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**50 Shades of Green** Posted by [admin admin](https://deansbeans.com/javatrekker/50-Shades-of-Green) on 10/29/2015

**Is Where You Sit Really Where You Stand?**

I graduated Williams College in 1975 BC (Before Computers).  At that time, many of us wanted to dedicate our lives to saving the planet from deforestation, nuclear disaster, industrial pollution, species decline and more.  Yet at that time there were no jobs, no institutions and no well worn pathways to participation in a greener world.  So most of us disappeared into the ordinary make-a-living world, doing volunteer work and activism on the side.  We were the First Wave.

Folks graduating these days are more fortunate.  Environmentalism has rebounded after a sonorous, selfish turn of the Millennium into a vibrant world of eco-opportunity.  You can work full time for government, corporations, advocacy groups or even start your own eco-friendly social enterprise or small business.  You are the Second Wave.  Yet there are at least fifty shades of green, and it is important to identify where your work falls on the spectrum of green commitment.  Does your level of participation really reflect your values and commitment to a greener world?

Several examples should illustrate both the range of possibilities and the more subtle issue of effectiveness and whether your work truly reflects your green values.

First, the government.  The height of environmental commitment is working full time for the EPA, right?  It certainly can be.  But what happens when decisions are made that compromise or betray green values for political ends?  Do you quit? Register your concern and carry on?  This was an especially poignant choice for folks in the EPA Enforcement Division under recent administrations that cut back enforcement funding to the point that even good clean water and endangered species regulations could not be enforced for lack of funds in the division.  I was once offered the job as Assistant Administrator of Environmental Protection for the US Virgin Islands.  I would write and work to enforce environmental laws.  I took the job only to find out that my boss was also the largest developer in the islands.  We were trying to protect mangroves while he was ripping them up and filling them in for new buildings.  Nope, couldn’t do it, even though it sounded like a dream job for a young environmental attorney.

Green jobs in the corporate world? Some companies are making serious, committed efforts to change their behavior and impacts.  Patagonia and Toyota are leaders in this.  Then there are Starbucks, Green Mountain, Coca-Cola, Honest Tea and even Seventh Generation, where the professed policies on water use, palm oil, treatment of indigenous peoples and more IMHO shade the green towards black (profits). Great pay and benefits, fantastic marketing and brand image – but do they really advance the green agenda or merely make a good living off it?

Social enterprise can be a wonderful way to live your values.  That’s why I started Dean’s Beans twenty three years ago.  But even here, unless you look deep at your buying practices, suppliers, ecological and cultural impact, you might be a lot less green than you think.  One such young company I met was giving a teeshirt to a poor African child if you bought a pricy teeshirt from them.  Sounds great until I found out that the tees were made in sweatshops using child labor in Asia.  The concept wasn’t ill-intended, just ill-designed and executed.

The point here is that there is more to environmental change than what is found in a job title, a marketing claim or a set of policies.  Look deeply into whatever you are engaged in.  Does it really make a difference? Are you content with your role and level of commitment?  There are many ways to participate in a greener world.  Where you stand on the spectrum of fifty shades of green is a political, ethical and economic choice dictated by your personal circumstances, beliefs and place in the universe.  Identify your current shade of green. Is it where you truly stand?

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Forum: website for Dean’s Beans, a fair trade coffee company. From its site:

“Great Coffee Making the World a Better Place:Our Mission--For over two decades our mission has been clear: To use high quality specialty coffee as a vehicle for progressive change throughout the coffeelands of Asia, Africa and the Americas. We do this through activism, ecological responsibility and innovative direct development programs with our cooperative partners.”