ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE UNITED STATES: RECONSTRUCTING "RACE" AND "NATURE"

by

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Abstract

Why were people of color largely absent in the participation of environmental organizations until the formation of the environmental justice movement? Until the 1980s, environmental groups in the United States remained relatively homogeneous along racial lines. With the emergence of the environmental justice movement spearheaded and mobilized by people of color, environmentalism was redefined as a civil rights issue. Today, there is a high degree of participation by people of color within environmental justice groups yet, there remains a lack of participation by people of color in mainstream American environmental groups. Few scholars have attempted to analyze the factors leading up to the extreme variation in racial participation of environmental organizations.

This thesis attributes the extreme variation to the "differing priorities hypothesis." I theorize that alternate priorities amongst environmental groups resonate differently along racial lines. Mainstream environmental groups focus largely on priorities based on "environmental positives" such as conserving aesthetic beauty, recreation, and preservation for future generations. Alternately, environmental justice groups mobilize around defeating immediate "environmental negatives" in their communities such as toxic dumps, health threats, and polluting industries. Environmental justice definitions of environmentalism appear to resonate with the more pressing concerns of racial minorities as a result of the past and present racial inequality and *de facto* segregation still persistent in the United States.

This analysis significantly contributes to social constructivism arguments about "race" and "nature" by showing how the environmental justice movement reconstructed "environment" beyond wilderness to where people "live, work and play" while simultaneously countering the racist stereotype that people of color are not interested in environmental issues. The implications

of contrasting the Sierra Club founding with the environmental justice founding in Warren County, North Carolina reveals that environmental decisions about what and who is protected are always political just as the concept of nature is never ahistorical. I argue that the homogonous portrayal of environmentalism and denial of the obvious differences between environmental priorities reifies white privilege consistent amongst mainstream society and acts as a barrier for the creation of a serious environmental movement capable of resonating with broader segments of the American population.

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Introduction and Methodology

The primary question this thesis sets out to answer is: Why were people of color largely absent in the participation of American environmental organizations until the formation of the environmental justice movement? Naturally asking one question often leads the researcher on to others, the second aim of this study is to address the parallel racial understandings of the ways in which "environments" are constructed and constituted. In order to answer these questions, the "differing priorities hypothesis" finds that mainstream environmental groups focus on priorities based on "environmental positives" in contrast, environmental justice groups mobilize around priorities surrounding "environmental negatives." Differing priorities simultaneously encourage some groups to participate while concurrently discouraging and marginalizing other populations based on the present *de facto* inequality in the United States and a history rooted in Eurocentric understandings of what constitutes "environment."

Over the last fifteen years, environmental justice case studies have become a popular thesis and dissertation subject in the social sciences. And for good reason— identifying and exploring cases of disproportionate impact against communities of color remains a compelling and feasible topic. However, researchers are now moving away from trying to prove disproportionate impact. Ryan Holifield finds, in reviewing the way research trends have progressed, that environmental justice has now been institutionalized within federal policy and therefore, "traditional environmental 'equity analysis' may no longer be appropriate" (Holifield, 2001, p.84.) While these studies are valuable, it is useful and timely to deepen the analysis moving away from trying to prove 'if' to shifting to questions of 'why.'

It is with this new focus in mind that I have sought out the most useful research contribution. While acknowledging the role of other researchers working to demonstrate cases of disproportionate risk, this study moves beyond establishing cases of environmental racism and

environmental justice, which have already been well established in the literature on a national level. Instead, the central focus of this thesis is to understand why there was a lack of participation by people of color in the American environmental movement until the significant rise in racial participation with the founding of the environmental justice movement. In order to answer this question the differing priorities of environmental groups are analyzed.

It is important to note in regard to methodology that answering complex questions stemming from societal inequality and racism have the potential of becoming methodological nightmares. Despite presenting significant methodological difficulties to social scientists, these questions are of profound importance and must not be shied away from due to the overwhelming impossibility of conclusively demonstrating a clear and falsifiable causal relationship. Despite the clear limitations in generalizability and falsifiability, it is believed that this research raises important issues for future social scientists to undertake and consider. Engaging with the current environmental justice dialogue is of pivotal importance, despite the fact that complex questions focusing on inequality, such as these, will likely remain unanswerable.

Five points are important in regard to the scope and intention of this research. First, this research is centered on environmental groups in America. Second, due to the limited data on the perceptions of people of color towards environmental issues, this work focuses primarily on African American and white perspectives. Third, while I acknowledge the ongoing debate over concepts such as "race," "environment," "blacks" and "whites" from here on, I do not always use quotes to signify their controversial construction. Forth, this thesis moves beyond the variation in environmental participation attributed to socioeconomic class alone, to argue that people of color have a unique relationship and interpretation of nature based on the past legacy of racial injustice and current *de facto* inequalities in environments. Therefore while race does not always supersede class, it is an equally compelling, yet often unrecognized variable in predicting levels of participations in environmental organizations. Fifth, it is also important to state that the

broader goal of this research is not to further the division within the environmental movement. However, as stated in the abstract, I believe that denial of the obvious differences between environmentalists reifies white privilege consistent amongst mainstream society, while acting as a barrier for the creation of a serious environmental movement capable of resonating with broader segments of the American population.

This research avoids the universalism found in works considered to be definitive or finite; instead this work is one example of a culturally grounded perspective of environmentalism. In-depth research into the history of environmentalism inevitably teaches the researcher humility. It is my contention that certainty and self-righteousness are often the cobblestones paving the path towards environmental destruction. Therefore, I make no claim to being an expert. It is with this consciousness that I offer these findings; the generalizations I make along with conclusions I draw are my own.

Because of the complexity and breadth of the question, my hypothesis requires a unique interdisciplinary approach. I attempt to tackle the original research question by drawing on diverse literatures and fields beyond political science including sociology, history, critical race theory, geography, environmental studies and social movement theory. This strategy is intentionally broad due to the complexity of the question. While acknowledging I am not a historian, this study uses the method of process tracing to examine the ways in which the two cases of the Sierra Club and the Warren County protests were established over time.

The first chapter establishes the history of John Muir and the Sierra Club in order to demonstrate the Eurocentric interpretations of environmentalism under pinning current priorities of mainstream environmental organizations. I will later argue that these lopsided Eurocentric interpretations of environmentalism do not always resonate with racial minority groups in the same way that they do for whites. The second chapter examines the emergence of the environmental justice movement while simultaneously showing how environmental issues

became rooted in civil rights struggles and in the process, redefined environmentalism in ways which resonate with the concerns of people of color within the United States. Overall, these two chapters are significant because they describe the defining movements popularly credited with launching both the mainstream and environmental justice movements and in the process, help to establish how differing meaning for the word "environmentalist" evolved.

Chapter three simultaneously illustrates how the construction of the ontological understanding of 'environment' came into being with very different meanings for different groups of people demonstrating that perceptions of environments and environmentalism are always racialized. With this analysis, I aim to contribute to the scholarship showing that while the natural environment existed long before humans, our ontological understanding of 'environments' is a fluid and shifting idea. Furthermore, I suggest that race and nature are deeply related in the ways in which they have been socially constructed. The implications of this analysis reveals that the social stratification embedded within the environmental arena is in-and-of itself political—a fact which becomes more directly evident through environmental decisions about what and who is protected from destructive environmental practices.

In building on the environmental histories established in the first two chapters along with some of the current explanations for the lack of participation by people of color in environmental organizations posed in chapter three, I establish a lucid contrast between the mainstream and environmental justice groups' relationship to the environment. The bulk of my argument lies in chapter four, which draws on the descriptive analysis of the preceding chapters meanwhile moving towards systematic analysis of recent studies and social surveys of minority perceptions towards environmentalism. The current environmental literature on racial perspectives addressed in chapter four demonstrates clear concern by minority populations towards environmental issues. Logically, the strongly expressed interest in environmental issues by racial minority groups does not coincide with the lack of racial participation in environmental organizations

prior to the 1980s. I offer the differing priorities hypothesis as a way of explaining the incongruity between both the expressed deep concern towards environmental issues by people of color, paired with the extreme lack of racial participation in mainstream environmental organizations demonstrated throughout the preceding chapters. According to the differing priorities hypothesis, it appears that mainstream groups focus on "environmental positives" while environmental justice groups focus primarily on "environmental negatives." By applying these terms to the earlier two cases of the Sierra Club and the environmental justice movement I show how the framing of environmental issues by mainstream groups may not resonate with people of color. In doing so, I will not only have demonstrated the differences between the emergence of the mainstream and environmental justice groups in their priorities and approaches to the environment, but equally important, the research shows how these priorities appear to resonate with different communities along racial lines.

Chapter five is devoted to the final discussion, conclusion and recommendations for future research. The outcome of this research suggests that the environmental justice movement in the United States emerged to address different priorities which neither resonated with, nor were addressed by the mainstream environmental groups. These cases clearly illustrate the different ways in which our ontological understanding of 'environmentalism' in the United States has broadened beyond conservation, "keeping it pure and pretty" to address environmental issues in "where we live work and play." Similar to other patterns of racial discrimination and segregation in the United States in housing, education, employment and prison populations, this research supports the contention that the environmental arena is no exception to racism and segregation.

In order to avoid contributing to the false assumptions that people of color are uninterested in environmental issues, I suggest that future researchers must grapple with the clear racial differences in environmental priorities within environmental organizations. In conclusion,

I attribute the extreme variation in the participation of people of color in environmental organizations to the differing priorities of environmental groups whose outlook and focus is shaped by a legacy of both past and present racial inequality and *de facto* segregation in the United States. Finally, I theorize that in-line with the environmental justice movement, only in recreating environmentalism in ways which resonate with people of color, will any sizeable environmental movement emerge with the potential for substantially re-altering current environmental practices.

Chapter I: The Sierra Club

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to bring to light the cultural construction of environmentalism. In order to establish the ways in which nature came to be perceived and defined in mainstream environmental organizations, this chapter begins by situating the late president of the Sierra Club and avid environmentalist, John Muir within the broader attempts to redefine nature. In contrast to earlier frontier ideals about nature's domination by man, Muir recontextualized and redefined nature as sacred and in need of protection from humans. In doing so, the historical precedents leading up to the ways in which the Sierra Club socially constructs and defines "environmentalism" around preservation and conservation ideals become evident. This point will become increasingly important for later analysis on the priorities of environmental organizations.

This chapter illustrates how Yosemite was once known as the "valley of the gaping mouth" by the former occupants of the region, many of whom believed they descended from the grizzly bear. In contrast today, Americans view, imagine and define Yosemite as a national park. Despite these and other multiple cultural meanings of environments, the canon of American environmentalism is rooted in Eurocentric interpretations of what constitutes "environment." Later analyses will build on the point that Eurocentric interpretations of nature do not always resonate across racial lines. Clearly, it is important to reassess environmental origin stories and the ways in which they are crafted to convey meaning about peoples' role to the natural environment and to each other in reflection of those defining them. The second section of this chapter illustrates that point with a modern retelling of environmentalism by scholars who reassess the role of early preservationists and in doing so, further illustrate how the concept of nature continues to be redefined and culturally constructed. In summation, I will later argue that environmental priorities such as those of the Sierra Club were often portrayed as benefiting all

groups despite the frequent negative impacts those priorities historically had on people of color. As will become increasingly clear in latter chapters, contrary to this homogenous portrayal of environmentalism, environments are actually quite political.

1.2 John Muir

On Christmas Eve 1914, John Muir died at the age of seventy-six. Despite having founded one of the most successful environmental organizations in history, the Sierra Club, Muir died in despair after losing the campaign to prevent the damming of the Tuolumne River in Hetch Hetchy Valley in California's Sierra Mountains. The failed campaign was a significant milestone in the making of modern day environmentalism. On one hand, people such as John Muir argued that the valley should remain a preserved wilderness sanctuary and protected from flooding. On the other hand were those who favored taking back part of the Yosemite National Park to create a dam in order to provide water for the burgeoning urban population of San Francisco. The Bay Area was just re-establishing itself after the earthquake and fire of 1906 which killed thousands, leveling nearly 500 city blocks and leaving thousands homeless. The dam controversy attracted the public to environmental issues like never before "The Hetch Hetchy affair thrust environmental issues onto the public stage and for the first time citizens who were not part of the small elite group of preservationists, conservationists, and outdoor enthusiasts got involved in environmental debates" (Taylor, 1999, p.35). Muir noted "The conscience of the whole country has been aroused from sleep" (Cohen, 1988, p.29).

Broad based opposition to the dam would have been unimaginable only a few decades prior to the event as popular notions regarding natural resources were still largely rooted in a "frontier mentality" focused on "conquering" land for human use. "Now the defenders of Hetch Hetchy attracted widespread national attention by portraying such an act not as improvement or progress but as desecration and vandalism"(Cronon, 1995, p.74). The emblematic struggle

between the priorities of conservation groups posed against the priorities of urban populations was one which would get played out repeatedly over succeeding decades.

Today, despite his failure in preventing the damming of Hetch Hetchy, Muir is recognized as one of the most famous environmentalists. Although Muir now ironically appears on the California commemorative quarter, during his lifetime he was not driven by money so much as by his passion for mountains. Muir is remembered for his writing; his real-life stories of scaling mountains and climbing to the top of trees in the middle of thunder storms found a ready audience in the *Century* and *Atlantic Monthly* periodicals in which he was published. It is best to illustrate the power and influence of Muir's whimsical writing on the ways in which nature came to be constituted as aesthetically pleasing and far removed from urban life by using Muir's words:

> The night wind is telling the wonders of the upper mountains, their snow fountains and gardens, forests, and groves; even their topography is in its tones. And the stars, the everlasting sky lilies, how bright they are now that we have climbed above the lowland dust! The horizon is bounded and adorned by a spiry wall of pines, every tree harmoniously related to each every other; definite symbols, divine hieroglyphics written with sunbeams. Would I could understand them! The stream flowing past the camp through ferns and lilies and alders makes sweet music to the ear, but the pines marshaled around the edge of the sky make a yet sweeter music to the eye. Divine beauty all (Muir, 1979, p.22).

Increasingly, Muir used such provocative association between nature and the divine to support his argument that wilderness areas needed to be protected. Together with several other prominent men, the Sierra Club was founded on May 28, 1892 with nearly two hundred members and John Muir serving as president. Long after Muir's death, the club would continue his protectionist legacy and expanded into a powerful social force widely recognized as one of the most influential environmental organizations. The club proved to be an effective tool for preserving Yosemite and other wild areas through their efforts in lobbying Congress and persuading wealthy philanthropists to buy and donate land to create nature preserves. At the

same time as they were protecting land from development, the Sierra Club was also altering the American construction of nature by challenging the prevailing attitudes of the day surrounding commercialization through raising consciousness about conservation.

While Muir and the Sierra Club viewed nature manifested as a grand temple, other conservationists such as Gifford Pinchot worked at re-crafting nature to be perceived as a workshop (Spirn, 1995, p.112). Pinchot's support for conservation of the forests stemmed from his belief that efficient and economic management would lead to the greatest maximization of resources. In contrast to Pinchot his former friend and eventual rival, Muir steered the club away from conserving natural resources for later development and economic profit. Muir referred to such practices not as a part of free market economics but as part of what he colorfully described as the "gobble gobble school of economics." In contrast, to economic profit, Muir believed in preserving the land for its inherent worth and do in doing so, achieve something which would "make the mountain glad" (Cohen, 1988, p.9). The Sierra Club articles of incorporation supported Muir spiritual, recreational and political aims:

> I. That the name of said Corporation shall be the SIERRA CLUB. II. That the said Association is made, and the said Corporation is formed, not for pecuniary profit. III. That the purposes for which this corporation is formed are as follows: To explore, enjoy and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast; to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and cooperation of the people and government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains; to take, acquire, purchase, hold, sell and convey real and personal property, and to mortgage or pledge the same for the purpose of securing any indebtedness which the corporation may incur, and to make and enter into any and all obligations, contracts and agreements concerning or relating to the business or affairs of the corporation or the management of its property (Sierra Club Articles of incorporation, June 4, 1892.)

Clearly profits were not the major consideration for the newly founded club. Valuing the aesthetic beauty of the land over profit can be linked to the recurring theme emerging in Muir's writing which fuses God and nature. In linking the two, Muir became part of a growing group of writers redefining nature as sacred instead of savage— a theme which would later resonate with

many mainstream environmentalists. God's fusion into nature becomes evident in works such as: *My First Summer in the Sierra*, Muir states:

> No wonder the hills and groves were God's first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seem the Lord himself. The same may be said of stone temples. Yonder, to the eastward of our camp grove, stands one of Nature's cathedrals, hewn from the living rock, almost conventional in form, about two thousand feet high, nobly adorned with spires and pinnacles, thrilling under floods of sunshine as if alive like a grove temple, and well named 'Cathedral Peak' (Muir, 1979, p.146).

While it is important to note the way Muir redefines nature as genteel and holy, it is also telling to examine the way he viewed Yosemite as a place for play and recreation. The book's simple yet revealing dedication often goes unnoticed: "To the Sierra Club of California, Faithful Defenders of the People's Playgrounds."

1.3 Clearing the way for conservation

Through associating the wilderness with the sacred, Muir's writings are a retelling and recreation of Western environmentalism. More recently, Jake Kosek also takes a new twist on redefining ideas of pristine wilderness. Kosek provocatively writes that contrary to romantic imagery, "The wilderness sanctuaries Muir held so dear were not, as he believed, simply "created by god"' they were created by the US Cavalry, armed with the nineteenth-century authority of manifest destiny" (Kosek, 2002, p.137). Thus, contrary to Muir's "playgrounds," Kosek points out how the national parks were once home to people who were pushed off of their land starting with Native Americans and followed by sheep and pig farmers and their families who were evicted to make way for recreation. "The removal of Indians to create an 'uninhabited wilderness'— uninhabited as never before in the human history of place— reminds us just how invented, just how constructed, the American wilderness really is" (Cronon, 1995, p.79).

William Cronon traces the recreating of our cultural environmental mythology, in which reverie comes to replace fear of the wilderness as the frontier ideology of nature as a place of satanic temptation and savagery is recreated into a place for sacred temples. He states, "The emotions Muir describes in Yosemite could hardly be more different from Thoreau's on Katahdin or Wordsworth's on the Simplon Pass. Yet all three men are participating in the same cultural tradition and contributing to the same myth: the mountain as cathedral." (Cronon, 1995, p.74). Up until Muir's lifetime, the prevailing associations with the environment were rooted in a Daniel Boone or Davie Crocket style mythology which portrayed the outdoors as places to be feared, conquered and civilized. Muir took a new twist on environmentalism by encouraging others to appreciate nature's beauty not as something to be conquered and made into a commodity, but to be preserved for recreation and for its aesthetic value. This "retelling of nature" according to Cronon shows the ways in which nature is not static, but rather how environmental knowledge is culturally constructed and historically contingent. (Cronon, 1995).

The gentrification of the national parks exposes the winners and losers in the intensely political struggles over conservation and ultimately reveals who has the power to define "environment." In the process, "environments" were constituted to reflect those defining it. When "The Valley of the Gaping mouth" became Yosemite Valley, the Ahwahneechee or "Sierra Miwok" tribes had to be either forcefully removed from the region or incorporated as tourist attractions before the park could be "created." This widely unrecognized fact is often left out of the largely Eurocentric canon of environmental history of national park creation and illustrates the "environmental amnesia" of other cultural perceptions of environmental issues.

Mark David Spence documents the Indian removal and making of the National Parks in *Dispossessing Wilderness.* In contrast to the whole scale forced removed of Native populations from Yellowstone National Park and Glacier National Park, Spence describes they way in which many of the small tribes who had lived in Yosemite for generations were encouraged to stay as a

tourist attraction to be marveled at as "simple red children" and viewed as a novel "part of wilderness." As one Park superintendent noted, "the removal of native peoples from Yosemite was not a high priority because they were a 'vanishing' tribe which would soon die out or assimilate into white society" (Spence, 1999, p.109).

In the 1920's, beyond the breathtaking views and fauna, the park began hosting another popular tourist attraction: "Indian Field Days." Spence chronicles the ways in which "crudely constructed canvas Tepees" and fake "Indian dress" replete with head feathers were implemented to conform to popular white conceptions of Indians (Spence, 1999, p.117). At the Field Days, along with a parade, rodeo and Indian Baby show, the winners of "Best Indian Warrior costume' and "Best Indian Squaw costume" received $25 dollars each for their participation (Spence, 1999, p.117). This kind of attraction added to the "parks as playground" appeal as a place for entertainment and recreation.

When Congress originally set aside Yosemite in 1864 for "public use, resort and recreation" the land became a "park." Human intervention and reshaping of the national parks had far reaching consequences for those that had once lived there. Not only were Native Americans forcibly removed from their land or encouraged to stay and perform for tourists, nonhuman plants and animals were also affected. The Brown Grizzly bear once prevalent in Yosemite soon became extinct in the region, although its image was proudly appropriated as the symbol of the California Flag to represent the State.

While most people are mildly aware that they destroy nature through consumption, few are conscious of how humans have historically contributed to the construction of it. While nature was plainly not created by humans, it is preserved, maintained and destroyed by them. "Only human intervention has kept Yosemite as a nature preserve" (Hayles, 1995, p.414). Visitors to the park are largely unaware of the non-European history of the ways in which Yosemite was altered through such techniques as cut and burn agriculture used by Native Americans to regulate

brush fires and maintain crops. Meanwhile visitors also may not realize the way the parks were crafted by men in modern times. In a similar fashion to the way he designed New York's Central Park, the acclaimed landscape architect Frederick Law Olmstead actually "created" the way visitors perceive Yosemite: crafting trails lobbying trees down to make way for scenic views and permanently altering the landscape in the process (Spirn, 1995).

The lopsided portrayal of environmental history erases the way in which the environment was once commonly understood not as a place for leisure but a place for labor. Although environmentalism is a term often associated with privilege, The United State's landscape was physically altered largely by the labor of the poor and people of color. These stories often go unheard in the popular press but are important in the formations of the way groups understand and relate to the environment. From mining, to laying railroads, to working in the fields picking cotton, people of color and the poor labored to transform the American landscape. In doing so, much of the population experienced "environment" not through nature trails and leisure expeditions but through "getting their hands dirty" and calloused by living and working on the land.

By pushing people off the land who had once worked, lived and died there in order to preserve nature as a realm where humans were considered destructive, conservation may have severed people's relationship to the land in an opposite yet equally alienating way that Industrialism did. As the decades passed, more people made their homes and their living away from large tracks of land and undomesticated animals, and the opposite extremes of cities and nature parks became more common. More frequently, the middle ground of people coinciding and making their living directly off the land while leaving a small "ecological footprint" was replaced by those who worked all day in offices and factories and took long drives to the wilderness on weekends or vacation. As increasingly cities became places commonly associated with industry, decay and degradation, nature frequently became defined as places we escape to

rather than our immediate surroundings. In this sense Muir's efforts in preservation may have helped to unintentionally solidify the dualism prevalent in modern American society which separates people out and apart from nature.

Instead of stressing the interrelatedness of men and women to each other and the environment, polarization has resulted in social and environmental hierarchies. While the Sierra Club worked to protect areas such as Yosemite from development, hierarchies were created in nature with some regions dubbed "beautiful" and protected meanwhile other regions such as swamplands and deserts and inner cities were considered less desirable and were slated for nuclear testing or were dumped upon and left to decay.

Similarly, in the context of social relationships, racial hierarchies were in the process of being reestablished and became a chief way to situate, exclude, enslave and distinguish people. While race was being constructed alongside nature, race relations were not a priority for Muir. The early preservationists saw no links between early environmentalism and race relations but, as later discussions will show, modern researchers clearly have. One month before thirty-year-old Muir arrived in California in March of 1868, W.E.B. Du Bois was born on February 23, 1868. While Muir was in the California mountains fighting to protect Hetch Hetchy, in a dilapidated school in the South, Du Bois was struggling to understand the depths of racism. Not long after the establishment of the Sierra Club and less than a decade before Muir's death, Du Bois would publish his seminal *The Souls of Black Folk* and establish the NAACP. These two significant men faced similar mammoth challenges in struggling against the mainstream hegemonic discourse of their day; both trying to alter and redefine the understandings of race and nature beyond the common conception which saw little value in trees or people of color other than their use as resources. In doing so, the concepts of race and nature would take on new interpretations in the coming years further demonstrating their social construction. The next

chapter will discuss the issues these two men mobilized: racial equality and environmentalism. It would take over one hundred years before they fused together as an ideology in the 1980s.

1.4 Conclusion

Chapter one examined the ways in which white histories of environmentalism such as John Muir's were established in mainstream environmental organizations around preservation and conservation issues. It is important to note that contrary to the lionization of early environmentalists such as the decision to put John Muir on the California commemorative quarter, the priorities of preservationists were frequently at odds with urban populations, the working class and minority groups. This is clearly illustrated in the attempts to stop the damming of Hetch Hetchy to provide water for San Franciscans alongside the forced removal of Native Americans from their ancestral homelands which are now national parks. Consistent with the founding of the Sierra Club by white upper class males, origin stories chosen to be representative of mainstream American culture only resonate with specific populations, and may even be offensive to those people whose ancestors were killed in the process of recrafting environments and creating natural parks. This first chapter described these early "winners" and "losers" in environmental decisions and in doing so, demonstrated that "environmentalism" is an idea which can never be separated from racialized interpretations, legacies and cultural mythologies. It is important for later analysis to glimpse the early hierarchies created within environments. Urban regions were viewed in a negative light by preservationists as places for industry and degradation and left to decline, meanwhile resources were set aside for their protection of wilderness regions such as Yosemite. In contrast to the focus on the Sierra Club, the analysis now shifts from examining the groups founded to promote beauty, recreation and other environmental benefits to the groups currently suffering from a disproportionate impact of environmental burdens.

Chapter II: Warren County

2.1 Introduction

Chapter two opens with situating the political climate of environmentalism in the 1980s. In contrast to other radical environmental media sensations at the time, the confrontation taking place at Warren County received little publicity and surrounded racial issues rather than those of conservation and species preservation. An extensive description of the protests at Warren County explores the significance of the watershed event which is largely credited with launching the environmental justice movement by linking race with environmentalism. The 1983 U.S. General Accounting Office study alongside the 1987 Toxic Wastes and Race Report are examined, not only because they played a crucial role in adding credibility to the young movement, but also in order to situate the two men commissioning the reports whose activism in defining the civil rights movement predated the Warren County protests. The environmental justice movement's deep roots in civil rights led to the concept of environmental racism which further demonstrates the way environments became tied with racial and social justice issues. In order to show the many forms of environmental inequality which fall under the umbrella of environmental justice, the struggles of several environmental groups, predominantly of people of color, are detailed. From these humble origins, the environmental justice movement gained widespread recognition in environmentalism through the People of Color Leadership Summits along with the signing of the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 by President William J. Clinton. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the difficulties of proving intentional racial discrimination as evident by the ongoing attempts to use Title VI of the U.S. Civil Rights Act to prove disproportionate impact of environmental threats suffered by racial minorities and the poor.

2.2 A marriage and a birth

The 1980s emerged as a decade of deadly environmental tragedies killing thousands of people and wildlife internationally. Today, victims continue to suffer from compromised health, cancer and deformity resulting from the worst industrial disaster and worst nuclear power accidents in human history: the 1984 chemical disasters in Bhopal, India and the 1986 radioactive fallout at Chernobyl in the former U.S.S.R. Similarly, natural habitats were lost and animal life decimated during the dioxin contamination and evacuation at Times Beach Mississippi, followed by the pesticide spill into the Rhine River in Switzerland in 1986 and the Exxon Oil Valdez spill off the Alaskan coastline in 1989. Despite the severity of these and other environmental tragedies the decade would be remembered by environmental activists and historians not only for bereavement, but as further discussions show, for the birth of a new form of environmentalism.

In 1982, the Greenpeace ship "Rainbow Warrior" riveted the public as the predominantly white crew engaged in nonviolent techniques of "bearing witness." By physically chaining themselves to whaling ships the crew engaged in a direct action campaign over priorities to stop seal hunting to save whales, and to ban nuclear testing. The Canadian Greenpeace group along with other recently formed American environmental groups such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Earth First! were a part of a growing radical breed of environmentalists who differed from their more moderate predecessors focus on conservation and preservation and were galvanized, instead, by biocentrism. Later that same year, while the 146 foot Warrior sailed from New York to Newfoundland, Canada to protest the annual seal hunt and to wage an anti-whaling battle in the ocean; on land, another resistance story was emerging largely unnoticed by the popular media. Other groups were forming in the deep South and were engaging in equally radical protests for the first time, driven by completely different and often conflicting environmental priorities not originating in conservation.

Beginning in September and going into October 1982, hundreds of protestors were arrested in North Carolina. On September 21st *The New York Times* reported that 320 protesters marched two miles from Coley Springs Baptist Church to the Warren County N.C. landfill site. About half of the protestors, one hundred and fifty individuals, were arrested ("150 PCB Protesters," 1982, p.A10). Warren County residents were unknowingly initiating a new form of race and toxic chemical related environmental protest which would soon take fire across the nation. Contrary to groups with a biocentric approach, these new activists had no intention of moving away from an anthropocentric focus and intended to deepen the debate to areas traditionally overlooked by the mainstream environmental movement. Over time, these new activists would highlight the inequalities and hierarchies existing between humans within environments thereby transforming the way people think about and relate to 'the environment.'

The event which led to the outrage, marches, and lawsuits in Warren County happened the same year as the notorious Love Canal incident. In 1978, the general public was transfixed by the nightmare unfolding in Niagara Falls, a predominately white community in the area of northern New York State. At Love Canal, toxic drums buried beneath residents' homes began to leak deadly contamination into people's basements and groundwater. The crisis became so severe that President Jimmy Carter declared the site a federal emergency, the first environmental disaster of its kind, resulting in the relocation of hundreds of families. "Practically overnight, hazardous waste went from being a hazy, poorly organized perceptual object in popular imagination to being the most feared of environmental threats" (Szasz, 1994, p.38). The Love Canal incident resonated with concerns raised at the first Earth Day in 1970 and added to the growing anxieties raised the preceding decade with the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. Her book foretold of the dangers of a chemically overburdened society rife with toxic threats with the potential of killing song birds and humans alike; published only two short years before the author herself would succumb to cancer (Carson, 1962). In 1978, while hidden toxins

were bubbling up under people's feet at Love Canal, in other regions of the country, deadly chemicals were being disposed of in a far more obvious fashion.

Late one night in June, Robert Burns and his two sons Randall and Timothy drove their trucks along a federal highway in North Carolina intentionally leaking a trail of toxic sludge behind them. The men continued their illegal nighttime excursions until more than 200 miles of roadside was covered with 30,000 gallons of waste transformer oil. After complaints by the public, an investigation into the ordeal found that rather than paying the hefty regulatory fees required for legally disposing of the toxins, the Ward Transformer Company paid the three Burns men $75,000 to get rid of the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) (Pezzullo, 2001). Because the chemicals were dumped on federal land, and the state lacked proper disposal facilities, North Carolina was put in the bind of figuring out what to do with the deadly dirt. The EPA recognized the extent of the contamination by declaring the highway a superfund site (Bullard, 2004). The dilemma over what to do with the PCB contaminated dirt resulted in a decision to ship it to the largely African American Afton community of Warren County regardless of the fact that the area did not fit all of the EPA's federal regulations for a chemical waste landfill (McGurty, 2000).

Naturally, Warren County residents did not want their neighborhood known as a dump site. Even, more important than declining property values, residents were concerned about the health of their families and loved ones. Clear links between PCBs and birth defects and cancer added to their escalating health concerns. Residents were most troubled by the fact that the new dump site would store PCBs near the source of their families' drinking water. The Afton site was 5-10 feet away from the water table and consisted of permeable soil instead of clay— falling far short of the EPA requirements which stipulated that the landfill be at least 50 feet away from ground water (Schwab, 1994). Studies such as the Princeton Report were beginning to suggest that all landfills eventually leak while others concluded that "Only the most optimistic could

believe that the heavy concentration of PCBs in the Afton landfill will not eventually reach into the groundwater" (Geiser & Waneck, 1994, p.51).

While the ongoing incident at Warren County did not attract anywhere near the level of media attention of Love Canal, toxics were a hot news sensation at the time and the struggle taking place in North Carolina stuck a chord with the publics growing fear of deadly hidden contaminants. Warren County's travails became the focus of a series of small newspaper articles. *The New York Times* interviewed Ken Ferruccio, who along with his wife Deborah, were two the major organizers of the protests:

> 'These folks believe that they're fighting for their lives, more so now than ever,' said Ken Ferruccio, president of Warren County Citizens Concerned About PCBs, an organization that says it has 400 members. 'People believe that PCB's are just the beginning. That's what frightens them' ("Carolinians Angry" 1982, p.D17).

Unbeknownst to Warren County residents the struggle taking place in their community over a hazardous waste dump was far from unusual. The sociologist Robert Bullard had spearheaded studies and compiled data in Texas on similar situations of disproportionate impact of waste disposal on communities of color. The overwhelming number of cases of African Americans living with toxic waste in their backyards eventually led him to conclude that neighborhoods such as Warren County were one of several "little black love canals which exist across the country" (Bullard, 1990).

The NAACP, along with a black Baptist church and the biracial group Warren County Concerned Citizens filed suit in Federal District Court charging the EPA and the State of North Carolina with practicing racial discrimination against the residents of Warren County for not locating the waste to a more appropriate facility (Bullard, 2004). Significantly, the largest concentration of African Americans in North Carolina was in Warren County with a population. For three years legal battles dragged on while landfill construction was underway in Warren County. Finally, the Court ruled against the petitioners, and the waste was to be shipped to

Warren County after all. By 1982, with all legal avenues exhausted, the residents mobilized for direct action.

The civil rights movement had begun in the South and the majority of the Warren County marchers were from the same generation involved in the struggles to desegregate the "heartland" less than a quarter century earlier. The typical makeup of participants and organizers were local Warren County citizens, supporters from neighboring counties, seasoned civil rights advocates, and church leaders and their congregations. The incident also attracted protestors from out of town including members from small grass roots organizations and more prominent organizations such as the Congressional Black Caucus and civil rights groups including the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) and members from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which had played a key role in desegregation struggles in the South under Martin Luther King Jr. (McGurty, 2000).

As dump trucks approached the landfill they were met by non violent protesters who drew on what Edwardo Lao Rhodes calls an "organizational blueprint" of tactics learned decades earlier during the civil rights movement (Rhodes, 2003). Marchers sang, shouted, and chanted and several of the protestors lay down on the road as human shields to physically block the chemical laden trucks. Consequently, more than two hundred State patrol and National Guard were called out to Warren County (McGurty, 2005). Over nearly six weeks, hundreds of protestors were arrested for blocking roads. Despite their heroic efforts the chemicals were eventually dumped as planned in Warren County.

Prior to the 1980s, there had been numerous other localized struggles taking place across the nation involving toxic waste, but because of the manner in which race and socioeconomic status were clearly linked to disproportionate impact in environmental inequality through a direct action campaign, Warren County is widely recognized for being the birth place of the modern environmental justice movement (Bryant, 1995; Bullard, 2004; Gottlieb, 2005; Pellow, 2005).

Beyond the birth of a movement, Warren County also witnessed a marriage as the result of the union between two distinct and sometime conflicting movements: the civil rights movement and the environmental movement.

After Warren County, environmental demonstrations would not only be associated with site and species specific concerns around preservation and conservation with a primary focus on use and enjoyment by future generations. Instead, environmental issues expanded not only to the location of dumpsites, but more importantly to issues surrounding environmental and racial equality including the way immediate environments threatened human lives. In this process the protestors created a new form of environmentalism by broadening the term to include issues of environment affecting communities today in "where we live, work, and play" (Alston, 1991).

It is appropriate that the environmental justice movement was born in the South. With the conclusion of the Civil War in 1865, the defeated Southern states unwillingly ended slavery. Nearly one hundred years later after civil rights protests originating in the South, the passage of the U.S. Civil Rights Act in 1964 ended *de jure* segregation. Roughly two decades later, in 1985, North Carolinians were beginning to piece together the ways in which their communities remained environmentally estranged from white communities through *de facto* segregation. In the same region where civil rights activist engaged in the most brutal struggles for equal inclusion in voting, education and employment, in 1982 similar groups of Southerners also had to demand equal inclusion, equal treatment and equal recognition in the environmental arena.

In January, 2004, after twenty years of living with PCBs in their neighborhood, a historically disenfranchised community achieved victory in demanding fair environmental treatment and environmental justice. The undeterred advocacy by the residents finally resulted in the clean up and closure of the Warren County landfill.

2.3 Environmental racism

Environmental risk and societal racism are problems which were rarely linked together prior to Warren County. An influential series of studies conducted in the 1980s began to reveal the ways in which Warren County appeared to be part of a broader phenomenon rather than an isolated incident. Although activism on the streets in Afton ended when the PCBs were dumped at the landfill, several of the marchers arrested at Warren County did not stop there. To many civil rights advocates, Warren County was not an ad hoc issue but part of a bigger, more encompassing, lifetime struggle in the fight for racial equality. Two of the Warren County protestors would go on to initiate significant reports which would play a crucial role in the movement by strengthening, legitimizing and verifying on paper the claims made on the streets at Warren County. The following crucial reports were groundbreaking in directly connecting race with environmental inequality and thereby helping to mobilize a movement.

The 1983 General Accounting Office Study was the first of several studies to document racialized forms of environmental inequality. It was initiated by Walter E. Fauntroy, one of those arrested at Warren County. Born in 1933 in Washington D.C., Fauntroy later became a Baptist pastor and the director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference for the District of Columbia. Fauntroy was an active civil rights advocate under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., and was a key organizer in the 1963 march on Washington. In 1971, Fauntroy was elected to Congress to represent the District of Columbia, and was one of the primary founders of the Congressional Black Caucus. In 1982, his arrest as Congressman during the Warren County Protests helped to draw attention to the Afton Community. After Warren County, Fauntroy along with the Congressional Black Caucus initiated the first government sponsored report on environmental justice issues, known as The General Accounting Office Study (GAO) examining the links between race, income and the placement of landfills (McGurty, 2005).

The pivotal report found clear correlations between race and hazardous waste sites. It helped to launch a series of similar studies which showed that racial minorities and the poor have an increased likelihood of being subject to disproportionate impact of environmental threats in their immediate living environments (Bryant, 1995; Taylor, 2000; Cole & Foster, 2001; Bullard, 2004; Gottlieb, 2005; Pellow, 2005). Conducted in the Southeast United states, the GAO study found that although blacks did not make up a significant percentage of the population, three of four hazardous waste landfills were located in communities that were predominantly occupied by people of color and at least 26 percent of the population had incomes below the poverty line in all four communities (GAO, 1983). Although the study was limited in its scope and focused only on the Southeastern United States thereby making it difficult to generalize across the rest of the nation, the findings were significant in demonstrating the distributive inequality dimensions of hazardous waste (Fletcher, 2003, p.95).

Another prominent advocate arrested at Warren County was Benjamin Chavis Jr., now known as Benjamin Chavis Muhammad, who also came from a long civil rights background. He was born in Oxford, North Carolina in 1948. Long before marching with Martin Luther King Jr., and becoming the youngest executive director of the NAACP, Chavis was active in the Civil Rights campaigns in the South, most notably the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Untied Church of Christ. While fighting to desegregate public schools in the North Carolina, Chavis was arrested as a member of the "Wilimington 10" on bogus charges of arson and conspiracy. In 1980, federal court reversed the conviction. After spending four years in jail for a crime he did not commit, Chavis was released when it was proven that prosecutors had intentionally framed him. In 1983, Chavis was arrested again in North Carolina while taking part in the Warren County protests and was jailed for a night.

Five years after taking part in the Warren County protests, Chavis became director and ordained minister of the Untied Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. The UCC

Commission for Racial Justice was founded in 1963 after the brutal killing of Medgar Evers and the horrific church bombing and killings of four little girls in Birmingham Alabama and only became active in environmental issues after Warren County residents requested their assistance in the civil disobedience campaign to stop the Warren County landfill (Grossman, 1994, p.276). While at the UCC, Chavis along with Charles Lee helped to commission a ground breaking report "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States." Released in 1987, the report used multivariate analysis to compile national statistics around demographics of communities where hazardous waste sites and facilities were located. At the time, popular sentiment suggested that socioeconomic status was the prime determinant in the siting of noxious industries. In contrast, by controlling for socioeconomic status, the report found that African Americans were more likely to live next to waste facilities and that race, not income, was the primary determinant in the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities (United Church of Christ, 1987). This is important because the report was the first national study to clearly find race as the major determinant in where polluting industries and the waste they generate end up. "Though socioeconomic status appeared to play an important role, race proved more significant. Communities with the highest composition of minority residents had the greatest number of commercial hazardous waste facilities" (Godsil, 1991 p.398).

Reverend Benjamin Chavis jr., coined the term 'environmental racism' and described it as:

> Racial discrimination in environmental policymaking, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic 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 leadership of the environmental movement (Chavis, Proceedings, 1991).

Environmental racism can be any practice that disadvantages communities or individuals based on their skin color whether intentional or unintentional (Bullard, 1994). Nationally, the concept of environmental racism resonated with other groups of color, who often lived in

severely depressed areas and were struggling with their own diverse forms of toxic threats and discrimination. These groups began to recognize the similarities in the environmental arena under the newly formed umbrella of environmental justice.

The phrase environmental racism functioned as an organizing mechanism through which seemingly divergent groups could conceptually problematize their individual existences into a common framework. Just as the concept of patriarchy had helped the women's movement to link their everyday experiences as part of a broader phenomenon rooted in inequality, so too did the concept of environmental racism fill a missing link. Localized groups began to see the inherent problem of focusing on a "Not In My Back Yard" (NIMBY) approach which, if successful, would only end up transferring the risk to another vulnerable and marginalized community somewhere else. For example, at the beginning of the toxic debacle in Warren County, there had been proposals for shipping the waste across state line to an Alabama landfill, "out of sight and out of mind." Investigation showed that the Alabama site was yet another black and toxically overburdened community (McGurty, 2000). The notion of environmental racism helped groups to shift their organizing approach towards one of solidarity with other oppressed communities thereby shifting their strategy to "Not In Anyone's Back Yard" (NIABY).

The General Accounting Office Study and the UCC Report clearly linked the demographics of communities to those of neighboring polluting facilities. In doing so, the reports helped to spark the environmental justice movement by lending validity to the claims of Warren County protestors and hundreds of other groups across the nation, who had also experienced a disproportionate impact of environmental disparities based on race and class. Other studies conducted over the following decades would find similar and further evidence of widespread environmental discrimination (Mohai and Bryant 1998; Bullard, 1993; Bullard,1994; Bullard, 2004; Bryant, 1995; Taylor, 2000; Cole and Foster, 2001; Gottlieb, 2005; Pellow, 2005; Pulido, 2006). During the 1980s, the dual concepts of environmental justice and environmental racism

helped to transform seemingly unrelated everyday occurrences experienced by a vast number of communities facing toxic threats at home and at work into a common agenda. And as further discussions will show, the dual concepts became the mobilizing link necessary to bring minorities, women and working class individuals into a traditionally white and upper middle class, and male environmental movement.

2.4 "The wrong complexion for protection"

While localized struggles involving issues related to the social, health and economic aspects of people's immediate living and working environments have been taking place across the country for generations, there has been little understanding of how individualized community struggles fit into a national pattern. Americans had long been fighting for worker safety under the labor movement alongside struggles for racial equality under civil rights without any strong formal ties to each other. To illustrate, the following handful individual campaigners and the groups they worked with would today find solidarity amongst the environmental justice movement: grassroots work by Jane Addams at Hull House, Alice Hamilton and her efforts against industrial pollution and urban degradation, Martin Luther King Jr's. Poor Peoples Campaign, Ceasar Chavez and the United Farm Workers struggle around pesticides and dangerous working conditions faced by farm workers. And of course, there are countless unsung yet equally noble activists. Writing in 1992, Marcy Darnovsky noted "Only during the past several years have people of color and labor activists succeeded in having such issues recognized as 'legitimate' environmental concerns (Darnovsky, 1992, p.28).

There is a high degree of similarities with other movements, particularly those fighting for social justice, but it is important to note that contrary to the emergence of the labor, women's and mainstream environmental movements, which were comprised predominately of whites, and contrary to the civil rights movement made up of predominantly black and white participants, the

environmental justice movement is now more encompassing. It has extended beyond its origins, and attracted people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Blacks, Asians, Pacific Islanders, Chicano/Latinos, Native Americans and working class whites can all identify with, and locate themselves within the environmental justice framework. However they often confront different forms of environmental injustice and environmental risk.

Communities often contend with not just one dump site, but numerous sources of environmental degradation and harmful exposure. This may include: congested freeways crisscrossing neighborhoods, older housing with lead-based paint, industries that emit dangerous pollutants into the vicinity, power lines and abandoned toxic waste sites (Bullard, 1994, p.12). According to the EPA, "racial minority and low-income populations experience higher than average exposures to selected air pollutants, hazardous waste facilities, contaminated fish, and agricultural pesticides" (Sandweiss, 1998, p.45).

Just as diverse groups face different environmental tribulations, different types of environmental waste bring different types of health threats. While Latino and Mexican Americans may mobilize around issues pertaining to migrant farm workers exposed to pesticides, Native Americans may mobilize around mercury and dioxin poisoning their traditional foods; meanwhile African Americans often mobilize around issues of remedial waste in their homes and neighborhoods.

Building and structural remedial waste consists of materials which were once commonly used in buildings and are now considered hazardous. The most prominent examples are asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and lead (Gerrard, 1994, p.17). In particular, lead poisoning is irreversible and comes from a variety of different sources such as lead based gasoline, smokestacks and most commonly peeling paint. Lead is particularly harmful if ingested by children, causing brain damage, retardation and learning disorders. Groups such as PUEBLO in Oakland, California have turned their attention to the uneven distribution of lead in communities

of color finding that there is an extreme difference in the general population effected by lead. Ethnic minority groups have a far greater risk of suffering from lead poisoning with ratings almost twice as high at 3% for black children with elevated levels of lead in their blood compared to 1.3% of white children according to the Center for Disease (CDC, 2006).

Another deadly environmental health threat tied to poverty and race is the respiratory disease, asthma. "Low-income populations, minorities, and children living in inner cities experience disproportionately higher morbidity and mortality due to asthma" (CDC, 2006). There remains controversy within the medical community over the relationship between asthma and environmental triggers. However environmental justice advocates see an obvious relationship to the race and class dimensions of the disease in their communities where both smokestacks and children carrying bronchial inhalers is a common sight.

Contrary to the quick and dramatic response and relocation of the predominantly white residents at Love Canal, witnessed by millions of television viewers, there appears to be disparate impact in enforcement and cleanup of communities of color by the EPA. Once minority neighborhoods are found to be dangerous due to environmental conditions, environmental justice activists argue that there is clearly an unfair pattern by which communities get cleaned up. They argue that the Environmental Protection Agency is failing to protect certain segments of the population. The National Law Journal's study entitled "Unequal Protection: The Racial Divide in Environmental Law" was released in 1992 and was another landmark report for the EJ movement. The report examined the EPA's list of more than 1,000 superfund sites and compared white and minority hazardous waste sites. They found that minority regions took 20 percent longer to be placed on the national superfund list, clean up began later on minority sites and the EPA often chose to cap hazardous dump sites rather than to treat them. At sites in predominantly white communities, the report showed that the EPA chose treatment 22 percent over containment and penalties under hazardous waste laws were nearly 500 percent greater than penalties at sites

with minority populations Finally, penalties for protecting communities from air, water and waste pollution were 46 percent higher in white communities (National Law Journal, 1992). Critically, the report found that race rather than income level was once again a major disparity under toxic waste laws. According to the authors of the study:

> There is a racial divide in the way the U.S. government cleans up toxic waste sites and punishes polluters. White communities see faster action, better results and stiffer penalties than communities where Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live. This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor (National Law Journal, 1992).

While some groups are fighting against dumps being located in their communities, the report showed that many other groups are on the reverse end of the spectrum and are still waiting for contaminated neighborhood to be cleaned up. By the 1990s cases of environmental injustice were increasing meanwhile the environmental justice movement was rapidly gaining steam. Spanning the continent, from Bay View Hunters Point in San Francisco where residents were fighting to get the 'former navel base-now superfund' underneath their homes cleaned up, to community activists in Camden, New Jersey fighting against the pollution from the surrounding trash incinerator, sewage treatment plant and other superfund sites, groups across the U.S. were fighting for justice. Many of these groups did not know each other existed a decade earlier but would come face to face to work together to firmly establish a common agenda at an upcoming conference in Washington D.C.

2.5 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit

In 1991 almost 500 years after the arrival of Christopher Columbus to America, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington D.C. Charles Lee and Benjamin Chavis from the UCC were key organizers of the event and in the preface to the proceedings of the Summit, Benjamin Chavis states:

> Leadership Summit is not an independent 'event' but a significant and pivotal step in the crucial process whereby people of color are organizing themselves and their communities for self-determination and self-empowerment around the central issues of environmental justice. It is living testimony that no longer shall we allow others to define our peoples' future. The very survival of our communities is at stake (Chavis, 1991, p.i).

The conference brought together a diverse network of environmental justice groups. The purpose of the momentous occasion was to define a new environmentalism which included a multiracial and social justice perspective (Gottlieb, 2005). The Leadership Summit's six-member national planning committee included several already well known environment justice leaders including Charles Lee, Patrick Bryant, Richard Moore, Donna Chavis, Robert Bullard and Dana Alston, who would coin the term "where we live work and play," which would later become a common catch phrase in redefining localized environmentalism (Alston, 1991). Over 300 delegates and hundreds of participants from rural and urban areas of all fifty states, of different racial backgrounds met to address concerns over disproportionate levels of pollution in their communities. Drafting a total of Seventeen Core Principles of Environmental Justice, the attendees established a strong foundation for solidarity. (See appendix). The philosophy, goals and vision for the movement were expanded and clarified.

Speakers at the conference included well known activists such as the Reverend Jesse Jackson, alongside less known leaders from groups that have largely gone unnoticed by the popular media. One such person was Charon Asetoyer, Executive Director of Native American Women Health Information and Resource Center, who presented at the conference, describing the unusual birth defects and spontaneous miscarriages developing in her people in Lake Andes, South Dakota. Like many others at the event, Asetoyer argued that today's problems were part of a long legacy rooted in colonialism. Native American participants echoed outrage over conditions on Indian reservations, which have some of the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in the United States.

As with other people of color, Latino/a Americans often face increased exposure to environmental threats on a daily basis where they live and work. Richard Moore a prominent Chicano activist and co-director of the Southwest Organizing Project described California farm worker communities where childhood cancer was common. He estimated that "300,000 U.S. farm workers, most of them Latino and Caribbean, suffer pesticide related illnesses each year" (Proceedings, 1991, p.17).

In 1986, five years before the Summit, one of the earlier Latina environmental justice groups still active today was founded. "Madres de Este Los Angeles," or "Mothers of East L.A," allied with African American activists to defeat the plans for locating a prison in Los Angeles County, and through their joint efforts, successfully prevented the Lancer municipal waste incinerator from being located in their community. The Mothers of East L.A. went on to defeat several other proposed Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs). The Mothers of East L.A are a significant group because they are a prime example of another way in which the environmental justice movement differs from previous environmental movements, which were made of almost exclusively of white males. In contrast, women often make up the backbone of the environmental justice movement, many of them becoming politically active for the first time not by choice but through necessity. "By and large, it is women, in their traditional role as mothers, who make the link between toxic wastes and their children's ill health. They discover the hazards of toxic contamination: multiple miscarriages, birth defects, cancer deaths and so on" (Krauss, Celene, 1994, p.260).

One central claim emerging at the Leadership Summit was the idea that the very people who are the most impacted by environmental threats and have the biggest stake in the outcome are the people most likely to be left out of environmental decision making. In 1991, in Kettleman City California, "El Pueblo Para Aire Y Agua Limpio" (People for Clean Air and Water) won a case against Chemical Waste Management over plans to build a second incinerator in the area.

They won when they protested that the project details were not translated into Spanish. "The plaintiffs charged the environmental impact statement and the public hearings required by the law were written and conducted only in English producing a barrier to participation for the 40 percent of the population who spoke only Spanish" (Getches & Pellow, 2002, p.11).

Latino/a and Chicano/a activists have mobilized around issues such as: farm workers suffering from abject poverty, unregulated minimum wages, lack of legal protection and health care, violence and an increased disparity of environmental health threats through pesticide exposure (Figueroa, 2001). Lack of English translation also becomes a problem for workers such as hotel maids and cleaning women who cannot read the directions for proper use and disposal of chemicals. They often use dangerous products daily without understanding their associated health risks.

Young Shin director of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, spoke at the Summit also commenting on the difficulties that low income, limited-English-speakers face. She described the lack of translation of workplace safety manuals into other languages such as Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese and stated that "Most immigrant women, at one time or another in their journey to American life, worked in the hotel, garment or restaurant industries (Proceedings, 1991, p.97). In conclusion she noted that the mainstream movement had historically ignored these everyday struggles of immigrant women to enjoy a safe environment saying, "When immigrant workers talk about environment, we talk about working environment, where we work and breathe for 10 to 14 hours a day. It is only right that our workplace issues receive its due priority in the environmental movement" (Proceedings, 1991, p.98).

Several speakers came from urban areas not traditionally considered in environmental struggles. Many were fighting for the removal and cleanup of dumpsites and decaying lots know as "Brownfield's" and for the establishment of public parks. Alongside groups struggling for equality in dilapidated urban areas, came representatives from regions often considered to be

some of the most beautiful landscapes on earth. It is a surprise to many that Pacific islanders face their own forms of environmental dangers. Regions such as Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Guam have been subjected to radiation and military testing on surrounding atolls and islands for centuries (Hofrichter, 2002).

Clearly as these speakers signify, in contrast to virtually every other major social movement in the Untied States, the rainbow of faces and representatives in the crowd at the 1991 Summit was a clear reminder that the environmental justice movement remains one of the most inclusive movements in American history with high numbers of women and people of color and working class individuals playing active rolls in organizing and defining the movement. The four-day event vividly illustrated that the complexion of the U.S. environmental movement had altered (Schwab, 1994). In the case of the environmental justice movement, although whites do not make up the majority they have, both historically and in recent times, played an important role in the struggle for environmental equality. Whites have often faced severe environmental challenges, especially in impoverished areas such as Appalachia. Whites were active in Warren County, and, prior to their involvement in the EJ movement, many working class whites fought their own toxic struggles. There were several attendees from predominantly white groups at the Summit, including Lois Gibbs, the founder of the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (CCHW). Gibbs, who had marched at Warren County, had taken a lead role in fighting to be evacuated from Love Canal after her son began having seizures. She later established the Citizens Clearinghouse on Toxic wastes and became one of the most well-known advocates against commercial hazardous waste dumps construction.

Beyond the unification of diverse groups, another outcome of the summit was attendees' resistance to the idea of organizing a national leadership, preferring instead to maintain a more direct, inclusive and nonhierarchical grassroots approach. It was agreed that the environmental justice movement would remain a local and regional conglomeration of multiracial grassroots

groups with the 17 principles unifying them at their core. The organizing strategy was decided upon in recognition of the multiple approaches needed for the different environmental threats facing each community. EJ activists feared that if a national leadership was put into place, it would inevitably lead to the dilution and cooption of the various causes. By agreeing with the phrase "we speak for ourselves," the delegates shifted the focus away the perceived environmental paternalism pervasive within the "top down" mainstream model, towards a focus on self-representation, and a model of "bottom up" power. "The EJM activists seemed generally to distrust national leadership or events, and to feel that the people most affected by environmental insults should be at the table when decisions were made" (Bryant & Hockman, 2005, 27). In light of these concerns, attendees adopted "A Call to Action." It states:

> We are a new movement which raises the life and death struggles of indigenous and grassroots communities of color to an unprecedented multinational integrated level. The fight against the disproportionately harmful impact of environmental degradation upon peoples of color is not new. We have been in this struggle, we have always known what is at stake. This movement addresses every aspect of our quality of life. Unlike traditional mainstream environmental and social justice organizations, this multiracial, multicultural movement of peoples of color is evolving from the bottom up and not the top down. It seeks a global vision based on grassroots realities (Proceedings, 1991, p.xvii).

Eleven years later in 2002, the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held. The second conference was important because it helped to significantly expand the environmental justice issues outlined a decade earlier. That the environmental justice movement had always been driven by more than a single issue ideology was increasingly evident at the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Panel discussions had expanded to address eclectic environmental topics from every region of the globe such as: bio-tech and bio piracy, garbage imperialism, oil and mineral extraction, transportation, military toxins and smart growth. While activists remained committed to the core Seventeen Principles, they branched out considerably to address differentiated issues

and new regions of the world were people were struggling for environmental justice and facing their own particular forms of environmental racism such as the international trade in toxic waste.

As mentioned previously, women have played a particularly important role in the shaping and growth of the EJ movement. In recognition of that fact, twelve 'sheroes' were honored at the Summit for their unwavering dedication and contribution to environmental justice. Beyond recognizing these individuals, the Second Summit also celebrated the overall successes of the movement. By 2002, the environmental justice movement had grown considerably in breadth and depth. Now there were representatives at the summit from established university environmental justice centers and legal clinics. Many delegates came from states which had adopted and codified environmental justice clauses. Significantly, the movement was not just national, the second summit attracted representatives from the Marshall Islands, Canada, South America, India, South Africa and the Philippines amongst many other regions. Just two Decades after Warren County the EJ movement had become global.

2.6 Legislation

In 1981, President Carter had signed Executive Order 12264 which proposed to limit the export of hazardous substances by US companies overseas. However, the decision was quickly overturned when Ronald Regan was elected (Caldwell, 1992, p.68). While Carter had attempted to limit the exports of hazardous waste abroad, over a decade later, President Clinton proposed limiting the dumping and disposal of hazardous and municipal waste onto poor communities of color back at home in the United States. In 1994, President Clinton made environmental history when he signed into law the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898: "Federal Actions To Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." The Order was a major milestone for EJ activists. It helped to legitimize and institutionalize an

environmental justice agenda within federal framework. "This Order promotes the enforcement of all health and environmental statutes in areas of high risk populations, ensures greater public participation, improves research data collection relating to health and environmental factors of high risk populations, identifies differential patterns of natural resource consumption among high risk populations, and a timetable for implementation" (Bryant, 1995, p.218).

The Executive Order directed each federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission. Each agency was required to develop a strategy for identifying environmental justice concerns within their domain and for formulating appropriate responses (Clinton, 1994). The Order also established the creation of interagency working groups on environmental justice. Several environmental justice advocates such as Benjamin Chavis and Robert Bullard were appointed to provide guidance to federal agencies and EPA administrators on environmental justice strategies for implementation (Sandweiss, 1998, p.43).

While the Executive Order was a significant achievement nationally and symbolically, and helped to alter the internal procedures on environmental issues at the federal level, it lacked "teeth" for grassroots groups fighting for justice at the local level. Looking for more significant ways to curb environmental inequalities, community groups and environmental justice attorneys turned to Title VI of the 1964 U.S. Civil Rights Act. Title VI prohibits discrimination by any agency receiving federal funds. However, activists quickly discovered that Title VI proved exceedingly difficult to prove; more than 110 Title VI claims have been filled since 1994 but none have been resolved (Pellow & Brulle, 2005). Despite efforts by environmental justice groups to apply Title VI to discriminatory practices of placing waste facilities in disproportionately vulnerable and disenfranchised communities. Today, the U.S. Supreme Court requires clear intentional discrimination for equal protection claims. Just as it was exceedingly difficult for attorneys to prove that segregation of public schools had a detrimental effect on minority children, EJ activists are still working to find ways of applying Title VI. However, the

intentional discrimination required by the Supreme Court remains exceedingly difficult to prove in the siting of noxious facilities regardless of the clear racial differences in outcome.

2.7 Conclusion

Chapter two expanded on the first chapter by adding another alternate version of environmental history. In contrast to the formation of the Sierra Club in 1892 around preservation and conservation issues, this chapter illustrates how the formation of the environmental justice movement in Warren County, North Carolina in 1982 became mobilized around issues of immediate health threats and racism. This contrast will be increasingly important in later discussions examining the difference in priorities that exist between these two groups. As with chapter one, the Warren County event is significant in the ways environments were redefined. By linking race with land and environmental concerns in a direct action campaign while drawing on previous civil rights tactics, the Warren County protestors initiated a new form of environmentalism that attracted and resonated with large numbers of people of color. Consequently, the next chapter expands the discussion of the ways past and present inequality in racial relations is mirrored in the environmental arena.

Chapter III: Race and environmental priorities

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters established clear differences in alternate understandings of environmentalism. Moving on, in order to tackle the original research question, this chapter looks for clues explaining why there has been a lack of participation by people of color in environmental organizations and finds explanations lying in fields outside of political science. In contrast to the homogenous portrayal of environmentalism, this analysis begins by illustrating the polarization taking place between environmental groups. Next the social construction of race and nature become evident in greater detail by touching upon the emerging field of Ecocriticism as an illustration of the ways in which literature was used as a vehicle to transmit perceptions about what constitutes the environment. This analysis shows that different racial groups have alternate environmental stories and histories and relate to nature in very different ways. Along similar lines, the field of Whiteness studies offers insights into the historical precedents leading to current inequalities in racial relations with a particular focus on the privileged rather than the oppressed. Together, the fields of Ecocriticism and Whiteness studies suggest that the alternate past histories along with the present difference in economic and cultural worlds Americans occupy based on their skin color have combined to shape modern day perceptions of environmentalism.

3.2 Troubled times

Struck down by an assassin's bullet in 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. never lived to see a man on the moon. King's racially motivated assassination suggested that the dream of putting a man in space proved more attainable than dreams of judging people based on the content of their character rather the color of their skin. While the most visible civil rights struggles ended with

the passage of the 1965 Voting Civil Rights act and the tragic assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the struggles for racial equality were far from over.

Prejudice and racial bias rarely take on the overt, snarling and obvious forms it had during slavery and Jim Crow. Instead, racism has become institutionalized. As Thomas McCarthy notes, though the American civil rights movement eliminated most forms of *de jure* inequality, "many forms of *de facto* inequality remained in place—deeply entrenched in the beliefs and values, symbols and images, practices and institutions, structures and functioning of national and global society" (McCarthy, 2004, p.156). Today, America remains a racially structured and divided society with clear racial differences in housing, education, employment, life span and prison populations.

This is evident today in the siting of toxic waste facilities. As Cole and Foster point out, when questioned about the racist outcome of decisions to locate polluting facilities in minority neighborhoods, representatives and decision making bodies from toxic industries and waste facilities never acknowledge the "smoking gun" of explicit racial motivation behind their decision to locate to a community of color. Instead ,they naturally point to the obvious desirability of a chosen location based on low cost land and sparse population (Cole and Foster, 2001). "Likewise, even the 'race-neutral' criteria used by government and industry for siting waste facilities—such as the presence of cheap land values, appropriate zoning, low population densities, proximity to transportation routes, and the absence of proximity to institutions such as hospitals and schools-turns out not to be 'race neutral' after all" (Cole and Foster, 2001, p.72).

Even environmental groups considered to be largely progressive were not immune to these seemingly blameless and insidious, yet no less damaging forms of racial inequality. In 1978, while the Warren County community was beginning their struggle against becoming a dump site and Love Canal residents were evacuating their homes built on top of a dump site, the

National Urban League was asking "Where are the people of color in the leadership of the national environmental organizations?" (Mutz, Bryner & Kenny, 2002, p.xxi).

Urban poverty continued to deteriorate even further in cities across America while asthma and other environmental health related diseases skyrocketed. Environmental justice activists perceived the mainstream environmental groups as being more concerned with priorities such as protecting the spotted owl or an old growth forest over and above the concerns of protecting communities of color. As one East Harlem resident commented "Around here an environmental problem is not having your kid shot (Rhodes, 2003, p.72).

Almost fifteen years after the inception of the EJ movement, a deep polarization between mainstream environmental groups and environmental justice groups had not been resolved and instead seemed to intensify. With the new millennium approaching, boards, decision-making bodies and CEOs of the nation's largest organizations remained predominantly white. The major environmental organizations were no exception. People of color who were directly suffering from environmental pollution often felt left out and excluded from taking part in the environmental decisions which clearly impacted their daily existence.

In 1990, a group of community activist and academics from several environmental justice groups drafted two letters and sent them to the so-called "Group of Ten," which consisted of several of the nation's largest environmental organizations including: the Sierra Club, the National Wildlife Fund, the National Parks and Conservation Association, the National Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, the Friends of the Earth, the Izaak Walton League, and the Natural Resources Defense Fund. The major organizations were accused of failing to include racial minorities and the poor. The environmental justice writers asked the groups to open up dialogue with them and also demanded that the mainstream groups address environmental racism and take immediate action to transform the staff composition of their organizations by making 30 to 40 percent of their staff minorities. Michael McCloskey brought

to light the overt racial exclusivity typical of mainstream groups when he accused the Sierra Club of having no blacks or Asians and only one Hispanic person amongst its 250 professional staff (Bryant, 1990).

Such accusations exposed the often hidden and tenuous relationship between the mainstream environmental groups and grassroots environmental justice activists around issues of race. Mainstream environmental organizations were taken aback by the charges and several organizations claimed they would take immediate action to try to rectify the hiring problem. The letters also generated a flurry of media stories. In a story headlined "Environmental Groups Are Told They Are Racist in Hiring," *The New York Times* reported on the reactions from the mainstream movement:

> Spokesmen for the environmental groups, including the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Wilderness Society and the Sierra Club, agreed that they had a poor record of hiring and promoting minority employees, but they denied that racism was involved and insisted they were trying to correct the situation.
>
> 'I don't think anybody is as aware of the whiteness of the green movement as those of us who are trying to do something about it,' said Jay D. Hair, president of the National Wildlife Federation, the nation's biggest conservation organization.
>
> Frederic D. Krupp, executive director of the Environmental Defense Fund, said, 'The truth is that environmental groups have done a miserable job of reaching out to minorities. One problem, he said, is that minority members who are "cause oriented" tend to be attracted to issues like discrimination and poverty, rather than environmental issues. Only recently, he said, have environmental problems been recognized as falling disproportionately on the poor and minority neighborhoods' ("Environmental Groups," 1990, p.A20).

Two years after the letters were sent, the National Wildlife Fund boasted of having the best record amongst the mainstream groups with 23% of its staff as minorities, despite their refusal to differentiate between maintenance and secretarial workers and the professional staff (Gottlieb, 2005). The letters to the "Group of Ten" had sparked intense debate and by 2005, several mainstream groups started their own environmental justice campaigns and expanded their mission statements to include environmental justice concerns. However, very little has changed.

mainstream organizations are still largely staffed and run by whites and there continues to be little resolution of the demands made by environmental justice activists pertaining to environmental racism.

Given the severe inequalities which exist in the United States amongst racial groups, it is not surprising that different priorities resonated to different degrees between the mainstream environmental organizations and environmental justice groups. While these groups often are mobilized around dissimilar issues, prior coalitions and joint efforts suggest that these two groups can indeed work together in mutually beneficial ways. However, while these mainstream environmental organizations and environmental justice groups can and do often join together in solidarity to advance common causes, some scholars suggest that they also can have an antithetical relationship to each other. Doreceta Taylor comments on the way the publicity generated over events such as Love Canal and Three Mile Island led to a heightened awareness by middle-class white communities around fears of hazardous waste facilities that, as environmental justice activists argue, shifted the burden of hazardous waste facilities to communities perceived as 'paths of least resistance' to minority and low-income communities (Taylor, 2000, p.4). Taylor notes the need for more analysis to examine the ways in which the success of upper/middle class white priorities may come at the expense of those priorities of people of color and the poor (Taylor, 2000, p.4).

Examples of such a contention abound in environmental literature. In 1998, some chapters of the Sierra Club made waves amongst social justice groups when they tried to pass anti-immigration legislation, fearing that a growing population would severely jeopardize their conservation priorities. On the flipside, Richard Hatcher, Mayor of Gary, Indiana reacted to the first Earth Day by contrasting the environmental movement with the pro-segregationist governor of Alabama and presidential hopeful George Wallace:

> The nation's concern for the environment has done what George Wallace was unable to do: distract the nation from the human problems of black and brown Americans ("The Rise of" 1970, p.30).

3.3 Whitewashing environmentalism

There appear to be chronic misunderstandings surrounding differing environmental priorities. To understand why, it is important to return to the earlier question of why there were largely no people of color participating in environmental organizations until the 1980s. One significant factor which is often overlooked but critical to this analysis is the role of white privilege. As previously noted, environmentalism is never ahistorical and therefore it is of pivotal importance that the environmental justice movement be situated within the historical legacy which gave rise to its founding. In so doing, historical analysis provides deep insight for the current reasons for why some people, and some places, continue to be protected. Consequently, it is impossible to fully grasp the concept of environmental racism without rooting the problem in Americans dark history of race relations and property. As Jake Kosek later argues, these ideas are rooted in a long legacy founded upon ideas of purity and pollution—both of the skin and of the land.

In the 1990s, several universities began adding an environmental justice focus to their programs and curricula; meanwhile, several other important academic disciplines were also emerging at the end of the Twentieth Century. Two are particularly noteworthy for the ways in which they would directly impact the environmental justice movement. The first was the field of whiteness studies. This controversial discipline emerged over the last few decades, seeking to explore the social construction of race and the concept of 'whiteness' and privilege. Scholars, such as McCarthy noted that although the concept of race was socially constructed, race became a social fact with real effects on the ordering of social relations (McCarthy, 2004). While the field of study is new, the sentiment is not. People of color have long seen whites as an identity

group, although they themselves often do not. Whiteness scholars often point back to over one hundred years ago when W. E. B. Du Bois theorized in his writings on *Black Reconstruction* that regardless of their position in society, white workers enjoyed a "public and psychological wage" (Du Bois, 1962, p.700).

While significant progress has been made, Whiteness scholars make it evident that racism is far from something from the past. Instead of outright attacks against people of color, racism has now morphed and has become institutionalized. "Racial oppression is not the work of 'racists,' but of people who in many cases would be sincerely offended if accused of complicity with white supremacy" (Garvey & Ignatiev 1997, p.347). This legacy remains true for many progressive organizations, university departments and job hiring procedures which accounts for the extreme differences in the presence or lack there of people of color. "The present political culture in this country gives broad sanction for viewing white supremacy and antiblack racism as forces from the past, as demons finally put to rest by the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act" (Lipsitz, 1998, p.19).

Environmentalist David Hahn-Baker worked within both the mainstream and environmental justice movements and comments on the difficulty of speaking about racism with traditional environmentalists who sometimes perceive accusations of lack of diversity, lack of inclusiveness and institutional racism as accusations of personal racism (Hahn-Baker, 1994, p.42). In line with this sentiment, Whiteness scholars would be quick to pick apart responses such as those given by mainstream representatives such as Bob Norman, the man in charge of human resources at the National Audubon Society. When confronted about the charges to explain why that of the 315 member staff at his organization, only three were black, Norman said "I can't believe it's racism" ("Environmental Groups," 1990, p.A20).

This new field held particularly important implications for environmental justice work, helping to identify the spatial distribution patterns of land in the United States along racial lines,

and in the process, illustrate the ways in which whiteness was constructed just as much around property as it was around pigment (Lipsitz, 1998). Clearly, from the original Constitution which prioritized life, liberty and the protection of property only to those deemed worthy of citizenship, to promises of forty acres and a mule, to the forced removal of Native Americans, the links between property and race have been contentious in the United States long before the environmental justice movement. In her article "Whiteness as Property" Cheryl Harris examines the relationship between property and racial identity finding the two are deeply interrelated and operate to enhance entrenched power through the established structure of American Law. "Although the systems of oppression of Blacks and Native Americans differed in form—the former involving the seizure and appropriation of labor, the latter entailing the seizure and appropriation of land—undergirding both was a racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law" (Harris, 1993, p.1715). Harris goes on to show that by defining Africans as property and acknowledging whites' "rights" to Native American land, the construction of whiteness as property was further entrenched (Harris, 1993).

Recently, environmental justice scholars have begun to analyze the effects of white privilege in relation to the environmental arena. Notable is Laura Pulido's work in such articles as "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." Using Los Angeles as a case study, Pulido traces the way whites have secured cleaner environments by moving to the suburbs and away from the industrial core and, in the process, Pulido suggests that such practices of white privilege have contributed to modern patterns of environmental racism (Pulido, 2000). She describes the way her work deepens the roots of the study of environmental racism: "In addition to interpreting racism as discriminatory facility siting and malicious intent, I also examine a less conscious but hegemonic form of racism, white privilege" (Pulido, 2000, p.12).

Jake Kosek's article, "Purity and Pollution: Racial Degradation and Environmental Anxieties," makes clear connections between the role of whiteness and environmentalism. Examining the ways in which parks and wilderness areas have been used as tools for spatial and racial separation, Kosek describes the way ideas about race and natural purity became reified in nature. He points to early environmentalists who drew from prevailing anxieties about race to make environmental issues intelligible by focusing on the need to protect national wilderness areas alongside popular sentiment based on the need to protect the 'pure' from the 'polluted,' the 'natural' from the 'unnatural,' resulting in racial and class fears around purity and degradation which became a primary mechanism through which the environment became discernable (Kosek, 2004). According to Kosek, "The destiny with which the social relations of race and class are embedded within these spaces of 'pure' wilderness has helped reproduce attitudes about the nature of race and perpetuate the racialization of nature" (Kosek, 2004, p.138).

Similarly, in detailing the founding of the conservation movement, Jeff Romm notes how the stage was set "it arose in a time of white supremacy, when an elite of well-placed white men made the consequential choices that created the practices we know as nature preservation. Segregation—whether of whites from minorities or of natural environments from 'improper' users—was an operating strategy running through American society" (Mutz, Bryner & Kenney, 2002, p.338). Others such as Donna Haraway, find race and nature to be pivotal factors in the establishment of national identity, "race, like nature, is at the heart of stories about the origins and purposes of the nation" (Haraway, 1995, p.321).

Clearly, as with nature, defining the concept of race depended greatly on the prevailing stories, ideas, science and attitudes of the day. For example, the naturalist classification systems of classifying sex, description and type of plants and animals species expanded to encapsulate mapping racial differences in hair, skull size and complexion and in the process appeared to lend scientific validity to the fictitious construction of race. While there were no biological

groundings for race, in the 19th Century, Charles Darwin's pivotal book, *On the Origins of the Species by Means of Natural Selection* was manipulated to create "Social Darwinism." Together with other prevailing and constantly changing theories of the time period surrounding racial inferiority, Social Darwinism was used to anchor ideas of race in scientific discourse thereby establishing hierarchies of "superior" and "inferior peoples." This led to justification for murder, enslavement, brutality and inequality of "inferiors" by "superiors." It is important to recognize that ideas of nature, race and a "human nature" became cloaked in scientific discourse used to justify separation— whether from man from particular regions which must remain untainted by humans and protected; or from humans who must remain pure and unsullied by racial mixing. As further discussions will show, these social constructions cannot be severed from their historical constructs and work directly to influence the priorities of modern day environmental organizations.

Carl Anthony of the Earth Island Institute uses the term "ecopsychology" as a way of understanding the way specific group identity experiences are bonded to the environment. In "Ecopsychology and the Deconstruction of Whiteness" Anthony argues that the separation within the human community is reflected in the separation between people and nature and that "Nature is also defined as 'other' in the same way as these 'other' people" (Anthony, 1995, p.270). According to Anthony, ecological justice will never be achieved without addressing environmental racism, and he points to the large numbers of people are not being reached by the environmental movement which he says only reaches a tiny fraction of upper-middle-class Europeans. He asks, "Why is it so easy for these people to think like mountains and not be able to think like people of color?" (Anthony, 1995, p.273). Anthony finds the myth of "Whiteness" to be the most urgent and most destructive environmental problem and comments that "white people want to project their images and stories that solidify their places and has allowed them to control the world" (Anthony, 1995, p.275). In remarking about the limited range of stories,

Anthony states that many people reach back to mythical times to find stories that help them connect to the land. As an example of alternate environmental stories dealing with different cultural histories of the land and alienation from it, he points to a fictional quote in a Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* in which a character named Sethe cannot separate out the beauty of the plantation with her memories of slavery and wakes up with nightmares wondering if hell is also a pretty place (Anthony, 1995, p. 266).

It is increasingly becoming evident amongst environmental justice activists that nature and race are often linked at their core and that the flip side of oppression is privilege. Therefore, some EJ activists find it doubtful that the mainstream environmental movement will make significant progress without first stopping to consider the relationship between mainstream priorities and how they fit with the rest of the planet's largely brown population. Such rehashing of priorities and basic assumptions about environmentalism is illustrated by questions such as those posed by Giovanna Di Chiro "What Counts as 'green?' Where is the 'environment' located? What are we trying to 'sustain' and for whom?" (Adamson, Evans, Stein, 2002, p.11).

It is with these very viewpoints in mind that a second field with high degree of resonance to the environmental justice movement emerged. In the 1990s, the horizons of environment and literature were fused in the study of ecocriticism. While a significant percentage of the field can be criticized for having a Eurocentric focus, several ecocritics have focused on environmental justice ecocriticism. These scholars are working to rehash the meanings of nature and environment by tracing the way conceptions about the natural world were established through their transmission in nature writings and literature. This analysis holds a high degree of relevance for the environmental justice movement because situating environmentalism within literature further demonstrates the way environmentalism is far from ahistorical, meanwhile challenging our current perceptions of what constitutes an 'environment.' "Recognizing this pattern is an important way of helping mainstream environmentalists reach a recognition that the low numbers

of people of color in conventional environmental groups is not a historical accident. On the contrary, a habit of taking white privilege for granted runs deeply in the currents of their movement" (Mutz, Bryner & Kenney, 2002, p. 340).

Amongst these scholars Joni Adamson argues in *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice and Ecocriticism* that the philosophical basis of contemporary environmental racism was constituted through the control of nature long justified in notions of unlimited progress and unchecked development cloaked by justifications in Western science (Adamson, 2001). She finds that the removal, displacement, or poisoning of humans is rooted in Euro-American stories of "nature talk" that split humans from environment and social concerns (Adamson, 2001, p.168). In this vein, Adamson alongside other environmental scholars most notably the eco-feminist Val Plumwood, are part of a growing breed of scholars who focus their analysis on the dualism prevalent in modern environmentalism which separates humans out and apart from nature.

Likewise, in *Converging Stories: Race, Ecology and Environmental Justice in American Literature*, Jeffrey Myers extends the argument that race and ecology are deeply interrelated themes. Myers explores early American literature and shows that racial oppression and environmental destruction are inherently and historically linked at their core (Myers, 2005). Myers simultaneously helps to expose the racism underpinning the creation of the mythology of the American West, "where every good Indian was a dead Indian," but he also focuses on restoring the traditionally overshadowed voices of women and people of color to the canon of environmental literature. In this vein, by analyzing their construction through literature it becomes apparent that race and nature have had many intersections in American writing and society long before the environmental justice movement. Myers analysis suggests the ways in which the construction of race is directly tied to the destruction of nature.

While these new fields offer tremendous insight, another piece of the priorities puzzle regarding why people of color were not attracted to participate in environmental groups may lie in loosely knit theories which have largely gone unexamined in scientific analysis. Scholars have posed a wide range of overlapping theories to explain contributing factors to the differing priorities amongst environmental groups. Solutions are compounded by the fact there will most likely be no sole cause of such a wide disparity in approaches towards environmentalism. Robert Bullard has suggested that one of the many factors contributing to the lack of minority participation is mainstream environmental organizations is the anti-urban sentiment prevalent in most major environmental organizations (Bullard, 2004). On the flip side, there is also a dearth of studies which examine the sentiment that people of color may be less likely to mobilize around nature issues because few people of color use national parks. However, hints that these messages may not resonate with people of color to the same extent that they do with whites can be found amongst the popular press.

In a recent issue of *The New York Times*, Bunyan Bryant, director of the Environmental Justice Initiative at the University of Michigan, commented that "I seldom see other African-Americans or even other minorities camping," and went on to speculate that one possible reason could be that "for blacks descended from sharecroppers, camping might have associations of living on a farm and of poverty" (Hill, 2005). In the same story by the Associated Press, Alan Spears, associate director of cultural diversity programs at the National Parks Conservation Association commented that beyond the economic and geographic explanations for why there is little racial diversity in outdoor areas and activities, he said, "Hispanics whose families are new to this country might have the same sort of negative associations with roughing it" (Hill, 2005). Further commenting on the "unwelcome" feeling minorities might experience in the woods Spears states, "It's all couched under a larger fear that maybe with some of these public lands,

you're going to run into white supremacists in camouflage clothing running seven-man assault drills or something like that" (Hill, 2005).

Such visceral experiences and emotional reactions may be overlooked by social scientists because of the difficulty posed in attempting to measure and quantify them. However, personal analogies such as the type offered through literature may provide deeper insights than quantitative and qualitative analysis can allow. The non fiction writing of authors such as Eddy L Harris seems equally to support and disprove these earlier sentiments. His book *Mississippi Solo,* is about himself, a black man and outdoor enthusiast discriminated against because of his skin color. The author describes the response of a friend, who after finding out Harris's solo canoe journey begins in Minnesota and ends in the South, proclaims, "From where there ain't no black folks to where they still don't like us much. I don't know about you, but I might be a little concerned about that" (Harris, 1988, p.7). Harris details his canoe trip down the Mississippi alone and as one of the only black men out in the woods he struggles with issues of ecological consciousness and racial identity. Always on guard, his trip is filled with encounters with friendly whites and he wonders if it is his canoe or his skin color which makes them all comment on the fact that he is not from "around here." However, his streak of good luck changes when two drunk hunters with shotguns stumble upon his campfire, point there guns at him and say "We ain't shot at nothing since early morning.' 'Seems kind of a waste, don't it?" Harris escaped into the woods, stumbled and chipped his teeth on a rock (Harris, 1988, p.207). The men continue to pursue him saying that "he would have to come out sooner or later" (Harris, 1988, p.207). Finally Harris shoots at his attackers, and eludes them. Under the cover of darkness, he flees back to the river where he felt "safe again, watched over by the river god" (Harris, 1988, p.212).

Such sentiments are hard to quantify but support claims that "nature" can never be severed from our cultural, historical relationship and racialized interpretation of it. "When we use the word 'nature,' we assert a unity, a set of relations, and a common identity that involves all the things humans have not made. Nature is, in this sense purely cultural" (White, 1995, p.183). Therefore, while the physical environment is real and existed billions of years before humans, the concept of "nature" is largely a product of culture.

In short, whiteness studies and ecocriticism are fields that are conceptually related to environmental justice. The emergence of these two academic disciplines contributed greatly to the deepening of environmental justice analysis in helping to locate patterns of current environmental inequalities in historical legacies for racial and environmental discrimination within the United States. Key to these works is the idea that both nature and race are socially, historically, culturally and economically constructed. While race and our understanding of nature are constructions, racism and environmental destruction both in cities and the wilderness remain a reality.

Furthermore, environmental stories passed down by people of color along with sentiments expressed in popular culture offer a glimpse at the ways in which the concept of 'the environment' has been crafted and created often to reify current power inequalities. With this realization comes the potential for the remaking of our understanding of nature, thereby including the voices of those historically left out of the shaping of environmentalism. "The notion that nature is socially constructed, rather than a pure identity external to society, forces us to take responsibility for how this remaking of nature occurs, in whose interests, and with what consequences (for people, plants and animals alike). It brings together ecology and social justice" (Braun, 2002, p.13).

3.4 Conclusion

Differences in racialized environmental experiences support the contention that race and nature are culturally created, and are often overlapping and intersecting in the ways in which they are defined. As further discussion will suggest, saving an endangered species may appear as remote of a priority to an inner city African American woman in the environmental justice movement as the priority of removing lead from inner city schools does for a suburban white woman in a conservation group. It would be a mistake to attribute these clear differences in perspective to race as a biological fact rather than social construction. As Whiteness scholars have clearly pointed out, while "the concept of race was socially constructed, race became a social fact with real effects on the ordering of social relations" (McCarthy, 2004, p.150). It is important to examine some of the often overlooked descriptive theories about why people of color may experience alienation and feel that particular environmental issues are not relevant to their concerns. The next chapter will build on the way past environmental histories vary with culture, alongside the present day inequalities existing between racial groups which underlie environmental priorities and participation.

Chapter IV: Discussion of priority analysis

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters focused primarily on descriptive analysis to establish the historic precedents leading up to the variations in environmental participation. This chapter begins by examining the views of racial minorities towards the environment in a systematic fashion by looking at current studies and social surveys which stand in direct contrast to negative prevailing assumptions about minorities and environmentalism. Contrary to the lack of people of color visibly participating in mainstream organizations, which may have fueled such stereotypes, the following studies indicate that racial minority groups were found to be as, if not more concerned with environmental issues than their white counterparts. Furthermore, it appears that it is frequently white males whose views towards environmental issues are anomalous compared to the rest of the American population. By building on the environmental history of the Sierra Club outlined in chapter one and the history of environmental justice activism explored in chapter two, alongside the clear contrast between the two groups' current and historic relationship to the environment pointed out in chapter three, obvious differences in priorities have emerged. In order to answer the original research question of why people of color did not participate in environmental organizations until the 1980s, I propose the differing priorities hypothesis. In support of this hypothesis, I chart the differences between groups and come up with the conceptual terms of "environmental positives" and "environmental negatives." While acknowledging that these categories are to some extent generalizations, nonetheless, I suggest that the terms can be useful in illustrating in an easily discernable fashion, the obvious differences which exist between mainstream and environmental justice groups.

4.2 Establishing differences in environmental priorities

Many mainstream white environmentalists were shocked by the emergence of the environmental justice movement because it was generally assumed that minorities did not care about environmental issues as much as whites (Mohai, 1990, Jones & Carter, 1994). In opposition to these stereotypes black congressmen have the best voting records on environmental issues when compared against their white colleagues and that the Congressional Black Caucus has historically taken pro-environment stances. Still, common prevailing assumptions proliferate that people of color are uninterested in environmental issues and are not environmentalists. These abounding stereotypes were largely neglected by social scientists until the end of the 20th century when researchers began to seriously challenge the statistical foundation of such long held beliefs.

In the 1970s, M.R. Hershey and David Hill surveyed over two thousand elementary and high school students in Florida. In their analysis of the findings in "Is Pollution a White thing?" African Americans appear to be less environmentally oriented toward pollution than whites (Hershey & Hill, 1977). It was later determined however, that the study had major design flaws: instead of asking the children if they had an interest in general environmental issues the questions focused on attitudes towards mainstream environmental groups (Rhodes, 2003, p.75). Given the previously stated low levels of minority members within these organizations and perceived differences in environmental priorities, it is not surprising that the minority children had lower responses towards these organizations than did whites.

Another early article specifically examining attitudes of African Americans towards the environment is "Blacks and the Environment: Toward an Explanation of the Concern and Action Gap Between Blacks and Whites" by Dorceta Taylor. In reviewing twelve previous studies conducted prior to 1985 in differences in concern for environmental issues, Taylor acknowledges the difficulty in trying to reach any conclusive and meaningful results through contrasting the

studies because several do not account for spurious correlations making it difficult to isolate effects of education, occupation, and income-related factors. Overall, beyond calling into question the problematic methods of design, she notes the studies pointing towards a "concern gap" between blacks and whites, with black concern for the environment consistently lower then that of whites. She attributes these differences to the idea that blacks may have other pressing concerns (Taylor, 1989, p.6).

In direct contradiction to these earlier studies, Jones and Carter review a series of studies from the 1980s and reached the opposite conclusion finding that "The assumption that a 'concern gap' exists between whites and blacks regarding environmental quality is, at best, an unconvincing one" (Jones & Carter, 1994, p. 567). However in agreement with Taylor, they acknowledge that there may be grounds for the recurring theme that blacks may have more pressing concerns, but conclude that the evidence of the earlier studies remain inconclusive since most examined 'absolute measures' of environmental concern rather than concern relative to other pressing societal problems (Jones & Carter, 1994, p 567).

Due to the lack of environmental surveys of public opinion along racial lines prior to the 1980s, it is difficult to gauge the level of concern amongst Americans towards environmental issues according to race. However, the issue becomes clearer in the 1990s when the General Social Survey significantly expanded the number of questions related to the environment. After examining the General Social Survey from 1973-1990, together with a series of other national surveys, Jones & Carter once again found that contrary to common assumptions, people of color are equally if not more concerned about the environment than whites. Whites are more likely to rank environmental protection higher relative to other domestic programs such as halting crime and improving the educational system, but critically these findings do not support the idea that blacks lack concern about the environment (Jones & Carter, 1994, p.572). Jones and Carter speculate that the idea that blacks may be less supportive of protecting the environment relative

to other social programs may have led to the confused and false notion that blacks are generally unsupportive of environmental protection (Jones & Carter, 1994).

In conclusion, Jones & Carter find blacks to be very concerned about the state of the environment and are strongly in favor of government efforts to protect the environment. However, the findings also indicated that relative to other domestic concerns, blacks ranked environmental protection lower than whites (Jones & Carter, 1994, p.572). In explaining the differences between the levels of concern they speculate "Given the race-lined residential and stratification patterns still visible in U.S. society, it should not be surprising that aggregated black respondents rank a number of other problems as needing greater and more immediate attention, and that these ranking are somewhat different from those given by aggregated white populations" (Jones & Carter, 1994, p.574). They note that ranking a problem lower than other pressing issues should not be mistaken for 'disinterest' or 'lack of concern (Jones & Carter, 1994).

Over almost three decades, Paul Mohai conducted a series of studies linking the environment and minority attitudes. He also finds that, contrary to popular assumptions about blacks and the environment, recent studies show that African Americans express as much, if not more concern for the environment as do white Americans (Mohai, 1990, p.2). Examining more recent results from the General Social Survey from 1973-2002, Mohai finds that blacks and whites have roughly the same level of concern over the three decade period and for most years, blacks were more likely than whites to say we spend too little on improving and protecting the environment (Mohai, 1990, p.2). The major differences were found among issues surround pesticides and nuclear power which African Americans were more likely to view as dangerous to the environment (Mohai,1990, p.3).

In 1990, Mohai teamed up with Bunyan Brant to conduct the Detroit Area Study which examined racial differences in environmental attitudes. Unlike the GSS, the Detroit study was

not a national study and therefore had a significantly smaller sample making it difficult to generalize results to a broader population; still the findings were significant because they once again directly contradicted prevailing stereotypes that blacks lack concern for environmental issues. Contrary to these assumptions, blacks were shown to be very concerned about nature and global environmental issues, and, consistent with the General Social Survey, blacks were more likely to mention pollution as a major issue. Especially significant were neighborhood environmental problems which blacks ranked among the most important problems as opposed to whites who ranked the issues at a far lower level (Mohai, 1990; Mohai and Bryant, 1998).

The Detroit Area Study was replicated again in 2002 and found "As before, substantially higher percentages of blacks rated pollution problems, such as air and water pollution, as 'very serious.' In addition, blacks were more likely than whites to rate pesticides and chemicals in foods as 'very serious' by a margin of more than 20 percent. Also as before, no statistically significant differences were found in how blacks and whites rated the seriousness of nature preservation" (Mohai, 1990, p.6). Once again the authors attributed the differences to the fact that in general environment quality in African American neighborhoods is lower than in white neighborhoods (Mohai, 1990, Mohai and Bryant, 1998).

Public opinion surveys undertaken by the Roper Organization also substantiated the importance of environmental issues to minority communities, which were almost identical for both majority and minority populations (Rhodes, 2002). Once again, the picture starkly changes when environmental concerns are rated alongside other priorities. Minority communities rank other issues such as crime, drugs and racial discrimination higher on their priority list.

While these studies provide tremendous insight, there remains a critical scarcity of studies examining people of color's attitudes towards environmental issues. However the work by Jones and Carter find that in support of studies by Mohai, certain environmental concerns will have more salience for blacks than for whites (Jones & Carter, 1994, p.575). While this

cumulative analysis shed clarity on a poorly understood, yet prevalent aspect of American society, there is a critical need for national studies that move beyond single indicator analysis, allowing participants to rank concerns in degrees of relevance. National statistical analysis on race and environmental issues is necessary which go beyond white viewpoints, and even beyond black viewpoints to cover a variety of racial groups in order to get a deeper understanding of environmental issues and priorities from another vantage point, providing a non traditional understanding of other types of environmentalism.

One of the few studies to consider these concerns was by by Linda Kalof, Thomas Dietz and Gregory Guagnano. In "Race, Gender and Environmentalism: The Atypical Values and Beliefs of White men," the researchers analyzed differences in values and proenvironmental beliefs amongst race and gender among a random sample of whites, blacks and Hispanics ("other ethnicities" were eliminated from the analysis due to the small number in respondents.) The analysts tested these beliefs on the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) a widely used scale devised to measure beliefs about environmentalism. Out of ten significant differences in means, the striking differences were between white men and all other subgroups (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002).

In direct contrast to the makeup of mainstream environmental groups, some of the most remarkable results among their findings indicate that whites were significantly less likely to endorse pro-environmental beliefs than Hispanics. Furthermore, blacks valued openness to change substantially more than whites or Hispanics. Whites also placed less value on altruism than Blacks or Hispanics (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002, p.9). The gender effect was significant only for whites with women being far more concerned than men. This led the authors to theorize that minority women and men are more similar in environmentalism than white women and men (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002, p.11). Furthermore, the authors contend that

"The results substantiate the argument that perceptions are rooted in U.S. women's and minorities' historical experiences of disadvantage" (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002, p.11).

In trying to account for why white men have such a extreme variation in difference in response sets than all other groups, the authors pose the idea that attitudes of white men in the U.S. are anomalous possibly due to their historically privileged position regarding risk and power and that such atypical values may result because they are not constrained by survival concerns (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002). "We suspect that the key variable associated with environmentalism and altruism may be membership in the most advantaged social structural or cultural group in the society, rather than race or gender per se" (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002, p.13). The authors conclude by calling for new theories of social stratification which take into account current circumstances and historical experiences in relation to the environment.

These findings are in line with a related study which addressed the links between gender, race and perception of risks. In their article "Gender, Race, and Perceived Risk: the 'White Male' Effect," Figueroa, Flynn, Slovic and Mertz find that risk was commonly judged lower by men than by women and by white people than by people of color with sizable differences between white men and other groups. White males were consistently less likely to rate hazards as posing a 'high risk' particularly amongst such items as "handguns, nuclear power plants, second-hand smoke, multiple sexual partners, and street drugs" (Figueroa, Flynn, Slovic and Mertz, 2000, p.164). With particular relevancy to environmental issues, white males were also shown to be more trusting of technological hazards and far less worried about adverse public responses from risk exposure to chemical and radioactive waste hazards (Figueroa, Flynn, Slovic and Mertz, 2000, p.167). In summation the authors find, "Compared with the rest of the sample, white males were more sympathetic with hierarchical, individualistic and anti-egalitarian views, more trusting of technology managers, less trusting of government, and less sensitive to potential stigmatization of communities from hazards" (Figueroa, Flynn, Slovic and Mertz, 2000, p.170).

The "white male effect" was replicated again a few years later this time when Slovic and Mertz teamed up with Terre Satterfield. In "Discrimination, Vulnerability, and Justice in the Face of Risk" the authors undertake the findings of the previous research on perceived risk along with broadening the study to examine the American public's ideas about perceived health and environmental risks. The results of the study of 1,204 compiled interviews yet again demonstrate the "white male effect" with white males rating the risk of hazards as lower than most other demographic groups (Satterfield, Slovic & Mertz, 2002, p.127). Furthermore, in line with Mohai and Bryant and Jones, the results show that African Americans are more rather than less concerned about environmental risks, particularly about pollution (Satterfield, Slovic & Mertz, 2002, p.127). The new analysis also found that vulnerability, gender, environmental justice and race were significant predictors of environmental risk and health perception (Satterfield, Slovic & Mertz, 2002, p.128). It should be noted that risk perceptions about natural disasters which minority groups already rated at a much higher risk as compared to white males may be even higher today due to the fact that this study was undertaken before the hurricane Katrina disaster which affected high numbers of minority communities.

It would appear that in contrast to the overwhelming lack of representation of mainstream environmental organizations, women and people of color are intensely concerned about environmental issues. As Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano argue, no longer can we assume that there is one uniform set of values, beliefs, and perspectives that represent human concern for and maintenance of the environment but rather we must look for structural differences in environmentalism (Kalof, Dietz & Guagnano, 2002, p.14).

Despite these findings, after nearly three decades of studies, social scientists have not reached a conclusion as to how race influences a person's environmental concern. However, as these more recent studies and data reveal, racial minorities may be more concerned about the environment than whites and in actuality, it may be white males whose views appear to be

notably abnormal. Taken together, the results of these studies suggest that people of color and women are deeply concerned about the environment.

These findings coincide with a rapid increase of environmental justice groups over the last three decades, made up of people of color and women. Robert Bullard has compiled a People of Color Environmental Groups Directory documenting the rapid increase in membership and formation of environment justice groups. It now lists over four hundred organizations, many of which have emerged only in the last three decades (Bullard, 2000). Dorceta Taylor statistically examines the people of color environmental groups and finds that fifty one percent of the leaders are women-often women of color and that over 70 percent of them work on water pollution or toxics issues with one in four groups working on issues relating to the siting of toxic facilities in their immediate communities (Taylor, 1999).

4.3 Priorities of Warren County and the Sierra Club

As the preceding analysis clearly illustrates, the "differing priorities hypothesis" is well grounded in recent studies and other areas of environmental literature. Despite the seemingly obvious differences in priorities, as Rhodes points out, far too often "environmentalism" is used as a homogenizing term, with no differentiation between poor or rich, black or white, and only "polluters and defenders, land or fauna to protect, a single, generic humankind to consider" (Rhodes, 2003, p.30). Contrary to this portrayal, environmental issues remain politically charged and environmental hazards differently dispersed. By masking the stark differences in environmental priorities existing between racialized groups, homogenization conceals the way specific populations are affected differently by environmental concerns. Giovanna Di Chiro echoes the belief that in contrast to the projected unity in catch phrases of what she calls "vocabularies of commonality" such as "unified planet, a common future, global commons or

global citizens." such homogenizing discourses of a common fate hide the different environmental predicaments of oppressed groups (Di Chiro, 2003).

Differences in environmental predicaments become clear in the 1980s, when mainstream environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club focused their efforts primarily on lobbying, filing lawsuits and recruiting new members through direct mail campaigns. Meanwhile grassroots environmental groups comprised primarily of people of color were growing at a rapid pace resulting in more than three times the number of groups formed than in the previous decade (Taylor, 1999, p.44). In order to tackle the complex phenomenon of why environmental justice groups in particular, grew at a rapid rate during the 1980's a wide array of past and present factors have been taken into consideration. However, due to the immensity of the question, it would be difficult to isolate all of the variables pinpointing the political, economic, historical and social factors leading up to the racial stratification and alienation of people of color from environmental groups.

Over time, political scientists have offered a wide range of theories speculating about why particular social movements come about when they do, yet due to the multiplicity of contributing variables, no hypothesis can ever completely and definitively capture all elements involved in their formation. Therefore, while acknowledging other contributing factors such as the election of Ronald Reagan, whose pro business policies were antithetical to those of environmentalists along with the severe recession of 1982 which primarily affected people of color and the poor, this study remains focused on the initial priorities hypothesis. Likewise, it is beyond the scope of this analysis to scientifically and conclusively prove why particular social movements come about when they do. Only a few of the seemingly most salient past and present factors will be discussed here starting with frame formation.

Through examining social movement frames, social scientists trace the ways in which particular messages resonate with different segments of the population. Frames are an important

part of social movement analysis and help people mobilize around an issue by transmitting the diagnostic and prognostic elements of an issue. On one hand, their diagnostic aspects help identify a problem and indicate who is to blame. On the other hand, their prognostic function helps offer solutions as well the means to achieve those goals (Bedford, 2005, p.38). By adding the equality aspect to environment issues, these two divergent concerns become fused thereby "environmental" and "justice" combine into a powerful and elastic master frame which has the potential of resonating with large groups of people around more than a single issue platform.

Significant work around framing by the environmental justice movement has been undertaken by Dorceta Taylor who portrays their effective use by the two movements, environmental justice and mainstream environmentalism, in great detail. Taylor illustrates the ways in which mainstream groups draw on their "cultural stock" to evoke images relating to wilderness and wildlife protection to motivate their members. "Such images, rooted in 19th-century frontier experiences and romantic transcendentalist environmental ideology, are still potent symbols that have a high identity salience for middle-class white environmentalists" (Taylor, 2000, p.7). However, according to Taylor these 19th-century images might not resonate with people of color due to forced relocations, living on reservations, appropriation of land, slavery and sharecropping, among other challenges faced by people of color at the time (Taylor, 2000). She finds that instead, in order to motivate their supporters, environmental justice activists draw on social justice and civil rights frames to evoke images of racism, appropriation of land, and the destruction of communities and culture (Taylor, 2000).

Taylor discusses why people of color may have appeared uninterested in participating in environmental organizations largely because of the ways in which the issues were framed, addressed and strategically focused on. Taylor's remarks appear well substantiated in the ways in which frames were initially used by mainstream and environmental justice groups to illicit very different responses over obvious differences in priorities. As noted earlier, the Sierra Club was

founded upon images of preserving wilderness, sacred places and natural beauty. In contrast, priorities at Warren County surrounded issues of health and property value and then turned into priorities of racial inclusion.

According to Eileen McGurty, when the NIMBY frame at Warren County transformed into one of environmental racism it became a powerful collective action frame only when concerns about groundwater contamination were overshadowed by a claim attributing the decision to construct a landfill in the Warren Community based on the fact that the residents were black, poor and powerless (McGurty, 2000). As opposed to a NIMBY frame linked primarily to local issues, the environmental racism frame constituted a new understanding of ecological harm tied to political powerlessness and inequality making the attribution of blame much broader to include racial discrimination throughout the South and society at large (McGurty, 2000).

The manner in which frames resonate amongst groups reveals the sharp differences in environmental surroundings. One example is found in the framing of the topic of health in the literature of these two divergent groups, with clear illustrations of the ways in which they have differed historically in their approach towards well-being. John Muir frequently wrote about the healing quality of nature to gain support from his readers and extolled the benefits of breathing the "fresh mountain air." He wrote that "everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike" (Muir, 1912, p.256). Muir also describes positive associations with the physical setting "no Sierra landscape that I have seen holds anything truly dead or dull, or any trace of what in manufactories is called rubbish or waste" and goes on to state that instead, everything in wilderness is "perfectly clean and pure" (Muir, 1979, p.157).

In contrast to the healing and uplifting environment that Muir wrote about one hundred years earlier, today minority populations and low income residents often live in polluted areas

where their immediate environment may compromise and harm their health. Naturally the frames EJ activists use reflect these circumstances. At Louisiana's "Cancer Alley" one Alsen community leader, Mary McCastle, a 72-year-old grandmother described her communities' battle with the Rollins plant:

> We had no warning Rollins was coming in here. When they did come in we didn't know what they were dumping. We did know that it was making us sick. People used to have nice gardens and fruit trees. They lived off their gardens and only had to buy meat. Some of us raised hogs and chickens. But not after Rollins came in. Our gardens and animals were dying out. Some days the odors from the plant would be nearly unbearable. We didn't know what was causing it. We later found out that Rollins was burning hazardous waste (Bullard, 1994, p.56).

Environmental justice groups mobilize their supporters by connecting dirty and foul smelling air to living next door to dumps, toxic industries, pig farms and bus depots and in-turn to societal, racial and class based inequality at large. While mainstream groups focus on large scale declines in natural resources, EJ activists mobilize their supporters with real life examples of people suffering from cancer, asthma and lead poisoning linked to their immediate home and work environments. In hindsight, it becomes evident that these frames would indeed resonate with EJ groups made up of people of color based on the aforementioned finding that African Americans express significantly greater concern than do whites about pollution problems, especially at the neighborhood level (Mohai, 1990).

Along similar lines, clear differences in ideals emerge by examining the language used in the founding of the Sierra Club and the emergence of the environmental justice movement. By contrasting the 17 principles of environmental justice established at the First National People of Color Leadership Summit in 1991 with those of The Sierra Club's 1892 Articles of Incorporation, clear differences in the environmental issues these groups focus on become obvious. The latter's unmistakable focus on nature and preservation issues could easily be attributed to the ninety-nine year gap between the founding of the two groups; however, an examination of current Sierra Club literature reveals that the issues they currently mobilize

around, while expanding, have remained in-line with Muir's original focus on nature preservation priorities (Sierra Club, 2006).

Clear differences in priorities can be seen not only in past writings of environmental groups, but also in the current literature of environmental organizations. Priorities are determined by what the founders, board members, staff and membership deem to be the most important. Observable evidence of the particular issues environmental organizations are choosing to focus on can be found with a cursory glance at their websites. Environmental priorities are conveyed in mission statements, through pictures and the past actions groups have mobilized around, alongside statements made by members. A cursory glance at mainstream and environmental justice groups' literature and websites demonstrates clear differences in priorities. A quick glimpse at any of the 400 people of color groups listed in Robert Bullard's 2000 Directory contrasted with the "Top Ten" mainstream environmental organizations reveals stark differences in outlook and focus.

Current differences between racial groups also influence current perceptions of environmentalism. Rhodes examines the low levels of minority group members in federal agencies such as federal agencies as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Energy. He points to a 1993 EPA survey measuring cultural diversity which asked respondents why they chose to work at the EPA. "Seventy-one percent of the white respondents chose the same response, 'To help protect the environment'—as opposed to only 42 percent of African Americans" (Rhodes, 2003, p.73). His analysis of the survey suggests that minorities who work for environmental agencies are more likely motivated by "nonenvironmental interests" (Rhodes, 2003, p. 73). This point is important because it reveals that once again people of color have different perceptions of environmentalism and may be differently motivated.

Present day recruitment practices may also contribute to the overwhelming lack participation by people of color in mainstream environmental organizations. Rhodes finds that instead of extending their drive to African American or Latino institutions, recruitment by the major environmental organizations takes place predominantly at white universities and programs in the environmental science, natural resource management and biology— all fields with below average minority representation (Rhodes, 2003, p. 82). Furthermore, he finds that deliberately or not, until very recently, these organizations have made little attempt to portray their literature and their mission in a style more attractive to minority groups (Rhodes, 2003, p. 82).

A quick look at the Sierra webpage validates his remarks where images of white environmentalists hiking, rock climbing and "playing" in nature abound (Sierra Club website, July 2006). Today, the Sierra Club remains overwhelmingly committed to issues of preservation such as halting commercial logging, maintaining clean water and protecting wildlands (Sierra Club website, July 2006). However, some progress has been made in addressing issues which more directly affect diverse segments of the population. After pressure from minority groups over the last two decades, the Sierra Club and other mainstream organization have branched out to adopt their own environmental justice campaigns. Today the Sierra Club website states:

> The Sierra Club supports local communities in their struggles for a clean and healthy environment for people of color and others whose neighborhoods have been targeted by polluting industries. When invited into a community, our Environmental Justice program provides grassroots organizing assistance, following the lead of the community members as they define the agenda and build self-reliance. Across the country, from Washington, D.C., to Arizona, we're supporting communities as they tackle issues from coal companies sapping pristine drinking water to homes being destroyed by mountaintop-removal mining (Sierra Club, 2006).

The convergence of environmental justice issues within mainstream environmental groups has produced a growing awareness of the ways in which environmental concerns may differ amongst groups depending on their cultural interpretations and quality of their immediate surroundings. The careful wording of this statement suggests that The Sierra Club is willing to

work alongside minority leaders on equal footing. This outlook may be a result of work by John McCown who, in 1993, identified the problem of Sierra Club employees coming into communities saying "Don't worry! Well do it for you! We'll speak for you!" (Gottlib, 2005, p.270). As a result, the Sierra Club environment justice staff members are committed to working in a community "only upon invitation" and incorporating the community's agenda (Gottlib, 2005, p.270). Despite these significant steps made by the Sierra Club and other mainstream environmental organizations, Rhodes speculates that it appears doubtful that minority membership in mainstream environmental groups will increase in proportion to their numbers in the population any time soon "given minorities' fundamental differences with the majority over agenda" (Rhodes, 2003, p.85). Clearly, a deeper analysis and understanding of differing priorities is necessary in order for groups to address their commonalities and areas of contention as well as intersection.

In 1992, on the centenary of the founding of the Sierra Club, executive member Michael Fisher took a radical step by encouraging minorities to take over the Sierra Club by joining local chapters and redirecting priorities towards grass-roots issues (Schwab, 1994). Contrary to this bold and well meaning statement, Robert Bullard has consistently argued that the mission of environmental justice advocates is not about creating "little brown Greenpeaces" or "little red Audubon societies" (Bullard, 2006, p.5). Taking over "Big Ten" organizations chapter by chapter is not what blue-collar or people-of-color constituents are striving for (Schwab, 1994). As activists made clear at the People of Color Leadership Summit, they want the ability to speak for themselves, defining their own priorities and reestablishing their own stories, definitions and relationship to environmentalism.

Despite the important steps mainstream organizations have made in beginning to address the environmental concerns of people of color and the poor, there appears to remain a chronic breakdown in the multiple understandings of environmentalism. In order to shed some light on

differences in environmental priorities it is worth noting that the word *ecology* originates from the Greek word for home. The term can act as a useful metaphor for illustrating the different focuses by different groups. Mainstream groups are often centered on the planet as 'home' and much of their work goes into protecting that home for future generations of people and species beyond an anthropocentric approach. In direct contrast, environmental justice activists have interpreted the concept more literally to environmental spaces where their very homes are located. Thus EJ activists often work to protect the quality of their immediate environment for the current generation and the direct health of their children.

Differences in environmental approaches can be reinterpreted through Abraham Maslow's groundbreaking "Hierarchy of needs theory" (Maslow, 1954). According to the pyramid depiction of the theory, there are five levels of needs. At the bottom rung are basic biological needs such as air, water and food. The second level consists of safety needs surrounding income security and physical safety. The third level consists of love and feelings of belonging through family, friendship, and group membership. The fourth level consists of the need for status, esteem and accomplishment. Finally, the fifth and uppermost level is that of self-actualization. As opposed to the four lower levels, which are considered deficiency needs, the top level is considered a growth level. Maslow theorized that individuals will move on towards upper levels only when the needs of the bottom levels are met. What is interesting to note is where environmentalism would fit into the pyramid today. Environmentalism characterized as conservation and preservation is popularly perceived at the top of the pyramid as a form of self actualization. This defines environmentalism as something outside of people's everyday experiences. If however, environmentalism is redefined in line with environmental justice struggles to include basic needs such as clean air, clean water, healthy food, waste disposal and community and workplace safety, concerns over "environments" actually become located at the

bottom levels of the pyramid. Thus, where environmentalism is situated in Maslow's hierarchy depends on perception and definition of what environmentalism is.

In this sense, placement in Maslow's hierarchy is a matter of cognitive perspective. If a person's definition of environmentalism is distant and focused on priorities of their choosing such as devoting their time and resources to preservation or species conservation, they would likely view themselves as acting out of self actualization.Yet, if a person sees the causal link between their environment and their health, they would likely place environmentalism closer to the basic needs at the bottom of the hierarchy. Placement is important because according to Maslow, the needs at the bottom of the pyramid are of greater urgency and must be met before individuals have the motivation to focus on other concerns. As noted in chapter three, environmental justice groups sometimes perceive the mainstream groups focus on priorities such as protecting the spotted owl or an old growth forest to be offensive by placing such distant needs over and above the immediate basic needs of communities of color and the poor. Maslow's theory helps to shed clarity on this polarization in environmental perceptions by providing a way to situate these examples of diverse needs within a comprehendible hierarchy.

This reinterpretation of environmentalism is important because the hierarchy of needs theory has long been used to explain human motivation by showing that only when people have their lower needs met, will they focus on to the higher order needs of self-actualization in the form of environmentalism. In actuality the environmental justice movement shows that those located throughout the pyramid fighting for safety and their basic biological needs, can and do become active in environmentalism before reaching the top of the pyramid.

Through tracing the accumulated differences I observed throughout my research in the ways in which environmental concerns historically and currently affect diverse populations, it appears that white and affluent populations are concerned with what I label "environmental positives" relating to improving environmental conditions for future generations: aesthetic

beauty and protecting regions often considered beautiful from commercialism and development from industries such as mining and logging. Environmental concerns relating to experiencing environment through play and entertainment: bird watching, hiking, camping, kayaking, fly fishing, skiing and sailing. Pollution concerns related to protecting animal/human species at large, destruction of habitats, global warming, Ozone depletion. Environmental consumerism issues in recycling, fair trade products and hydro electric automobiles. Health concerns related to optimal health-pesticide free organic foods and non genetically modified crops and finally concerns related to the passage of international trade agreements. On the flip side it appears that people of color struggle to attain an equal benchmark in environmental quality in the places where they live and work. People of color environmental groups appear to mobilize around what I call "environmental negatives." Localized urban eye sores such as brownfields and LULUs, power plants, toxic dumps, dirty water and freeways. Deteriorating health at work and at home through pesticides exposure on the job, lead poising in homes, rats and roaches and dirty air linked to environmental triggers such as asthma. The social justice dimensions of deteriorating quality in immediate living environments: crime, noise pollution, litter, toxic facilities, limited availability of fresh fruits and vegetables linked to diabetes and obesity etc.

The question of why people of color largely did not participate in the mainstream environmental movement until the 1980s is well supported by the "differing environmental priorities hypothesis." Since mainstream environmental organizations were historically devoted to priorities surrounding "environmental positives," people of color would have a high incentive not to join in mainstream groups but to form their own organizations which would address "environmental negatives" in ways which clearly link racial demographics to broader patterns of societal inequality. Given the severe *de jure* racial inequality prevalent in the United States up until the passage of civil rights legislation it is doubtful that a broad based movement of people of color could have emerged until the end of the twentieth century. The differing priorities

hypothesis encapsulates the lack of participation phenomenon in easily understandable terms and coincides with a key statement voiced by the environmental justice movement's most prominent scholar, Dr. Robert Bullard, who states that mainstream groups are often concerned with "protecting the environment from humans" meanwhile environmental justice groups are concerned with "protecting humans from their environments" (Bullard, 1994, p.117).

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this final chapter situates the present attempts of environmental organizations to define their priorities as a further process of reconstructing nature and environmentalism. In stark contrast to earlier definitions of nature by mainstream groups such as the Sierra Club, which depicted nature as far-away places, with exotic birds, flora and fauna, grand vistas, mountain ranges and scenery, environmental justice activists redefined everyday close to home experiences as environmental issues including communities overrun by rats, the siting of landfills in their communities and health issues from lead poisoning and asthma. The emergence of the environmental justice movement visibly proved that people of color are eager to participate in environmental organizations. Substantiating this contention are the multiple studies on minority perceptions towards environmental issues which clearly illustrate the support and interest in environmentalism by people of color. In summation, the lack of people of color participation in environmental organizations is attributed to the differences in environmental priorities, which, in turn, are attributed to the differences experienced by racial groups in their past and present environments.

V. White, black, brown and green all over, a sleeping giant wakes up

5.1 Discussion and Conclusion

Although it is not always possible to pinpoint all of the causes of social participation in environmental organizations, examination of the ways historical antecedents and current practices shape differing environmental priorities can provide important clues. This analysis has taken a wide perspective in order to trace the ways in which ideas about nature and "environment" were culturally created. In doing so, I have not lost sight of my original research question. This thesis attributes the extreme variation in racial participation of environmental groups to the "differing priorities hypothesis." I have theorized that critically different priorities amongst environmental groups resonate differently along racial lines. Mainstream environmental groups focus largely on priorities based on "environmental positives" such as conserving aesthetic beauty, recreation and preservation for future generations. Alternately, environmental justice groups mobilize around defeating immediate "environmental negatives" in their communities such as toxic dumps, health threats and polluting industries. Environmental justice definitions of environmentalism appear to resonate with the more pressing concerns of racial minorities as a result of the past and present racial inequality and *de facto* segregation in the United States.

This analysis suggests that prior depictions of environmentalism focusing on preservation and leisure did not resonate to the same degree with people of color as they did with the whites who were defining them. In contrast, as illustrated in the second chapter, when environmentalism was redefined as a civil rights issue with the emergence of the environmental justice movement large numbers of people of color participated in environmental struggles. By re-defining the environment to include priorities of local environmental issues where people "live, work and play" advocates broadened the meaning of the modern understanding of the term 'environment.' In turn, this new understanding of environmentalism resonated with the more pressing concerns

of racial minorities resulting in a high degree of participation by people of color within environmental justice groups.

The environmental priorities hypothesis counteracted the false stereotype that people of color did not participate in environmental organizations because they were uninterested in environmentalism. Instead, people of color are extremely interested in environmental issues-possibly more so than whites, but deem particular localized issues to take more precedence over others. Consistent with other forms of racial discrimination and segregation, the stark differences in environmental priorities appear to co-inside with broad based racial inequality in environmental conditions. As Jones and Carter found in chapter four "Given the race-lined residential and stratification patterns still visible in U.S. society, it should not be surprising that aggregated black respondents rank a number of other problems as needing greater and more immediate attention, and that these ranking are somewhat different from those given by aggregated white populations" (Jones & Carter, 1994, p.574).

Together, the roots of the overarching differences in racial participation in environmental organizations are attributed to the differences in environmental priorities which stem from the varying past and present environmental histories of people of color within the United States. However, it should be noted, that because people of color may have more pressing priorities, it does not mean that they lack concern for broader environmental issues such as those put forth by conservation groups. Generally everyone wants a clean environment and a healthy future for their children, the difference is that some groups are far closer to achieving those goals today. The overall implications of contrasting the Sierra Club's founding with the environmental justice founding in Warren County, North Carolina reveal not only the differences in environmental priorities and participation, but more broadly that environmental decisions about what and who is protected are always political just as the concept of nature is never ahistorical.

5.2 Future Research

"Environments" were once defined largely by white males. Today such narrow definitions are being re-imagined to include all people and all places. This redefining is of vital importance not only for the health of racial communities who suffer the most from negative environmental consequences, but also for the rapidly declining health of the planet as phenomena such as global warming illustrate, declining inner city areas are connected to wilderness preserves and thus, neither areas are ever truly protected from environmental degradation.

By illustrating how racial minority groups reconstructed "environment" beyond wilderness to inner city and social justice issues, this thesis significantly contributes to future cultural constructivism arguments about race and nature. Today, the environmental justice movement has blossomed to include issues which are no longer site/species specific and resonate with broader segments of the population, such as those concerning children's health and inner city air quality. As a result of the multiple approaches towards environmentalism, the environmental justice movement remains one of the most inclusive movements in America, reflecting this diversity with high numbers of people of color, women, and working class individuals playing active rolls in organizing, leading and defining the movement.

The significance of this research holds important implications for social scientists, environmentalists, policy makers and society at large. In order to avoid contributing to the large-scale misunderstandings, stereotypes and limited definition of "environmentalism," future researchers and environmentalists must take pause to grapple with the clear differences in environmental priorities. As the United States population becomes more diverse while environmental resources continue to decline, it would appear the environmental justice movement will only become increasingly relevant to even larger segments of the American populace.

While this research has centered on the differences between the mainstream and environmental justice groups, it appears that in the future both groups would significantly benefit from finding ways of resolving their differences to work more closely together towards achieving their common causes. Worsening environmental degradation will most likely make the priorities of both mainstream environmental groups and environmental justice groups more difficult to attain. Both groups have a strong incentive to work together. Mainstream groups cannot create a serious movement without the participation of people of color and working class individuals. Meanwhile environmental justice activists could be more effective with the aid of the resources and legal expertise of the mainstream movement.

In the future, environmental organizations hoping to increase the participation of racial minorities in their organizations must more accurately address the alternate concerns of people of color environmentalism. Rigorous recruitment of people of color, along with the use of non-white environmental origin stories and examination of white privilege and diversity training are good first steps towards achieving that goal.

In summation, as stated in the beginning of this analysis, I believe that the homogenous portrayal of environmentalism and denial of the obvious differences between environmental priorities reifies white privilege consistent amongst mainstream society while simultaneously barring the creation of a serious environmental movement capable of resonating with broader segments of the American population. Future research must first examine the perspectives of diverse segments of environmentalists while acknowledging that people of color have a unique cultural and political relationship to the environment. Finding solutions to racial environmental inequality, marginalization and alienation must include those groups who have been traditionally left out of the environmental arena. Critically, this research shows that "environmentalism" must be reconstructed to reflect America's multiple experiences, stories and relationships to the environment.

In conclusion, I have argued that racial minorities clearly suffer from differing forms of environmental inequality which are reflected in the environmental priorities they focus on. In turn, these differing priorities of environmental groups affect the racial makeup of participants in environmental organizations. In order for the priorities of environmental justice activists, leaders and scholars to be addressed, they must be included in traditionally exclusionary environmental debates. Furthermore, I suggest that in order for people of color to become active participants in environmental struggles, they must be given room at the table, not just to assimilate into the already defined perceptions and pre-existing organizations but to create their own groups and ways of viewing environmentalism. In order for future differences in environmental priorities to be resolved, for racial participation in environmental organizations to be increased, and the lopsided European portrayal of environmentalism to be expanded, as environmental justice activists made clear at the first People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, racial minority groups and others traditionally left out of the shaping of environmentalism must be given the chance to "speak for themselves." However, the problem will not end there. They must also be heard by the mainstream white society that continues to turn a deaf ear to pleas of rectifying the extreme racial differences that exist in America in education, employment, housing, health care, prison populations and all other areas that contribute to immediate living "environments."

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Appendix

Principles of Environmental Justice

Preamble

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1) Environmental Justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2) Environmental Justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3) Environmental Justice 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.

4) Environmental Justice 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) Environmental Justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6) Environmental Justice demands the cessation of the 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.

7) Environmental Justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making, including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8) Environmental Justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work 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) Environmental Justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.

10) Environmental Justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.

11) Environmental Justice 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) Environmental Justice 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 provided fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13) Environmental Justice 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) Environmental Justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15) Environmental Justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16) Environmental Justice 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) Environmental Justice 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.

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