

EARTH DAY

Campaign takes Earth Day to original roots of activism

By Glenda Marshall

This year, for the 25th anniversary of Earth Day, OSPIRG and the "Free the Planet" campaign have been working to take Earth Day back to its original roots of environmental activism.

In the past few years, Earth Day celebrations have fallen increasingly in the hands of the same corporations that are



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destroying our planet. Earth Day has become a medium in which companies overshadow their bad environmental track records by sponsoring

concerts and media events that they say are for the celebration of Earth Day.

For example, timber company ads tell us about their "plant a tree" programs, while they continue to spend a fortune to lobby for the right to chop down the remaining 10 percent of our virgin forests. Oil companies say in their ads that they are taking better care of the environment, but they are resisting reforms to halt the greenhouse effect.

Plastic companies tell us in their ads that they are recycling, yet the industry recycles only 7 percent of the plastics it makes and fights laws that would require them to recycle more. Chemical company ads say these companies are taking "responsible care" of our health; but 900,000 Americans get sick every year from drinking polluted water, and 100 million of us are breathing dirty air.

How are we to stop this corporate "greenwashing"? As a generation we can rally together and make Earth Day the grassroots movement it was meant to be. Earth Day was started by students in 1970 out of concern for our environment. We, as students, have a responsibility to continue the fight for a healthy planet and continue the activism that students are known for.

April 22, 1970, was a landmark day for the environmental move-

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ment. That day students celebrated the Earth and warned the nation of the threats to its health. The first Earth Day was partially responsible for the Clean Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Endangered Species Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, as well as other key environmental reforms.

The Free the Planet Coalition is trying to spread the message that if we don't protect our environment now, future generations will suffer. The Earth is about 4.5 billion years old, and we have a responsibility to protect this planet that has given us all so much for so long.

We need to take back the Earth from its corporate and political enemies, and return it to the hands of those who will protect it.

Do we want history books to say that the apathy of our generation helped to lead to the destruction of the planet or that our mobilization helped prolong the life of this planet and protected it for future generations?

Everyone needs to get involved. Together we can make a big difference, but separately we are fighting a losing battle.

Glenda Marshall is the media coordinator for OSPIRG's Free the Planet Campaign.

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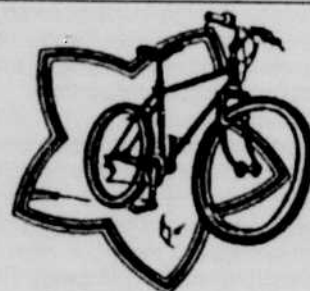
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