STRANGELY LIKE WAR

ALSO BY DERRICK JENSEN

Railroads and Clearcuts
Listening to the Land
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ALSO BY GEORGE DRAFFAN

Railroads and Clearcuts
The Elite Consensus
The Global Timber Titans

STRANGELY LIKE WAR

THE GLOBAL ASSAULT ON FORESTS

DERRICK JENSEN

GEORGE DRAFFAN

Foreword by
Vandana Shiva

A POLITICS OF THE LIVING BOOK

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FOREWORD

The forest has always been my teacher in peace, in diversity, in democracy. Diverse life forms, small and large, moving and immobile, above ground and below, with wings, feet or leaves, find their place in the forest. The forest teaches us that in diversity lie the conditions of peace, the realization of democracy.

I grew up in the lap of Himalayan forests. I shifted from a research career in physics to environmental research and activism when the peasant women of my region started the chipko (hug the tree) movement.

Forests have always been central to India. They have been worshipped as Aranyani, the goddess of the forests and the primary source of life and fertility. The forest as a community has been viewed as a model social evolution. The diversity, harmony and self-sustaining nature of the forest formed the organizational principles guiding Indian civilization; the aranya samskriti (roughly translated as 'the culture of the forest' or 'forest culture') was not a condition of primitiveness, but one of conscious choice. According to Rabindranath Tagore, the distinctiveness of Indian culture consists of its having defined life in the forest as the highest form of cultural evolution. In *Tapovan,* he writes:

> Contemporary western civilization is built of brick and wood. It is rooted in the city. But Indian civilization has been distinctive in locating its source of regeneration, material and intellectual, in the forest, not the city. India's best ideas have come when man was in communion with trees

> and rivers and lakes, away from the crowds. The peace of the forest has helped the intellectual evolution of man. The culture of the forest has fueled the culture of Indian society. The culture that has arisen from the forest has been influenced by the diverse processes of renewal of life which are always at play in the forest, varying from species to species, from season to season, in sight and sound and smell. The unifying principle of life in diversity, of democratic pluralism, thus became the principle of Indian civilization.
>
> Not being caged in brick, wood and iron, Indian thinkers were surrounded by and linked to the life of the forest. The living forest was for them their shelter, their source of food. The intimate relationship between human life and living nature became the source of knowledge. Nature was not dead and inert in this knowledge system. The experience of life in the forest made it adequately clear that living nature was the source of light and air, of food and water.

As a source of life nature was venerated as sacred, and human evolution was measured in terms of human's capacity to merge with her rhythms and patterns intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. The forest thus nurtured an ecological culture in the most fundamental sense of harmony with nature. Such knowledge that came from participation in the life of the forest was the substance not just of the Aranyakas or forest texts, but also of the everyday beliefs of tribal and peasant society. The forest as the highest expression of the earth's fertility and productivity is symbolized in yet another form as the Earth Mother, as Vana Durga or the Tree Goddess. In Bengal, she is associated with the sheora tree *(Trophis aspera)*, and with the sal *(Shorea robusta)* and asvathha *(Ficus religiosa)*. In Comilla she is Bamani, in Assam she is Rupeswari. In folk and tribal cultures, trees and forests are worshipped as Vana Devatas, forest deities.

But the forests, our sacred mothers, our teachers of peace and security, are themselves becoming the victims of war. It is a war unleashed by the violence of the monoculture mind, which reduces nature to raw material, life to a commodity, diversity to a threat, and views destruction as "progress." In *Strangely like War,* Derrick Jensen and George Draffan open our eyes to the terrorist assault on our living guardians and the destruction of our real security.

Vandana Shiva
August 8, 2003

NOTE

The pronoun *we* should be used only by royalty or those with particularly active intestinal flora. In this book, *I* refers to the primary author, Derrick Jensen, and *we* refers to both authors.

Deforestation

> It was strangely like war. They attacked the forest as if it were an enemy to be pushed back from the beachheads, driven into the hills, broken into patches, and wiped out. Many operators thought they were not only making lumber but liberating the land from the trees.[1]
>
> *Murray Morgan, 1955*

The very day we wrote the final words of this book, scientists declared that yet another subspecies of tiger had gone extinct in the wild (with only captives remaining, so discouraged they're dosed with Viagra to try to make them breed). Gone extinct. Such a passive way to put it, as though we know no cause, can assign no responsibility. It's almost as though we were to say that victims of murder passed away, or that victims of arson decided to move.

The South China tiger joins its cousins the Caspian tiger, Bali tiger, and Javan tiger, all victims of logging, roadbuilding, and the leveling of forests under this excuse or that.[2] The other tigers will almost undoubtedly join them soon.

It doesn't matter much to the tigers whether the forests are cut because Mao decided that "Man must conquer nature," or because the World Bank decided that "Man must develop natural resources." The forests are cut, the tigers are dead.

The forests of the world are in bad shape. About three-quarters of the world's original forests have been cut, most of that in the past century. Much of what remains is in three nations: Russia, Canada, and Brazil. Ninety-five percent of the original forests of the United States are gone.

We don't know how fast the surviving forests are disappearing. We don't know how many acres are cut each year in the United States, nor how much of that is old growth. We have estimates, and we'll give them throughout the book, but the paucity of information even on present levels of cutting reveals more than it hides: it reveals how desperately out of control is the whole situation.

The United States Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management sell trees from public forests—meaning they belong to you—to big timber corporations at prices that often do not even cover the administrative costs of preparing the sales, much less reflect full market value. For example, in the Tongass National Forest in southeastern Alaska, 400-year-old hemlock, spruce, and cedar are sold to huge timber corporations for less than the price of a cheeseburger, and taxpayers pay for the building of the logging roads as well. The Forest Service loses hundreds of millions of dollars a year on its timber-sale programs. In other words, if you pay taxes, you pay to deforest your own land.

If you live in the West, Southwest, South, Northeast, Midwest, Alaska, or anywhere else in the United States where there are or were forests, chances are good you've seen or walked clearcuts, sometimes square mile after square mile, cut, scraped, compacted, and herbicided. You've seen lone trees silhouetted on ridgelines, and you've seen once-dense forests reduced to a handful of trees per acre. You've suspected and later learned that these few trees were left so the Forest Service and big timber corporations could maintain that they did not clearcut this particular piece of ground. And maybe you came back another time and saw that the survivors, too, were gone.

You've probably driven highways lined by trees, then pulled over to look around, only to discover that just like in old westerns, where false fronts hid the absence of real stores, you've been sold a bill of goods: a few yards of trees separate the road from yet more clearcuts. This fringe of trees, which reveals recognition on

the part of timber corporations and government agencies that industrial forestry requires public deception, is common enough to have been given a name: the beauty strip.

Do yourself—and the forests—a favor. Next time you fly over a once-forested region on a clear day, look down. Pay attention to the crazy quilt of clearcuts you see below, to the roads linking clearcuts and fragmenting forests, roads that wash out in heavy rains to scour streambeds and destroy fisheries.

Only 5 percent of native forest still stands in the continental United States. Four hundred forty thousand miles of logging roads run through National Forests alone.[3] (The Forest Service claims there are "only" 383,000 miles, but the Forest Service routinely lies, keeping double books—a private set showing actual clearcuts, and a public set showing some of the same acres as old growth—misleading the public by labeling clearcuts "temporary meadows," reducing the stated costs of logging roads by amortizing them over a thousand years, and so on).[4] That's more road than the Interstate Highway System, enough road to drive from Washington, D.C. to San Francisco one hundred and fifty times. Only God and the trees themselves know how many miles of roads fragment the forests.

The forests of this continent have not always been a patchwork of dwindling and increasingly isolated natural communities. Prior to the arrival of our culture, unbroken forests ran along the entire eastern seaboard, leading to the cliché that a squirrel could have leapt tree to tree from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, never having touched the ground. Today, of course, it could still never touch ground, but instead walk on pavement. Polar bears wandered as far south as the Delaware Bay; martens were "innumerable" in New England; wood bison cruised that region; passenger pigeons passed overhead in flocks that darkened the skies for days at a time, Eskimo curlews did the same; rivers and seas were so full of fish they could be caught by lowering a basket into the

water. American chestnuts ran from Maine to Florida so thick on the dry ridgetops of the central Appalachians that when their crowns filled with creamy-white flowers the mountains appeared to be covered with snow. Before European "settlement"—read conquest—of America, there was no such thing as "old growth," no such thing as "native forest," no such thing as "ancient forest," because *all* of the forests were mixed old growth, they were all native, they were all diverse, ancient communities. Difficult as all of this may be to imagine, living as we do in this time of extraordinary ecological impoverishment, all of these images of fecundity are from near-contemporary accounts easy enough to find, if only we bother to look.

Worldwide, forests are similarly under attack. One estimate says that two and a half acres of forest are cut every second. That's equivalent to two football fields. One hundred and fifty acres cut per minute. That's 214,000 acres per day, an area larger than New York City. Seventy-eight million acres (121,875 square miles) deforested each year, an area larger than Poland.

The reasons for international deforestation are, as we'll explore in this short book, similar to those for domestic deforestation. Indeed, those doing the deforesting are often the same huge corporations, acting under the same economic imperatives with the same political powers.

Apologists for deforestation routinely argue that because preconquest Indians sometimes "managed" forests by setting small fires to improve habitat for deer and other creatures, industrial "management" of forests—deforestation—is acceptable as well. But the argument is as false and unsatisfying as the beauty strips, and really serves the same purpose: to divert our attention from deforestation. This is analogous to saying that because someone once clipped a partner's fingernails, it's okay for us to cut those fingers off.

I saw this argument presented again just today in the *San*

Francisco Chronicle, in an op-ed piece by William Wade Keye, past chair of the Northern California Society of American Foresters. He wrote, "Native peoples managed the North American landscape, cutting trees and using fire to perpetuate desirable forest conditions. There is no reason that we cannot equal or better this record of stewardship."[6] Actually, there are many reasons. Indians lived in place, and considered themselves a part of the land; they did not come in as an occupying force and develop an extractive economy. They did not participate in an economy and culture that valued money over life. They were smart enough not to invent chainsaws and fellerbunchers (huge shears on wheels that roll along the ground, severing trees and stacking them into piles). They were smart enough not to invent wood chippers or pulp mills. They were smart enough not to invent an economy that ignored everything but cash. They were smart enough not to invent limited liability corporations. They didn't export mountains of timber overseas. They knew trees and other nonhumans as intelligent beings with precious lives worth considering, and not as cash on the stump, or resources to be managed, or even as resources at all. Their spiritual beliefs did not include commands to "subdue the earth," nor was their cosmology based on the absurd notion that one succeeds in life by outcompeting one's human and nonhuman neighbors.

And the Indians didn't subdue the earth. There is absolutely nothing in our culture's history to suggest that we can "equal or better this record of stewardship." There is everything in our culture's history and present practices to suggest that the deforestation will continue, no matter the rhetoric of those doing the deforestation, and that ecological collapse will be our downfall, as it has been for earlier civilizations.[7]

But believe neither us, nor even contemporary accounts of early explorers who wrote of the extraordinary richness of native forests, nor especially the handsomely paid liars of the timber

industry and the government. For the truth lies not in what they say, nor even in what we say. The truth lies on the ground. Go out and walk the clearcuts for yourself. Rub the dried soil between your fingertips. Walk the dying streams; listen to the silence in the skies (except for the whine of chainsaws and roar of distant logging trucks). Walk among ancient ones still standing, trees sometimes two thousand years old. Put your hands on their bark, on their skin. Taste the difference in the air. Smell it. Reflect on the beauty of what's still there, and on what has been lost—what has been taken from us.

When you've finished crying, and if you want to know more about the current crisis in the forests—where we are, how we got here, and where we're going—then come back and read the rest of this book.

I walk in an ancient forest. Redwoods who sprouted long before civilization reached this continent surround me. When a redwood falls, young trees often come up from burls around the base or underground, so when you see several two-thousand-year-old trees huddled around a space that one day might have been another massive trunk, it's easy to find yourself slipping even further back in time, perhaps another two thousand years, to when that parent tree sprouted.

Many parts of this forest floor never see the sun. Big-bodied, small-headed beetles scurry beneath ferns that run like a carpet between trees. Hard-shelled millipedes wriggle through duff. At every step my feet encounter rough surfaces of redwood roots that twine together tree-to-tree to hold these trunks upright through storm and wind. The roots, I've read, seek each other out to form nets of mutual support. Would that we remember to do the same.

An old alder, downed in the last windstorm, cuts across the path. It died long before it fell, its branches growing bearded with

moss. It served the forest when it grew, it served standing after death, and now it will serve the forest as it slowly falls apart.

I make my way to a large stream. I stand in the soft soil of a thousand years of fallen leaves, and look out to see a salmon sweeping clean her nest. Her body is big and dark brown, her tail white and tattered from the journey upstream and from beating against the gravel beneath her. A sudden sound pulls my attention downstream, and I see another fish fighting her way up a series of rapids. She makes it halfway, then tires, or maybe realizes she's chosen the wrong path, and floats back down. She rests a moment, then slides up again, sometimes shifting to her side—perhaps to keep as much of herself as possible under water, or perhaps to keep her belly from scraping too much on the bottom. She thrusts herself forward against the force of the water, this time heading directly for underwater paths she can most easily follow to the pool waiting above a final row of rocks. She swims for the only break in that row—revealing an extraordinary ability to read and analyze currents, to precisely predict upstream barriers by what she sees and smells and feels in the water moving around her—and makes it to the pool. She cruises quickly to the dark at the bottom, and I do not see her again.

When you consider the current landscape of the cradle of civilization—what is now Iraq and environs—what pictures come to mind? If you're like me, the images are of barren plains and even more barren hillsides, goats or sheep grazing on a few scrubby bushes breaking a monotony of light brown dirt. But it was not always so. As John Perlin states in *A Forest Journey: The Role of Wood in the Development of Civilization,* "That such vast tracts of timber grew near southern Mesopotamia might seem a flight of fancy considering the present barren condition of the land, but before the intrusion of civilizations an almost unbroken forest flourished in the hills and mountains surrounding the Fertile

Crescent."[8] The trees were cut to build the first great cities and the ships that plied the first great empire. Once the ships were built, wood was imported to make the cities even bigger. Down went the great cedar forests of what is now southwest Turkey, the great oak forests of the southeastern Arabian peninsula, and the great juniper, fir, and sycamore forests of what is now Syria.[9]

One of humanity's oldest written stories—one of the formative myths of Western culture—is that of Gilgamesh, who destroyed southern Mesopotamia's cedar forests to build a city.[10] According to this story, Enlil, the chief Sumerian deity, who must forever watch out for the well-being of the earth, entrusted the demigod Humbaba to defend the forest from invaders. But the warrior-king Gilgamesh killed Humbaba and leveled the forest. Enlil sent down curses on the deforesters: "May the food you eat be eaten by fire; may the water you drink be drunk by fire." These curses have followed us now for several thousand years.

Let's move a little west. Picture this time the hills of Israel and Lebanon. I recently asked a man from Israel if his country has trees, and he said, "Oh yes, we have lots of little trees, which we water by hand." This fits with the images that come to mind. Every picture I've seen of the Crucifixion, for example, shows a hilltop devoid of trees. The same is true for most of the pictures I've seen of Palestinian refugee camps, and for Israeli settlements. What happened to the "land of milk and honey" we read about in the Bible? And what about those famous "cedars of Lebanon?" You'll find them only on the Lebanese flag now. The rest are long gone—cut to build temples, cities, and ships, cut for fuel, cooking, metalworking, pottery kilns, and all the trinkets of commerce.

Move west again, to Crete, and then up to Greece, and we see the same stories of trees making way for civilization. Knossos was heavily forested and now is not. Pylos, the capital of Mycenaean Greece, was surrounded by giant pine forests. Melos became barren. The same is true for all of Greece.

When you think of Italy, do you think of dense forests? Italy was once forested. These forests fell beneath the axes of the Roman empire.

Or how about North Africa? Surely not. This land is as barren as the Middle East. But here, once again quoting Perlin, "Berbers fulfilled their duty by felling the dense forest growth for their Arab masters. Such large quantities of wood were shipped from these mountains that the local port was named 'Port of the Tree.'"[11] All to make Egyptian warships.

We could continue with this journey, through France and Britain, across North and South America, into Asia and Africa, but by now you see the pattern.

That pattern continues today, accelerating as our culture metastasizes across the globe. Worldwide, forests fall.

As of 1997, Nigeria had lost 99 percent of its native forests.[12] The same was true of Finland and India. China, Vietnam, Laos, Guatemala, Ivory Coast, Taiwan, Sweden, Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, the United States, Mexico, Argentina, Burma, New Zealand, Costa Rica, Cameroon, and Cambodia had all lost at least 90 percent. Australia, Brunei, Sri Lanka, Zaire, Malaysia, and Honduras had lost at least 80 percent. Russia, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Bhutan, and the Congo had lost at least 70 percent. Gabon, Papua New Guinea, Panama, Belize, Colombia, and Ecuador had lost at least 60 percent. Brazil and Bolivia had lost more than half. Chile, Peru, Canada, and Venezuela had lost almost half.

Since 1997, of course, things have gotten much, much worse.

Forest Dwellers

> We would never buy paper made from dead bears, otter, salmon and birds, from ruined native cultures, from destroyed species and destroyed lives, from ancient forests reduced to stumps and mud; but that's what we're buying when we buy paper made from old growth clear-cut trees.[1]
>
> *Margaret Atwood*

When a forest is cut, not only trees are killed. Whether it's lions in ancient Greece, spotted owls or coho salmon right now in the Pacific Northwest, or gorillas in Africa, the loss of forests means the loss of the creatures who live there.

The list of plants and animals damaged or extirpated by the deaths of once-great forests is long, and getting longer every day. Golden-crowned lemur, orangutan, Siberian tiger (of whom there are only two hundred and fifty left), marbled murrelet, Port Orford cedar (killed by a fungus transported on logging equipment), black forest wallaby, aye-aye, red cedar, mahogany, ivory-billed woodpecker, Carolina parakeet, golden-capped fruit bat, Hazel's forest frog, smooth-skinned forest frog, Amur tiger, Amur leopard, forest owlet, Nelson's spiny pocket mouse, saker falcon, red wolf, panda, and on and on.

Scientists estimate an average of 130 species are driven extinct every day. That's about fifty thousand each year. That is not just by deforestation, but by the larger effects of industrial civilization. Deforestation plays its part, though, in great measure because forests are home to so many creatures. For example, although rainforests presently cover only 3.5 percent of the planet's land surface, they support more than half of all known

life forms. The national forests of the United States provide habitat for three thousand species of fish and wildlife.

Seventy-five percent of the mammals endangered by the activities of industrial civilization are threatened by loss of forest habitat.[2] For birds, the figure is 45 percent. For amphibians it's 55 percent, and for reptiles it's 65 percent.

Even those apologists for industrial forestry who admit other creatures besides humans live on this planet, and who acknowledge that destroying their homes could possibly harm them the tiniest little bit, still argue that logging is a trivial cause of damage compared to mining and agriculture. They especially like to show pictures of poor (brown) people using slash-and-burn agricultural techniques in the rainforests. But this argument is as much a deflection as most of their others. Worldwide, logging likely accounts for more than two-thirds of forest destruction, as opposed to burning and other causes.[3] In Oceania it's "only" 42 percent. Asia, 50 percent. Central America, 54 percent. South America, 69 percent. Africa, 79 percent. Europe, 80 percent. North America, 84 percent. Russia, 86 percent.

Recent studies show, too, that species extinction likely continues for a century after deforestation.[4] Guy Cowlishaw of the Zoological Society of London cautions, "We should not be lulled into a false sense of security when we see that many species have survived habitat loss in the short term. Many are not actually viable in the long term. These might be considered 'living dead.'" By correlating, for example, the number of individuals of different species of primates living in Africa, their habitat size, and the extent of deforestation of their habitat, he has come to the conclusion that deforestation is leaving Africa with a large extinction debt. Even if no additional forest is cut, six countries—Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Kenya, and Nigeria—stand to lose more than a third of their primate species in the next thirty or forty years. That presumes, once again, *no further deforestation*. But

scientists estimate that within that same time, 70 percent of remaining West African forests and 95 percent of remaining East African forests will be cut.

It's not just primates. Studies on birds show similar trends. Thomas Brooks, a biologist from the University of Arkansas who has studied avian extinction in Kenya's Kakamega Forest, said, "Even a century after a forest has been fragmented, it may still be suffering from bird extinctions. . . . The good news is we have a brief breathing space. Even after tropical forests are fragmented, there is still some time to adopt conservation measures to prevent the extinction of their species. The flip side of this is bad news, though: There is no room for complacency."

Healthy forests are crucial not only to the creatures who live there. Forests purify water and air. They mitigate global warming by storing carbon. Because half of the rain in rainforests comes from local water evapotranspirated from the forest itself, forests increase local precipitation. They prevent flooding and erosion.

It is common when making a plea to halt deforestation to talk about the ways the loss of these forests hurt *us,* using, for example, the fact that rainforests can be considered great medicine chests, if only we will use the medicines instead of destroying the chests. Just tonight I read on a website deploring tropical deforestation, "The rainforest is the earth's natural laboratory, from where one quarter of today's pharmaceuticals are derived. One seemingly insignificant plant, the rosy periwinkle, gave us medicines which revolutionized the treatment of leukemia in children. According to the National Cancer Institute, 70 percent of the plants used in fighting cancer can only be found in the rainforest. But less than one percent of tropical forest species have been thoroughly examined for their medicinal properties."[5]

While it's certainly true that there are many selfish reasons to stop cutting down forests, we don't want to emphasize them, because ultimately—and even in the short run—we don't think

that particularly helps. It doesn't challenge the grotesquely narcissistic and inhuman utilitarian perspective that *is* our worldview and underlies our attempts to dominate the world.

A few years ago I was one of the only environmental representatives at a conference of children's health advocates. That in itself was strange, I thought. How can you possibly discuss the health of children without emphasizing the fact that industrial civilization is rendering the planet uninhabitable for them?

One of the advocates there—a high level federal bureaucrat at the Centers for Disease Control—expressed the need to halt tropical deforestation (it often seems to me that more people in the United States want to halt tropical deforestation than want to stop it here at home) by saying, "We need to save those plants because they're our medicines for the future."

"That's precisely the problem," I responded. "The belief that the forests belong to us. They're not *our* medicines, and they're not *our* forests. First, the plants belong to themselves, and they belong to the forest. Second, if they belong to any humans at all, they belong to the indigenous people who live on that land. We have no more right to take their plants for medicines than we do for timber."

Several people looked at me as though I had suddenly stopped speaking English and begun quacking like a duck. This is what often happens when you cease to speak the language of unbridled exploitation—untethered selfishness—and begin to suggest that forests, and the creatures who live in them (including indigenous humans), have the right to live on their own, regardless of how useful or not they may be to us. What was happening in that room was in many ways what happens moment-by-moment in the forests: a clash of incompatible worldviews and value systems.

At every step of the way there have been humans living in the forests that have fallen to the axe, and now the chainsaw: People

who do not view forests as resources, but instead as homes to be lived in forever. There were the indigenous conquered near the Fertile Crescent, whose sacred groves were cut by Gilgamesh and his ilk. The Canaanites and many others, conquered in the Promised Land, whose sacred groves were cut by the Israelites lest the Israelites be tempted to worship in their shade. The indigenous of northern Greece, whose forests were cut to serve commerce, and who were called *barbarians* because they did not speak the language of civilization, but instead made sounds like *barbarbar*. These people were conquered, their forests cut. The indigenous of Italy, France, England, called *savages* because they lived in forests (*savage* derives from the root word for *forest: savage:* "not domesticated, untamed, lacking the restraints normal to civilized human beings," from Medieval Latin *salvaticus;* alteration of Latin *silvaticus,* of the woods, wild; from *silva,* wood, forest). These, too, were killed, their lands deforested.

Move across the ocean to the United States. A standard conceit of the settlers was that they faced not *terra incognita* but *terra vacuuis,* an empty land with trees ripe for cutting. But these were not empty lands, and they are not empty lands today. There are those who live there. There are nonhumans, whose lives are as meaningful to them as yours is to you and mine is to me. And there are humans, with lives just as precious.

Wilderness is a social construct. My niece recently moved to Louisiana, and sent me a note in which she stated how uncomfortable she is that an alligator lives on her Coast Guard base. "Call me crazy," she wrote, "But I think it's odd to have wild animals so close to where people are." Not always would this have seemed odd. For almost all of human existence, it was simply how things were. And for some humans it still is. For them there is no city in here, no wilderness out there, no split between humans who exploit and a resource base to be exploited.

What all of this means is that when we talk about saving

forests we too often forget about the people who call them their home. No, we're not talking about those people with more cash than integrity who buy ecologically sensitive pieces of ground and threaten to construct vacation homes—with the real purpose being to extort money from those who wish to protect the land. Nor are we talking about transnational timber corporations attempting to "gain access to" wild forests the world over. Nor are we talking about loggers, many of whom truly do love to walk in the forests they're destroying. Nor are we talking about environmentalists living in yurts and composting their feces into humanure. We're not *even* talking about writers and researchers who love to look at salmon and will do anything possible to help stop deforestation.

We're talking about the indigenous, those who live on the land that their ancestors lived and died on, going back so many generations that the distinction is lost between those who live on the land and the land itself. We're talking about those whom we have never gotten to know, and who have never fit our self-serving stereotype that they are "beastly," "savage," "primitive," somehow subhuman, living lives that are "nasty, brutish, and short." This notion is self-serving because it reinforces the conceit that these people would be better off if we civilize them, take them (by force if necessary) out of their childlike ways to live as adults. As Ronald Reagan put it, "Maybe we made a mistake in trying to maintain Indian cultures. Maybe we should not have humored them in that, wanting to stay in that primitive lifestyle. Maybe we should have said: No, come join us. Be citizens along with the rest of us."[6] Conveniently left unsaid is the theft of their land, and its ultimate despoliation.

Nor do the indigenous live romantic lives wandering about picking a few berries now and then. They have serious long-term relationships with the plants and animals with whom they share their landscape. Ray Rafael, who has written extensively on the

concept of wilderness, has said, "Native Americans interacted with their environment on many levels. Fortunately, they did so in a sustainable way. They hunted, they gathered, and they fished using methods that would be sustainable over centuries and even millennia. They did not alter their environment beyond what could sustain them indefinitely. They did not farm, but they managed the environment. But it was different from the way that people try to manage it now, because they stayed in relationship with it."[7]

Theft of indigenous land is not ancient history, something that *only* happened a long time ago, something to express our regrets over as we continue to profit from their land. It happens today, all over the planet. Anywhere there are indigenous people living traditionally in forests, they are being threatened, harassed, arrested, dispossessed, killed, and their forests are being cut down. Here are a few current examples among far too many.

Africa: The Bayanga Wood Company deforests the homeland of the Ba'Aka (pygmies) of the Central African Republic. The Ba'Aka are forced into settlement camps at the fringes of their dying forests.[8] The transnational timber corporations Rougier (French), Danzer (German), Feldmeyer (German), Wonnemann (German), and the Dutch-Danish-German consortium Boplac deforest the Congo. Pan African Paper Mills, Raiply Timber, and Timsales Ltd. are entering—and destroying—the forests of the Ogiek people of Kenya, who are being evicted from where they have lived, hunted, and gathered honey forever. In 1967 the World Bank decided that the Gishwati forest, home to the Batwa (pygmies), should be cleared to use for potato farming and cattle raising. The Batwa were not, of course, consulted. As a sixty-one-year-old Batwa says, "We were chased out of our forest, which was our father because it provided us with food through gathering and hunting. . . . The State chased us out of the forest and we had to settle in the fringes, where we die of starvation. All the

development projects that were carried out in Gishwati forest have done nothing for us and no Batwa has even received the benefit of a job."

The genocide continues. A 2002 news report (not from the corporate press, of course, but from the human rights organization Survival International) stated that the Botswana government "denied the Gana and Gwi Bushmen still in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve their only means of communication with the outside world, and turned back Bushmen bringing them essential supplies of food and water. Government officials seized solar powered radio transceivers, provided by [Survival International] for the Bushman communities. They also told two Bushmen bringing food and water to the beleaguered communities, whose supplies were cut off by the government last week, that entry to their ancestral lands was forbidden. The two were later allowed to deliver the food and water, but were told that in future they would have to have a special permit or pay to enter the reserve. The Central Kalahari Game Reserve was set up in the 1960s as a home for the Gana and Gwi Bushmen, whose ancestral lands include the reserve area. Yet since the mid-1980s, the Botswana government has waged a campaign of harassment to force the Bushmen off the land that is theirs under international law. In past weeks many of the 700 Bushmen still living in the reserve in the face of this harassment have been forced to leave, and last week the government terminated supplies of water and food to those who are still resisting."[9]

Back to the "developed" world. North America. British Columbia granted huge timber concessions to the timber giant Macmillan-Bloedel, which made billions of dollars by clearcutting nearly all of Vancouver Island. In 1999, Mac-Blo, as it is commonly known, was bought out by the U.S.-based transnational timber corporation Weyerhaeuser, which had already liquidated forests in Wisconsin, Minnesota, Washington, Oregon, the

Philippines, and Indonesia. Weyerhaeuser, like Mac-Blo before it, is clearcutting like mad, in part because the First Nations of Canada have never extinguished title to the forests being clearcut and are suing the Canadian government to exercise their rights to sovereignty over this land, including not allowing it to be cut. The Haida have sued Weyerhaeuser for illegally clearcutting their land in the Queen Charlotte Islands. Guujaaw, chief of the Haida in British Columbia, said about Weyerhaeuser, "They've come and wiped out one resource after another. . . . We've been watching the logging barges leave for years and years, and we have seen practically nothing for Haida."[10]

South America. The Guarani living in forests in Argentina do not believe land can belong to anyone. How can human beings, who are only passing through life, be owners? The Moconá S.A. Forestry Company, which is not a human being but a corporation, a legal fiction, is cutting down their forests. The company offered each community seventy-four acres on which to live. The Guarani rejected the possibility that the land could have any owner and found it absurd that they were being offered seventy-four acres of those communal lands where their ancestors had lived and where they themselves were already living, land they were, according to their worldview, borrowing from their children. The corporation raised the offer to about five hundred acres, and continues to cut.

The Wichí have lived on the same land (in what is now called Argentina) for at least 12,000 years; now through depredations of timber and agricultural corporations, their homeland has been reduced from more than 170,000 acres to less than sixty-seven. The remaining sixty-seven acres are an oasis of green amidst a now-barren landscape.

The Mapuche of Chile have lost more than 95 percent of their original 27 million acres, and now logging companies are coming for the rest. Police murder children who protest the logging.

Asia. The Karen in Burma are under attack from Canada's Ivanhoe Capital Corporation, which in 1994 reached an agreement with the Burmese military regime to run the Monywa copper mine. Safety measures are completely absent. Miners threaten to blow up local residents who complain about water pollution and skin problems. The Karen are also under attack by the United States' Unocal corporation, which along with the military has used forced labor to construct the Yadana gas pipeline. Mass murder and mass rapes are useful tools for enslaving a people and forcing them to destroy their own landbase. And the Karen are under attack by the Thai dam-building company GMS Power and the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand, which are building a huge dam at the Salween River, the only remaining free-flowing major river in the area. One hundred and seventy-five villages will be relocated. Or perhaps not. The Burmese Army has begun a program of extermination.

The Togeans of Indonesia have taken to torching logging equipment of the transnational timber corporation destroying their home.

In the Philippines, logging companies and the military have taken over the forests of the Agta, who are now homeless and still menaced. A spokesperson for the Agta recently stated, "A certain colonel warned us that if we do not vacate our land, our tribe will be exterminated."

The Penan of Malaysia have been struggling for their lives and for the life of their forest for many years. But life was not always a struggle. As Ngot Laing, Chief of Long Lilim, Patah River, said, "In the past our life was peaceful, it was so easy to obtain food. You could even catch the fish using your bare hands—we only needed to look below the pebbles and rocks or in some hiding holes in the river." Urin Ajang concurred, "In the past, we did not fall sick, we did not have scabies, the water was clean. We did not have all these puddles that breed mosquitoes." But

now, Ngot says, "The people are frequently sick. They are hungry. They develop all sorts of stomach pains. They suffer from headaches. Children will cry when they are hungry. Several people including children also suffer from skin diseases, caused by the polluted river. Upper Patah used to be so clean. Now the water is like Milo, sometimes you can even find oil spills floating downstream." Another Penan, Lep Selai, said, "Living a settled life is just not our way. We are used to the forest. Besides, I do not know how to farm." This doesn't mean the Penan are too stupid to become farmers. The real point is, as Peng Megut put it, "We know that if we agree to settle down, it would in effect be a tradeoff for our forest. The government is asking us to settle down, as if once when we are settled, they can do anything to our forest." Ayan Jelawing sums up, "We were the first people of this Apoh area. The waters did not have a name then, not until we gave it a name in our language. . . . The logging companies first entered into the Apoh area in the 1980s. When the Penan communities went to meet the companies' managers they would simply say that the Penan do not have any rights to this area. How could this be?" Ajang Kiew states, "We asked for forest reserves. We asked for a school for the village. We asked for clinics. Instead they gave us the logging companies. Now it is oil palm plantations. We would end up as laborers for hire. The profits would only make other people rich. But the land they work on is land belonging to the Penan." And finally, Nyagung Malin gives a solution: "We are used to living in the forest. And life did not used to be difficult. If we needed to build our huts, we could easily find the leaves in the forest. If you really want to give us development, then do not disturb our forest."[11]

The people of the forests aren't stupid, backward, or stubborn; they are loyal to the source of life.

Accountability

> We policemen have been made the tools of the big business interests who want to run things. I'm ashamed of myself for consenting to do their dirty work. The big fellows in this town can do anything they like and get away with it, but the workers can't even think what they want to think without being thrown in jail.[1]
>
> *Police Captain Plummer*

The military and police, and, more broadly, the government—any government—often promote deforestation, and spend far more time and energy working toward the theft of indigenous land than its protection.[2] This was true in the days of Gilgamesh's Mesopotamian city-state of Uruk, and in the days of the Israelites, and true in the days of the Greeks and Romans. It's been true throughout American history, and it's true today. This support is quite often direct, as when the military in Papua New Guinea machine-guns those who resist Freeport McMoRan's copper and gold mining there; as when the Saramake people of Suriname are threatened with imprisonment when they resist the deforestation of their land by Chinese timber companies; as when the Indonesian military suppresses those in the path of ExxonMobil's oil operations; as when police in the United States frequently use pepper spray and "pain compliance holds" against those who attempt to halt deforestation here.

The support comes, sometimes, through intentional neglect, and through repeatedly refusing to enforce any kind of accountability on those who deforest. Enforcement officers, politicians, bureaucrats, police, judges, and businessmen are tied together in

patron-client networks that promote their own interests rather than enforcing the community's forest policies and laws.[3]

We want to tell you, for example, a story about the relationship between the government and the ongoing destruction of the last redwood forests in the United States. It concerns a timber company called Pacific Lumber (PL).[4] As recently as two decades ago, PL was a family-owned company known for being fair to its workers and for being as sustainable as an industrial forestry company can be (which isn't terribly sustainable, but one of the first lessons you learn as an environmentalist is to savor bright spots—or less gloomy spots—where you find them). Then the owners decided to take the company public.

The company was soon taken over by a corporate raider named Charles Hurwitz, famous for proclaiming and actualizing his version of the Golden Rule: He who has the gold rules. Hurwitz has a long history of illegal and antisocial activities, stretching back to his early twenties, when he was forced to plead no contest to the Securities and Exchange Commission for illegal stock market dealings. He later acknowledged looting New York-based Summit Insurance out of $400,000. Next he raided the pension fund of Simplicity Pattern, causing retirees' benefits to drop from $10,000 per year to $6,000 per year. That company, under the new name MAXXAM, became the holding company through which Hurwitz has raided many other companies, bilking retirees, stockholders, and the public out of money, breaking unions, and eventually, as we'll see, devastating the landscape of northern California. During the Savings and Loan scandal of the 1980s, Hurwitz and MAXXAM looted the United Savings Association of Texas, costing taxpayers $1.6 billion to bail out. More than $1 billion of this money remains unaccounted for, despite (or perhaps because of) lukewarm prosecution by the United States Department of Justice.

Hurwitz used some of his ill-gotten gains to take over Pacific Lumber in northern California. One of the first things he did was

raid the workers' pension fund, taking $55 million from retired loggers and millworkers. Then he began liquidating the company's assets, including the world's largest stands of privately owned (well, actually corporate-claimed) old-growth redwoods. Simultaneously, his longtime partner in crime and number two man at MAXXAM, Barry Munitz, resigned to become Chancellor of the California State University System. They got a pet state senator, Barry Keene, to secure the passage of a resolution creating the Center for the Resolution of Environmental Disputes, at the head of which would be, you guessed it, the Chancellor of the California State University System. Moreover, PL donated $61,000 to California Governor Gray Davis. Davis then solicited and received a $15,000 contribution from MAXXAM for one of Davis's political pals right when California was considering regulatory action against the company for water quality violations. You may be familiar with this tactic under its street name: *shakedown*. It is often stated in California that Gray Davis is an honest politician, by which it's meant that when he's bought he stays bought. That's certainly true in this case. The North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board, with members appointed by Governor Davis, has repeatedly deferred action on water quality matters pertaining to PL.

PL routinely breaks state and federal law. Even with regulatory agencies in its pocket, it's been cited hundreds of times for violations of forest practices rules, the Endangered Species Act, the Clean Water Act, and so on. Mudslides from PL clearcuts have destroyed (human) homes. They've destroyed water supplies for (human) communities. A few years ago, after a logger threatened to kill protesters ("Ohhhhh, fuck!" he is caught screaming on videotape, "I wish I had my fucking pistol! I guess I'm gonna just start packing that motherfucker in here, 'cause I can only be nice so fucking long!"), the logger actually did drop a tree on one of the protesters. The logger was never arrested. Indeed, Humboldt County sheriffs assaulted and arrested environmentalists instead,

and the local district attorney issued an opinion that the environmentalists themselves should be charged with manslaughter.

Meanwhile, the cutting continues.

To much fanfare, and over the objections of local environmentalists, Dianne Feinstein, another of Hurwitz's pet senators—federal this time—pushed through a deal that gave Hurwitz $380 million in exchange for 7,500 acres of redwoods. Even more important to Hurwitz than the money, if such a thing is possible, was that as part of the bargain, the feds agreed to allow Hurwitz to deforest another 46,000 acres, including 2,000 acres of old growth, over the next ten years. Hurwitz will also be allowed to deforest much of the rest of the 200,000 acres claimed by PL, including 8,500 acres of old growth, over the next fifty to one hundred years. Further, the deal waived compliance with the Endangered Species Act in many areas, tantamount to giving PL a fifty-year permit to kill endangered species.

Local environmentalists sued over that deal, and in the three years since, PL and the government agencies that protect it have refused to hand over the applicable records to the court, presumably because of what they would reveal about the deal and the effects of PL's logging, were they to become public. Finally, a judge issued a stay on all PL logging associated with the deal until documentation was released.

The response by PL was, unsurprisingly, to ignore the stay and to continue—in fact to accelerate—logging. A further response by PL's president and CEO Robert Manne was to call those who opposed this logging "eco-terrorists," and to say that their actions fit "a pattern of behavior that the Department of Justice will be keenly interested in reviewing."[5] He continued by stressing that "ours is a society of laws and rules, and we are troubled that these activists are obviously determined to ignore both. This illegal and aggressive behavior must not be allowed to continue." I sometimes wonder the degree to which this sort of extreme irony is inten-

tional, and the degree to which it is unconscious. If the former, he's evil. If the latter, he's stupid. We suspect a combination.

Here's the point: As PL loggers cut trees in explicit and knowing violation of the judge's stay, as well as any number of federal and state laws and regulations, they have been escorted by members of sheriffs' departments, not to make sure they don't continue their illegal cutting, but to make sure they can. On the other hand, since the stay, sixteen environmentalists have been arrested, many carrying copies of the judge's orders. As deputies carried one eighteen-year-old female tree-sitter from a logging site (after having put her in pain-compliance holds), they said to her, "We're good citizens. We remove trash from the forest." Her bail, because she was protesting illegal cutting by PL, has been set at $200,000.

Meanwhile the cutting continues.

We don't want to give the impression that PL is unique. Far from it. The political alliances, lax enforcement of forestry rules, and exemptions from the Endangered Species Act and other environmental regulations are all industry standard. For example, while Hurwitz has gotten a lot of bad press, Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) has been, according to one researcher, Doug Bevington, "quietly plundering the state's forests on a scale that makes Charles Hurwitz look like a novice."[6] SPI claims 1.5 million acres of land in California, making it the state's largest private (read, corporate) landowner and the second-largest landowner in North America.

SPI benefits greatly from federal subsidies, first by cutting 39 percent of all the trees taken from the national forests in California, and then using those profits to double its corporate land holdings over the last ten years.

Between 1992 and 1999, SPI increased its clearcutting by more than 240 times, and increased the size of its average clearcut from

46 to 361 acres. The corporation has plans to clearcut a million more acres (1,562 square miles), an area larger than Rhode Island.

The California Department of Forestry is essentially owned by the timber industry, and yet SPI still routinely ignores CDF's rules. Between 1991 and 1999 Sierra Pacific asked the state to exempt 4.4 million acres from meaningful departmental oversight, leaving 711,445 acres where SPI *pretended* to abide by the regulations.

SPI's purchase of state regulatory agencies cost them $231,500 in political donations in 1998 and 1999. This money was used to purchase support at every level from the governor to county sheriffs, which might help explain who gets arrested and who does not. Although SPI purchased Governor Gray Davis's opposition in 1998, they have since shown themselves to be willing to purchase politicians of both major parties—revealing, if nothing else, that the parties are two sides of the same corporate coin. In 2002 they gave Davis $42,716, and more recently hosted a timber-industry fundraiser that brought in $129,000 for him. That may have been a belated payment for Davis's 1999 appointment of Mark Bosetti of Sierra Pacific to sit on the State Board of Forestry. A spokesperson for Davis stated, "There's absolutely no nexus" between these pay-offs and Davis's actions.[7]

Not content with the purchase of taxpayer-subsidized timber, SPI has routinely stolen public timber from national and state forest lands as well. As federal agents wrote in a 1993 briefing paper, "These companies are suspected of manipulating the log scale [in order to escape paying full price for the timber they removed from public lands]. It is further suspected that various Forest Service officials have met with representatives of these companies concerning the administration of Forest Service timber sales and decisions have been made not in the best interest of the government. It is suspected those decisions have resulted in an undetermined loss of revenue to the United States Treasury." That case was mysteriously dropped. The company has been

known, when cutting trees on SPI-claimed land, to cross borders into public lands and cut there as well. Or sometimes when cutting they'll simply sneak extra log trucks out without proper receipts. When individuals do this, it's called theft.

Not content even with all this, a few years ago SPI came up with something called the Quincy Library Group. The claimed purpose of the group was to deal with the (logging-induced) collapse of the regional forest-based economy. The group's name makes it appear to consist of a few folks hanging out in the public library to wrestle with the fate of their local forests, but the name is another beauty strip. The truth is that twenty of the thirty participants in this self-described "community group" were associated with the timber industry. Most of them were SPI employees. Not surprisingly, the group's plan was to double logging in parts of three national forests, and cut a network of long, thin clearcuts through the region, all under the pretense of forest health. Also not surprisingly, SPI was able to get Congress to attach a rider making this plan the law of the land. The Plan is expected to cost taxpayers at least $70 million in lost revenues. SPI will be the main recipient of this largesse.

Meanwhile the cutting continues.

We don't want to give the impression that SPI is unique. Far from it. This is industry standard. For example, a few years ago Weyerhaeuser was caught stealing trees from federal lands. Lots of them. Back in 1991 Congress had set up the U.S. Forest Service Timber Theft Investigations Branch (TTIB), in order to provide the illusion of doing something about the annual theft of up to a hundred million dollars of federal timber by timber corporations. This amounts to up to 10 percent of the total federal timber cut—and this figure comes not from environmentalists, but from a former Forest Service Chief, in other words, from someone firmly in the pocket of the timber corporations. As reporter Mike

Romano noted, "Nobody expected the task force to do much more than inoculate the Forest Service against critics, but it won a string of stunning convictions, including a record-setting $3.2 million case against the Columbia River Scaling Bureau in 1993. Later that year, [Mike] Marion's 10-man team launched a law enforcement initiative unprecedented at the Forest Service—three concurrent investigations into allegations of million-dollar timber theft, accounting fraud, and obstruction of justice by Forest Service field managers." One of the companies investigated was Weyerhaeuser. Marion and his staff found that Weyerhaeuser had illegally cut up to 6 million board feet of timber. They also suspected that Weyerhaeuser was illegally exporting trees cut from federal land. A report by the task force states, "In summary, the Government was giving Government timber away for free." The particular thefts being investigated had cost taxpayers more than $3 million.

Once it became known that Weyerhaeuser was under investigation, and could be prosecuted, Forest Service employees granted Weyerhaeuser retroactive permission to cut trees outside of its contracts. As one employee later put it in a sworn affidavit, "We felt we need to protect [Weyerhaeuser] from violating the contract." Further, Forest Service employees tipped off Weyerhaeuser to the undercover task force investigation and destroyed pertinent Weyerhaeuser files two days prior to their intended seizure by investigators. Why? One Forest Service supervisor explained that he exposed the covert probe "because he couldn't afford to jeopardize his good working relationship with Weyerhaeuser."

Despite the best efforts of many within the Forest Service to sabotage the investigation, an independent Forest Service review concluded "the probability of conviction is good, as is the probability of civil recovery."

Something had to be done. But how was Weyerhaeuser to be protected? As always, the answer was simple. In this case, Jack Ward Thomas, Forest Service Chief, abruptly disbanded the

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TTIB. A plausible case has been made that the order to disband came directly from the White House. Clinton did not want to upset Weyerhaeuser, a Fortune 500 corporation valued at more than $8 billion at the time—worth $18 billion by 2002—and a corporate ally from his days as governor of Arkansas.

Regardless of who gave the order to shut down the investigation, the process itself was dirty. Assistant U.S. Attorney Jeff Kent, responsible for timber theft cases in the Northwest, wrote the Office of Inspector General, which has oversight over the Forest Service: "Even as Chief of Special Prosecutions in Chicago, responsible for corruption and organized crime cases, I have never encountered in my 20 years as a prosecutor such a concerted effort by management to impede and sabotage the Congressionally mandated mission [of a group like the task force] or such Machiavellian maneuvers."[8]

Meanwhile the cutting continues.

I want to share another story about accountability. I teach creative writing at a prison in Northern California. Last night I happened to ask one of my students why he's in prison. He laughed, embarrassed, then said, "I was high on crank and stole a videotape from a store."

"How long did you get?"

"Two years."

"I gotta know," I said. "What movie was it?"

He laughed again, then said, "*The Lion King*. I got two years for *The Lion King*."

I had another student serving a life term for stealing a bicycle from someone's garage, and another serving a life term also for stealing a videotape. I do not know what the movie was, but to have gotten that sentence, it surely must have been a lot better than *The Lion King*.