

HW#5  
Sustainable Design  
February 10, 2009

## **This I Believe...**

I believe in two things that I fear may be mutually exclusive.

If all the scientists are correct, then the earth is peril and future of the planet ironically depends on humans. Humanity's march up the evolutionary ladder is a product of nature. We are, after all, a product of our environment, and the same set of evolutionary processes that all species have benefited from.

Man has severely impacted the planet, and it is increasingly becoming apparent that the effects are negative. Overpopulation, resource depletion, and ecosystem perturbation seem to sum up the most pressing problems.

Alas, there may be a future after all. Sustainability seeks to diminish, and really eliminate the negative impacts that humans have on the environment. As a young engineer with the potential to positively impact the world, this gives me great hope and satisfaction.

I would consider myself "all in." I love nature and appreciate its beauty. It saddens me to think of a world where deserts expand, rainforests diminish, flora and fauna die, and snow and rain are a thing of the past. I believe in the core principle of moving towards a life that has no negative impacts on the environment. I am excited about sustainability, and I am interested in the nuts and bolts of how it will work on a daily basis. I look forward to contributing to the world and its sustainability in a positive manner.

However, I fear that a commitment to these principles is not compatible with several other principles that I also consider important. Freedom and capitalism, it seems to me, are going to suffer tremendously if sustainability and environmentalism become the guiding principles by which we live.

When I speak of freedom and capitalism, I mean the way it has been practiced primarily in the United States. Obviously, being born and raised in a nation whose sole purpose for coming to being, and continuing to exist is freedom and capitalism has colored my world view.

In order to become a benefit to this earth instead of a drain, we as a species are going to have to give up many of the freedoms, modern day conveniences, and advancements that we have worked for. From a naturalist standpoint almost everything we do is wasteful. Things like driving twenty miles to work, attending a play, going to a basketball game, or watching a movie are all wastes of energy and resources.

Freedom, capitalism, sustainability, and environmentalism are all things that I believe in. From where I sit, it seems that they are mutually exclusive. Now that I am a parent I struggle even more with this balance. I hope I am wrong. What will the future hold? I don't know. I must remain positive and hopeful, for me, my children, and the world. Mankind has the intelligence and ingenuity to make the conversion to sustainability, but do we have the commitment and willingness to sacrifice? Do I have the commitment to sacrifice? Stay tuned.