

BOOKCHIN

A larger than life personality who
changed the face of social theory.

Murray Bookchin

COMMITTED TO SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE



Murray Bookchin was a philosopher and social theorist born in the Bronx, New York in 1921. He was a pioneer of ecological thought, and lived in Burlington, Vermont between the early 1970s and his death in 2006.

A Prescient Thinker

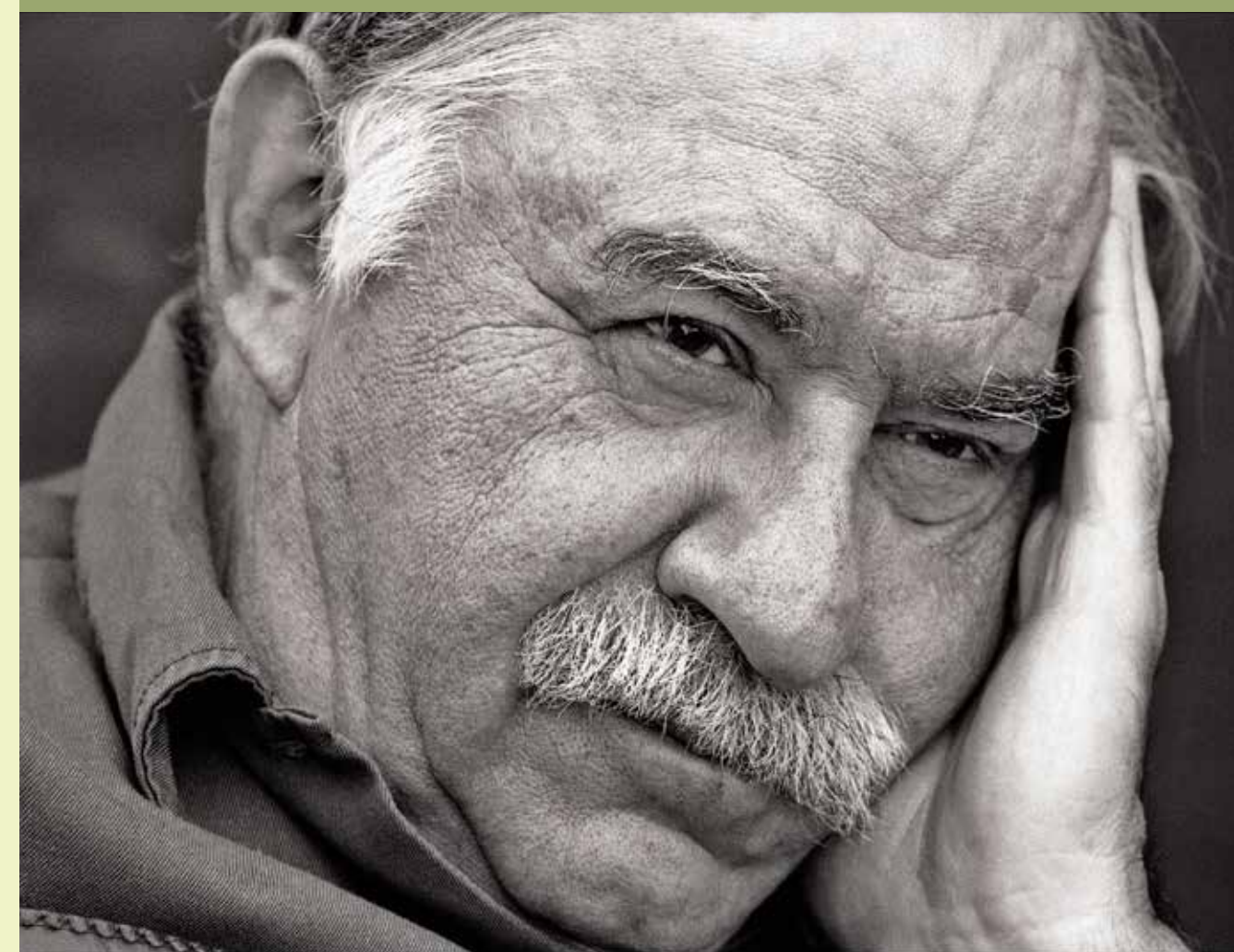
Politically active from an early age, Bookchin served as a streetcorner orator in New York City and a labor organizer. He published a book-length article on chemicals in food in 1952, and from that point on started to explore the intersection of ecology and politics. In 1962 his work, *Our Synthetic Environment*, published under the pseudonym Lewis Herber, came out 6 months before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which has been credited with starting the modern environmental movement. In an essay titled, "Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" published in 1964, he warned of the probability of global climate change if we did not curb emissions of greenhouse gases. Throughout his work, Bookchin brought forth a radical analysis that explored the social roots of the environmental crisis, one which has proven to be prescient.

Drawn to Vermont

Bookchin first moved to Burlington in 1971, drawn to the state's environmental ethic and our tradition of local town meeting democracy. His writing drew a direct link between top-down forms of economic and political organization and ecological degradation. He put forth the central idea that to end the historically disastrous attempt to dominate nature, we must eliminate all forms of domination in human society. He elaborated these ideas in a philosophy he called social ecology, and detailed a political practice based on the concept of direct democracy embodied in the Vermont town meeting tradition.



"If we do not do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable."



"To speak of limits to growth under a capitalistic market economy is as meaningless as to speak of limits of warfare under a warrior society."



"The assumption that what currently exists must necessarily exist is the acid that corrodes all visionary thinking." – Murray Bookchin



Institute for Social Ecology

In 1974 Bookchin and cultural anthropologist Dan Chodorkoff founded the Institute for Social Ecology, initially based at Goddard College in Plainfield, Vermont. The Institute, at its original center at Cate Farm, developed practical applications of solar energy, wind power and small scale organic aquaculture, utilizing experiential learning to introduce these technologies to Vermont. Bookchin understood the potential for these "alternative technologies" to address the growing environmental crisis, but insisted that they be rooted in a larger matrix of decentralized, directly democratic social change.

A World Inspired by His Ideas

Bookchin went on to write hundreds of articles and 25 books, which influenced growing ecological movements in Vermont and around the world, including the anti-nuclear movement, ecofeminism, Green politics, the alter-globalization movement, Occupy Wall Street, and the climate justice movement. His work has been translated into 15 languages and provided ideas that have recently taken shape in municipalist movements that have gained political power across Europe, particularly in Spain, as well as in the Kurdish region of northern Syria known as Rojava, where 4 million people live in a system of Democratic Confederalism inspired by Bookchin's ideas.

A Great Deal More to Learn

Bookchin's legacy lives on in Vermont and around the world. In 2021, his centenary year, we invite Vermonters to become better acquainted with the work of this important and prescient thinker. We still have a great deal to learn from him.

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