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## The Eco-Martyrs of 2018 and Maslow: Is Self-Actualization Only for Colonizers?

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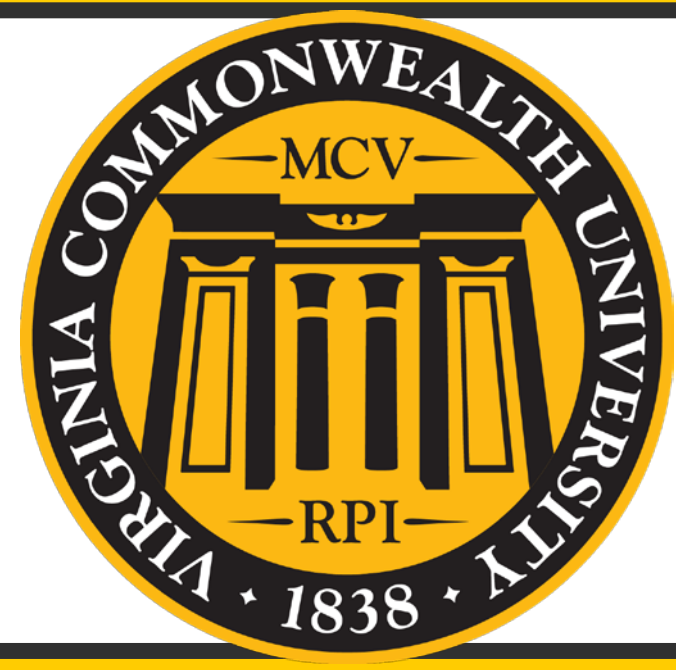
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# Is Self Actualization only for Colonizers?; The Introduction of Eco Martyrs as Self-Actualizing Individuals

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## Introduction

Abraham Maslow's theory of Self-Actualizing individuals is a composite of 14 attributes linked to certain behaviors that only a small number of humans ever reach. Maslow's theory has often been misinterpreted through what Dr. Bland and Dr. DeRobertis call "academic game of telephone" (2017) and has been inappropriately interpreted to be a pyramidal lockstep progression rather than the holistic dynamic system (Bergen, 2008). We wish to show how a lockstep progression interpretation is incorrect when applying the Self-Actualizing concept; We will be using Calvin Hall's expanded 16 characteristics to explain how our eco-martyrs exhibit self actualizing tendencies.

**Holmes Alberto Niscue**



Holmes Alberto Niscue exemplifies Maslow's 4th trait of self actualizers; that they are problem-centered rather than self-centered individuals. Niscue was an indigenous leader of the Unipa organization in Columbia and received many death threats surrounding his work in defending the rights of the indigenous people's lands. Niscue continued with his efforts to protect the indigenous people of Columbia even after receiving many death threats and ultimately was shot only a hundred feet from the police station. Niscue shows Maslow's 4th trait due to his relentless work in putting the problems of people in front of his own.

**Benjamin Ramos**



Maslow's 9th characteristic is the ability to identify with humankind, this characteristic is shown through genuine love for people as well as the ability to extend one's empathy to the whole of humanity. Benjamin Ramos exhibits these characteristics as he was a human rights advocate as well as a pro-bono lawyer for people who suffered from a violation of their human rights. Ramos was murdered by a motorcycle drive-by and had recently been providing legal services to six families of those slain in a recent massacre. While offering his services to those in need for free Ramos not only exhibited great kindness and empathy for humankind, he also showed great resolve as he knew his life could be at stake due to his charitable work.

**Teurn Soknai**



Maslow's 2<sup>nd</sup> Characteristic entails that the person accepts themselves, others, and the natural world around them for who and what they truly are. Teurn Soknai was born into the Bunong Indigenous people who are regarded as the sacred protectors of Cambodia's natural forests. Teurn was always surrounded by the trees and the forest and from a young age was aware of the importance of the forest and wildlife that inhabited it. While working for the Ministry of environment, Teurn Soknai was murdered after confiscating chainsaws and motorbikes used in the illegal logging trade. Soknai clearly exhibits Maslow's second characteristics by accepting his role as protector of the trees at a young age and understanding that greed and corruption could cost him his life in this pursuit of justice for the forest.

**Pedro Vielma**



Maslow's 10th Characteristic of Self-Actualizing individuals is that they have a deeper and more intimate/profound relationship than the average adult. This characteristic is shown through the life of Pedro Vielma. Vielma was a well-known small farmer and organizer of a council of socialist producers. During an ongoing legal dispute over land rights, Vielma helped to support those in his community with access to crucial resources on his lands such as water and a place to bathe. On August 2nd Pedro Vielma was murdered after trying to defend members of his community who had come to his property to bathe, armed men attacked these peasants and when Vielma intervened asking for peace he was met only with violence.

**Ajit M Naik**



Maslow's 16th characteristic was that Self-Actualizing individuals are able to transcend the environment around them rather than just coping with it. Ajit M Naik exhibits Maslow's 16th characteristic in his lifelong fight for the Kali River. Naik was a 57-year-old lawyer living in Karnataka India who used his skills as a lawyer to spearhead efforts to rid the Kali river of pollution. While fighting for the Kali, Naik also fought against illegal logging and illegal dams being built alongside the river that negatively impacted the locals. Naik exemplifies the ability to rise above one's surroundings as he was not complicit in the ongoing pollution of the Kali river. He stood against the grain and fought for what he believed in and ultimately it cost him his life.

## Conclusion

Our martyrs clearly exhibit tendencies of self-actualizing individuals all while missing various portions of their "lower needs." This dynamic of being able to focus on higher level of functioning while missing or lacking adequate fundamental needs is evident that Maslow's self-actualizing ability is not a lockstep progression but more holistically focused. Research is currently exploring the misconceptions surrounding Maslow's Self Actualization theory While only 5 of our 16 martyr's are presented here, we believe that each martyr exemplifies all 16 qualities set forth by Calvin Hall and have chosen these 5 to help exemplify a specific quality.

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