Land, Ethics, Justice, and Aldo Leopold

BY CURT MEINE

Aldo Leopold scholar Curt Meine contends the conservationist's attitudes on race, social justice, and social progress are more complex than some claim, and offers suggestions for further exploration.

The legacy of racism, inequity, and injustice in the history of conservation and the contemporary environmental movement is being scrutinized as never before. The American ecologist, conservationist, and author Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) is among the influential historical figures whose attitudes and actions have been sharply criticized. Especially because Leopold was devoted to protecting wildlands and expressed concern about the impacts of human population growth, detractors have characterized him as callously misanthropic at best, racist and fascistic at worst. These representations can be weighed against Leopold's personal and professional record, and his views on such themes as the Native American experience, the eugenics movement of the early twentieth century, cultural diversity, and the rise of fascism. In his late years, and in the final formulation of his influential essay "The Land Ethic," Leopold was increasingly explicit in framing his value system as one grounded in a commitment to just human relations. Moreover, the ethic he expressed was not static and could not be exclusionary. It expanded the purview of ethical consideration in the conservation movement and provided new foundations for the expansion of environmental awareness in the mainstream of American society. Viewed in this way, Leopold may be regarded not as an apotheosis of conservation thinking, but as an essential transitional figure within a still broader, ongoing movement, informed by an ever-evolving ethic of care.

THOMAS COLEMAN, UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON. ALDO LEOPOLD ARCHIVES, S02210

Aldo Leopold, around 1947.

RACE, HISTORY, AND CONSERVATION'S INFLECTION POINT

How are we to abide with one another, and with the land and waters that sustain us all, on the one Earth that embraces us all? How will we do so in a time of rapid and complex social and environmental change? How may we not merely survive, but thrive together, in all the communities to which we belong, including the whole community of life that gives us life?

And most important: In asking all these questions, who belongs to the *we*? For all who care about future generations and the living world, answers to these questions must contend with the record, and reality, of injustice and exclusion in American history and society, and globally as well. Awareness of the legacy of racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of injustice in conservation and the environmental movement is not new, but the urgency of the present reckoning is unprecedented. Critiques have examined themes such as genocide and the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from ancestral lands; support for eugenics among early conservationists; and the chronic lack of diversity in environmental professions and organizations.[1] As historian Dorceta E. Taylor has stated, "The [American] conservation movement arose against a backdrop of racism, sexism, class conflicts, and nativism that shaped the nation in profound ways."[2] Conservation stands now at an inflection point, where contemporary conservationists must recognize and overcome history's burdens in order to meet the future's needs.

Attention has also focused on the racial attitudes of key historical figures such as John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt. The critiques hold that these men, from their privileged positions, valued "pristine" lands but cared little about those who occupied, worked, or were removed from such lands, especially Indigenous, Black, and poor people. In this manner, such figures were complicit in the process of colonization, settlement, and erasure, even as they perpetuated the separation between humans and the rest of nature that lay at the root of our ecological crises. In response, others have sought to contextualize the experience of these and other figures and to lay out complexities behind their apparent attitudes.

The American ecologist and conservationist Aldo Leopold is among those who have come under increased scrutiny. Leopold assumed many roles across his career: naturalist, forester, advocate, scientist, teacher, and author. He was a transformative figure in twentieth-century environmental science, policy, and ethics. Trained as a forester, he contributed to the development of soil conservation, wildlife management, and other conservation professions. His work provided foundations for later interdisciplinary fields such as ecological restoration, conservation biology, environmental history, and ecological economics. His book *A Sand County Almanac*, published posthumously in 1949, has long been essential reading in courses on U.S. environmental history, policy, and literature.

Leopold was also a foundational figure in environmental philosophy, arguing that dominant Western ethical frameworks had to evolve and expand to embrace *land* (i.e., ecosystems, or "the environment") as "a community to which we belong."[3] He called this idea *the land ethic*. "This philosophy of land," he confessed in 1947, was not always clear to him. "It is rather

the end result of a life journey, in the course of which I have felt sorrow, anger, puzzlement, or confusion over the inability of conservation to halt the juggernaut of land abuse."[4]

Conclusions about Leopold's attitudes on race, social justice, and social progress should consider the totality of his life experience, acknowledging his faults as well as his evolving vision. Leopold's actions and the descriptions of his personality by contemporaries do not support the assertion that he was racist in his personal or professional life. They provide abundant evidence to suggest otherwise and to demonstrate constant evolution in his social attitudes and political stances. Leopold's record, however, is not without its flaws and biases. He was the product of institutions and a society built upon foundations of colonialism, oppression, and the Doctrine of Discovery, and he acknowledged the impact of these forces only to a limited degree. In his extensive published and unpublished writings, one will find occasional statements and phrasings that now read as clumsy, cringeworthy, and offensive. However, one will also find unalloyed condemnations of the impacts of imperialism, colonialism, and arrogant power.

Further scholarship is needed to enhance the narrative account of Leopold's social and racial attitudes. This essay does not aim or purport to offer a final word on these questions. It seeks to provide constructive framing and encourage critical reexamination that can help reconcile profoundly problematic histories with present and future needs.

ALDO LEOPOLD'S LIFE JOURNEY

Leopold's story, with all the shortcomings and advances it reveals, demonstrates how society has—and has not—addressed our systemic social and ecological crises. Leopold once wrote, "There are two things that interest me: the relation of people to each other, and the relation of people to land."[5] He understood that social and environmental challenges are intrinsically *connected*, and so must be progress in addressing them. Prior scholarship on Leopold has touched on his racial, social, and political attitudes, but new evidence, perspectives, and priorities invariably reframe the questions scholars ask. Which is as it should be. Such constant revisiting of prior assumptions and conclusions, in fact, characterized Leopold's own intellectual development. He was a scholar and scientist who deeply valued critical analysis, for "hewing to the facts, let the chips fall where they may."[6]

Especially because Leopold was devoted to protecting wildlands and expressed concern about the social and ecological impacts of human population growth, detractors have characterized him as a callous misanthrope at best, a racist and fascist at worst. It is true that Leopold was not as discerning on matters of social and economic justice as he was on conservation issues per se. He did not fully acknowledge the historic trauma and contemporary effects of Native American genocide, dispossession, and removal. Nor did he explicitly recognize that the consequences of land exploitation have for generations fallen disproportionately on the poor, and on Blacks, Indigenous people, and people of color. He was not (in today's terms) an active anti-racist, defender of indigenous rights, or advocate for civil rights. Leopold's limited perspective on race and social justice carried ethical blind spots.

However, Leopold was a lifelong reformer who understood the fundamental relationship between social and ecological well-being. He grew increasingly concerned across his career with the cultural roots and consequences of land commodification, exploitation, and degradation. Based on that understanding, he worked to advance an ethic of care that could bridge our need for justice and compassion toward one another and toward the living land. Such ethical development was fundamental to reforming cultural values, economic philosophy, and community relationships in order to achieve greater "harmony with land."[7] His work pointed toward the convergence of social and environmental concerns and actions that the world now so urgently needs.

We turn to history to inform our judgment and measure our progress. At the same time, in revisiting historic events, movements, and figures, we may interpret past events uncritically in terms of contemporary values and concepts, what historians call *presentism*. Born in 1887, Leopold came of age in a time, and within a dominant culture, marked by systemic racism, classism, and sexism. He joined an emerging conservation movement that bore those marks, but that has also included those who recognized the congruence of social justice and environmental reform. He did not live to experience the rise of the civil rights, women's rights, American Indian, peace, environmental, and environmental justice movements—much less the progressive intersection of these movements (and the reactionary response) that especially marks the current inflection moment.

By the early 1930s, Leopold was increasingly willing to express publicly his skepticism regarding all anthropocentric economic ideologies, which he saw as "competitive apostles of a single creed: *salvation by machinery*."[8] [Emphasis in original.] "There is a feeble minority called conservationists who are indignant about something," he wrote in 1934. "They are just beginning to realize that their task involves the reorganization of society, rather than

the passage of some fish and game laws."[9] He would explore the ethical foundations for that "reorganization of society" over the remainder of his career. In the few years Leopold had to live after World War II, he moved more consciously toward an integration of conservation's social, economic, and ecological dimensions under the rubric of *the land ethic* and its companion concept of *land health*.

REVIEWING THE RECORD

Recent characterizations of Leopold as "racist," a "white supremacist," or an "ecofascist" reflect particular claims that pertain not only to Leopold personally, but to the American conservation movement generally (and thus to Leopold as an iconic figure within it).[10] As I see it, labeling Leopold in this way oversimplifies the record, especially his wilderness advocacy, his integrative conservation vision, and his effort to understand human population pressure and technological power as factors in environmental change. It glosses over instructive details involving his very real flaws and failings, as well as his insights, on these questions. Finally, it fails to appreciate Leopold's ethical evolution, especially in the final years of his life, as he sought to comprehend the impacts and existential consequences of World War II.

Leopold and the Protection of Wildlands Over the last several decades, scholars in environmental history, environmental ethics, ecocriticism, Native American/Indigenous studies, and other fields have exhaustively deconstructed the "received" idea of wilderness. In parallel, conservation organizations and practitioners have been widely censured for a history of imposing protected areas on landscapes without the consent or participation of local inhabitants, especially Indigenous peoples.

As a progenitor of the idea of protecting large undeveloped landscapes, Leopold has been on the sharp receiving end of such criticism. His concept of wilderness, it is said, "not only bore traces of the racial theories of an earlier generation of American conservationists but also retained some of their class prejudices."[11] He "believed that when fewer individuals occupied an environment, they could better appreciate the ecological interactions taking place within it."[12] In promoting wilderness protection, Leopold "was operating off the assumption that some humans had a greater right to enjoy the beauty of nature than others."[13] The argument, in sum, is that Leopold's approach to conservation was beholden to, and driven by, a concept of wilderness that was (and remains) ahistorical, misanthropic, exclusionary, callous, and elitist.

Leopold's public advocacy on behalf of securing extensive areas of roadless public land—lands taken from their Native inhabitants over the previous four centuries, and that four decades later would be legally defined and codified as "wilderness"—began in his mid-thirties, while he was working for the U.S. Forest Service in the American Southwest in the early 1920s. His aim was to designate relatively undeveloped lands on the U.S. national forests as a novel "form of land use."[14] At a time when automobiles were first coming onto the landscape, the federal government was expanding funding for road and highway construction across the country. This was at the core of his early advocacy. In opposing the contemporary "Good Roads Movement," Leopold lamented "the tragic absurdity of trying to whip the March of Empire into a gallop."[15] He pushed to provide roadless lands with a special level of protection that left them open to hunting, fishing, camping, and other uses compatible with their less-developed character.

In 1921, in his first significant publication on the theme, Leopold advocated for reserving as "wilderness" the largest unfragmented landscape in the Southwest, on the Gila National Forest (established in 1905) in New Mexico. Leopold argued that "[h]ighest use demands its preservation." He even suggested that cattle ranches be included within such designated areas, arguing that they "would be an asset from the recreational standpoint because of the interest which attaches to cattle grazing operations under frontier conditions." Ranchers would benefit by being spared the burden of "new settlers and . . . hordes of motorists."[16] Leopold did not reference (much less make any parallel appeal to respect) the historic tenure, traditional land uses, and contemporary interests of the Chiricahua Apache or other Native communities of the region.

In this early phase of his advocacy, Leopold was motivated primarily by a desire to sustain "a distinctive environment which may, if rightly used, yield certain social values."[17] He recognized and admitted that not everyone shared such values, or his personal passion for wildland recreation. However, he held that

> It is the opportunity, not the desire, on which the well-to-do are coming to have a monopoly. And the reason is the gradually increasing destruction of the nearby wilderness by good roads. The American of moderate means can not go to Alaska, or Africa, or British Columbia. He must seek his big adventure in the nearby wilderness, or go without it.[18]

While thus arguing for more egalitarian access to recreational wildlands, Leopold's wilderness advocacy in the mid-1920s also partook of a neocolonial and exceptionalist view of American

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Aldo Leopold started his forestry career in the American Southwest, a place he would write about throughout his career. He was in his first job as a forest assistant on the Apache National Forest in Arizona when this photo was taken in 1910.

history. In several articles, Leopold advanced a Turnerian appeal to the development of national character, i.e., of white settlers' experience of the Euro-American frontier—or, as he phrased it, "our pioneer environment." "For three centuries," he wrote, "that environment has determined the character of our development; it may, in fact, be said that, coupled with the character of our racial stocks, it is the very stuff America is made of. Shall we now exterminate this thing that made us American?"[19]

In making this argument, Leopold came face to face with its core paradox—but left that paradox unresolved. Even as he touted triumphalist "pioneer" values, he decried the loss of "the indigenous part of our Americanism"[20] and rebuked the modern American citizen who "has planted his iron heel on the breast of nature" and exercised a harsh "dominion over the earth."[21] Yet it was not the romantic illusion of an unpeopled wilderness (much less pride in its "conquest"), or a simplistic disdain for modernity or people, that initiated his activism. It was a broad and basic pragmatism. "Our system of land use," he wrote, "is full of phenomena which are sound as tendencies but become unsound as ultimates . . . The question, in brief, is whether the benefits of wilderness-conquest will extend to ultimate wilderness-elimination."[22]

Over the next two decades, Leopold's rationale for wildland protection evolved continually to embrace a broader range of historical, cultural, economic, biological, scientific, and spiritual values. The recreational and ethno-nationalist rationales receded. Ultimately he held that "the rich diversity of the world's cultures reflects a corresponding diversity in the wilds that gave them birth."[23] The cultural significance of wildlands was an expression, not of misanthropy or exclusivity, but of intellectual humility and humanity's continual "search for a durable scale of values."[24]

The experience of World War II honed the point in Leopold's thinking, even as the postwar boom in land development and resource extraction commenced. He wrote, with sarcastic reference to Hitler's Third Reich, that "The shallow-minded modern who has lost his rootage in the land assumes that he has already discovered what is important; it is such who prate of empires, political or economic, that will last a thousand years."[25] And yet Leopold could only dimly foresee how wildlands now provide a basis for biocultural restoration, for revitalizing communities and cultural connections in landscapes he knew, from Wisconsin prairies to Southwestern semi-arid rangelands to German forests, and well beyond.

Two core points deserve emphasis. First, Leopold did not adhere to a purist or absolute concept of pristine, idealized, "unpeopled" wilderness. It is a favorite trope of wilderness deconstructionists that conservation as a movement has been thoroughly beholden to this flawed "myth." It may well describe others who historically advocated for wilderness protection, and it was undoubtedly a primary motivation for a certain segment of the conservation and environmental movements over the decades. It does not, however, fit Leopold. Rather, Leopold held that "wilderness exists in all degrees"; that "wilderness is a relative condition"; that "as a form of land use [wilderness] cannot be a rigid entity of unchanging content, exclusive of all other forms."[26] He argued for a "flexible" concept of wildlands that could accommodate itself to, and blend with, other forms of land use.

This suggests the corollary second point: Leopold as a conservation thinker, scientist, advocate, and practitioner never focused exclusively on wildland protection. He consistently worked to integrate land protection with care for more populated landscapes, from farms, forests, and rangelands to whole watersheds and urban neighborhoods. The striking lyricism of Leopold's prose in *A Sand County Almanac* can lead readers to overlook the fact that, in the book's foundational first part, he was describing not a scenic, unpeopled, or "pristine" wilderness, but a mundane piece of Midwestern farmland, "first worn out and then abandoned by our bigger-and-better society."[27] He (along with his family, friends, and students) worked there and elsewhere to rebuild depleted wildlife populations and repair damaged ecosystems, providing foundations for modern conservation biology and ecological restoration. Leopold's vision of land conservation was all-embracing, extending across the entire continuum of land-use intensity, from the wildest lands to the most humanized. To this point, he proposed at the end of his life, significantly, not a *wilderness* ethic, but a *land* ethic. That ethic regarded *all* land as worthy and deserving of "love and respect."[28]

To the claim that access to wildness and the appreciation of "ecological interactions" was and should be exclusive, Leopold had a plain response:

> Like all real treasures of the mind, perception can be split into infinitely small fractions without losing its quality. The weeds in a city lot convey the same lesson as the redwoods; the farmer may see in his cow-pasture what may not be vouchsafed to the scientist adventuring in the South Seas. Perception, in short, cannot be purchased with either learned degrees or dollars; it grows at home as well as abroad, and he who has a little may use it to as good advantage as he who has much.[29]

It was a conviction Leopold affirmed throughout his years of writing, speaking, and teaching.

Leopold and Human Population

Recent critiques of Leopold have also focused on his views on human population, population density, and the environmental impacts of the growing human population. These critiques again pertain not only to Leopold, but reflect what has long been a central debate within conservation, the environmental movement, economic and political theory, international development, sustainability studies, and related fields. As regards Leopold, the judgments are harsh. That Leopold regarded "overpopulation" as "the root cause of environmental problems."[30] That his wilderness advocacy had "a disturbing corollary—a disdain for human population growth that culminated in a critique of providing food and medical aid to developing nations."[31] That Leopold was "more-than-a-little racist" and "fretted over the influx of Asian and other foreign immigrants to the United States."[32] Such statements, loosely sourced and offered without countervailing evidence, echo tensions over problematic attitudes that have long been part of environmental discourse, that have been perverted in odious ecofascist ideologies, and that continue to vex efforts to achieve a robust approach to ecosocial justice.

Leopold was an early leader in the development of population ecology and applied wildlife ecology (especially as related to land use). As such, he not surprisingly considered if and how these fields could provide perspective on the dynamics of human population growth and its ecological and social impacts. He mused in 1934 that wildlife research "may ultimately throw light on sociology, as well as conservation." "It is not unthinkable," he wrote, "that the present world-wide disturbances which we call revolution, depression, and real-politik are the preliminary rumblings of Nature over an unhealthy population density."[33] From time to time, Leopold conjectured in this way, arguing by analogy from wildlife populations to human society (while almost invariably adding cautionary qualifiers):

> Man thinks of himself as not subject to any density limit. Industrialism, imperialism, and that whole array of population behaviors associated with the "bigger and better" ideology are direct ramifications of the Mosaic injunction for the species to go [to] the limit of its potential, i.e., to go and replenish the earth. But slums,

wars, birth-controls, and depressions may be construed as ecological symptoms that our assumption about human density limits is unwarranted . . . .[34]

We now know that animal populations have behavior patterns of which the individual animal is unaware, but which he nevertheless helps to execute . . . . This raises the disquieting question: do human populations have behavior patterns of which we are unaware, but which we help to execute? Are mobs and wars, unrests and revolutions, cut of such cloth?[35] Violence [in land use] . . . would seem to vary with human population density; a dense population requires a more violent conversion [of land].[36]

Such expressions illustrate the degree to which Leopold's speculations reflected his times and his personal and professional experience. Amid the Great Depression, Dust Bowl, and World War II—which is to say, in a time like ours of multiple convergent crises—conservationists had to think in a more integrated way about social, economic, and ecological systems and disruptions. As a forerunner in applying emerging ecological principles and insights to the natural resource management fields, Leopold was invariably drawn to ponder these broader systemic connections and questions.

Leopold was aware that these questions carried him into sensitive territory, and he explored them cautiously. Significantly, he did not consider human population in isolation, but in relation to affluence, consumption, education, economics, politics, aesthetics, and especially technological change. In encouraging citizens to be more mindful about the impact of consumer choices, he redefined conservation as "our attempt to put human ecology on a permanent footing."[37] Leopold never advocated harsh or coercive measures of population control, or steps that could be construed as racially motivated. He regularly stressed that human progress was not a mere matter of increasing human numbers or density, but entailed the quality of life and (as we might now phrase it) ecological resiliency. This, he observed, ran "counter to pioneering philosophy, which assumes that because a small increase in density enriched human life, that an indefinite increase will enrich it indefinitely."[38]

These questions became more urgent, and more public, in the aftermath of World War II, reflected in the publication of best-selling books by two of Leopold's professional colleagues: *Road to Survival* and *Our Plundered Planet*.[39] In effect these two books both reflected and accelerated the globalization of conservation, preparing the way for the later environmental movement that would reframe consideration of human population growth. In that process, the intimately related questions of equity and justice would for some time be sequestered, held off in a separate realm. But one way of understanding the emergence of *sustainability* as an organizing concept starting in the 1980s is as a movement to reintegrate questions of population, environmental impact, and justice (global, intergenerational, and interspecies). Another generation later, environmental thinkers continue to do so under such rubrics as *right relationship*, *integral ecology*, and *resilient socio-ecological systems*.

There are plentiful examples, past and present, of scientists, scholars, policy makers, and advocates who regard human population—along with affluence, consumption, poverty, inequality, education, technology, women's rights, and globalization—as a complex factor in the calculus of conservation and development. As for the "disturbing corollary" involved in facing that complexity *while also valuing relatively less transformed socio-ecological systems* (i.e., wildlands), Leopold was (and is) hardly unusual in that endeavor. Still many others have shared Leopold's frustration with the moral *status quo*—and valued his call for a radically inclusive ethic that "changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it," recognizing the inherent value, dignity, and agency of all people and other species.[40] Those who explore, analyze, or hold such positions may well do so without being misanthropes, racists, nativists, or ecofascists.

Race, Conservation, and Leopold

Beyond these key themes in conservation and environmental history, what does Leopold's personal experience reveal of his views on race, justice, and social change? Leopold scholars (myself included) have emphasized how his scientific paradigms and ethical framework, and the affective content of his writing, evolved across his lifetime on a number of fronts. Coming to terms with the historic record on Leopold's social attitudes requires careful, objective, and comprehensive reading and is open to all who wish to explore the nuances of his intellectual and emotional growth. Several themes merit special consideration.

Native Americans and Leopold

Aldo Leopold has received criticism for being unaware of or actively antagonistic toward Indigenous peoples; for averting his eyes from the truth of Native American genocide; and for failing to account for the history of land alienation and appropriation. Some see in Leopold's consideration of land ethics an unacknowledged appropriation of Indigenous belief and value systems.

Others have noted that, in the text of *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold largely ignored or overlooked the Native American experience. In his wilderness advocacy and in his work as an administrator and manager of public lands, Leopold rarely acknowledged the origins of the nation's public domain in the relentless seizing of land from Native American tribes over the previous four centuries of colonization and one hundred and fifty years of American nationhood. To the degree that Leopold was embedded in and failed to address this history of dispossession and trauma, he contributed to the erasure of Native land tenure and sovereignty in the mainstream of American public consciousness.

Leopold never summarized his views on the historical and contemporary circumstances of Native Americans (or Indigenous peoples elsewhere) in any single publication. However, Leopold had more direct interaction with Native Americans, and more to say about the reality of indigeneity and Native Americans in history and in the contemporary landscape, than at first appears. The documentary evidence is scattered throughout the archival and historical record. No scholar has yet taken on the large task of tracing, synthesizing, and analyzing this evidence.

Leopold spent his boyhood in Burlington, Iowa's "Flint Hills" (Sac/Fox *Shoquokon*), but he likely had no interactions there with native Sac and Fox (Oaakiiwaki/ Othakiwaki) people. Their removal occurred through the 1832 "Black Hawk Purchase" treaty, fifty-five years prior to Leopold's birth. Leopold did occasionally encounter Ojibwe (and perhaps other Anishinaabe) people in northern Michigan, where his family vacationed in his youth. Leopold's education at the Lawrenceville School in New Jersey, Yale University, and the Yale Forest School provided scant opportunity to learn about or acknowledge Native American history.[41]

Upon joining the U.S. Forest Service in 1909, Leopold was dispatched to the American Southwest. Over the next fifteen years, he interacted with Navajo (Dine) and Hopi (Hopituh Shi-nu-mu); with White Mountain (Dził Łigai Si'an N'dee), Jicarilla Dindei (Haisndayin), and other Apache tribes; and with the Puebloan communities of the Rio Grande basin. His actions and writings of the period present a decidedly mixed bag of responses. On the one hand, the inexperienced Leopold could complain about Apache hunters, and ignore the land claims of the Jicarilla Apaches while seeking to establish a waterfowl refuge. On the other hand, he spoke out forcefully against proposed national legislation that would have allowed the taking of Pueblo lands and the "possible disintegration of the Pueblo Indian communes." Leopold's stance on the latter revealed his general attitude at the time:

> This was, I hope, the ultimate impertinence of Boosterism in the Southwest. That the Indian culture and ours should have been placed in competition for the possession of this country was inevitable, but the cool assumption that this last little fragment must necessarily disappear in order that an infinitesimal percentage of soot, bricks, and dollars may be added to our own, betrays a fundamental disrespect for the Creator, who made not only boosters, but mankind, in his image.[42]

Leopold was well aware of his position of privilege and of what in his youth he termed "the advent of white-demoralization" of Native cultures.[43] The evidence is again dispersed across the archival record, but suggests a pattern of gradually increasing acknowledgment of cultural culpability. He recognized the legacy of colonialism and the Doctrine of Discovery, alluding in one essay to "the clank of silver armor and the cruel progress of the Cross."[44]

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Aldo Leopold, ca. 1904. He was well aware of his position of privilege and of what in his youth he termed "the advent of white-demoralization" of Native cultures.

In his Wisconsin years, Leopold interacted somewhat more often with members of the Ho-Chunk (formerly Winnebago) Nation. His "shack" property lay near extant Ho-Chunk settlements. His writing began to reflect a more informed and circumspect view. Two trips into northern Chihuahua yielded an essay, "Song of the Gavilan" (first published in 1940), in which he suggested that "There once were men

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Aldo Leopold served as professor of game management at the University of Wisconsin from 1933 until his death in 1948.

capable of inhabiting a river without disrupting the harmony of its life. They must have lived in thousands on the Gavilan, for their works are everywhere."[45] In another 1940 essay, "Escudilla," Leopold reflected on his early experience in the Arizona Territory:

> "We spoke harshly of the Spaniards who, in their zeal for gold and converts, had needlessly extinguished the native Indians. It did not occur to us that we, too, were the captains of an invasion too sure of its own righteousness."[46]

In a somewhat parallel manner, Leopold's approach to land stewardship also shifted. In 1920, for example, he disparaged the use of traditional light burning—"Piute forestry"—in fire-adapted Southwestern landscapes, a relic of his early training as a forester.[47] He would soon begin to question his assumptions about the inherent destructiveness of fire.[48] By the mid-1930s, he identified fire as a basic tool of ecological restoration and engaged in early experiments in prescribed burning.[49] In this sense, his record indicates at least an embryonic appreciation of Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

Over the last two decades, scholars have contested the ways in and degrees to which Leopold's land ethic precepts may have reflected, ignored, or appropriated Indigenous knowledge and value systems. Environmental ethicist J. Baird Callicott, for example, held that there were (and are) close parallels between "The Land Ethic" and relational ethics in the Anishinaabe worldview and tradition. Others have responded that such a position irresponsibly and disrespectfully privileges a Leopoldian ethic over Indigenous systems of ethics.

Citizen Potawatomi philosopher and environmental justice scholar Kyle Powys Whyte has addressed these tensions most directly. Whyte writes that Leopold's example "does not provide a model of environmental

stewardship that many Indigenous peoples would identify with or find useful." Leopold's progressive narrative of expanding ethical inclusivity, he writes, "goes in the opposite direction of the narratives many Indigenous peoples would provide of their ethics." Whyte cautions that in drawing such parallels, ethicists must "push beyond linking abstract ideas" and focus on "bringing together . . . people who subscribe to . . . different ethics [for] more careful consideration of potential differences."[50] The moment is ripe for such consideration of contrasting ethical foundations, frameworks, aims, trajectories, and implications for environmental stewardship.

Cultural Diversity and Leopold

Leopold had frustratingly little to say directly about the experience of Asian, Black, or Hispanic/Latinx Americans per se, although again allusions and episodes may be found across the documentary record. There is no evidence that Leopold personally harbored racist attitudes. Although he was the product of a privileged background in a dominant white culture and segregated society, he was not oblivious to class, racial, ethnic, and religious divisions. Growing up at the turn of the twentieth century in a loosely progressive family of secular German background, he was exposed through his parents to the influences of German literature and liberalism. His father's business, the Leopold Desk Company, was noted in its time for its advanced labor policies. Leopold's youthful correspondence reveals clear awareness of his class privilege, and a broad generosity toward "others" whom he did encounter.

Leopold's cross-cultural marriage to Maria Alvira Estella Bergere, Catholic daughter of a prominent New Mexican family with a lineage that traced back to Mexico and Spain, was unusual in its time. Scholars have suggested that this contributed fundamentally to Leopold's appreciation of the cultural context of conservation. Estella Leopold Jr. notes that her mother, "fluently bilingual . . . handsome and dark-skinned," infused their family life with the food, music, and stories of her Hispanic background.[51] The five Leopold children, all of whom became acclaimed scientists, educators, and conservationists themselves, carried this mix of cultural influences. The marriage was traditional in the sense that Estella and Aldo worked inside and outside the home, respectively. Estella outlived her husband by twenty-five years. In the 1980s, daughter Nina recalled that over those years her mother "started being herself, rather than just Dad's wife. She became very strong in her political convictions, a very definite personality."[52]

In this context, it is worth noting that Leopold encouraged both his daughters, Nina and Estella, in their academic pursuits, and both ultimately became accomplished scientists, mentors, and environmental advocates. Leopold's graduate student Frances Hamerstrom was the first woman to earn a master's degree in wildlife management and the only woman to earn a graduate degree with Leopold. "He never held my sex against me," Hamerstrom recalled in the early 1980s.[53] Another student, Ruth Hine, applied to pursue studies with Leopold after the end of the war. Leopold, she recalled thirty-five years later, replied "that they didn't take women as graduate students in wildlife, but he put it in a way that didn't really bother me."[54] Soon after, however, he did accept another woman, Brina Kessell, as a PhD student. However, Leopold died before she could begin her studies with him.

In 1987, Leopold's son Luna described his father's manner of interacting with others. "Dad was as kind, considerate, and tolerant a person as any I have ever known. Practically never did he criticize anyone personally, even when he disagreed with that person. He treated even the most humble with the same respect as the most distinguished. This was especially noticeable when traveling—the porter in the train, the shoeblack, the waitress in a cafe—all were engaged in conversation, in which he might ask about the person's interests, avocation, or work."[55] Luna's retrospective testimonial, however subjective, is corroborated almost without exception by the accounts of those who observed Leopold personally and professionally.

These personal observations underline a key point about Leopold's changing perspective on the role of people and communities in carrying out conservation work on the land. The arc of Leopold's career clearly shows him moving away from the top-down and expert-driven approach to land and resource management that marked the early Progressive conservation movement, and toward ever more democratic and participatory land conservation processes. "The Land Ethic" was nothing if not a call for expansive and inclusive participation in environmental stewardship, from wild lands to "working" lands to urban lands, to the global biodiversity, atmospheric, and oceanic commons. A land ethic, as interpreted and extended since Leopold's time, has inspired innumerable community-based conservation efforts and locally driven movements, on behalf of everything from food sovereignty to watershed rehabilitation to urban land restoration. At the same time, it has provided foundations for a still emerging global ethic of care.

Eugenics and Conservation

The early conservation movement included many leading figures who

adhered to the ideology of eugenics and, implicitly or explicitly, white supremacy as an expression of scientific racism. In applying rational "science" to questions of the status and "improvement" of human populations, its proponents could claim eugenics as another front in the progressive movement of the day, validating their racist attitudes and antiimmigrant policies. The movement also existed of course outside the conservation world and was embraced across the traditional political spectrum.

In addition to such well-known adherents as Theodore Roosevelt and forester Gifford Pinchot, the eugenics movement counted as leaders some of the most prominent conservationists of the era—namely William Temple Hornaday, Madison Grant, and Henry Fairfield Osborn Sr., all associated with the New York Zoological Society and the American Museum of Natural History. Leopold was aware of the association of eugenics and conservation. Although a generation younger, he was acquainted with, and occasionally interacted with, several of these figures. This has been sufficient for some to regard reporting on these connections as a revelatory "outing" of Leopold.[56]

In my view, the more remarkable fact is that Leopold did *not* embrace the enthusiasm for eugenics demonstrated by so many key senior figures in the conservation movement that he himself would help to revolutionize. Leopold had an intermittent, deferential, and testy relationship with Hornaday, whose strict protectionist view of wildlife conservation ran counter to Leopold's more proactive and interventionist ecological approach. No documentary evidence has appeared to indicate that Leopold and Grant met or interacted. However, Leopold was aware of Grant's prominent conservation activities and writings. Both were members of the Boone and Crockett Club, the influential organization of sportsmen that Theodore Roosevelt cofounded in 1887. The only substantive reference to Grant in Leopold's archival papers involves that connection and dates from December 1930. The club was soliciting donations from its members for a ceremonial gift in Grant's honor. Leopold wrote in response, "I enclose my check for $5 for the Madison Grant cup. I have long admired his work and have read his publications with great interest."[57]

In this instance, Leopold may well have been holding his tongue in his cheek. In a 1922 article on one of his primary concerns at the time—advanced soil erosion and the degradation of Southwestern watersheds—Leopold wrote: "Pioneering . . . has absorbed the best brawn and brains of the Nordic race since the dawn of history. Anthropologists tell us that we, the Nordics, have a racial genius for pioneering, surpassing all other races in ability to reduce the wilderness to possession."[58] For some observers, this is a smoking-gun passage, citing it with the assumption that Leopold was an admirer of what the "Nordic races" had wrought. The phrase hearkened back to Grant's notorious 1916 book *The Passing of the Great Race*. Leopold invoked the term explicitly and intentionally. His reference to "anthropologists" in the passage indicates his awareness of Grant (and possibly Osborn) as prominent eugenicists.[59]

Reading the passage in its full context reveals that Leopold was no admirer of eugenicist ideology. He used the phrase ironically. Following his vivid description of deteriorating watersheds, Leopold concludes, "This, fellow citizen, is Nordic genius for reducing to possession the wilderness." The sarcastic tone was not anomalous. In another essay from the time, for example, Leopold mocks "our vaunted superiority"—*our* referring to the dominant culture to which he belonged, and which was hastily "crushing the last remnants" of roadless Southwestern landscapes.[60]

Germany, National Socialism, and Leopold Madison Grant's writing infamously inspired Adolph Hitler in his ideology and his rise to power. In 1935 Leopold observed the consequences first-hand. Leopold was forty-eight when he traveled to Germany and neighboring Czechoslovakia on a three-month fellowship to research the history of forestry and game management. During this trip, he confronted directly the ill effects of an overspecialized and harsh utilitarian approach to natural resource management. The experience also exposed him to the reality of the Nazi regime's authoritarian rule and its systemic racism and antisemitism. The trip, in sum, was a key turning point not only in Leopold's views on the historic tension between disciplinary and integrated approaches to conservation, but his broader views on culture and conservation.

Leopold's time in Central Europe yielded nine published articles as well as unpublished notes, reports, and manuscripts. His observations and publications have been revisited regularly in biographical studies and articles, by both German and non-German researchers. For the conservation professions, Leopold's take-home-to-America lesson was unequivocal. While still in Germany, he wrote:

> We have [in Germany] the unfortunate result of what might be called a too purely economic determinism as applied to land use. Germany strove for maximum yields of both timber and game, and got neither. She is now, at infinite pains, coming back to an attitude of respectful guidance (as distinguished

FOREST HISTORY SOCIETY, CLARENCE L. FORSLING COLLECTION, FORSLING409

Aldo Leopold's trip with a group of American foresters to Central Europe in 1935 had a huge impact on his conservation ethic. He is in the center, with binoculars, listening to a German forester talk about the Colditz Forest near Dresden, which was put under intensive forest management in 1822.

> from domination) of the intricate ecological processes of nature, and may end up by getting both.[61]

Leopold's optimism was premature, as during his trip he came to fathom the full depth of Germany's political degeneration. The "infinite pains" would not soon ease and would extend far beyond forestry and wildlife management. In general, Leopold confined his views on the political situation in Germany to unpublished (at the time) correspondence and manuscripts. He returned to the United States with a fatalistic expectation that war would soon come. The reality would become personal when, several years later, Leopold provided assistance from afar to the family of a German Jewish colleague who had escaped the concentration camps at Dachau and Buchenwald.

The implications of Leopold's direct encounter with fascism remain another underexplored area of scholarship. Its lasting impact on Leopold's worldview and on his conservation ethic, however, was clear. In both culture and conservation, society had to overcome—*dismantle* we would now say—self-destructive systems of dominance, oppression, and violence. The theme recurred with increasing regularity and urgency for the remainder of his life. In a 1939 article on conservation and agriculture, for example, he stated:

> Sometimes I think that ideas, like men, can become dictators. We Americans have so far escaped regimentation by our rulers, but have we escaped regimentation by our own ideas? I doubt if there exists today a more complete regimentation of the human mind than that accomplished by our self-imposed doctrine of ruthless utilitarianism.[62]

In "The Land Ethic," Leopold alluded specifically to contemporary fascism:

> In human history, we have learned (I hope) that the conqueror role is eventually

> self-defeating. Why? Because it is implicit in such a role that the conqueror knows, *ex cathedra*, just what makes the community clock tick, and just what and who is valuable, and what and who is worthless, in community life. It always turns out that he knows neither, and this is why his conquests eventually defeat themselves.[63]

Recent characterizations of Leopold as an "ecofascist" fail to account for Leopold's personal response to actual fascism. More broadly, they fail to examine how Leopold worked to reconcile and balance the individual and collective well-being of people in society and within entire ecological systems. Environmental philosopher Michael P. Nelson importantly notes, "It is of vital importance to note that when Leopold speaks of [the] 'extension of ethics,' he uses words like 'accretions' to refer to the land ethic. He goes to lengths to point out that the land ethic only 'enlarges the boundaries of the [moral] community,' and therefore our ethical obligations still include our 'fellow members.'"[64] Luna Leopold saw this reflected in his father's thinking as well, holding that "the idea of an ethical view of land was a gradual outgrowth of his concern for individual people, an extension of his innate feeling that all persons have good and interesting qualities that must be understood and respected."[65]

Postwar Prospects World War II was an unprecedented global ethical crisis for the generation that endured it. Coming out of the war experience, leading public figures—diplomats, journalists, writers, philosophers, cultural critics—would examine the forces of dehumanization, racism, and alienation from nature for insights into the human condition and the rise of twentieth-century totalitarianism. Such thinkers as Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas, Albert Schweitzer, W. E. B. Du Bois, Jacques Ellul, and Lewis Mumford (among many others) grappled with these systemic theological and ethical issues. Mumford wrote in *The Conduct of Life* (1951):

> So habitually have our minds been committed to the specialized, the fragmentary, the particular, and so uncommon is the habit of viewing life as a dynamic inter-related system, that we cannot on our own premises recognize when civilization as a whole is in danger; nor can we readily accept the notion that no part of it will be safe or sound until the whole is reorganized.[66]

To affect that reorganization, national and international institutions had to reform themselves—or be created whole cloth. These years brought into being the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the United States, they marked the high-water mark of labor union membership and the stirring of the reinvigorated civil rights movement.

Even as the postwar "Great Acceleration" was commencing, leading conservationists were circling around similar points of convergence. In a 1944 article, "Post-War Prospects," Leopold stated that "The impending industrialization of the world, now foreseen by everyone, means that many conservation problems heretofore local will shortly become global."[67] He would live only three more years after the war, but it was a time of transformation in the conservation movement, and in the intensity of Leopold's personal response to the prospects for humanity and the ecosphere. The aforementioned books *Road to Survival* and *Our Plundered Planet* viewed that global future through a neo-Malthusian lens. In recent critiques, Leopold has been presented as engaging in this same school of "ethically questionable" thought, guilty of misanthropy by association especially with William Vogt.[68]

The recent critiques of Leopold on this point rarely if ever cite "The Land Ethic." This is an oddity, given that it is generally regarded as Leopold's last and most enduring contribution to conservation thought and probably the most widely read and closely scrutinized of all his writings. What such critiques miss is the thrust of Leopold's postwar ethical leap forward: his alarm at the prospect of new war-spawned research and technologies, untethered by ethical constraints, aligned with growth-at-all-costs economics, and oblivious to the health and resilience of human and ecological communities.

In a June 1947 speech "The Ecological Conscience" (a predecessor to "The Land Ethic"), Leopold bluntly stated: "Cease being intimidated by the argument that a right action is impossible because it does not yield maximum profits, or that a wrong action is to be condoned because it pays." He then made an explicit connection between exploitation of people and land. "That philosophy is dead in human relations, and its funeral in land-relations is overdue."[69] Global conflagration and the deployment of destructive technologies had tempered Leopold's characteristic progressive outlook. He wrote—albeit in the gendered language of the time—that "[i]t has required 19 centuries to define decent man-to-man conduct and the process is only half done; it may take as long to evolve a code of decency for man-to-land conduct."[70]

Such passages (among many others) reveal Leopold in his late years as anti-imperialist, anti-dominionist, and antifascist. If, as a pragmatist, he was not fully anti-capitalist, he was fundamentally opposed to

COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN–MADISON, ALDO LEOPOLD ARCHIVES, S01985

The time spent at the "shack" on the family's land near Baraboo, Wisconsin, became essential to Aldo Leopold's writings about conservation. Back row: Aldo, Estella Bergere Leopold, Luna, and Starker; front row: Nina, Estella Jr.

the anthropocentric ethos of land commodification, expressed with particular violence through capitalism, but also through "all the new isms—Socialism, Communism, Fascism, and especially the late but not lamented Technocracy."[71] And if he was not directly or actively anti-racist, he was increasingly explicit in framing his value system as one grounded in a commitment to just human relations. That is what the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, the rise of totalitarianism, the trauma of World War II, unleashed wartime technologies, and contemplation on the root causes of land abuse brought to the fore in Leopold's final expression of a land ethic. His rendering of a land ethic was essentially, in its own way, a postwar product.

THE LAND ETHIC AND SOCIAL EVOLUTION

Leopold died in April 1948 at sixty-one. *A Sand County Almanac* was published in the fall of 1949, with "The Land Ethic" as its capstone essay. Leopold would become closely identified with the term and the concept. However, he was careful *not* to claim it as his own and to build resilience into his call. He wrote, "I have purposely presented the land ethic as a product of social evolution because nothing so important as an ethic is ever 'written'." He understood that no one individual could compose an ethic; that any ethic is and must be a collective cultural effort, ever-emerging and always evolving "in the minds of a thinking community."[72]

That process began immediately among his contemporaries in conservation and included voices who explicitly drew connections between social reform and ecological wellbeing. Paul Sears, who succeeded Leopold as president of the Ecological Society of America, wrote in 1950, "It may be that we shall presently begin to use science in a new and worthier way, to give us our bearings, to help us understand the ecology of our own

species. To this end we must weave together all that we know of ourselves and of the physical world."[73] In 1954, as the Supreme Court was handing down its *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, Leopold's close colleague Olaus Murie, a leading wildlife biologist, remarked to his fellow professionals, "Thoughtful people are trying to understand our place in Nature, trying to build a proper social fabric, groping for a code of ethics toward each other and toward nature. The current controversies in the diverse field of conservation are an expression of this ethical struggle."[74] As the late Barry Lopez observed, "Leopold articulated an ethic . . . embedded in the lives of the people around him. And in *A Sand County Almanac* he gave it a setting in which many in his Anglo readership saw the outlines of something crucially important to ethical living, something they had not seen before."[75]

Leopold's book sold modestly at first, but became more readily available through paperback editions published as the modern environmental movement emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. The land ethic reached a new generation of adherents, at least some of whom saw, and fostered, connections between conservation and social justice movements. For example, Trappist monk, theologian, and social activist Thomas Merton, in a 1968 book review, commented that Leopold "understood that the erosion of American land was only part of a more drastic erosion of American freedom, of which it was a symptom."[76] In his speeches on the first Earth Day in 1970, Senator Gaylord Nelson (from Leopold's state of Wisconsin) stated, "Our goal is not just an environment of clean air and water and scenic beauty. The objective is an environment of decency, quality and mutual respect for all human beings and all living creatures."[77]

In these same years of evolving public environmental consciousness, other voices emerged to speak to the convergence of social justice, cultural change, and environmental ethics. Kiowa writer, poet, and artist N. Scott Momaday, who in 1969 became the first Native American to receive the Pulitzer Prize, provided his statement of "An American Land Ethic" in 1971: "We Americans need now more than ever before—and indeed more than we know—to imagine who and what we are with respect to the earth and sky. . . . We must live according to the principle of a land ethic. The alternative is that we shall not live at all."[78] The late ecofeminist scholar Karen Warren recalled first reading the opening of "The Land Ethic" in 1973. "I was a philosophy graduate student in a virtually all-male department, writing a doctoral dissertation in a field too young yet to have a name, on a topic deemed by fellow analytic philosophers to be outside the boundaries of professional respectability. Yet I persevered, and nearly twenty-five years later, I vividly recall the profound sense of awakening I felt when I read that opening line."[79]

In citing such voices (among many others who might be quoted), I do not mean to imply that any continuity between Leopold's framing of "The Land Ethic" and other or subsequent expressions of an environmental ethic is frictionless. Quite the contrary. This process is rife with contrasts, varied perspectives, competing priorities, and outright contradictions. The point in providing them is to illustrate that a land ethic (however labeled) was not static and *could not be* exclusionary. In Leopold's view, such an ethic explicitly embraced people as "member[s] and citizen[s]of the land community," and placed no conditions on that membership."[80] Its core tenets of ecological interdependency inherently subvert racist, classist, sexist, and white supremacist attitudes. In the broad arc of Western conservation history, the land ethic represented a move away from a colonial and anthropocentric view of the land, and toward something more aligned with Indigenous views on intergenerational obligations and kinship among all beings and communities.[81] It may now contribute to further progress in realizing an ethic of care, responsibility, and mutual thriving among people, and between people and land.[82]

Aldo Leopold was able to outgrow himself continually across his lifetime. That capacity reflected a simple fact about Leopold: he recognized dynamic connections in the living world, in human history, in human communities, and in the human mind. He accepted the responsibilities that come with that recognition and acted upon them. This allowed him ultimately to push conservation's boundaries of ethical consideration outward and provide new foundations for the dominant society's expanding environmental awareness. That said, he did not live long enough to reinforce all the connections that are now so urgent, overdue, and necessary—connections among all our diverse ecosystems and communities; connections across disciplines; connections among different belief systems; and connections between justice and conservation.

Leopold once defined conservation, "viewed in its entirety," as "the slow and laborious unfolding of a new relationship between people and land."[83] That "unfolding" predated Leopold and has never stopped in the decades since Leopold wrote those words. Contemporary scientists, scholars, and writers such as Momaday, Robin Kimmerer, and Kyle Powys Whyte remind us that the "new" relationship in fact has ancient foundations and now entails the reclamation of venerable Indigenous traditions of reciprocity between

people and land. As geologist and writer Lauret Savoy has asked, with reference to the African American experience of land relations and the development of her racial and environmental consciousness: "Did Aldo Leopold consider me?"[84] If in the past, conservation—and the ethical frames that have informed it—were all too monolingual and monochromatic and monocultural, they must now draw on diverse voices from cultures, knowledge systems, and faith traditions from throughout the world. Through all this, posterity may come to regard Leopold not as an apotheosis of conservation, but as an essential transitional figure within a still broader, ongoing movement, informed by an ever-evolving ethic of care.

PROGRESS AMID INTERSECTING CRISES

The scrutiny being given to Leopold and other notable figures in the history of conservation and environmentalism will, and must, continue. Perhaps archives will yield additional statements and evidence that further undermine their iconic status. So be it. Better real, limited, and fallible human beings than unimpeachable icons. The work of self-scrutiny applies to the present as well, in the active countering of the same elements of racism and injustice in our own lives that we identify in historic figures.

But this moment especially demands even more. We live amid accelerating and interconnected crises: global health and public health, climate disruption, biodiversity loss, water degradation, food insecurity, social and economic inequality, racism, and democratic governance under assault. The times require new ethical frames that address the structures and systems of environmental exploitation that Leopold and at least some of his contemporaries confronted. They call on us to connect that legacy to current efforts to change entrenched structures and systems of human exploitation and oppression.

The urgent need is to overcome institutional racism within and beyond the environmental movement. Conservationists, environmentalists, and society in general must move forward in tangible ways. More than thirty years have passed since the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit brought the environmental justice movement into the national spotlight. We can no longer pretend that our intersecting crises are, or can be addressed as, separate "issues." We can no longer ignore the fact that their impacts fall unequally on different parts of the human community, or that these disparities are structural, racial, and gendered. And we can no longer put off addressing them until some indefinite future.

Progress requires engaging all our human ways of knowing and being—Indigenous and Western, urban and rural, scientific and artistic, economic and ethical, material and spiritual. As the late author and activist bell hooks stated, "to tend the Earth is always . . . to tend our destiny, our freedom, and our hope."[85] Our common future depends on forging an ethic that includes and reflects diverse voices, values, faith traditions, and knowledge systems. Leopold memorably wrote that "one of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds."[86] Those wounds are ecological *and* social, they are profoundly connected, and their common causes and consequences run deep. Recognizing those connections, in all their dimensions, is an essential step in moving toward healing and renewal.

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NOTES

1. Dorceta E. Taylor provides an essential historical overview in *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016). Karl Jacoby, in *Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014), details exclusionary practices behind the establishment of parklands. Ellen Griffith Spears' *Rethinking the American Environmental Movement Post-1945* (New York: Routledge, 2019) provides a more intersectional history of the environmental movement. Michelle Nijhuis' *Beloved Beasts: Fighting for Life in an Age of Extinction* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2021) is a compact overview of the history of wildlife and biodiversity conservation.
2. Taylor, *Rise of the American Conservation Movement*, 9.
3. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), viii.
4. Aldo Leopold, "Foreword," in *Companion to* A Sand County Almanac: *Interpretive and Critical Essays*, ed. J. B. Callicott (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 282.
5. Curt Meine, *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988, 2010), 51.
6. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 154.
7. Luna B. Leopold, ed., *Round River: From the Journals of Aldo Leopold* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), 145; Qi Feng Lin, "Aldo Leopold's Unrealized Proposals to Rethink Economics," *Ecological Economics* 108 (Dec. 2014): 104–114.
8. Aldo Leopold, "The Conservation Ethic," in *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, eds. Susan Flader and J. B. Callicott (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 188. This passage appears in Leopold's article "The Conservation Ethic," first published in the *Journal of Forestry*. Q. F. Lin, in "Aldo Leopold's Life–work and the Scholarship It Inspired," *Socio-Ecological Practice Research* 2(1): 10–11, notes, the article "was reprinted in 1946 under the title 'Racial Wisdom and Conservation' in [the] *Journal of Heredity*. Leopold's conservation ethic was introduced in the preamble as providing an ecological basis for eugenics. How the article came to be republished here is unclear. There is no evidence that Leopold was aware of or acceded to this use of his article."
9. Leopold, "The Arboretum and the University," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 209–11.
10. Eve Andrews, "Why Does Environmentalism Have a Dark Side?" *Grist*, 29 August 2019, https://grist.org/article/why-does-environmentalism-have-a-dark-side/; Wanjiku Gatheru, "It's Time for Environmental Studies to Own Up to Erasing Black People," *Vice*, 11 June 2020. https://www.vice.com/en/article/its-time-for-environmental-studies-to-own-up-to-erasing-black-people/; and Mallika A. Nocco, et al., "Mentorship, Equity, and Research Productivity: Lessons from a Pandemic," *Biological Conservation* 255:108966, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2021.108966.
11. Miles A. Powell, "'Pestered with inhabitants': Aldo Leopold, William Vogt, and More Trouble with Wilderness," *Pacific Historical Review* 84(2) (2015), 205.
12. Powell, "Pestered with inhabitants," 220–21.
13. Andrews, "Why Does Environmentalism Have a Dark Side?"
14. Aldo Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 134–42.
15. Aldo Leopold, "The River of the Mother of God," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 127.
16. Aldo Leopold, "The Wilderness and Its Place in Forest Recreational Policy," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 721.
17. Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," 135.
18. Aldo Leopold, "Conserving the Covered Wagon," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 130.
19. Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," 137.
20. Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," 138.
21. Leopold, "Conserving the Covered Wagon, 129.
22. Leopold "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," 134.
23. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 188.
24. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 200.
25. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 200.
26. Leopold, "Wilderness as a Form of Land Use," 135–36.
27. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, viii.
28. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, viii.
29. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 174.
30. Prakash Kashwan, "American Environmentalism's Racist Roots have Shaped Global Thinking about Conservation," *The Conversation*, 2 September 2020, https://theconversation.com/american-environmentalisms- racist-roots-have-shaped-global-thinking-about-conservation-143783.
31. Powell, "Pestered with inhabitants," 195.
32. Andrews, "Why Does Environmentalism Have a Dark Side?"
33. Aldo Leopold, "The Game Cycle: A Challenge to Science," *Outdoor Nebraska* 9(4): 14.
34. Aldo Leopold, *Game Management* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), 49.
35. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 186.
36. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 220.
37. Leopold, "Land-use and Democracy," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 298.
38. Leopold, "A Biotic View of Land," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 270. In "The Land Ethic" in *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold changed "pioneering philosophy" to "our current philosophy" (220).
39. William Vogt, *Road to Survival* (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1948) and Fairfield Osborn, *Our Plundered Planet* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1948).
40. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 204.
41. One youthful encounter did evidently leave a strong (if naïve) impression on Leopold. As a seventeen-year-old he had the opportunity to attend a lecture by Charles Eastman (Ohíye S'a), the prominent Santee Dakota (Isányathi) physician, writer, and reformer. "Some words and phrases which I have never heard anywhere else impressed me particularly," Leopold wrote to his mother. "He said, after speaking of the Indian's knowledge of nature, 'Nature is the gate to the Great Mystery.' The words are simple enough, but the meaning unfathomable." Curt Meine (ed.) *Aldo Leopold: A Sand County Almanac and Other Writings on Ecology and Conservation* (New York: Library of America, 2013), 705.
42. Leopold, "A Criticism of the Booster Spirit," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 102.
43. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, 35.
44. Leopold, "The River of the Mother of God," 123.
45. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 150.
46. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 137.
47. Leopold, "'Piute Forestry' vs. Forest Fire Prevention," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 114–22.
48. Leopold, "Grass, Brush, Timber, and Fire in Southern Arizona," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 114–122.
49. In *Game Management*, Leopold wrote, "The central thesis of game management is this: game can be restored by the creative use of the same tools which have heretofore destroyed it—axe, plow, cow, fire, and gun" (vii).
50. Kyle Powys Whyte, "How Similar Are Indigenous North American and Leopoldian Environmental Ethics?" SSRN (March 1, 2015): http://dx.doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2022038.
51. Estella Leopold Jr., *Stories from the Shack: Sand County Revisited* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 296.
52. Meine, *Aldo Leopold*, 528.
53. Sumner Matteson, *Afield: Portraits of Wisconsin Naturalists, Empowering Leopold's Legacy* (Mineral Point, WI: Little Creek Press, 2020), 214.
54. Matteson, *Afield*, 179. Ruth Hine, the first woman to earn a PhD in zoology at the University of Wisconsin, remained a close friend of the Leopold family, and credited Leopold's writing with "[having] had more of an effect on me than anything in my thinking." It is possible that Leopold

favored accepting only men as students in the immediate postwar rush of student applications under the G.I. Bill.

55. Thomas Tanner, *Aldo Leopold: The Man and His Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Ankeny, IA: Soil Conservation Society of America, 1987), 165).
56. Louise Fabiani, "When Wilderness was Strictly Whites-Only," *Pacific Standard*, 14 June 2017. https:/psmag.com/news/when-wilderness-was-strictly-whites-only. Gatheru, in "It's Time for Environmental Studies to Own Up to Erasing Black People," includes Leopold alongside Madison Grant and John Muir as "white supremacists that created the language of conservation to accommodate racialized conceptions of nature." S. Braun (Letter: Catt Hall in a Middle Ground, *Iowa State Daily*, 16 July 2020) similarly places Leopold in the company of William T. Hornaday in maintaining a "casual racism against Native peoples." Nocco et al. in "Mentorship, Equity, and Research Productivity," regard Leopold as an "ecofascist" with an "exclusionary legac[y]."
57. Aldo Leopold to W. Redmond Cross, 15 December 1930, Aldo Leopold Papers, Series 9/25/10–2: Organizations, Committees, UW Archives.
58. Aldo Leopold, "Erosion as a Menace to the Social and Economic Future of the Southwest," *Journal of Forestry* 44(9) (1946): 627. The passage was drafted in 1922 but not published until 1946; and also appears in a popular article "Pioneers and Gullies," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 106–133.
59. A cursory review of Leopold's archival papers does not provide any indication that Leopold was aware of the anthropologist Franz Boas, who countered the eugenicists' racist pseudoscience. See Charles King, *Gods of the Upper Air: How a Circle of Renegade Anthropologists Reinvented Race, Sex, and Gender in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Doubleday, 2019).
60. Leopold, "The River of the Mother of God," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 127.
61. Leopold, "Notes on Wild Life Conservation in Germany," *Game Research News Letter* 6(3)(1935), UW-Madison Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology.
62. Leopold, "The Farmer as A Conservationist," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 259.
63. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 204.
64. Michael P. Nelson, "Holists and Fascists and Paper Tigers... Oh My!" *Ethics and the Environment* 1(2)(1996): 110.
65. Tanner, *Aldo Leopold*, 165. Luna offered similar remarks, refuting the charge of ecofascism, in his foreword to Robert A. McCabe's 1987 book *Aldo Leopold: The Professor* (Madison, WI: Rusty Rock Press): "Rather than interpreting the concept of the land ethic as an indication of disregard for the individual in favor of the species or the ecosystem, my view is quite different. I see the concept of the land ethic as the outgrowth and extension of his deep personal concern for the individual. Accepting the idea that the cooperations and competitions in human society are eased and facilitated by concern for others, he saw that the same consideration extended to other parts of the ecosystem would tend to add integrity, beauty, and stability to the whole."
66. Lewis Mumford, *The Conduct of Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 12.
67. Leopold, "Post-war Prospects," *Audubon Magazine* 46(1): 27.
68. Powell, "Pestered with inhabitants," 196.
69. Leopold, "The Ecological Conscience," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 346.
70. Leopold, "The Ecological Conscience," 345.
71. Leopold, "The Conservation Ethic," in *The River of the Mother of God*, 188.
72. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 225.
73. Paul B. Sears, *Charles Darwin: The Naturalist as a Cultural Force* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1950), 94.
74. Olaus J. Murie, "Ethics in Wildlife Management," *Journal of Wildlife Management* 18(3) (1954): 289.
75. Barry Lopez delivered these remarks on April 23, 2017, in the 1st Annual Leopold Lecture at the National Hispanic Cultural Center, Albuquerque, New Mexico. I am grateful to Dr. Pricilla Solis Ybarra for sharing her recording of Lopez's lecture.
76. Thomas Merton, "The Ecological Conscience," *The Catholic Worker* 34(5): 4.
77. Gaylord Nelson, "Partial Text for Senator Gaylord Nelson, Denver, Colo., April 22, 1970," UW-Madison Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, http://www.nelsonearthday.net/docs/ nelson_26-18_ED.
78. N. Scott Momaday, *The Man Made of Words: Essays, Stories, Passages* (New York: St. Martine's Press, 1997), 47, 49.
79. Warren continues: "Unlike Leopold, I went on to develop a different position, ecofeminism, which explores important connections between the domination of women, people of color, children, the poor, Third World and indigenous peoples, and the domination of nonhuman nature. Unlike Leopold, I went on to argue that an environmental ethic which fails in theory or practice to reflect ecofeminist insights into the nature of these connections is inadequate. Still, it was Leopold's description of land as property and his association of land with 'slave-girls' which first inspired me to think not only about 'an ethic, ecologically' but about the gendering of human-nonhuman relationships." "The Legacy of Leopold's 'The Land Ethic,'" *Reflections* (August 1998), http://ruby.fgcu.edu/courses/bhalvers/ids3920/LeopoldEssay4.htm.
80. Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 204.
81. Whyte notes that such comparisons "can be considered important today because they are a potential option for bringing together environmentalists of all heritages in North America based on a common ethical orientation." As noted above Whyte also cautions, critically, that "any potential comparison" necessarily entails "sobering acknowledgment of and openness to differences between Leopoldian and Indigenist ethics." See: "How Similar Are Indigenous North American and Leopoldian Environmental Ethics?"
82. Robin Kimmerer writes: "The next step in our cultural evolution, if we are to persist as a species on this beautiful planet, is to expand our protocols for gratitude to the living Earth. Gratitude is most powerful as a response to the Earth because it provides an opening to reciprocity, to the act of giving back." "Returning the Gift," *Center for Humans and Nature*, October 1, 2013, https://humansandnature.org/earthethic-robin-kimmerer.
83. Aldo Leopold, "Wisconsin Wildlife Chronology," *Wisconsin Conservation Bulletin* 5(11) (1940): 8.
84. Lauret Savoy, *Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint Press, 2015), 34. Savoy's book chapter as a whole constitutes a response to her question. She writes: "The scope of America's 'thinking community' remains narrow. A democratic dream of individual liberties and rights hasn't yet contributed to a 'co-ordinated whole'—whether human, biotic, or the land. Danger lies in equating theory with practice, or ideal with committed action, as personal responsibility and respect for others, and for the land, can be lost to lip service, disingenuous manners, and legislated gestures to an ideal."
85. Alison H. Deming and Lauret E. Savoy, (eds.) *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and The Natural World* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2002), 15.
86. Leopold, *Round River*, 165.