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John Jacobi

The Persistent Hope

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Text created by Freedom Club at UNC-CH. For
feedback or questions, email uncfc@riseup.net.
<http://johnjacobi.github.io/articles/2014/09/04/the-persistent-hope/>

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Since the advent of the technological way of life our world has lost its magic, its freedom, and much of its beauty. The coming decade looks like it will be a decade of disasters. But despite the negativity that threatens to engulf us, if we look closely we can see a glimmer of hope for a better future—and it's not the false hope of the techno-optimists.

Google has recently begun efforts to build an enormous trans-Pacific cable system to connect the US to Asia at faster speeds. Obviously there are many problems inherent in this project, particularly the impacts it has on the ecosphere. But sharks aren't having any of that. Google is having to put a protective guard around the cables because the sharks keep biting them, which could potentially cause widespread internet outages. The sharks have actually been at this for a while—at least since 1985, when shark teeth were discovered embedded in an experimental cable near the Canary Islands.

This is a clear example of nature biting back. Obviously the sharks aren't conscious agents of revenge for an all-powerful Mother Earth. But they are part of a complex and interdependent ecosystem, which will invariably cause problems for technologies that disrespect and disregard it. All around us we can see examples of this.

Squirrels have similarly caused problems with power-lines, for example. In 2013 New York Times author Jon Mooalem reported that over a four-month timespan, squirrel attacks on power lines made the news at least 50 times. Even more impressive, the Nasdaq has been shut down by squirrels twice: once in 1987 for 82 minutes and once again in 1994. In fact, much of power infrastructure seems to be particularly vulnerable to natural attacks. The primary cause of most power failures is weather, but the 2003 Northeast blackout was caused by power-lines brushing against a few Ohio tree branches. All of these cases is indicative of the way industrial society regards nature: it doesn't. As a result, natural processes end up causing a lot of problems for industrial infrastructure.

Of course, the response of the technocrats isn't to step back and let the wild processes take their course. Rather, the technocrats intend to march us forward evermore, protecting underwater cables with mesh and kevlar and moving power-lines underground. We can see the same trend in scientific communities studying climate change. Scientists and

policy-makers have shifted away from discussions about stopping climate change and are instead pushing for reinforced infrastructure to avoid some aspects of climate disaster.

Those who stand with wild nature should not lose hope in this increasingly synthetic age when such inspiring examples of nature fighting back exist. All around us we can see the squirrels and the sharks and the trees and the clouds acting with persistent hope that their wildness will win. It is true that technology may prevail in destroying wild nature completely. It may prevail in creating a completely synthetic world. But Mother Earth is strong and fierce, and she will not easily be defeated.

This is especially true if we humans decide to join the fight on behalf of wild nature. Of course not all humans can or will when they are trapped in a technological prison. But those placed firmly on the side of wild nature have a duty to fight with the sharks and the squirrels. Our advantage as a species is our consciousness, and it may be our consciousness that will determine whether nature lives or dies in the struggle against industrial society. If a conscious minority of wild humans does not work against industrial society, then industrial society will either prevail or else its collapse may be so late that it brings down the entire biosphere with it. But we must keep our hope, because there is a chance that if we do join wild nature in her fight, we might be able to protect our home, our freedom, and, most of all, our wildness.