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OUR VIEW

ANOTHER DAY
ON PLANET EARTH

Our differences are well-documented. Lines drawn along political, philosophical, ethnic and religious divides give the impression that we're all on different teams.

Those sides lead to everything from small squabbles to horrific rifts. They're the defining narratives we use to understand and explain our lives.

But there's a big, unifying similarity we all share, and that's the place we call home.

The planet Earth, the beautiful and strange and wondrous cosmic address that has been the setting for every moment of recorded human history, save the few short jaunts into our tiny solar system neighborhood in the unfathomable universe.

Our planet is remarkably unique among the cosmos, a fact we've only come to understand in the past century. As inhospitable as places like Death Valley and Antarctica are to our delicate human bodies, even they pale to the brutal environs found literally everywhere else outside our atmosphere.

It's no wonder many have taken to calling her Mother Earth.

Environmentalism isn't a new concept. For centuries of human history we had a close bond with the planet. Our agrarian ancestors knew that careful stewardship was the only way to ensure it would continue to yield us crops, and the hunters and gatherers knew that only biological balance between flora, fauna

NASA
The western hemisphere, as shown in the Blue Marble photographs released by NASA in 2002. The collection was the most detailed color depiction of planet Earth ever compiled.

and humans would sustain us.

But the urbanization of the 19th and 20th centuries saw those connections broken, as fewer people were needed to produce their own food and populations shifted from the country to cities. The conveniences of modernization took us out of tune with nature.

This preceded many short-sighted decisions, and by the end of the 1960s the U.S. was at a breaking point. Oil slicks on the Cuyahoga River in industrialized Ohio had caught fire several times. The bald eagle was on the brink of extinction in the West and whale populations in the world's oceans were critically low. An oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara that devastated the pristine beaches was a stark reminder of the true impact of energy production on the environment.

Closer to home, the misuse of the Willamette River was turning it into a toxic discharge, and reckless irrigation practices on the east side of the state were draining streams and rivers to the point of ecological collapse.

The first Earth Day was celebrated on April 22, 1970, as a way to reengage with our planet. It was a day for education and celebration, to learn about our

home and understand the role we play on it.

Later in the same year, President Richard Nixon created the Environmental Protection Agency and signed a robust update to the Clean Air Act. Both were met with bipartisan support.

It's a shame that environmentalism has become a political wedge issue, considering it should be a place we can find substantial middle ground. The environmental movement of the 1960s has bred a knee jerk anti-development culture, while President Trump's administration has targeted federal climate change research, ostensibly for short-term economic gains. Both narrow views of the Earth are unbecoming her grandeur.

Most of us are left in the middle. We certainly care for our planet and earnestly want to see it thrive for our children and grandchildren. But we also know that means finding our place in it.

We want to reengage with our corner of the planet.

It means spending time outside, away from the divisive tendencies of our devices, and learning about the billions of tiny parts that make up the whole wide world.

It means planting a garden or going for a hike, cleaning up litter at a park or teaching your children about energy conservation.

It means treating the planet as a shared resource and not another line to divide us.