

# Earth Jurisprudence

Reconnecting with the laws and lore of the Earth

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## Rights of Nature come alive in Mexico City

March 2017

Dear <<First Name>>,

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of January, the City of Mexico officially recognised Rights of Nature in its Constitution – becoming the first major city to take such a bold and necessary step. A growing number of states, regions, countries and international bodies have begun the adoption of Rights of Nature provisions – from [Colorado](#) to [Ecuador](#), as well as ordinances in some cities such as [Pittsburgh](#) and [Santa Monica](#). The City of Mexico was inspired by the United Nations Harmony with Nature, and the virtual dialogue on Earth Jurisprudence which took place last year; many of the participants were at the forefront of encouraging this development.

The relevant sections of the new [constitution](#) are paragraphs 2 and 3 of article 13. They assert that, not only will 'the right to the preservation and protection of nature will be guaranteed by the authorities of Mexico City' but, further, that a secondary law shall be passed 'to recognise and regulate the protection of the rights of nature, as formed by all its ecosystems and species as a collective entity with collective rights.' This means that there will be an enforceable law so that the citizens of Mexico City can uphold these Rights of Nature.

Rights of Nature is emerging as a strategy to defend Nature at this time of gross violations – by asserting the intrinsic right of every element of life to exist. As [Thomas Berry](#) put it, 'Every component of the Earth Community has three rights: the right to be, the right to habitat and the right to fulfill its role in the ever-renewing processes of the Earth Community.' These rights need to be recognised and embedded in social values and governance systems, inherent in the way we live respectfully with the larger community of life. Indigenous traditions reflect this practice and these examples emerging across the planet are vital steps towards the just transition so urgently required.

This constitution is one crucial milestone. [In Ecuador](#), for the first time, a court has issued a decision on a constitutionally-based Rights of Nature case. At the next climate negotiations, the UNFCCC COP23 in Bonn, Germany, the [Global Alliance for the Rights of Nature](#) plans to hold a tribunal calling companies and states to account. Across the world, communities, groups, cities and states are taking a stand, demanding that we recognise and respect the Rights of Nature and Mother Earth.



## Earth Jurisprudence and Rights of Nature

In a recent interview we asked attorney Linda Sheehan, to explain her views on the relationship between Earth Jurisprudence and Rights of Nature. Linda, former Executive Director of the [Earth Law Center](#), is now heading up Planet Pledge and has been promoting a legal framework based on the inherent Rights of Nature to exist, thrive, and evolve.

"There are really three elements", says Linda, "there is the philosophy, which is the Earth Jurisprudence world view. How do we think about Nature? Rights of Nature is correcting the legal error, this error that just gave all rights to humans and really in an individualistic sense – not thinking about it in terms of community. And then the third part is the practice. The practice of how we do things. And we need both the philosophy and the law to help keep us on track with our practice." [Read Linda's interview here.](#)

The Earth Law Centre has released its second edition of [Fighting for Our Shared Future: Protecting both Human Rights and Nature's Rights](#), detailing over 200 instances of co-violations of the Rights of Nature and human rights around the world. The report offers solutions, such as UN adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Mother Earth, and how to report on co-violations.



## African Landscape Architects inspired by Nature

As a warm-up to the 1<sup>st</sup> Ethiopian Landscape Forum, held in December 2016, the EiABC (Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development) invited Dr. Mellese Damtie to discuss the role that Earth Jurisprudence can play in shaping Ethiopia's future urban, social, rural, academic, touristic, agricultural, forest, and river landscapes.

Mellese, a lawyer, biologist, Professor of Law at Ethiopia's Civil Service University, and a key actor in the growing African Earth Jurisprudence movement, addressed an enthusiastic group of post-graduate Landscape Architects. After explaining the principles of Earth Jurisprudence and how some countries are adopting the Rights of Nature into their legislation, the group discussed what they can contribute to the health of the Earth through their profession. The participants are now developing ethical codes for landscape architects. "I think I have succeeded in making Earth Jurisprudence relevant for the landscape architects, for them to understand that they have to consider Nature in their work", Mellese happily commented.

"Consider this: all the ants on the planet, taken together, have a biomass greater than that of humans. Ants have been incredibly industrious for millions of years. Yet their productiveness nourishes plants, animals, and soil. Human industry has been in full swing for little over a century, yet it has brought about a decline in almost every ecosystem on the planet. Nature doesn't have a design problem. People do." (William McDonough, Architect)

### Upcoming events

29-30 March 2017, Brussels, Belgium

**Nature's Rights Conference at European Parliament & Expert Meeting.**

To introduce nature's rights and the European Citizen's Initiative to EU institutions. For more detail, [click here.](#)

21 April 2017, United Nations, New York, USA

**UN Harmony with Nature Dialogue on Earth Jurisprudence.**

An interactive dialogue, to be held at the plenary meetings of the 71st session of the UN General Assembly.

21-22 April 2017, Sigtuna, Sweden

**Earth Rights Conference, Sweden 2017**

Dialogue and co-creation to explore the idea that nature, not just humans, have rights. For more detail, [click here.](#)

21-22 June 2017, Cochabamba, Bolivia

**International Symposium on the Rights of Mother Earth**

Within the framework of the OTCA (Amazon Cooperation Organisation), a symposium to advance Earth Jurisprudence at the regional level.

21-24 September 2017, Tiveden, Sweden

**Rune Magic and Shamanism: Original Nordic Knowledge from Mother Earth**

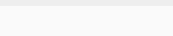
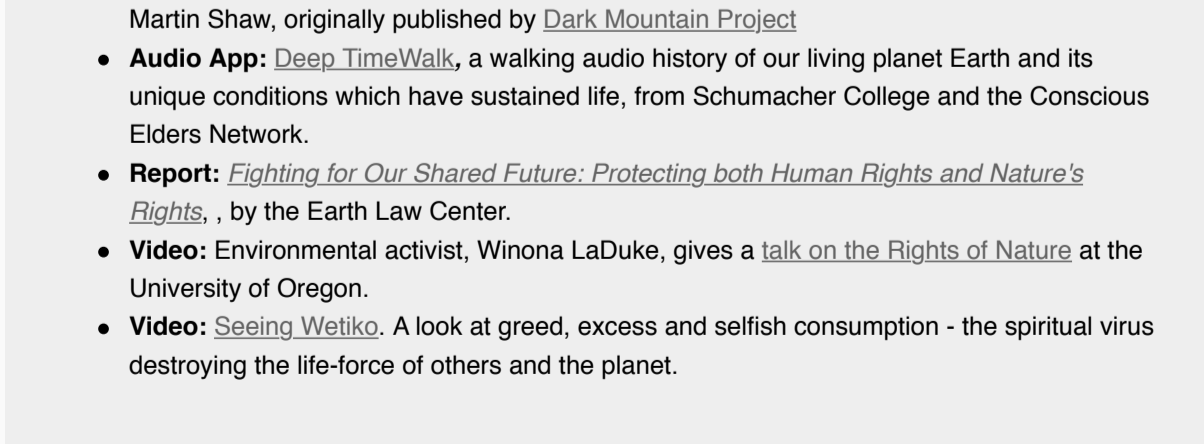
A course with Jörgen I. Eriksson, [click here.](#)

## News

- Ecuadorian Court issues ruling in World's first 'Rights of Nature' case – a very mixed ruling, with important implications for Rights of Nature. [Read more.](#)
- Youth organisations sue the government of Sweden for failing to take responsibility on climate change. [Unofficial translation available here.](#)
- Indigenous people's forces have final say about their land. [Read more.](#)
- Brazil's 'River People' join march with indigenous communities to offer alternative to deforestation. [Read more.](#)
- Indigenous Federation sues Peru over oil extraction in a national park. [Read more.](#)
- OSISA (Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa) supports Africa's growing Earth Jurisprudence movement. [Read more.](#)

## Recommended Reading & Viewing

- **Article:** [On the Rights of Nature](#), by Mari Margil of CELDF - an up-to-date account of Rights of Nature philosophy, laws and cases.
- **Article:** [Buen Vivir of Nature: Indigenous Philosophies Reframing Law](#), by Kiana Herold.
- **Article:** [The Rights of Nature: A manifesto for the rights of nature](#), by David Humphreys.
- **Article:** [The Myths we Live By: Uncolonising our Imagination](#), by Charlotte Du Cann, Martin Shaw, originally published by [Dark Mountain Project](#)
- **Audio App:** [Deep TimeWalk](#), a walking audio history of our living planet Earth and its unique network which have sustained life, from Schumacher College and the Conscious Elders Network.
- **Report:** [Fighting for Our Shared Future: Protecting both Human Rights and Nature's Rights](#), by the Earth Law Center.
- **Video:** Environmental activist, Winona LaDuke, gives a [talk on the Rights of Nature](#) at the University of Oregon.
- **Video:** [Seeing Wetiko](#). A look at greed, excess and selfish consumption - the spiritual virus destroying the life-force of others and the planet.



Working together, to strengthen the African Earth Jurisprudence movement.

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Earth Jurisprudence is the philosophy and practice that recognises the Earth as lawful and ordered. We humans are embedded in her living processes, and our actions should be guided by the primary laws of the Earth.



## Dawi's story of re-uniting with seed and culture, in Ethiopia

Rural women in Africa have a unique perspective on seed, joining the dots between land, biodiversity, climate, the nutritional needs of the family and the ceremonial requirements of the community. At the heart of this relationship between Africa's women farmers and seed, and their Earth-centred approach to agriculture, is a legacy of traditional knowledge that we cannot afford to lose.

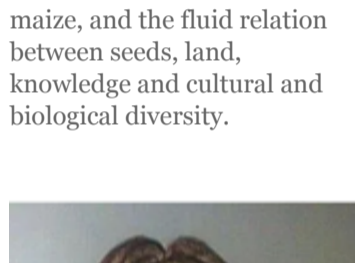
Here, Dawi Mamo, from Gindeberet in South-Western Ethiopia, tells Mersha Yilma of MELCA about the loss of local seed varieties, and how trainings and community dialogues are re-uniting women farmers with their seed and their culture. [Read Dawi's story here.](#)



## Voices of Maíz

For many communities across the Americas, maize is the centre of creation, and her cycle of life has made possible the lives of humanity as well as a way of life based on community, coexistence, harmony, reciprocity and respect. Maize is not only a food, but a deep part of identity.

[Voices of Maíz](#) is a beautiful and collective process of storytelling with Indigenous maize keepers throughout North and South America - a collaborative process, coordinated by Karen Swift, which explores the role of Indigenous cultures in the creation and conservation of maize, and the fluid relation between seeds, land, knowledge and cultural and biological diversity.



## 'Going back to my roots'

Mashudu Takalani, a young woman from the Venda tradition in Limpopo Province, north eastern South Africa, works with EarthLore, accompanying communities in their path to revive their indigenous knowledge and practices.

In this heart-warming interview, Mashudu tells of her own journey for the first time, having overcome the ridicule she and her family had experienced because of her mother's 'calling' to follow her tradition. [Read Mashudu's story.](#)