

Environmental Justice Educational Series

Introduction to Environmental Justice, Intersectionality, and Sustainability

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The EJ Movement emerged in the 1970s in reaction to discriminatory environmental practices that negatively affected communities of color

This includes toxic dumping, municipal waste facility siting, and poor air quality from factory emissions.

The United Church of Christ (UCC) and community of Warren County, NC protested for one month against the siting of a chemical landfill there

The protest spurred studies examining the relationship between race and toxic waste.

Links to where this information was gathered:

1. [Link](#)
 2. [Link](#)
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On October 24, 1991, nearly “300 Black, Native, Latino, Pacific Islander, Asian American and other minority activists gathered in DC” for the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit

During this four-day event, delegates spoke about their lived experiences of environmental injustices.

From this, the 17 principles of EJ were created.

Links to where this information was gathered:

1. [Link](#)
 2. [Link](#)
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EJ is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, culture, education or income with respect to the development, implementation

Principle #1 affirms that, “the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.”

And the 17 principles of EJ are still relevant today:

- While the systemic issues of 1991 are still the same in 2024, participants of the summit feel hope with increased involvement

Links to where this information was gathered:

1. [Link](#)
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Adding a layer: intersectionality

Coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality is “a lens, a prism for seeing ways in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other.”

It is not “identity politics on steroids, it is not a new mechanism to turn white men into pariahs.”

Links to where this information was gathered:

1. [Link](#)

More great resources:

1. [Link](#) (her original paper on intersectionality)
 2. [Link](#)
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Take a moment to examine the wheel of power/privilege, ask yourself:

- What sounds like me?
- How has my power and privilege impacted me or others around me?
- How does my power and privilege intersect?
- What's not on the wheel?

Wheel of Privilege Citation:

Migrants at the university doorstep: How we unfairly deny access and what we could (should) do now - Scientific Figure on ResearchGate. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Wheel-of-Power-Privilege-and-Marginalization-by-Sylvia-Duckworth-Used-by-permission_fig1_364109273 [accessed 28 Jun, 2024]

[Link to the source](#) where the questions came from

Our careers in sustainability have a direct impact on the perpetuation of environmental injustices

As rising environmental sustainability professionals, we must be intersectional environmentalists:

Coined by Leah Thomas, intersectional environmentalism (IE) argues that social and environmental justice are intertwined, and environmental advocacy that disregards this is harmful and incomplete.

IE “focuses on achieving climate justice and approaching environmental education, policy, and activism with equity, inclusion, and restorative justice in mind.”

[Link to source](#)

EJ examples by specialization, just to name a few:

1. Sustainability in the Outdoor Industry:

- Equitable access to outdoor spaces
- Transportation, high costs, and personal safety are barriers

2. Renewable and Sustainable Energy:

- With transition to solar, low- and middle-income communities incur the burden of high electricity costs from the grid
- Drivers with disabilities cannot use many electric car chargers

3. Sustainable Food Systems:

- Marginalized communities often face lack of access to affordable and healthy food options

4. Environmental and Natural Resources Policy:

- Minority and low-income communities are more likely to live near hazardous waste sites, factories, and pollution
 - There is unequal enforcement of environmental regulations

5. Urban Resilience and Sustainability:

- Unequal access to green spaces and distribution of funding
- Redlining: Loan refusal as a result of where folks live, being deemed “risky investments”
- Transportation: Lower income and higher proportions of BIPOC residents are associated with more pedestrian injuries

Acquired from insights from the DEI committee