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Response: Reengaging Environmental Education in the 'Anthropocene'

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At the turn of the 21st century, an historical moment of rapid earth system change and environmental crisis in an era labelled by some scholars as the *Anthropocene* (the age of humans), the need for environmental education is perhaps greater than ever; but, as I argued 27 years ago, not just any environmental education will do. As the world confronts increasingly complex issues of rising poverty, escalating conflict, and ecological degradation, it matters what we mean by 'the environment', and it matters what educational practices we engage. Too often, environmental education has adopted the persistent and problematic 'human versus nature' binary in Western thinking, a conceptual legacy that leads to false dichotomies separating problems considered more 'social' from those classified as more 'environmental'. Over the past 3 decades, the field of environmental education has expanded globally, benefitting from the path-breaking analyses of environmental justice studies, feminist political ecology, and the environmental humanities, all transdisciplinary fields that offer environmental education a critical frame for understanding the dynamic 'social nature' of human and environment connections and interdependencies. Yet, the current discourse of the Anthropocene reengages these oppressive dichotomies. To rethink and transform this re-splitting trend, I envision the flourishing of a robust, socially critical environmental education grounded in feminist analyses, environmental justice and decolonial theories, and engaged in embodied, lively action research collaborations supporting more sustainable and resilient communities.

Biography

Giovanna Di Chiro is the Lang Professor for Issues of Social Change at Swarthmore College where she teaches courses on environmental justice theory, action research methods, and community sustainability. She is a faculty partner and policy advisor for Nuestras Raíces (our roots), a community organisation that focuses on urban agriculture, food justice, and resiliency in the Puerto Rican/Latino community of Holyoke, Massachusetts. Di Chiro has published widely on the intersections of environmental science, policy, and activism addressing issues of human rights, food security, and environmental and climate justice. Email: gdichir2@swarthmore.edu.

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