

Two Alternative World Views of Planet Earth

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I. Background

I am an ancient retired ecologist, having taught ecology and environmental sciences at various universities and colleges since 1974. My research and teaching interests have covered a broad spectrum, including climate change research with NASA. Somewhere along the line, I see two world views seem to be unfolding: 1) One I shall call the Planet Earth View (named after Richard Attenborough's latest epic); and 2) the alternative view, the Ostrich View.

II. Portraits of the two views

1. Planet Earth View

The healthy view. This viewpoint is shared by those global inhabitants who have a finger on the pulse of the earth; what they feel is shocking (to them). The earth's pulse is weakening and there is a plethora of signs to substantiate that humans are, metaphorically, the virus. These inhabitants are observant, they are connecting the dots, and firmly believe that inaction, denial of reality, and business as usual equates to globacide. I don't know what Attenborough will say, if anything, in PE 2 about man's impact, but PE 1 intentionally kept humans out of the picture. My guess is that PE 2 will, like PE 1, will likely focus on the magic and the beauty of earth, that earth which will be lost forever if we take the Ostrich View. Truthful science education is of paramount importance to the avoidance of an earth driven by the Ostrich View.

2. The Ostrich View

The unhealthy view. This is the view not just being taken by the HEC but a good percentage of Americans as became glaringly and frighteningly obvious in our last national election. You frequently hear people say, "We need to wake up to climate change." I think most of us have awakened but have opted to remain in bed rather than take on the most daunting challenge civilization has ever faced. Using another metaphor— were we ostriches, we have chosen to keep our heads in the sand.

Who are the human ostriches? These are the people, who are of the PERSONAL OPINIONS, I stress word, opinion, that five paragraphs containing references to

biodiversity, climate change and human impact on the environment should be stricken from a new set of science standards. I'm surprised they didn't include references to threatened and endangered species. The human ostrich includes deniers of climate change and any human influence on the environment, which includes biodiversity/extinctions. These are people who don't really want to accept the fact that alongside terrorism, healthy economies and jobs, etc. looms the specter of climate change and crumbling ecosystems. These are people who don't connect the dots, who don't relate healthy ecosystems to healthy economies, who don't want to connect us to unprecedented meteorological events and to climate change.

By their vote, the HEC ceased to be a committee on education, ^{contemporary} in my opinion, Science standards based on omission of critical scientific truths, is in effect, lying. You cannot talk about basic ecological principles and concepts and the current state of the earth, physically and biologically, and leave out five critical paragraphs. This would be akin to discussing principles of physics and omitting gravity. In essence, the HEC is condoning book burning. It is one thing to personally accept an alternative truth and reality, but quite another to make sure that the next generation is dragged down your delusional path.

IV. Education and the Next Generation

This last national election has had some positive fallout: it has been a wake-up call to the fragility of a democracy, and along with that, the environment. Properly educated students don't believe that climate change is a hoax. People are getting involved by the droves, especially the youth, the ones who need to know the truth and not the alternative truth.

This next generation will most likely be the last to "get it right." By that I mean, if we fail to pass on to them as accurate as possible view of the world, how they need to right our wrongs in a fairly short span of time, we will be doing not only them a huge disservice but also Planet Earth, for which we should be the guardians not the killers. Fortunately, the youth are way out in front in their understanding of environmental issues. They aren't going to be fooled by the omission of a few words. However, having said that, if there are enough roadblocks to the truth, such as untruthful science standards, the process toward an environmentally stable planet will be retarded, and we can't tolerate that. The earth is not a grand experiment, a test tube, whereby if we don't like the results of an emasculated EPA, giving federal lands to the states, letting coral reefs die and rainforests be cut, we don't get another shot at it. Please do your part and don't contribute to the perpetuation of a false world view.