

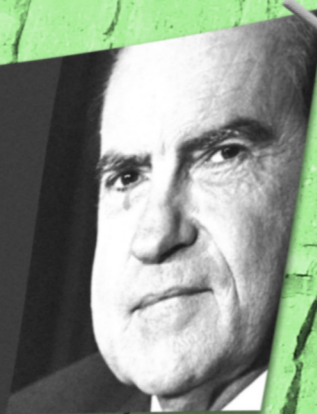
MISDIRECTING CLIMATE ACTION

1970-71 Earth Day and 'Keep America Beautiful'

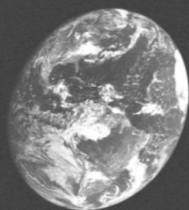
By D. Hunter Schwarz - Yello.substack.com

**KEEP
AMERICA
BEAUTIFUL
FOR ME.**

It's Your Duty.



**PROTECT
OUR
PLANET:**
Get Involved
In Litter Picking!



From the first Earth Day 50 years ago to today's climate crisis, compelling images and strong visual communication has raised awareness and served as a powerful call to action for environmental causes. But some images have been more effective than others.

The inaugural Earth Day, celebrated on April 22, 1970, was the result of gripping images of an oil spill off the coast of Santa Barbara, Calif., the year before. The disaster led to images of dead animals washed up on the shore and birds covered in oil. President Nixon said the spill had "touched the conscience of the American people." It also inspired Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wisc.) to start a day dedicated to the planet after he flew out of Los Angeles and saw the spill from his plane's window, Earth Day coordinator Denis Hayes told Pacific Standard. For its part, NASA has been

credited for its Apollo missions and the moon landing, which also occurred in 1969. The missions' remarkable photos of the Earth showed the planet as an "isolated ecosystem floating in space," influencing attitudes about protecting it, according to the Center for Lunar Science and Exploration.

Much of the environmental emphasis in the mid-20th century was about littering, a focus that was intentional.

A conglomerate of packaging and consumer companies, including Coca-Cola and the Dixie Cup Company, formed a group in 1953 called Keep America Beautiful that created ad campaigns that put the onus for a cleaner planet on consumers as opposed to companies. It shifted the discussion away from regulating production and packaging.

In 1971, Keep America Beautiful released their most

well-known ad, which showed a man dressed in traditional Native American clothing. The ad became known as "The Crying Indian" commercial because of the single tear that rolled down the man's face after he encountered pollution and garbage. The tagline "Don't Mess with Texas" was also the result of an anti-littering campaign. Created by the Austin-based ad agency GSD&M for the Texas Department of Transportation, it debuted in 1986 in an ad starring Stevie Ray Vaughan that

aired during the Cotton Bowl. The campaign targeted males ages 16 to 24 and resulted in a dramatic reduction of roadside litter. It brought in \$143,000 in royalties for the state from 2004 to 2016, according to Dallas News.

Environmental visual communication has since shifted from recycling and litter to climate change at large, and companies have adopted messaging to present themselves as environmentally conscious, even if it's not accurate. It's a practice known as...

...**"Greenwashing"**.

Verb

To make people believe that your company is doing more to protect the environment than it really is.

Cambridge Dictionary