



Planetwalker: 22 Years of Walking. 17 Years of Silence.

By John Francis PhD

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When the struggle to save oil-soaked birds and restore blackened beaches left him feeling frustrated and helpless, John Francis decided to take a more fundamental and personal stand—he stopped using all forms of motorized transportation. Soon after embarking on this quest that would span two decades and two continents, the young man took a vow of silence that endured for 17 years. It began as a silent environmental protest, but as a young African-American man, walking across the country in the early 1970s, his idea of "the environment" expanded beyond concern about pollution and loss of habitat to include how we humans treat each other and how we can better communicate and work together to benefit the earth.

Through his silence and walking, he learned to listen, and along the way, earned college and graduate degrees in science and environmental studies. The United Nations appointed him goodwill ambassador to the world's grassroots communities and the U.S. government recruited him to help address the Exxon Valdez disaster.

Was he crazy? How did he live and earn all those degrees without talking? An amazing human-interest story, with a vital message, *Planetwalker* is also a deeply personal and engaging coming-of-age odyssey—the positive experiences, the challenging times, the characters encountered, and the learning gained along the way.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—Francis was green before it was the popular thing to be. On January 17, 1971, he saw a half-million-gallon oil spill near the Golden Gate Bridge, and a year later, in an attempt to do something positive for the environment, he chose to start walking, forsaking motorized vehicles of any kind. He walked everywhere, and on his 27th birthday, feeling again that he was not doing enough for the world, he took a vow of silence. For the next 17 years, he spoke not a word. But his life didn't stop and he never sat still. Francis managed to walk across the United States and, while he did, he earned an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in science and environmental studies; finally, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, he completed a PhD in land resources. He learned how to play the banjo, and the five-string Conqueror became his walking companion, people magnet, and calling card. He continued his pedestrian trek, took a job at the office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and eventually became UNEP's Goodwill Ambassador to the World's Grassroots Communities, and walked and sailed to the tip of South America. *Planetwalker* is an inspiring story that will make teens think and may help them to realize that global change is possible through individual action.—*Joanne Ligamari, Twin Rivers United School District, Sacramento, CA*

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Review

"It's a remarkably insightful, poetic, and inspiring story, one that's sure to make readers think more carefully about their own styles of living." — *Booklist*

From the Trade Paperback edition.

About the Author

John Francis, Ph.D. is the Founder and Director of Planetwalk, a nonprofit environmental education organization. He travels around the world speaking on pilgrimage and change, and on Planetlines, an environmental studies curriculum based on the walking pilgrimage, which he is developing for K-12 schools and universities.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Miguel:

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Adrian Kao:

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Ruth Little:

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