

Social and Environmental Justice; The Fabric of Sustainable Communities

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Workshop Objectives

- Provide definitions of Environmental Justice
- Give brief history of EJ movement, studies and laws
- Explore why social and environmental justice are fundamental to a sustainable world community
- Review the connection of economic systems and environmental justice
- Look at root causes, solutions and explore resources for further learning and future involvement in Environmental and Social Justice
- Reminders about why to stay involved...



Defining Environmental Justice



The following 17 principles were developed At The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (Oct. 1991)

1. Affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction
2. Demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all people, free from any form of discrimination
3. Mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.



Environmental Justice...

4. Calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water and food.
5. Affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self determination of all peoples.
6. Demands the cessation of production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.



Defining Environmental Justice



Environmental Justice...

7. Demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation
8. Affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy environment without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.



9. Protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.



Environmental Justice...

10. Considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. Must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts and covenants affirming sovereignty and self determination.
12. Affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and provide fair access for all to the full range of resources.



Environmental Justice...

13. Calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color
14. Opposes the destructive operations of multinational corporations.
15. Opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.



Environmental Justice...

16. Calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
17. Requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.



The Environmental Protection Agency's definition:

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including racial, ethnic, or socio-economic groups should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local and tribal programs and policies” (U.S. EPA , 1998).



Environmental Racism Defined



Racial discrimination in environmental policy making and the enforcement of regulations and laws; the deliberate targeting of people of color communities for toxic and hazardous waste facilities; the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities; and the history of excluding people of color from the leadership of the environmental movement. (Chavis, 1991)



Historical Threads in the Environmental Justice Movement

- The Native American/American Indian experience
- The Civil Rights Movement
- The Anti-Toxics and Farm Labor Movement
- Academia
- The Labor Movement
- Traditional environmentalists
- The First National People of Color Summit
- Grass roots activism



EJ Key Events, and Research

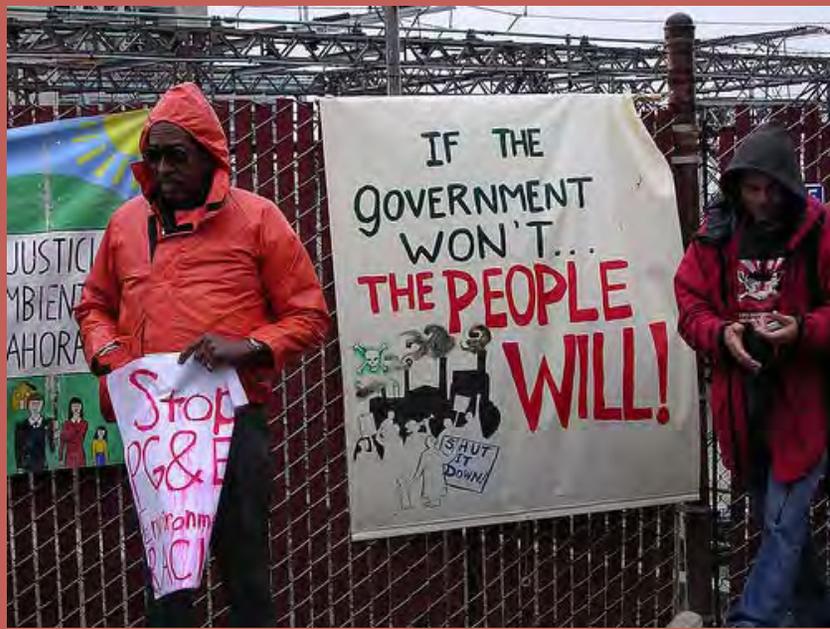
- **1971-** U.S. Council on Environmental Quality acknowledges disproportionate environmental risk levels to racial/ethnic minorities and socioeconomically disadvantage groups
- **1982-** Warren County Protest over PCB landfill-led to GAO study and report
- **1983 -**
 - Robert Bullard's Published article, *Solid Waste Sites and the Black Houston Community*
 - U.S. GAO study revealed 3 out of 4 hazardous waste landfills in SE U.S. were located in African American Communities (1/5 of the population in this area).
 - Urban Environment Conference framing toxics struggle in terms of power, class and racial inequality



EJ Key Events, and Research: *Continued*

- 1986 Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A. and Mothers of East L.A. stopped incinerator project and other hazardous projects.
- 1987-Report of Study findings “Toxic Waste and Race” by United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice
- 1990
 - Green Peace Report
 - Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality
 - Michigan Conference Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards
- 1991-First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit
- 1992- National Law Review Journal reports “Unequal Protection” in U.S. EPA enforcement.





EJ Key Events, and Research: *Continued*

- 1992 -United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
- 1994- President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898
- 1997- Court ruled against big polluters for title VI violations, Chester, Penn.
- 1998- Chemical Co., Shintech (polyvinyl plant) was defeated by activists, from allowing an \$800 million polyvinyl plant to be located in Convent, Louisiana.
- 2003-Report-Not in my Backyard (NIMBY) report by U.S. Commission on Civil Rights for
- Ongoing and increasing news from 03-08, the movement is on fire



What Are Some Root Causes for this Movement and How is it Connected to Sustainability?

- History-Colonization of North America-
“Discovering America”
 - Destruction of indigenous cultural, environmental and spiritual values
- Economic System-GDP-growth at any cost
 - Slavery
 - Oppression-construction of whiteness as a measure for being “American”
 - Use of divide and rule political strategies
- Corporate power structure-allows more rights for business than individuals
- Unequal distribution of wealth-the majority are just trying to survive while the few are participating in gluttony...how can this ever be sustainable?



Root causes con't

- Commercial Media-main source of entertainment of U.S. public-advertising works for the benefit of the “market economy” in many insidious ways
 - Globalization allows both what we do here and what we are ***not allowed to do here*** to happen elsewhere
- *Through the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)



- Corporate Funded Elections-Conflict of interest?
Who's protecting us?
- General lack of public awareness

Solutions-what can we do?

- Learn more about these topics...keep learning....challenge yourself to keep open to new information and understanding-see the resources at the end
- Vote, stay involved, informed and aware of your rights and the laws that do or do not protect you, your family and your community
 - <http://www.votesmart.org/>
 - <http://www.lcv.org/>



Solutions

- Speak up on behalf of others with less privilege/power than you... what happens to others *impacts all of us.*
- Learn more about economic alternatives like:
 - *Genuine Progress Indicator* (Redefining Progress) and <http://www.rprogress.org/index.htm>
 - *Natural Capitalism* (Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, L. Hunter Lovins) <http://www.natcap.org/>



Solutions

- Find out how these issues are impacting your community and those who attend your college
- Help others to understand how our health and social welfare directly impacts our ability to consider sustainable choices in our own lives



Solutions

- Understand your connection to inequality and what you do to support or inhibit it (**Are you aware of what you invest in/purchase and the policies and companies you support?**)
- Know that what you continue to learn transforms you and all those who you encounter on your journey, remember the following facts to share with others.....



*FACTS THAT WE SHOULD KNOW ABOUT
OUR WORLD
MAY THEY IMPASSION AND INSPIRE YOU
TO ACT...*

- Half the world — nearly three billion people — live on less than two dollars a day.
- The GDP (Gross Domestic Product) of the 41 Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (567 million people) is less than the wealth of the world's 7 richest people combined.
- Nearly a billion people entered the 21st century unable to read a book or sign their names.
- Less than one per cent of what the world spent every year on weapons was needed to put every child into school by the year 2000 and yet it didn't happen.



Facts that We should know

- 1 billion children live in poverty (1 in 2 children in the world). 640 million live without adequate shelter, 400 million have no access to safe water, 270 million have no access to health services. 10.6 million died in 2003 before they reached the age of 5 (or roughly 29,000 children per day).
- Rural areas account for three in every four people living on less than US 1\$ a day and a similar share of the world population is suffering from malnutrition. However, urbanization is not synonymous with human progress.
- Urban slum growth is outpacing urban growth by a wide margin. Approximately half the world's population now live in cities and towns. In 2005, one out of three urban dwellers (approximately 1 billion people) was living in slum conditions.



Facts that WE should know

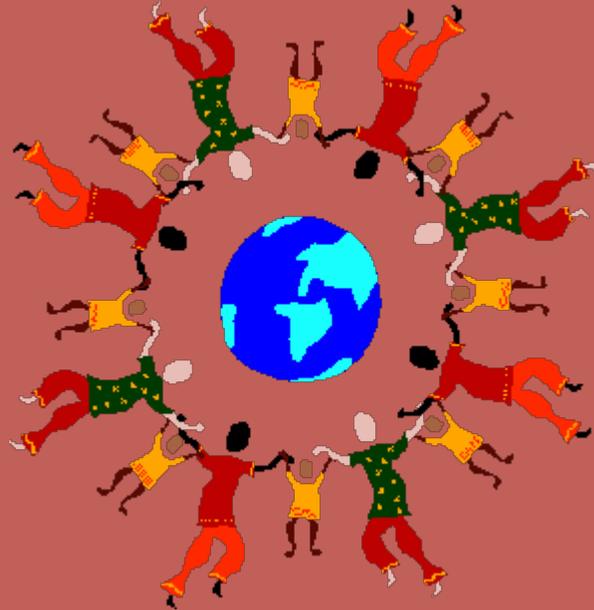
- In developing countries some 2.5 billion people are forced to rely on biomass—fuelwood, charcoal and animal dung—to meet their energy needs for cooking. In sub-Saharan Africa, over 80 percent of the population depends on traditional biomass for cooking, as do over half of the populations of India and China.
- Indoor air pollution resulting from the use of solid fuels [by poorer segments of society] is a major killer. It claims the lives of 1.5 million people each year, more than half below the age of five: that is 4000 deaths a day. To put this number in context, it exceeds total deaths from malaria and rivals the number of deaths from tuberculosis.

<http://www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Facts.asp>



INSPIRING QUOTES

■ “BE THE CHANGE YOU WANT TO SEE IN THE WORLD” Gandhi



■ “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has” Margaret Mead



Sources and Resources

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- ❏ Reichtschaffen, C. and Gauna, E., ***Environmental Justice: Law, Policy and Regulation***, Carolina University Press, Durham, North Carolina. 2003.

