

PUENTE | ANTHOLOGY

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Long Live Earth and Its People

Curriculum



"America is segregated and so is pollution. Race and class still matter and map closely with pollution, unequal protection, and vulnerability. Today, zip code is still the most potent predictor of an individual's health and well-being."

-- Robert Bullard, PhD, "Father of Environmental Justice"

NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR

- Environmental justice (EJ) issues disproportionately impact communities of color and income communities. In exploring the issues and perspectives many of our students will fee...

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Key Term / Definition

Green Action for Health and Environmental Justice defines Environmental Racism as:

"Environmental racism is the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color. Environmental justice is the movement's response to environmental racism..."

Environmental racism refers to the institutional rules, regulations, policies or government and/or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for locally undesirable land uses and lax enforcement of zoning and environmental laws, resulting in communities being disproportionately exposed to toxic and hazardous waste based upon race. Environmental racism is caused by several factors, including intentional neglect, the alleged need for a receptacle for pollutants in urban areas, and a lack of institutional power and low land values of people of color. It is a well-documented fact that communities of color and low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by polluting industries (and very specifically, hazardous waste facilities) and lax regulation of these industries."

Learning Objectives

These pieces have been selected as a way for students to:

- Identify environmental justice challenges in communities and the connection between Intersectionality and the effects of climate crisis
- Connect and engage students to the environment and embrace cultura y familia as part of the environmental narrative
- Develop awareness, knowledge, and concepts to provide opportunities for environmental justice action

Essential and Guiding Questions

- What is environmental justice and environmental racism? What are the 17 principles of environmental justice (EJ)?
- How do environmental issues disproportionately impact communities of color with high poverty?

- What environmental injustices exist in my community?
- What are some ways to assure communities have access to a healthy environment to live, learn, and work in?
- How do community members connect to the topics, issues, and policy initiatives that impact them and the spaces we are recreating in?
- Are there organizations I can work with in my community?
- How do we ensure everyone has a voice in the conversation?

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Suggested Activities

- Environmental Justice (EJ) History
 - The EJ movement is rooted in activism driven by communities of color. The first national People of Color [Environmental Leadership Summit](#) in October, 1991 was a groundbreaking meeting that gave rise to the [17 Environmental Justice Principles](#). (MS, HS, CC)
 - Give students time to read the above 17 principles and reflect. Students can share their thoughts/opinions/questions with a jamboard, or sticky notes. If in person, copy each principle and place each one around the room. Students can write their reflections on a sticky note they place under the principles.
 - After they have written and posted their reflection, have a facilitated conversation about their thoughts from these principles. Students (or instructor) can lead this conversation by reading the principle [\[redacted\]](#) sticky notes.
 - Students may have more questions at this point. At this point more context will help ground the following activities. (MS, HS, CC)
 - Begin with providing the [EPA's EJ timeline](#). Then show this short [Pro Publica: A Brief History of Environmental Justice](#) video.
 - Students can read this Robert Bullard [interview](#) or listen to this [podcast](#).
 - Students can write a reflection.
 1. Prompts: What examples of environmental justice did you find powerful? What questions do you have about environmental justice? What do you think communities



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- [EJ Atlas](#): "The EJ Atlas collects these stories of communities struggling for environmental justice from around the world"
- Data Set exploration: Students can explore these maps to dive into community demographics, health outcomes and pollution exposures. If you choose to use these resources, give students time and space to reflect. Students can choose a community to explore. Although these maps don't explain why there is a pollution burden, they lay out what the problem is. See [this resource](#) for guided activities using CalEnviroScreen. (MS, HS, CC)
 - [CalEnviroScreen](#): California mapping tool that "help identify California communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution"
 - [EJScreen](#): EPA mapping tool for the United States
- Storytelling: Present this [slideshow](#) on EJ Storytelling and its relationship to civic action and community empowerment. The lesson culminates in students creating their own environmental

justice story based on the resources in the slideshow. Examples of photovoice, video narrative, and ethics are included. (MS, HS, CC)

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- Break students into groups. Assign each group one of the following environmental justice communities or organizations (or ask them to research local groups in the area). Have each group give a 10-minute presentation on each organization focusing on the mission, impact, and significance of each organization: (MS, HS, CC)
 - [Communities for a Better Environment \(CBE\)](#)
 - [California Environmental Justice Alliance \(CEJA\)](#)
 - [EarthJustice](#)
 - [Sierra Club](#)
 - [National Resources Defense Council](#)
 - [Environmental Health Coalition](#)
- Spend a week exploring the following topics in Intersectional Environmentalism: (MS, HS, CC)
 - [Modern-Day Imperialism in the Global Waste Trade](#) (toolkit)
 - [Indigenous Environmentalism: The Rights of Manoomin](#) (toolkit)
 - [Reimagining Food Justice + Food Sovereignty](#) (toolkit)
- Dedicate two class sessions to having students report on environmental racism in groups using this [lesson plan](#) from Learning for Justice. (MS, HS, CC)
- Natural Disasters: As a class, ask students to shout out the names of natural disasters they remember. Some students may remember recent California earthquakes and wildfires, the Texas freeze in 2021, or older events such as Hurricane Katrina or the polar vortex in winter 2018-2019. Write the name of each natural disaster on the board. Then, ask students to pick one natural disaster from the list and write down everything they know about it. Have them discuss in small groups what they remember. At the end of class, assign them to prepare a 5 minute presentation on the natural disaster they wrote about, focusing on how it affected marginalized groups in the area where it occurred. You may need to spend class time defining the term “marginalized” and giving examples of how specific disasters have caused the most harm among these groups. Case studies to consider are the lack of U.S. government response to [Hurricane Katrina’s African American victims](#) and [Hurricane Maria’s Puerto Rican victims](#), despite Puerto Rico’s status as a U.S. colony. (MS, HS, CC)
- After teaching your class about environmental justice, ask students to create a poem, short story, or collage responding to the following prompt to close out your unit: What would your community look like if environmental justice was achieved? Describe how it feels to live in that world. (MS, HS, CC)

Text Selections

FICTION

- Lambda, Marie & Baldev Marie. *Green Green: A Community Gardening Story*. (MS, HS, CC)
- Mbue, Imbolo. *How Beautiful We Were*. (book) (HS, CC)
- Ward, Jesmyn. *Salvage the Bones*. (book) (HS, CC)
- Rice, Waubgeshig. *Moon of the Crusted Snow*. (book) (HS, CC)

AUDIO

- All My Relations. [“For the Love of the Mauna, Part 1”](#) (podcast episode) (CC)
- [Climate One Podcast featuring Robert Bullard](#): “The environmental justice movement, the civil rights movement, peace and justice, women’s movement and right now the climate movement. You look at young people ...they are owning these issues and they’re saying no, we don’t have to wait until we can

vote to be mindful of the fact that we are destroying this earth and we are on the wrong direction, and we have to do something about climate crisis" (HS, CC)

- NPR. [“‘The Color of Law’ Details How U.S. Housing Policies Created Segregation”](#) (podcast episode) (HS, CC)
- The Red Nation Podcast. [“Do rivers have rights? w/ Faith Spotted Eagle”](#) (podcast episode) (HS, CC)
- TruthOut. [“We Are Living in a Climate Emergency. Why Doesn't Nature Have Legal Rights?”](#) (podcast episode) (HS, CC)

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VIDEO

- Carter, Marjora. [“TEDx: Greening the Ghetto”](#) (HS, CC)
- Frontline PBS. [“Flint’s Deadly Water: Full Documentary”](#) (MS, HS, CC)
- Kanopy. [“Maize in Times of War \(film\)”](#) (MS, HS, CC)
- LaDuke, Winona. [“Indigenous Food Sovereignty”](#) (lecture) (CC)
- Land Loss Prevention Project. [“Our Land, Our Lives: The North Carolina Black Farmers’ Experience.”](#) (MS, HS, CC)
- The Met. [“Gulf Streams and the Atlantic World”](#) (panel discussion) (CC)
- Pro Publica: [A Brief History of Environmental Justice](#) (MS, HS, CC)
- Via Campesina. [“A Movement in Formation”](#) (video) (MS, HS, CC)
- Vox. [“The Flint Water Crisis”](#) (news video) (MS, HS, CC)
- The Wilderness Society. [The emerging queer and intersectional environmental movement.](#) (CC)
- The Wilderness Society. [How a Black community in NYC’s Central Park disappeared](#) (MS, HS, CC)

NON-FICTION

- Bullard, Robert. [Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality.](#) (book) (CC)
- Chang, Alvin. [“Living in a poor neighborhood changes everything about your life”](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)
- Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. [An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States.](#) (print and audio book) (CC)
- Milman, Oliver. [“Robert Bullard: ‘Environmental justice isn’t just slang, it’s real’”](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)
- [EPA Environmental Justice Timeline](#) (website) (MS, HS, CC)
- Estes, Nick. [Our History Is the Future: Standing Rock Versus the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the Long Tradition of Indigenous Resistance.](#) (print and audio book) (CC)
- Ferguson, Bernard. [“Hurricane Dorian was Climate Injustice.”](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)
- Gatheru, Wanjiku. [“Want to be an Environmentalist? Start with Anti-racism”](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)
- Harrison, Da’Shaun. [Climate Change Disasters Leave Fat and Disabled People Even More Vulnerable to Harm.](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)
- Hernandez, Jessica. [Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science.](#) (print book and audiobook) (CC)
- [Indigenous Environmental Justice](#), Karen Jarratt-Snider (Editor), [Marianne O. Nielsen](#) (Editor)
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall. [Braiding Sweetgrass.](#) (book) (CC)
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall, Monique Gray Smith & Nicole Neidhardt. [Braiding Sweetgrass for Young Adults: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants.](#) (book) (MS, HS, CC)
- King, Heidi Tyline. [Saving American Beach: The Biography of African American Environmentalist Mavynnee Betsch.](#) (picture book) (MS, HS, CC)
- Middleton Manning, Beth Rose. [Upstream: Trust Lands and Power on the Feather River.](#) (book) (CC)
- [The Red Deal: Indigenous Action to Save the Earth.](#) (pdf) (CC)
- Rothstein, Richard. [The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America.](#) (book) (CC)
- Thomas, Leah. [The Intersectional Environmentalist: How to Dismantle Systems of Oppression to Protect People + Planet.](#) (book) (HS, CC)
- Trevizo, Perla. [“Students at Houston ‘environmental justice’ school among young people seeking climate action”](#) (article) (MS, HS, CC)

POETRY

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- Borgeson, Isa. "[The Ghosts of Sea Salt Corpses](#)" (poem text and video) (MS, HS, CC)
- Borgeson, Isa. "[Yolanda Winds](#)" (video) (MS, HS, CC)
- Brookins, KB. "[Good Grief: after the Texas 2021 Winter Storm](#)" (MS, HS, CC)
- Coleman, Wanda. "[Requiem for a Nest](#)" from *Ostinato Vamps*. Copyright © 2003. Used by permission of University of Pittsburgh Press. (MS, HS, CC)
- Ferguson, Bernard. "[It Might Be a Hurricane Year](#)" (MS, HS, CC)
- [Kathy Jetñil Kijiner](#) (MS, HS, CC)
- McDougall, Brandy Nālani. "[Water Remembers](#)" (MS, HS, CC)
- Siagatonu, Terisa. "[Atlas](#)" (video) (MS, HS, CC)
- Tilsen, Mark. [It Ain't Over Until We're Smoking Cigars On The Drill Pad: Poems from Standing Rock and the Frontlines](#). (book) Mark Tilsen is an Oglala Lakota Water Protector and an activist/poet who participated in the protests at Standing Rock. (HS, CC)

VISUAL ART

- Queer Brown Vegan. [Educational Resources](#) (free illustrated ebooks) (HS, CC)
- Via Campesina. [Access to Resources and Means of Production](#). (free illustrated ebook) (MS, HS, CC)
- Via Campesina. [We Feed the World: An illustrated book in defence of peasant agriculture](#). (free illustrated ebook) (MS, HS, CC)

Resources:

Reference materials
for the educator,
background,
databases

- [Science Friday by Laura Diaz](#) Activities to Explore the Relationship between Race and Income and Pollution Exposure.
- [CalEnviroScreen](#): California mapping tool that "help identify California communities that are disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution"
- [EJScreen](#): EPA mapping tool for the United States
- [EJ Atlas](#): "The EJ Atlas collects these stories of communities struggling for environmental justice from around the world"
- Storytelling as a Tool:
 - Briant, K. J., Halter, A., Marchello, N., Escareño, M., & Thompson, B. (2016). The Power of Digital Storytelling as a Culturally Relevant Health Promotion Tool. *Health Promotion Practice*, 17(6), 793–801. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524839916658023>
- Photovoice [Resources](#)
- Photovoice Ethics: Wang CC, Redwood-Jones YA. Photovoice Ethics: Perspectives from Flint Photovoice. *Health Education & Behavior*. 2001;28(5):560-572. doi:10.1177/109019810102800504
- [TEJAS: Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services](#)
- The Wilderness Society: [The Public Lands Curriculum](#)

The Puente Project

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