volunteers” from my compost pile, many years ago. First tomatoes, and then squash, grew magically from my compost. Knowing their existence indicated the location of a wonderful garden spot, I added herbs and lettuce the next year. More compost invited worms. The worms oxygenated the soil and helped more plants grow even better. And thus, as the worm turns, my garden has increased in size and variety. Gardening offers so many wonderful and incredible benefits, besides producing luscious and flavorful fruits of the earth. There’s the composting, which makes use of kitchen scraps and replenishes the earth. There’s the mulching, which also helps the earth by keeping moisture in and making for a more absorbent bed. (Note about mulching: the simple act of mulching your yard helps with water retention thus reducing some stormwater run-off thus keeping fertilizer out of our drainage ponds.) There’s the reduction of buying shipped produce that costs ever so much to find its way to our store’s shelves. In the simple act of gardening, I’ve become so much more deeply connected to the earth of this bioregion. Every morning, my eyes feast upon my garden, and joy is in my heart and soul.



You are invited to join the work of Heart of the Earth

The money to print this newsletter (about \$800 per issue) and to cover the minimal expenses of this voluntary movement is donated by supporters like you. Please support our vital effort. And please: do something significant each week to curb global warming!

Sign our pledge and join in our efforts to “cool the earth”

Make a contribution

___ \$10

___ \$15

___ \$25

___ \$50

___ \$100

Volunteer

Draped in Simplicity

Michelle Hatton

I spotted a billboard in town the other day that said, “Advertisements are supposed to make you feel inadequate.” There were pictures on it of pretty girls wearing glossy lipstick. It made me think about how remarkably successful advertisements are in making us feel inadequate. To compensate, we buy. And many women buy clothes. So where is that balance between consumption vs. moral strength, living simply vs. dressing to beat the band? I don’t know. But engaging in a clothing exchange is a start.

A clothing exchange is a chance to get together with friends and swap clothes. Women clean their closets and bring to the party garments that

never really fit right, seemed too loud, too dull, too uncomfortable; or that they simply tired of wearing.

Culling your closet and sharing the loot with other women is some sort of ancient bonding experience, I’m convinced. It’s a way to adorn and adore your friends in all their shapes and sizes. “Oh, it’s perfect on you!” we say. “Oh yes, it accentuates that delicate waist of yours!” or “No, no, take it off – it washes you out.” We touch each other; we dress each other; we are like sisters. We are buoyed by our instant new wardrobe and the warm compliments of our girlfriends.

I had a clothing exchange a few weeks ago and invited as many female

friends as I could fit in the house. Within minutes, the neat little piles of clothes that each woman had brought were strewn around my living room. Stripped down to our underthings, we snatched up sundresses, skirts, business jackets, shorts, jeans, even tops for our little ones at home.

When the recycled garments finally found their appropriate new owners, we shared a covered dish brunch and celebrated our new bounty with animated talk. These new treasures, already broken in and possessing good karma, are gifts we have given one another. We return home with new duds, feeling beautiful, with any feelings of inadequacy about the way we look, vanished.

Committing to Shabbat (A Holy Day of Rest)

Mary Beth McBride

After participating in a Heart of the Earth discussion group on Voluntary Simplicity, my husband, Tom Anderson, and I have been exploring the anxieties and overwork patterns that cause us such stress. We’ve identified the “quick fixes” that seem to soothe us in our busiest days. These include driving rather than walking, drying clothes rather than hanging, fast food, ice cream or a coffee. We can see that they are superficial “fixes” that seem to offer immediate gratification, but leave us with a deeper hunger and fatigue. And we see how these choices lead to an over consumption that affects both our bodies and the body of our Earth.

So, we’ve committed to having a day of Shabbat once a week. Shabbat is traditionally a holy day, a day of rest from the daily schedules, tasks and worries. It is a day to receive, relax and allow time to connect to a deeper rhythm within ourselves, with our environment, and with spirit. The most difficult part of this commitment is keeping one day a week open for Shabbat; even our weekends tend to get booked up.

On our Shabbat, we make no appointments and we put away all “to do” lists. We wake up fresh and ask: what is it we most want to do today? What would replenish our bodies and souls? (It is okay to wash the car, if it brings a sense of harmony and pleasure.)

Tom writes of his experience, “At the beginning of each Shabbat, I’m scattered and outward focused, thinking about all the things I need to take care of. Our Shabbat stricture that I not attend to ‘tasks,’ especially those that come from the outside world, and which thus feel most urgent, seems almost repressive. But by the day’s end my sense of it has been altered significantly. It feels like a great gift to have the freedom to attend to what I want. It promotes the simple joy of being who I am.”

For me, Shabbat is a practice. I have to recommit over and over during the day to being present and not thinking about something not done or some-

thing to be done. If I stick with it, by day’s end, I feel refreshed at a deep level; my unnamable hungers have been satisfied. And during the days that follow Shabbat, it is easier to make my daily decisions with more consciousness and less consumption, and I feel more deeply connected with my heart and spirit, with my community and with this precious Earth.



Globalization

continued from pg. 2

I’m not naïve enough to think that it’s just consumers like me who are responsible for the life-threatening problems of the people I heard on the video. I/we/consumers are part of that problem, and as such we can take action through conscious buying and boycotts. These methods work because they impact corporations through the only language they understand—money. But my not buying a raincoat made in Viet Nam or China will not have much impact on “structural adjustment,” the IMF’s and World Bank’s stranglehold on local third world economies. Is it really possible to have any impact on them? Certainly not if I remain ignorant of their workings.

So I’m determined to educate myself on these globalization issues—always the necessary first step. But even as I write this, doubt creeps in: “How can I? ... they’re so huge ... what’s the use?”

Then I remember the angry women from southern India portrayed in the video, organizing to try to figure out what can be done since CocaCola moved into their town and opened a water bottling plant, sucking all the private and community wells in the area dry. If these women can learn about “structural adjustment” and the World Bank, and organize to assert their rights to resources necessary to life, certainly I can.

Editors Note: Many Tallahasseeans are traveling to Miami November 19-21 to register our opinion about the issues raised in Crystal Wakoa’s article during the FTAA meetings. To join us, attend the training events Nov. 9-10 with Starhawk (see calendar).

To purchase a copy of this video on globalization, go to www.pbs.org/now/ For more information on the upcoming FTAA meetings in Miami, www.stopftaa.org

Don’t Spend More Than You Make

By Janisse Ray

I think one of the most important things we can all do in the interest of sustainable living, especially at this time of year, is get out of debt and stay out. Our excessive personal consumption models an unsustainable and unachievable lifestyle to the global community. Here are some startling statistics:

- **Total U.S. household credit card debt is more than 600 billion dollars.**
- **It takes an average of 4 months for a credit card user to pay off holiday bills.**

CALENDAR

November 9

Starhawk: Non-violent activist training and the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA)
Sunday ♦ 2-5 pm

Location: U.U. Church, 2810 North Meridian Road

Learn in-depth principles and techniques of non-violent direct action with one of the premier activists of our time, Starhawk. Share methods to bring creative, vibrant magic to demonstrations and to community work. This training is in preparation for the Miami mobilization (see November 19-21 below).

Fee: Sliding scale donation request \$5-20.

To register: www.magnoliacircle.org/starhawk.htm

Ritual: Healing the Earth with Starhawk and Magnolia Circle
Sunday ♦ 7 pm

Location: Miccosukee Land Coop Community Center (Take Miccosukee Road 8 miles past Capital Circle NE. Watch for the MLC sign on the right.

An evening of healing and empowerment for the earth, culminating in a spiral dance.

Fee: FREE - All are welcome
Sponsored by the Heart of the Earth and others.



November 10

Lecture: Earth Spirit, Earth Action: Envisioning Global Justice
Monday ♦ 7 pm

Location: Florida Ballroom, FSU, Tallahassee

To act effectively against the violence of globalization, we need hope, courage, and a vision of what real justice might be. Starhawk discusses what the global justice movement stands for and wants. Sponsored by the Center for Participant Education. Book signing to follow.

Cost: Free

November 19-21

Free Trade Area of the Americas Meeting

Heads of state, trade ministers, and global justice activists will converge in Miami for another showdown as supporters of corporate globalization attempt to further the Free Trade Area of the Americas and protestors gather to oppose it. "Another world is possible" is the slogan of the global justice movement.

for ourselves, our relationships, and our environment and how we can counteract them in our daily lives. Globalization explores the roots, processes, and impacts of corporate globalization and actions individuals can take to promote an alternate vision for a just and sustainable world. All welcome. For more information, call Sue Cerulean 216-2016.

December 6

Earth Spirit Walk: A Conversation with Nature

Saturday ♦ 10 am to 1 pm

Location: Leon Sinks Geological Area

A short walk blending nature study and personal reflection. Limited to 12 participants.

Sponsored by: Heart of the Earth

S e e
www.heartoftheearth.org/earthspirit.htm for additional details or call Mike Brezin (386-6767) for details and to register.

December 3

Voluntary Simplicity and Globalization Study Circles

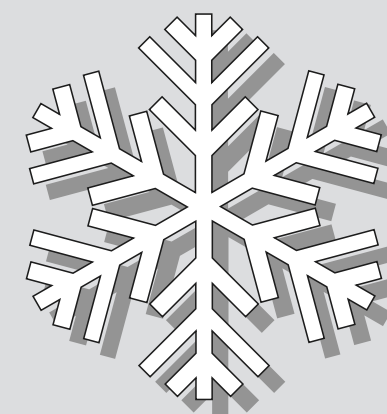
Wednesday ♦ 7 pm

The Healing Center, 847 Park Avenue

Organizational meeting for 9-week sessions to begin after the holidays. The Northwest Earth Institute developed these courses to develop practical actions for a sustainable world. Voluntary Simplicity addresses the distractions of modern society that keep us from caring

December 21

Winter Solstice



The Heart of the Earth Pledge

I vow to investigate what it means to become native to this place, and to do so in accordance with the ecological realities of this landscape;

I vow to investigate the use of fossil fuel energy sources by my household, and as far as I am able, to reduce that use by 30% within the next 36 months;

I will measure my purchases, travel, lifestyle and desires against the following two questions:

Is it sustainable?

What do the unborn of all species, all those waiting to be born, ask of me now?

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