

RACHEL HAYS & JOSÉ VÁZQUEZ

## AV & Software CONSUMER

**The Cost of Cool.** 2001. Video Project (45 Lusk Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94107). PLANET/English and Spanish versions available, along with a study guide. Running length: 15 minutes. \$95 for in-school use, \$34.95 for home use. [www.videoproject.net](http://www.videoproject.net).

**The Cost of Cool** is a well-grounded in environmental issues that confronts a number of environmental and moral dilemmas well presented as the chief cause of distinctly American biological consumption. Narrated by Alexandra Paul, the film addresses such diverse issues as

RACHEL HAYS holds a Ph.D. from the University of California at Davis, and has taught courses at the college level. With a B.S. from San Diego State University, Hays moved to the University of California at Davis for her M.S. degree. For several years Hays has done research for the Resources Ecology Laboratory at Fort Collins, CO, studying nutrient cycling and soil organisms. She has published articles in several popular and scientific periodicals. She can be reached through NABT, 12030 Sunrise Drive, #110, Reston, VA 20190 or e-mail: [hays\\_r@world-net.com](mailto:hays_r@world-net.com)

JOSÉ VÁZQUEZ is a Professor in the General Studies Program at New York University. He holds a graduate degree from the University of Puerto Rico and a graduate degree from the University of Pennsylvania. His teaching experience ranges from elementary school to college. He has a predominant passion in educating gifted students. His address is Shimkin Hall 327, NYU, 50 West 4th Street, New York, NY 10012; [jrv2@nyu.edu](mailto:jrv2@nyu.edu).

**Millennium.** Available for \$86 (in NTSC, PAL, and SECAM formats).

The video **Populations on Earth** begins with a simple and important question – “Is the world overpopulated with people?” Using footage from over 20 countries around the world, the program traces the history of humankind from the days of *Homo sapiens* through the 21st century. Numerous examples illustrate the complexity of this issue, allowing viewers to sample facts and form opinions about the pros and cons of population growth.

The program is divided into four segments. The first segment presents a concise overview of human socio-cultural history. Beginning with pre-history, the narrator describes how changes from hunter/gatherer groups to agricultural and industrialized societies contributed to longer life spans, specialization of labor, and declining death rates. Surprisingly, the video program does not limit itself to western civilization: it draws its examples from countries around the globe, including Egypt, South America, China, and the Middle East. I was fascinated by the similarities among cultures, and how cultural and social changes affected population growth, in some cases increasing it by a hundred fold!

The second and third segments provide evidence and theories that support both sides of the population growth debate. On one hand, scientists and citizens argue that the world is seriously overpopulated and that more people will only bring more problems in the future. Diminishing food supply, a limited natural resource base, and the accumulation of greenhouse gases are just a few of the facts presented to support this argument. On the other hand, there are those who challenge this view, claiming that more people also bring more hands and minds to improve the quality of life on the planet. They acknowledge that more people bring specific problems, but that these problems are being solved

and that we are living longer and better lives. Examples that support this argument include higher living standards, decreasing pollution, lower infant mortality rates, and increasing wealth per capita. Citing Mark Twain, this camp believes that “The reports of my death [the Earth] have been much exaggerated.”

The final segment focuses on one problem that is not easily solved – species extinction. As populations continue to grow, they impinge on the natural ranges of numerous species, including the Panda bear and Galapagos tortoise. Both camps of the population growth debate have different solutions to the problem, from halting destruction of native habitats to improving genetic engineering techniques so that plants can be more productive and species recovery is accelerated. Interestingly, the video has a strong stewardship message. Nowhere do they explore the possibility that animals and plants also have a say in the matter. Just look at the problems with cougars in the Pacific Northwest or bears in national parks. If we move too far into their ranges, they may just start looking for food in our cities and towns!

One thing that I appreciated about the video is its emphasis on balance. Equal time is devoted to exploring the population growth debate from both sides. The information is current and I could detect no apparent bias in the interpretation. However, I found myself wondering about the types of evidence presented to support each side of the debate. On the anti-population growth side, much of the evidence was scientific in nature. The video focused on research on pollution, global warming, and natural resources. For the other camp, the discussion focused more on sociological issues. Although I value research from both traditions, some viewers may find that this lack of scientific balance weakens the pro-population growth argument.

Aside from this balance issue, I found no other pitfalls in the video. It is well paced, engaging, and allows the viewer to make an informed decision in the end. By spanning the globe for examples, teachers will find the video useful in science and history classes. In fact, I plan to use it as an example for integrating scientific and historical discussions. After all, the science of today is the product of our current priorities. Someday, we may look back and see connections between society and science that eluded us in the past.

José M. Rios  
Assistant Professor  
University of Washington  
Tacoma, WA 98402

## DINOSAUR BIOLOGY

**Dinosaurs 3D.** 2001. Megasystems (5126 South Royal Atlanta Drive, Tucker, GA 30084). 1-888-GLASKAR/[www.glaskar.com](http://www.glaskar.com). CD-ROM. \$34.95.

### System Requirements

Operating System – Windows 3.11, Windows 95 or higher, Windows NT

- CPU – 486DX/66MHz
- RAM – 8 MB RAM (12 recommended) screen
- Screen Display – 256-color SVGS (16 bit recommended)
- CD-ROM Speed – 6x CD-ROM drive or better
- Available HD space – 8 MB or more
- Audio – Windows compatible sound card (8 bit recommended)
- Other – Mouse or other pointing device

**Author's note:** I ran **Dinosaurs 3D** on a 1.5 Ghz Pentium IV, 512 MB RAM, running windows XP (©2002) and it worked fine.