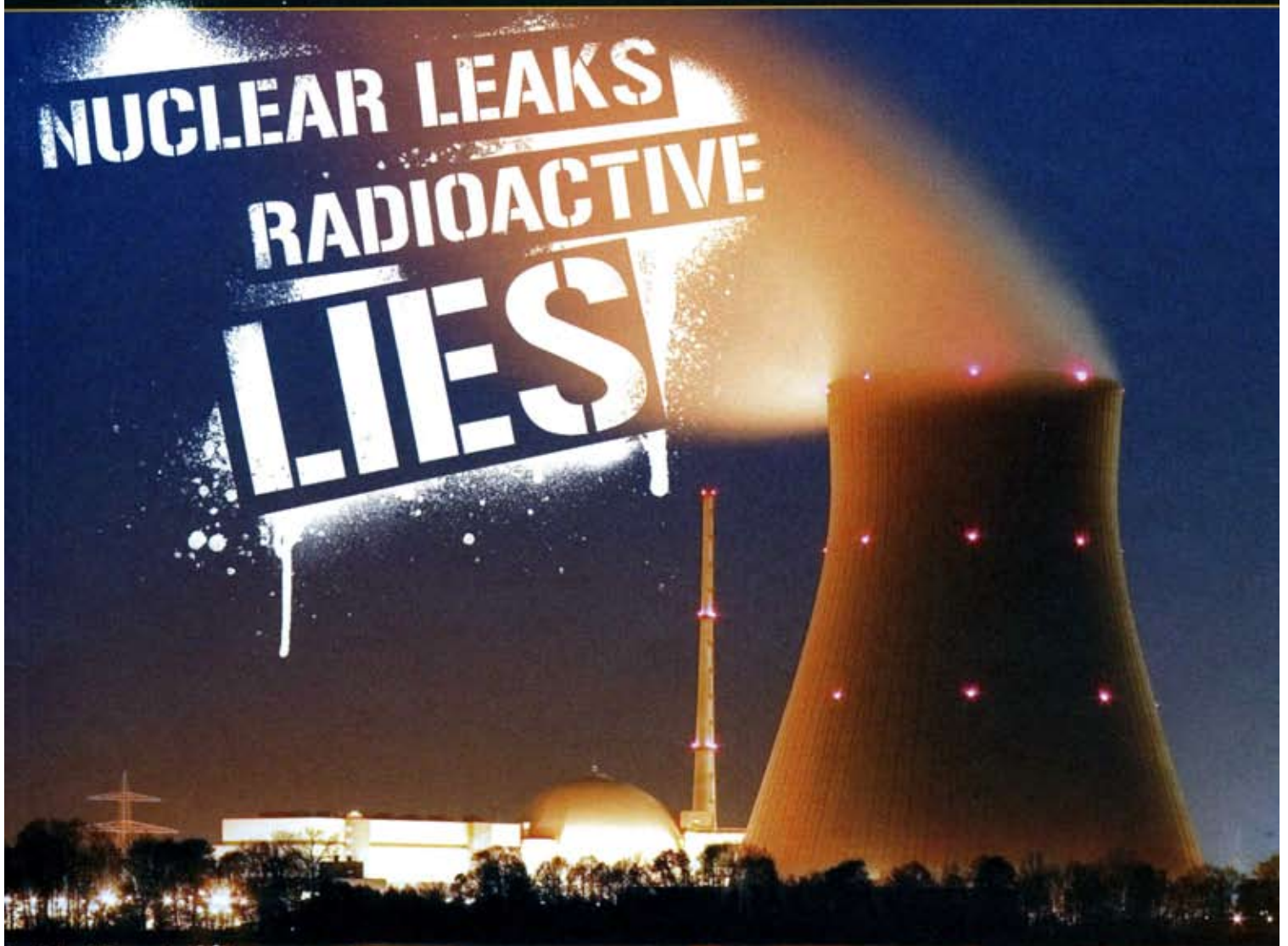


CLEAN WATER • STRONG COMMUNITIES • CITIZEN ACTION

WATERKEEPER

**NUCLEAR LEAKS
RADIOACTIVE
LIES**



President RFK, Jr.
The Waterkeeper Movement

Erin Brockovich
Out Of Environmental Adolescence

Harvey Wasserman
Solartopia

OUT OF Environmental Adolescence

By Erin Brockovich

Like a member of our family, our relationship with the environment comes down to one basic truth. If we take care of it, it will take care of us. If we abuse it, it will abuse us. In other words, what we contribute to the environment we live in will ultimately come back to us in the way we have consumed it. We are either going to benefit from it, or suffer from it, depending on how well we care for it. We face problems in dealing with the environment. Our focus, at times, seems to get lost through false promises, misdirection and a basic misunderstanding of what it is we are all trying to accomplish.

It is time that we shift our perspective. We cannot be overly concerned with making money and not provide for those things that we should be caring about. Unless we start making some major changes in the way that we deal with the environment, I worry that we will not live long enough to see our retirement days. And even if we do make it, we might not be healthy enough to enjoy those final years.

I believe that if, in the name of profit, the little stream that runs behind the factory has to go by the wayside, or if the big beautiful ocean seems like the only place to dump all those nasty chemicals – well then I say we have gone way too far.

I do not believe for one minute that this type of thinking and this type of action is what we truly intend. If the price that all of us have to pay, because of what we've done to our environment, is illness, disease and poverty as we age, I say that price is way too high.

Part of the problem is human nature. In our youth we believe that we are immortal. We smoke cigarettes, eat processed foods, breath and ingest all sorts of pollutants, taking all sorts of foolish risks. But as we mature we begin to see the need for respect for our bodies. Let's face it, the environment is simply an extension of ourselves. Yet we treat it like we, the human race, are teenagers. We must, and I say that *we must* start treating it differently. We cannot continue to use this planet as some type of massive dumping ground.

The environment is either our ally or our enemy and what we get will depend on how we treat it. As

the cliché goes, "The chain is only as strong as its weakest link." This is the struggle. The struggle is the nature of the animal. The animal is the human race and our nature, unless we conquer it, stands between us and our ability to live long, healthy and prosperous lives from the moment of our conception to our final days of reflection. This is not someone else's problem. It is ours as members of the family of humankind.

When any of us suffers from what we have done to our environment, we all suffer. And believe me, that suffering has a human face. In a very real sense, we all share this planet as family members. We cannot hide the consequences of our destruction to environment with shame or excuses. We must realize that there is no shame in having a problem, but there is great shame in ignoring the problem. Once we recognize the problem and extent to which it already hurts our family and ourselves then we can start finding solutions.

It's time for us to grow up. We must all, as an individual, as a community, as a company, as an organization and as a family, think and act differently. This change will require the strength and responsibility that come with maturity. This may be too much to ask of a teenager, but not of an adult. As a government, you can protect the environment and still grow the economy. As a company you can protect the environment and, guess what, you can still make a profit. As people you can protect the environment and still enjoy your life, your family, your health and your retirement days, the gifts that we have all been given. Each one of us needs the air that we breathe and the water that we drink in order to live and love and make it through another day.

This may seem like a high aim, but I can see that the difference is already being made through each and every one of the 156 Waterkeepers around the world. I hope that when you confront a polluter, you are proud. I hope when you demand better enforcement of the laws that protect our waters and our communities, you are proud. I hope that when you declare that access to clean water is not a human privilege but a human right, you are proud. You are facing the problems, you are looking for the solutions and, by God, you are making that difference. **W**

"Let's face it, the environment is simply an extension of ourselves."



On June 22, San Francisco Baykeeper, presented Erin Brockovich with Baykeeper's Dorothy Reid Environmental Leadership Award.