

OPINIONS

# Environmental racism: the pillaging of the Planet Earth

by Larry Goldberg

There is little doubt in today's society that racism is an ongoing problem. Our world encompasses more than the human species. Humanity is surrounded by a vast and fragile environment, which is constantly being discriminated against, much like man's inhumanity to man. This translates into environmental racism.

For this theory to function properly we need a working definition of environmental racism. Environmental racism occurs when humanity practices segregation, persecution and domination of its environment. This definition describes what is happening all over our planet today.

Throughout our world we have been taught that our planet's "natural resources" and wildlife have been placed on this earth for our consumption and domination. In turn, instead of being the guardians of the planet Earth we have become its pillagers.

## Moral values

Similarly, in our past we as a race have enslaved our fellow human beings, much like we now enslave the environment. However, over a long and arduous process people realized that the institution of slavery was an unjust and an immoral practice.

Environmental racism faces these very problems, but on a grander scale. Earth is constantly being dominated and persecuted; thousands of artificial fires continue to burn in the tropical rain forest to make way for human development. Every day millions of trees are being clear cut, streams, lakes, rivers, oceans and all its contents are being polluted and many species are becoming extinct daily. And the war in the Gulf brought environmental terrorism and the spillage of Kuwaiti oil, torching of oil wells and the destruction of much wildlife in water and on land.

## Arduous process

Throughout history, humans as a race have been brought up in a social paradigm that has taught us to use nature as a commodity. The solution to the problem lies in changing the social paradigm in which we live. We must readdress the social and moral values which we have towards our environment.

These rights returned to nature will protect it for its own sake and not for our good.

First, we must change the way the governments of the world look at the environment. They must protect the environment as one has the right to have his/her rights protected. This means that governments must enact stiff legislation that makes destruction of the environment a true crime, not a symbolic slap on the wrist. In short, they should implement an environmental constitution, which protects the right of nature, much

## We must change the way governments of the world look at the environment

like a strong constitution protects human rights.

Second, education should be a key factor in changing the way society looks at our planet. If children are taught at an early age that our world is something to be respected and cherished, then these beliefs will be carried into adulthood. One

must remember that the children of today are the future of tomorrow.

Third, corporations must rethink their business practices when it comes to dealing with the environment. We all know that corporations are key contributors toward environmental destruction. Therefore, they

must either (a) as a group start policing themselves or (b) the job will fall into the hands of the government who will enforce much stiffer penalties over the long haul.

Finally, society as a whole must pressure social institutions to achieve these goals, because in essence they reflect our views as a society, and as such these institutions must respond to our request to stay in business and in power.

Consequently, society must re-evaluate its moral and social parameters toward nature. We must break out of this theory of environmental racism, much like we the student body are trying to address the problems of human racism.

Until this is accomplished, we as a race will not only destroy ourselves but also this planet which has existed millions of years before our arrival.

The advertisement features a large, faint background graphic of the words 'IBM FUN DAY' in a stylized, overlapping font. Below this, the text 'PS/1' is prominently displayed next to an illustration of a family (a man, a woman, and a child) looking at a computer monitor. To the right is a detailed illustration of an IBM PS/1 computer system, including the monitor, system unit, keyboard, and mouse. The central text reads: 'Fun, Food and Freebies. All courtesy of IBM. See how IBM PS/1 and PS/2 solutions will work for you. Students, before you graduate, take advantage of Micro York's SPECIAL "Graduation" prices. Enter the draw for a PS/1 Computer'. At the bottom, three tilted rectangular boxes contain the event details: 'Thursday March 14, 1991', '10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.', and 'East Bear Pit, Central Square'. The IBM logo is centered at the very bottom.