

ECONEWS

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Promoting the Vision of a Sustainable Vancouver Island

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WHERE IS OUR EARTH ANTHEM?

That may seem a strange question when we are trying to tackle such enormous problems as global warming, species extinction, and the need to redesign our whole way of life so that it doesn't trash the way our children and grandchildren live.

But where is the music that makes us feel the inevitability of victory? Our culture is producing and listening to more music than ever, yet there is this big piece missing.

We have new age music that celebrates the purity of nature; punk, hip hop and heavy metal music that denounce the injustices and stupidity of the world; and folk music that mourns the loss of beauty and the dying of species - but where is the music that celebrates a future in which we *succeed* in building a sustainable world, and makes us determined to get there?

It is impossible to recall the South African struggle against apartheid without the stirring music of *Nkosi Sikeleli* and a host of other songs.

It is impossible to recall the French Revolution without the stupendous music and lyrics of *La Marseillaise*, and its furious call to defend their newly found freedom:

*O Liberty, can man resign thee
Once having felt thy generous flame?
Can dungeons, bolts or bars confine thee*

Or whips thy noble spirit tame?

Nor can we recall the movement to end slavery without its music:

*When Israel was in Egypt's land,
Let my people go!*

Oppressed so hard they could not stand,

Let my people go!

Go down, Moses,

Way down in Egypt's land.

Tell old Pharaoh

To let my people go!

What would the US civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s be without its utterly determined lyrics:

*We shall overcome,
We shall overcome,
We shall overcome some day,
Oh deep in my heart,
I do believe,
We shall overcome one day.*



Peter Seeger in full voice

Today, we face a peril like no other, and people all around the world are working overtime to tackle the multiple threats to Earth's ecosystems - but forty years after the first Earth Day, in 1970, where is the global Earth Anthem we can sing together to celebrate our determination to succeed?

No-one has written it. That is the surprising reality.

There are songs that address environmental themes, including many by Victoria's singer/songwriter Holly Arntzen, but where is the all-commanding anthem that will draw us together with words of such joy and determination that they give us the strength we need to persist with the work and overcome the many setbacks and obstacles on the road to victory?

Its absence, I believe, lies in our failure to articulate what "victory" means, or even to *believe* that it is possible. Too many people think collapse and failure are inevitable; some even welcome the prospect, believing it is we greedy consuming humans who are the problem, and the sooner we are gone the better.

Some believe that the best way to mobilize people is by attacking the greedy polluting corporations and their evil capitalist ways, destroying more

forests, polluting more oceans, and selling us more garbage for the sake of a buck. It may be true, but it does not convey a vision of victory.

Victory has to be more than a successful defence - protecting a forest, saving a beach, stopping a housing development. Victory has to be the shining city on the hill, a utopian vision similar in power to those that inspired people to work so hard to achieve public health care, public education, pensions, the end of child labour, and votes for women - things for which we are enormously grateful, even if we take them for granted.

The vision of victory, sufficient to inspire the world's first Earth Anthem, must offer a shining vision of Nature protected, our economies and banking systems transformed, our food supply secure in our own hands and the hands of organic farmers, our energy being entirely renewable; our neighbourhoods being resilient and full of celebratory cooperation; our nations working together to restore Earth's ecosystems; our hearts full of respect for each other no matter the colour of our skins, the way we love each other or the amount of money we carry in our pockets.

These things are all possible - and if we believe them not to be, it is only because we have forgotten our history, and the astonishing things we have achieved in the past. Creating global harmony with Nature is no larger a challenge than ending slavery or creating democracy. It takes innovation, struggle and persistence, but above all it takes vision - and an Earth Anthem that will inspire our hearts to sing.

As soon as that song is written, we will know it - and from that moment on, victory will be that much more possible. We need to believe in the future. Earth's creatures and our own children and grandchildren ask nothing more.

Guy Dauncey