



# **CHANGING THE TERRAIN**

## **The significance of rights of Nature for environmental and social activism**

Cormac Cullinan

Australian Wild Law Conference, September 2011



GETTY

Our strategies  
aren't working!

**THERE  
IS NO  
PLANET B**

**BLA BLA  
BLA...  
ACT NOW!**



# OPPOSING WORLD VIEWS

Humans are the pinnacle of the evolutionary process and are entitled to monopolize natural resources and to “out-compete” other species.

v

Humans are an integral and inseparable part of a community of life without which we cannot exist and so the health of the whole is paramount







Learning from social  
justice movements



I AM NOT A MAN AND A BROTHER



# THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION of Human Rights



ADOPTED BY THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS 183RD MEETING, HELD IN PARIS ON 10 DECEMBER, 1948



Using rights to  
shape the political  
terrain

# UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF THE RIG OF MOTHER EARTH

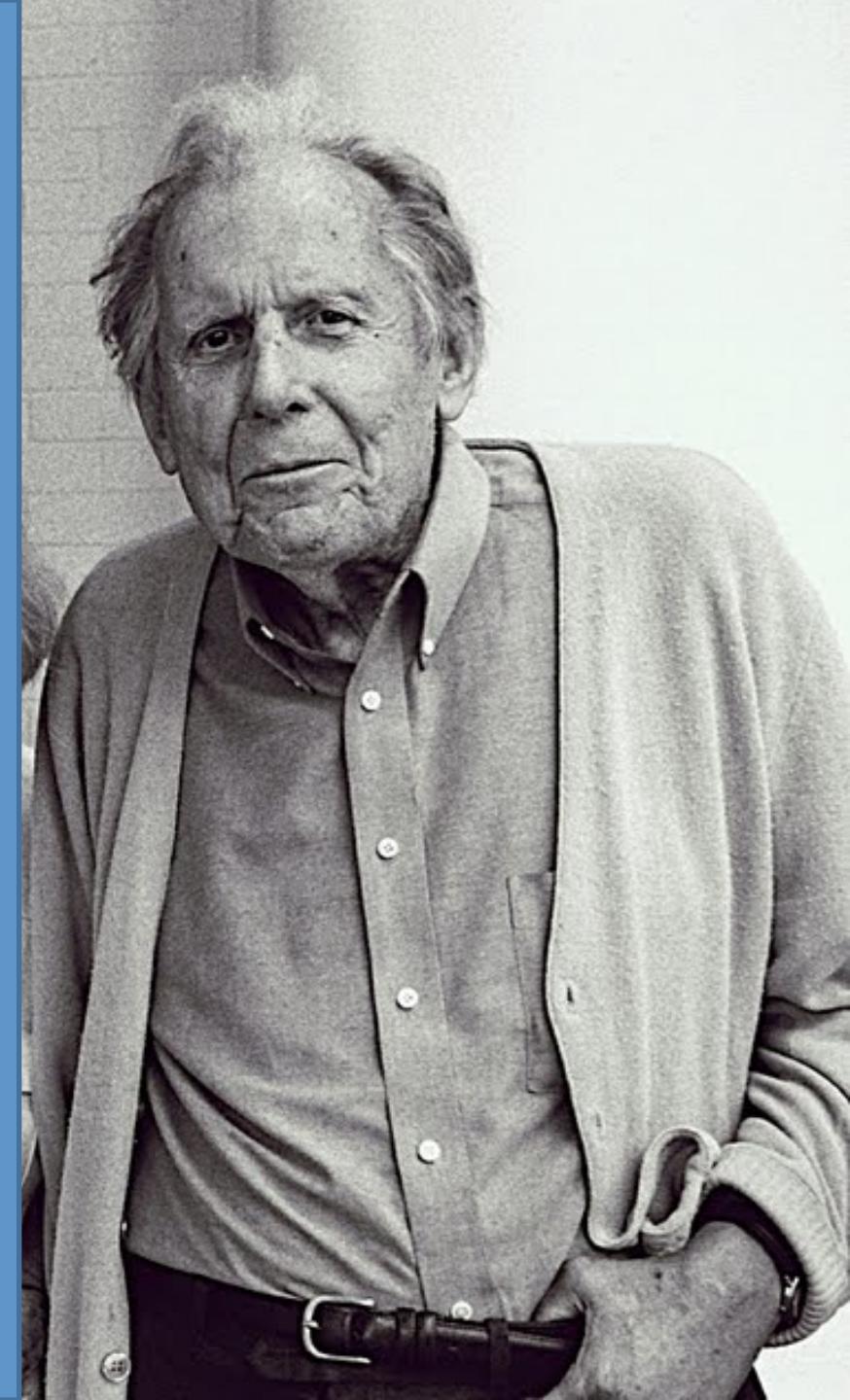
Mother Earth is a unique, indivisible, self-regulating community of interrelated beings that sustains, contains and reproduces all beings.

# Advantages

- Addresses core issues
- We occupy the high ground
- Platform for broad coalitions
- Easier to mobilise in favour of positive vision
- Equally valid in Global North and Global South
- Now is a good time

It's happening!

**“We are now experiencing a moment of significance far beyond what any of us can imagine. What can be said is that the foundations of a new historical period, the Ecozoic Era, have been established in every realm of human affairs. The mythic vision has been set in place...”**





# Laying the foundations

- 1973: *Should trees have standing?*  
Christopher Stone
- 1999: *The Great Work*, Thomas Berry.
- 2002: *Wild Law*
- 2004 Wild law conferences (UK)
- 2006 Center for Earth Jurisprudence
- 2007 Tamaqua Borough

# Acceleration

- 2008: September: Constitution of Ecuador
- 2009
  - April: Mother Earth Day
  - October: 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Wild Law Conference & ALBA calls for adoption of Universal Declaration
  - December: COP 15 Copenhagen
- 2010
  - April: Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth
  - September: Global Alliance for Rights of Nature

# What Next?

- 2011
  - April: Address to UN General Assembly
  - Bolivian Law
  - Ecuador: 1<sup>st</sup> successful case
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Wild Law Conference
  - December: COP 17 Durban (?)
- 2012
  - Rio + 20



