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Agriculture and Food
 Atmospheric Issues
 Biodiversity
 Clean Air
 Commentary
 Eco-Education/Religion
 Energy Production
 Environmental Justice
 Government Regulations
 Land Use
 News
 Population
 Toxics
 Transportation
 Waste Management

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■ 12/9/2007

- ▶ New hope for sustainable development
- ▶ Pressing toward a sustainable future
- ▶ Video: Craig Rucker on Global Warming
- ▶ Video: CFACT's Adopt-A-Village Project
- ▶ Does racism cause breast cancer?
- ▶ Malaria atonement and forgiveness

■ One Minute Radio Commentary

- ▶ 11/17/2007: Global climate models still not dependable
- ▶ 11/14/2007: PERC questions forest sequestration plans
- ▶ 11/13/2007: Oil on the water?
- ▶ 11/12/2007: SUV impact on oil consumption overstated
- ▶ 11/9/2007: Britain's not so jolly good taxes

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[Home](#) » [Environmental Analysis](#) » [Environmental Justice](#) »

Malaria atonement and forgiveness

Anti-DDT, anti-energy groups have much to atone for

Friday, September 21, 2007

by [Paul Driessen](#)

During the Days of Repentance, Jews ponder their sins of the past year. Today, Yom Kippur, is their final opportunity to make amends and alter the judgment that God will enter in his books, as the sun sets.

This Day of Atonement, however, can assure forgiveness only for sins between people and God. To atone for sins against other persons, we must first seek reconciliation with those we have wronged, demonstrate repentance, and right the wrongs or make restitution.

In this politicized age, many people have their own lists of folks who "ought to be seeking forgiveness." I'm on several – including Greenpeace's roster of "climate criminals."

At the top of my own list are the radical environmentalists – and foundations and others who give them the money and political clout to perpetrate mischief worldwide.

Back when I helped organize the very first Earth Day on my college campus, the nascent environmental movement offered hope for a cleaner, better future. Indeed, thanks to the awareness we helped generate, the river I grew up on was revitalized, air

International trade policies by First World nations do little to enhance Third World economic development.
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 July, 2005: 1 article
 May, 2005: 1 article
 April, 2005: 1 article
 January, 2005: 1 article
 September, 2004: 1 article
 February, 2004: 1 article
 June, 1998: 2 articles

pollution was reduced, and our overall quality of life improved.

It took laws, regulations and a new mindset on the part of people, governments and businesses alike. I'm proud of the roles we played and delighted that people are more committed to protecting our planet.

But over the years, the movement's activist wing became a huge, multinational, multi-billion-dollar crisis creation and perpetuation industry. Using junk science, over-hyped fears and unrelenting campaigns against companies, technology and development, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action, Environmental Defense, Sierra Club, Natural Resource Defense Council and other groups thwart progress and help prolong poverty, misery and premature death.

Its leaders and foundation mother lodes have much to atone for, if they are to escape harsh judgment in the eyes of God and history.

By opposing fossil-fuel, hydroelectric and nuclear power, they help keep a third of the world reliant on wood and animal dung – or if they're lucky, little solar panels on their huts. Deprived of energy for lights, refrigeration, hospitals, schools, offices, factories and safe water, they remain impoverished, plagued by disease and despondent about their future.

Intense environmentalist opposition to biotechnology prevents Third World farmers from planting crops that resist disease and drought, require fewer pesticides, and yield bumper harvests that would reduce malnutrition and put cash in the pockets of destitute families.

The worst cabal of pressure groups remains virulently opposed to spraying tiny amounts of DDT on walls to keep mosquitoes out of houses, and using other insecticides to kill blood-sucking insects that carry malaria, dengue and yellow fever, and a host of other killer diseases.

A year ago, the World Health Organization, U.S. Agency for International Development, President's Malaria Initiative and other agencies again recognized the vital role of these chemicals – and reintroduced them in their comprehensive, integrated disease control programs. But Pesticide Action Network, Beyond Pesticides and Physicians for Social Responsibility demand that the agencies return to the disastrous policies of recent years, when disease and death rates were rising every year.

The activists and foundations had watched the tolls mount, but did nothing. They knew the approach they advocated didn't work, but did nothing. They could have supported research into alternatives to DDT, or even bought bednets to protect children, but didn't spend a dime on that. They spend millions to attack insecticides, and truly comprehensive solutions, but nothing to protect parents and children.

Pesticides, they shout, are "poisonous bandaids." Some researchers, they assert, have found "possible links" between high levels of DDT and low birth weights in babies, reduced breastmilk production in mothers, and impaired mental abilities in children. One day, they insist, we will have a vaccine.

It's all pure speculation, but they have the money and PR savvy to garner extensive press – hyping minor hypothetical risks of using pesticides, and ignoring the real, life-threatening dangers that those pesticides would prevent.

Meanwhile, an African child dies from malaria every 30 seconds – a million a year. Countless more perish from other insect-borne diseases. Two billion people are at risk, and 500 million get malaria every year, notes Fiona Kobusingye-Boynes, coordinator of Congress of Racial Equality Uganda.

Malaria victims are wracked by fevers, chills, convulsions and vomiting. They can't work, cultivate crops, or attend school. Families must stay home to care for the sick, and spend up to a fourth of their meager incomes on drugs and medical care. Many who don't die suffer severe brain damage.

Fiona knows this all too well. She has endured repeated bouts with malaria, lost many family members to the disease, and almost died again this week from malaria complicated by pneumonia and intestinal illness that are also prevalent across Africa.

Chloroquine and other treatments can be nearly as awful as the disease, and may not help. Bednets are themselves impregnated with insecticides, and are only a partial solution. So they're not exactly healthy, organic alternatives to DDT or Icon. And lest we forget, chemotherapy drugs have nasty, proven side effects. Should we ban them, too – along with other potent drugs, and the insecticides that keep mosquitoes and West Nile virus at bay here in the States?

And yet, the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Foundation, Cedar Tree Foundation, California Endowment and other shortsighted donors continue to lavish hundreds of thousands of dollars annually on these radical groups – enabling them to continue their lethal lies, tirades, pressure tactics and mayhem.

Goldman is headed by a wealthy San Francisco insurance magnate. Cedar Tree was begun by a Boston pediatrician. The California Endowment is headed by a physician (an African-American). All support good causes. But the millions they have given Pesticide Action, Beyond Pesticides and Physicians have exacted an unconscionable toll across Sub-Saharan Africa.

Good deeds simply don't offset this carnage. And while for-profit corporations are prosecuted and penalized for every accident – these callous groups and their bankrollers are not held liable or accountable even for the toll.

Their actions violate basic medical, humanitarian and human rights principles. They violate the ethical and social responsibility standards that "progressive" activists say for-profit companies must follow. They ignore the Hippocratic Oath, and the need to help families insure their children against killer diseases, with comprehensive strategies that include DDT and other insecticides – and actually work.

Goldman, Cedar Tree, the California Endowment and their compatriots must atone for their sins. How?

Stop funding these heartless pressure groups. Donate to organizations like CORE and Africa Fighting Malaria that are working with the WHO, USAID and PMI to end this needless slaughter, get electricity and other modern technologies people in the Third World – and enable them to stay healthy, work more productively, and build strong family and national economies that can afford modern homes with window screens. Buy some bed nets, and help train Africans in how to use DDT and other insecticides safely, responsibly and with minimal environmental impact, to reduce disease and save lives – now!

Then they can seek forgiveness from families who have lost loved ones – and atonement would be made.

Paul Driessen is senior policy advisor for the Congress of Racial Equality and Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow, and author of Eco-Imperialism: Green power · Black death.



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