

When I say no to a coal export terminal, I am saying no to a way of life that I have grown familiar, even comfortable with. I am saying no to an easy, acceptable way for others to share in that way of life. I am saying that I believe we as a species have crossed a line from ok to not-ok. What's that line? The line defines, for me, a level of consumption of the planet's resources that went from beneficial to harmful, from acceptable to unacceptable. Instead of feeling confident that humans operate well within the boundaries of the planet's annual creation of abundance, I feel confident that humans are taking way more than what could be called their fair share. On what authority do humans take more than they give? Part comes from ability: we imagine ourselves as the baddest predator on the planet. Who will prevent us from taking whatever we want? Part comes from our mythology: we believe the earth is here to be subdued, to be exploited, to be manipulated. Parents of young children operate differently. Yes they are stronger; they have more than enough ability to take whatever they want from their children. But they don't. Why? the mythology is to love, nurture and enable their children to become loving, nurturing adults. Just because they could abuse their children (and sadly some few do), the vast majority don't. They don't subdue or exploit or manipulate. Quite the opposite.

So why is there a difference between a mythology of empowerment, nurturance and sustainability for children and a mythology of exploitation and subjugation for the earth? Answer: until a few decades ago, what humans did on the earth did not appear to matter. In the space of a few generations, we have crossed the line from few taking what they need to too many taking too much. A small snowball rolling down from near the bottom of a mountain will bounce harmlessly against the first house it encounters. A small snowball rolling down from the top of the mountain will gather enough size to take out the village. We are mentally used to small snowballs while only slowly, too slowly to date, coming to see that the mountain has grown much taller and the snowballs are starting much higher. A few houses along the edge of the village have already suffered damage (Sandy, Katrina). Every day we use fossil fuel energy, like coal, or enable others to use it, like the Chinese or other developing nations, the mountain grows.

When I say no to a coal export terminal, I must be saying yes to something. I say yes to taking a different path. A mountain-lowering path. A different mythology. A mythology of appreciation for the abundance that the earth offers and commitment to doing my part to stay on the "leave some for the children" side of the consumption line. Talk is cheap. If I don't walk my talk, I am wasting everyone's time. First order of walking: stop the waste. Waste that is invisible, in the form of inefficient appliances, leaky homes, low mileage cars, unnecessary trips, more than sufficient heating, cooling, lighting, entertainment, whatever. Waste is everywhere and as acceptable in the culture as lane-marking stripes on the roads. No one can see the hundreds of places of wasted energy any more than they can see early stages of cancer, but not seeing or feeling either doesn't mean it doesn't exist and it does no harm.

There was a time before smartphones and GPS when people got from a to z by asking questions or using a paper map. Now we get upset if the smartphone app that presents map information isn't accurate to the nearest ten feet, or doesn't give us step by step directions. One might argue that an older less accurate method embodies waste (wasted time, wasted anxiety, wasted gas

perhaps) and that as we increase precision we reduce or eliminate waste. Precision is cool. Look at the improvement in cameras over the past few years. Precision in lighting (LED lights), giving the same amount of light for a tiny fraction of the energy that used to be needed, is cool. Precision in appliances (Energy Star) is cool. Saying no to a coal terminal *requires saying yes to walking the precision talk*—otherwise it's just hot air. Say yes to hacking off useless carbon dioxide fat. Hacking off an old mythology that was useful then but is harmful now. Hacking off the unconscious behaviors that are robbing our children and grandchildren of the very love we have always offered them.

Unshackle your cool gene. Lead by example. Get precise. Find the waste. Squeeze it dry. Design, then play, then win the coolest game going. Teach, and love, those kids the New Cool.

Joe Symons  
January 2013  
[negawattmedia.com](http://negawattmedia.com)