

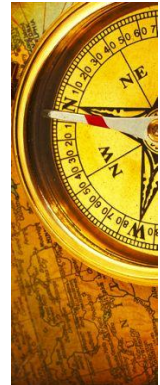
**April 28, 2009**

<http://www.readthespirit.com/ourvalues/2009/04/hoffman2-crucial-issues.html>

## **What are the crucial environmental issues—from bright to dark green?**

***THIS WEEK, I'm welcoming Dr. Andrew Hoffman, the Holcim (US) Professor of Sustainable Enterprise at the University of Michigan. He's a leading expert in balancing our desires for development and environmental health. [Please, add your Comments this week to this very timely series.](#)***

### **And here is Dr. Hoffman...**



At the end of Monday's post, I argued that "dark" and "bright" greens actually need each other. Please, continue to let us know what you think about those terms—and what you think about the state of this movement right now.

Today, let's take a step further. Here's why I think these two apparently confrontational branches of the movement really are important to each other.

Scholars who have studied the civil rights movement and other periods of change argue that more extreme groups within a movement actually help the moderate, consensus-building groups with a kind of "radical flank effect."

When radicals pull the tail of the political spectrum further in one direction, they shift the center of the debate and create a category of moderates. Think of Martin Luther King. He was seen as a moderate because Malcolm X pulled the political flank so far to the left that mainstream America found King palatable.

While moderates help move change along through direct engagement—the more radical groups focus on the deeper, core issues of the movement. They can set the agenda and become the standard bearers for the long-term issues of the movement, issues that may be less palatable for a moderate to bring up in a widespread appeal.

Together, the two seemingly different branches really form a broad spectrum. Sometimes this has been described as a tension between purity and pragmatism.

I think that the environmental movement needs both. That is, if the two sides can coordinate their efforts, in the end.

So, right now, jump into this important conversation. What do you think are the most pragmatic issues people should be working on within the environmental movement? What should the moderate center of the movement be doing right now?

Then, look out into that more radical end of the movement—and look into the future—and tell us what issues you think are the big changes we need to make eventually.

What should we do right now that makes practical sense?

And what are some of the big issues looming?