

Rene Suleiman

As innately selfish human beings, we tend to assume that what we possess is solely ours to use and abuse. The Native American saying suggests otherwise: that the earth, an entity that has endured and will continue to endure, is a sanctuary borrowed from our children. The only problem with this beautiful concept is that our children have drawn up no contract or rules about how to handle this borrowed item. Therefore, it is our responsibility to build our own contract, to lay down what needs to be done in order to maintain integrity with our lenders. This essay will suggest one such contract.

The first point of this contract is to mold an ideology that will guide us in the responsible treatment of this precious resource. To do this we must shatter and reform our present ideology, one which is terribly near-sighted. It indicates that the best means of managing the earth is through entrepreneurial exploitation. We must rid ourselves of this belief, and move forward with unselfish earnestness. Rather than the current short-term vision of producers and consumers, we need to visualize the long-term consequences of our actions. We must use our borrowed earth in a sustainable fashion, giving as much as we take, and improving what has sunk into disrepair. Only then can we honorably return the earth to our lenders, the future.

The second point of this contract is to apply this ideology. The two main players in the application process are the producer and the consumer. It is the producer's responsibility to innovate, to make sustainable business models. This is theoretically easy but culturally difficult; our society is built on oil and coal. The success of our ideology requires the initial bravery of the producer to break this cultural mold, and the following support of the consumer. As consumers we must be willing to sacrifice cheapness or availability in order to encourage sustainable business. When the consumer expresses interest in this new sustainable market, other producers will follow. We also must be vigilant in fixing what our ancestors have neglected. Ultimately this will produce a system where our ideology is applied in a cycle of conservation and sustainability which will maintain what we have borrowed.

The final point of this contract is to prepare our children to receive the earth by sowing the seeds of knowledge. They should not be indoctrinated in our own ideology, but rather taught critical thinking skills to prepare them to chisel out their own contract when ours becomes outdated. We must pass on to them our vision and our responsibility, so that they can understand the importance of what we will return to them, and the job that lay ahead.

This contract is by no means perfect, but neither are we. The most important idea that has been emphasized is a responsibility. To our children, to our ancestors, to the earth. This is our responsibility; to continue building these contracts so that there will always be an earth to borrow.