

This past autumn, I had the honor of traveling to Jackson in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the wilderness act. The reason that I was attending was due to the fact that I was part of the YAW, Young Ambassadors for Wilderness, program. The program is designed to open the eyes and minds of youth in order to recognize the need to protect and sustain the outdoors. There were multiple students from around the state, and we had lessons where we interacted with people who have dedicated their entire lives to protecting the wilderness, and they are now hoping to pass that legacy unto us.

During our time in Jackson, we traveled to the Murie Ranch, which was once owned by Olaus and Marty Murie who were some of the most influential conservationists of all time, and have left a lasting legacy on the world. There we met a man named Ed Zainhauser. I'm not sure if you are familiar with the name, but his father, Howard Zainhauser, was one of the main authors of the Wilderness Act. Mr. Zainhauser has dedicated his entire life to continuing to spread the legacy of his father, and shape his own. Mr. Zainhauser realizes that the future of the world-in all aspects-rests upon the shoulders of the younger generations. Now, I'm not saying that he, or I, believe we should cast away all people over the age of thirty, but we both believe that the younger generation needs support and guidance in order to create a better future, and to 'clean up' the mess that our predecessors have created.

While standing in the historic Murie cabin, I heard Ed Zainhauser deliver a speech that hit home for **all** of the attendees. For the rest of my talk I am going to quote Mr. Zainhauser heavily, because his speech is extremely relevant to the interconnectivity of life, and also because his writing is awe-inspiring. He starts off with a talk about wilderness relating to

religion, because wilderness and spirituality are closely intermingled. Kinship, human kinship, originally motivated the concept of redemption in Christianity. In a beautiful Hebrew Scripture story, The Book of Ruth, redemption was how you drew someone back into the kinship structure that alone protected a person. In that culture, only kinship conferred rights and protection. To advocate the designation of wilderness, whose essential quality-whose character-is its wilderness, redeems us today. Because: Protecting wilderness draws us back into kinship with the real world, the actual world that, however unacknowledged, remains our source of life as the human animal. 'We were born into the great democracy of nature,' John Hay writes, 'no matter how far we seem to have strayed, and more and more people are looking for ways to be its citizens again.' We are not as separate as we think. We are permeable membranes. Wilderness experience reality-checks our rationalist, materialist, consumerist illusion. Mr. Zainhauser completely accepts that wilderness affects us all, and that we are all in a 'web of wilderness protection.'

I was amazed to hear the answer when Ed asked us by how many votes the wilderness act was passed, and I would like to ask you the same-How many voted do you think the wilderness act was passed by? Let me tell you a startling fact: 374 members of the US House of Representatives voted on the final wilderness bill in August 1964. The vote was 374 to one! Imagine such a vote today, 373-1. Heck, right now the term "Act of Congress" is our second-to-newest oxymoron. But what other laws passed in 1964? How about the Civil Rights act, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, the Voting Rights Act, the Defense Education Loan Act? The list goes on. So wilderness is actually part of a truly great society, holistically constructed.

The Wilderness Act can help us draw the entire biosphere into our circle of ethical regard. We can recognize ourselves as *interdependent* members of the whole community of life on Earth that derives its sustenance from the Sun. We are not just *independent* but *dependent* and *interdependent*. Preserving wilderness makes room for permanence as well as for change. It treats remnants of our public domain lands—which we all own in common—as *community* not as *commodity*...

Naturalist John Hay writes that the whole of life is the source of life. Hay calls wilderness the Earth's immortal genius. Poet Gary Snyder calls wilderness the planetary intelligence. Wilderness and wildness are integral to what writer and farmer Wendell Berry calls the circumference of mystery. Wilderness and wildness are integral to what poet Denis Levertov calls the Great Web.

Wilderness and wildness are integral to what the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. calls our inescapable network of mutuality. Novelist Andrew Lytle writes that, “prophets do not come from the city promising riches and wearing store-bought clothes. No, prophets come from the wilderness, stinking of goats...and telling of a different sort of treasure.”

The call of wilderness is not to escape the world but to encounter the world's essence.

Wilderness calls us to renew kinship with all of life. By securing a national policy of restraint and humility towards natural conditions and wilderness character, the Wilderness Act nudges us toward enlarging the boundaries of the community.

In preserving wilderness, Howard Zanhieser believed, we take some of the precious ecological heritage that has come down to us from the eternity of the past, and we have the

boldness to project it into the eternity of the future. If you are looking for good work, you will find it in being that link between those two eternities. Go forth, do good, tell the stories, take a young person into the wilderness, take *another* young person into the wilderness, and keep it wild.

A part of the YAW program was also to create a project to draw in other youth, and to display the beauty of the outdoors. There were projects ranging from a girl who created an entire environmental education badge for girl scouts, to the documentation of botanic journals, and the creation of documentaries focused on the Bighorn Mountains. But, one of the most impressive projects was that of Nareese Triple. In a school organization called FCCLA, she had started a project to protect the Red Desert. Her dedication to it was astounding, and she *truly* has a passion for wilderness. My favorite quote from her is as follows, and I quote, “Wilderness is a part of us that, once it is gone, we’re never getting back. By destroying Wilderness, we are destroying ourselves.” Unquote. *The wilderness, no matter how much you are involved with it, connects us all, We need to protect the system which connects us all, or else our ties will be severed. The future may be uncertain, but if we are to support the younger generations and open their eyes to the beauty of the wilderness they will feel the stronger needed to preserve it. So, I would like to ask you all to interact with the web, and pass the legacy.