



## Crimes Against Nature

By Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.  
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### Introduction

The country's most prominent environmental attorney, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., lifts the veil on how George W. Bush's administration has eviscerated the laws that protect our nation's air, water, public lands, and wildlife, in order to enrich its corporate paymasters. The White House's lavish subsidies and tax breaks are allowing the corporations to profit by poisoning the public and eliminating security at more than 15,000 nuclear and chemical facilities that are prime targets for terrorist attacks.

Kennedy shows how right-wing White House ideologies have taken the "conserve" out of conservatism and has trampled the free-market democracy in favor of a kind of corporate-crony capitalism. A shocking book for Democrats and Republicans, **Crimes Against Nature** is about the corrosive effects of corporate corruption on our core American values.

### Discussion Questions

1. **Crimes Against Nature** is about "the effect of corporate cronyism on free-market capitalism and democracy." (p. 4) What are the primary examples of "corporate cronyism" detailed in **Crimes Against Nature**? What industries have benefited the most?
2. The author presents a series of egregious misuses of the environment, greed, cold-heartedness, irresponsibility, manipulation, and outright chicanery. Which of the stories (i.e., pork farmers, mercury, energy bill, mountain-top mining, national security) shocked you the most and why?
3. In nearly every abuse recounted in **Crimes Against Nature**, the author points out the campaign contributions to the Republican party from the industry that benefited. Do you believe that these were payoffs? Should campaign finance laws be changed? How?
4. The author paints a compelling case for concern about the environment being of equal importance to Democrats and Republicans == He argues that all people want to drink clean water and eat healthy food. Why hasn't this issue united the two parties more?
5. How was George W. Bush able to "greenwash" his abysmal environmental record in Texas? How has his environmental record and political manipulations as president mimicked his time as governor of Texas?
6. One of the most troubling aspects of the Bush agenda described in **Crimes Against Nature** is the use of language by the administration (i.e., naming the anti-conservation committee "Wise Use"). Name other ways in which the administration has used language to cloak its agenda. What is the best defense against this "spin"?
7. Hitler's sidekick, Hermann Goering said, "Voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the peacemakers for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country." Do you believe this is true? Discuss ways this statement correlates to what is happening in the United States, according to the author.
8. "While claiming to embrace its values, the Bush administration has stolen the soul of the Republican Party." If this is true, why haven't Republicans been able to stop it? When Republicans were originally labeled "conservative," do you think it referred to the environment? With the Democratic party perceived as the environmental party == or "conservation" of the environment == why haven't they co-opted the term "conservative" for themselves? Should they?
9. Are you surprised by the author's position: "Free-market capitalism is the best thing that could happen to our environment, our economy, our country?" (p. 190) Do you agree with him? Does free-market capitalism automatically lead to responsible environmental behavior? Why or why not? Did it lead to corporate environmental responsibility in the early days of capitalism?
10. Kennedy states, "While communism is the control of business by government, fascism is the control of government by business." (p. 193) Are these accurate definitions? Why or why not?

### About the Author

Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., is senior attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council, chief prosecuting attorney for Riverkeeper, and president of Waterkeeper Alliance. He is also a clinical professor and supervising attorney at the Environmental Litigation Clinic at Pace University School of Law. A former assistant district attorney for New York City, he is the co-author of **The Riverkeepers: Two Activists Fight to Reclaim Our Environment as a Basic Human Right**.