

Gary Snyder's FOUR CHANGES written for the first EARTH DAY - 50 years ago today. ARE WE MAKING THE CHANGES?

Hi,

I know everyone is getting inundated with Earth Day emails, but this is a very special one, a poetic manifesto written by my old buddy Gary Snyder for the very first Earth Day. Please listen and then share it widely on its 50th anniversary and the 50th anniversary of Earth Day:

<https://soundcloud.com/bioneers/four-changes>

Four Changes at Age 50: A Celebration of the Environmental Movement's First Manifesto of Contemplative Ecology

A note by Diana Hadley, Jack Loeffler, Gary Paul Nabhan and Jack Shoemaker April 2020

In the months before the first Earth Day in April 1970, mention of a prophetic manifesto seemed to crop up in nearly every serious discussion of what the nascent environmental movement should be and what values it should embody. That manifesto was conceived and shaped in the summer 1969, as poet Gary Snyder toured a number of college campuses around the United States and then entered into deeper discussions with a number of other poets, visionaries and activists in the San Francisco Bay area. Affectionately called “Chofu” by other radical environmentalists during that time, Snyder gradually refined their collective vision into a ten-page draft document that became what we now know as Four Changes.

Several features of this manifesto were then, and still are, unique in the canon of writings considered foundational to the environmental movement. Snyder's literary gifts shine through the manifesto with prescient, poetic and playfully comic qualities to them. The tone seemed as fresh and as “out of the box” as *Leaves of Grass* must have sounded when Whitman first sowed it onto the American earth a century earlier. The manifesto called for a radical shift in our relationship with the planet through changing the way we perceive population, pollution, consumption, and the transformation of our society and ourselves. In this manner, it foreshadowed later expressions of ecological thought that we now call contemplative ecology and deep ecology. While it was in many ways anchored in Buddhist teachings, it was also precise in its understanding of modern ecological science and respectful of the place-based wisdom of the traditional ecological knowledge of the many indigenous cultures of the world. It did not privilege Western science over other ways of making sense of the environment, but welcomed dialogue and integration of many distinctive expressions.

Four Changes was also rooted in a mature understanding of the political ecology of power dynamics and disparities in access to resources that were ravaging our planet, its biological and cultural diversity. Parts of it were so pertinent to these issues that it was read into the Congressional Record on April 5th 1970--- two and a half weeks before Earth Day flags were unfurled all around the world. In that sense, it was perhaps the first robust articulation of what we now call a yearning for environmental justice. Still, the tone was hopeful—that humankind could

learn to respect, learn from and embrace the other-than-human-world. As Snyder later paraphrased one of the tenets of Four Changes,

“Revolutionary consciousness is to be found among the most ruthlessly exploited classes: animals, trees, water, air, grasses.”