



***CONFLUENCE:***  
***Toward Whole Environmentalism***  
Written by Janet Curtis  
for Center for Whole Communities

*We do not exist in isolation. Our sense of community and compassionate intelligence must be extended to all life forms, plants, animals, rocks, rivers, and human beings.*  
- Terry Tempest Williams

Earth Day 1970 is often cited as the beginning of America's contemporary environmental movement—a celebratory day, which began a seemingly broad, unified, committed, progressive, and renewed environmental movement in the spirit of one Earth, one people. This environmentalism, focused on the relationship of environment and quality-of-life issues, embodied civic engagement, political mobilization, and social activism on behalf of the commons. And yet, somewhere along the way since, a narrowing occurred and familiar divisions took hold.

### **Origins**

Historically, environmentalism in the United States has been a complex movement. With its beginnings in the American West, wilderness preservation became the framework for early environmentalism, focused on protection and management of natural resources. Until World War II, the urban and industrial centers of the country were not included in this mainstream environmental framework. The connection between industrial pollution and the loss of wilderness was essentially overlooked as the regulation and development of natural resources was separated from the urban environment.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tensions between advocates for resource extraction and development and those who promoted preservation and regulation set in motion a politics of conservationism. A central figure in this debate was author and naturalist John Muir, a passionate advocate for the preservation of the vast and extraordinary natural landscapes of the West. Muir attempted to put forth a unifying vision of both “preservation” and “right use” of natural resources. President Theodore Roosevelt advanced this concept,

believing that preservation of forests was an imperative of economic utility. Toward this end, Roosevelt established the U.S. Forest Service and the Reclamation Service to help coordinate private development through government regulation and management of natural resources that was scientifically-based. Inspired by Muir's passion for nature, Roosevelt also established the nation's first National Monuments—eighteen in total—by Presidential Proclamation, ensuring the preservation of nationally beloved places such as the Grand Canyon in Arizona.

In addition to Muir and Roosevelt, other notable figures during this period included Gifford Pinchot and John Wesley Powell, the pioneer leaders of the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Geological Survey respectively, who are credited with helping to establish the nation's conservation bureaucracy. And from the East, Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh are remembered as prominent and lasting voices of conservation. Their writings and advocacy went beyond protection of landscapes to include aspects of social change, reflecting their unique understanding of the vital relationship between land and people, setting them apart from many of the early preservationists.

Today, despite their differences, all of these men are recognized for laying the groundwork for early environmentalism. But were there others who did not fit within this preservationist context? Others who may have held a more holistic understanding of the environment—natural and built—one that would create a pathway toward *whole environmentalism*, an environmentalism of both wilderness and human habitat, of both social justice and environmental quality?

Indeed, lesser known contributors to early environmentalism include people like Robert Marshall and Alice Hamilton who understood that the environment went beyond wilderness areas to the places where people live, work and play. In his book *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, author Robert Gottlieb calls attention to Robert Marshall, the “people's forester,” and Alice Hamilton, a pioneer in occupational health and toxicology. Marshall, one of the principal founders of the Wilderness Society, was also a socialist, passionate about civil liberties and making nature an integral part

of people's lives—ideas that are not part of the legacy for which he is remembered. And Hamilton, the first woman appointed to the faculty at Harvard University in the Department of Industrial Medicine, anticipated many of our present-day environmental and public health issues associated with the rise of industry. She was perhaps America's first urban environmentalist but does not garner the same attention in environmental history as those who advocated for wilderness preservation.

During this era, the preservationists defined nature and the environment as *wilderness*—a wilderness that some believed should be left alone while others asserted that it should be for sport and outdoor recreation. Either way, despite this ideological debate, few could access these pristine places; they were saved for elite outdoorsmen to hunt, fish, and camp.

Ensuring wilderness preservation inspired the creation of many of today's eminent environmental organizations, including the Appalachian Mountain Club (1876), National Audubon Society (1886), and the Sierra Club (co-founded by Muir in 1892), among others. Given their focus on natural resource and wildlife protection, these organizations had an inherent anti-urban bias (which they still struggle with today) and the early memberships of these organizations were comprised primarily of privileged Anglo-Saxon men. These organizations embodied an environmentalism of elite ideology, lacking the diversity and social network to truly forge an environment-centered social movement.

### **Transformation**

With the rise of industrialization following World War II, a contemporary environmentalism emerged rapidly in the 1960s, to address the clean-up and control of waste and pollution. Rachel Carson's landmark book *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, became a "call to action" alerting the American public to the dangers of chemical pesticides, particularly DDT. *Silent Spring* altered the concept of "nature," to include the human environment and quality-of-life issues broadly. As never before, Carson's analysis shone the spotlight on the relationship between industrialization (namely, ecological impacts of hazardous substances), human health, and the natural world, thus provoking revolutionary development of legislation

affecting air, land, water, and human health, and eventually leading to a ban on DDT in the United States. Her book was an awakening, inspiring new grassroots environmental organizations and activism.

During this decade, public engagement soared. Across America, citizens—from rural communities to urban centers—were galvanized and inspired in protest and direct action to advance civil rights, peace, and environmental protection. The leadership of John Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Lyndon Johnson, and Robert Kennedy contributed to this public transformation centered on equality, quality of relationship, diversity, ecological integrity, and our commonwealth. Some of our nation’s most significant environmental and civil rights legislation was formulated and adopted during this period, including the Wilderness Act (1964), Civil Rights Act (1964), Voting Rights Act (1965), Land and Water Conservation Act (1965), Solid Waste Disposal Act (1965), National Historic Preservation Act (1966), Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (1968), Civil Rights Act (1968), National Environmental Policy Act (1969), and soon to follow the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (1970), the Clean Air Act (1970) and the Endangered Species Act (1973). These extraordinary legislative victories were bipartisan, stemming from a national consciousness among a majority of Americans who demanded both social equity and environmental quality for its citizenry. The political and social conditions of this period seemingly inspired, and/or permitted, legislative leadership that was holistic in its approach to land and people: wilderness and civil rights together.

In particular, it was through his “Great Society” vision and policies that President Lyndon Johnson established an environmental and social imperative that extended protections and responsibilities more broadly to include the places where people live and work. The old principle—conserve pristine natural resources, was of the preservationist era. President Johnson advanced a broader vision in his Special Message to the Congress on Conservation and Restoration of Natural Beauty on February 8, 1965:

The air we breathe, our water, our soil and wildlife, are being blighted by poisons and chemicals which are the by-products of technology and industry... The same

society which receives the rewards of technology, must, as a cooperating whole, take responsibility for [their] control.

To deal with these new problems will require a new conservation. We must not only protect the countryside and save it from destruction, we must restore what has been destroyed and salvage the beauty and charm of our cities. Our conservation must be not just the classic conservation of protection and development, but a creative conservation of restoration and innovation.

Johnson understood the interrelationship of wilderness and city, of land and people. Further proof of this understanding resides in his legacy of the national parks established during his tenure as President. Out of the thirty-five national parks that were created, thirty-two of them are in proximity to large cities.

The integrated advancement of civil rights, public health, social equity, environmental protection, and natural resource preservation made the 1960s a period of *confluence* toward *whole environmentalism*. An environment-centered social movement had begun.

### **Divergence?**

With new laws, public policies, and regulations the 1970s saw the rise and institutionalization of many of America's contemporary and dominant environmental organizations, including Environmental Defense Fund, Natural Resources Defense Council, National Audubon Society, and the Nature Conservancy, to name a few. The complexities of industry, sprawl development, and state and federal laws inspired a field of specialists—lawyers, engineers, planners, economists, scientists, lobbyists, and so on—to advance conservation and environmental protection. Although many grassroots organizations persisted, the professionalization of the environmental movement began to represent an approach that was technical, regulatory, and science- and economics-based, often without consideration of social conditions. This “corporate” approach began to fracture the “modern” era of environmentalism, which had only begun a decade earlier, as a divide emerged between well-funded, national organizations and community-based grassroots organizations and New Left “radical” groups. This stark divide precipitated a series of fractures among grassroots groups as lines were drawn among specific environmental issues including wildlife protection,

environmental justice, recreation, rivers, water quality, toxics, land conservation, and the list goes on. Among conservation groups in particular, the mid-1970s became the point of fracture among a gaining broad-based land trust movement as two distinct camps emerged: conservation land trusts, focused on the preservation of land and natural resources, and community land trusts, focused on land reform, redevelopment, and housing equity. This split persists today.

Beginning in 1981, Ronald Regan's administration deepened this divide between mainstream and grassroots environmental groups through policies of deregulation that set a new framework for environmentalism. This framework was centered on market-based incentives to encourage business to voluntarily stop polluting, an approach that did not align well with the views of progressive, grassroots groups. Many mainstream environmental and conservation organizations, however, accepted this approach, essentially evolving into a block of public interest groups that sought to influence public policy and deal in compromise. It was during this period that the "Group of Ten" was formed; CEOs of ten of the largest environmental organizations met regularly to advance an agenda focused on cooperation with industry and corporate sectors. The approach of the "G-10" was to find "win-win" solutions with industry, an approach that alienated many progressive environmental groups, particularly the grassroots who deemed market approaches as a license to pollute and exploit the natural landscape. It seemed that no longer was the goal to prohibit pollution and natural resource depletion, but simply to regulate it.

While national mainstream environmental groups such as the Environmental Defense Fund and the Sierra Club focused on public policy and legislative strategies, two grassroots movements outside the institutionalized mainstream were rising simultaneously within environmentalism; the environmental justice movement and the land trust movement.

## **Justice**

With its roots in the civil rights movement, the environmental justice movement has focused on the rights and liberties of low-income people and communities of color as they relate to the

places where people live, work, and play. The impetus for activism has been one of *social equality*, embodying a social justice agenda, not necessarily an environmental one, in the traditional sense. Historically, this grassroots activism has been in response to the disproportionate burden of industrial pollution imposed on low-income communities and communities of color such as the siting or dumping of toxic waste and industrial facilities in their neighborhoods. Coupled with these industrial burdens, communities of color often lack environmental assets such as parks and greenspace in their neighborhoods.

The focusing event that many credit as the “beginning” of the struggle for environmental justice occurred in 1982 when local officials of Warren County, North Carolina decided to site a PCB landfill in a small, predominantly African-American town. With the help of organized church-based civil rights leaders, massive protests by African-American residents took place calling national attention to the issue of “environmental racism.” The protests prompted an investigation by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), examining hazardous waste sites in eight southern states. The GAO found that three out of four hazardous waste landfills were located near communities that were predominantly African-American.

In 1987 the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice issued a landmark study, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*, which documented the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on low-income and minority communities. This study energized local activists and created momentum for the environmental justice movement because it determined that the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards was not the result of neutral decisions but instead the product of the structural inequalities (social and economic) that had fostered other racial oppression, such as segregation.

Soon after, the now widely known and revered “Environmental Justice Principles” (see attached) were developed and adopted in 1991 at the first multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. The seventeen principles continue to stand as the guiding doctrine giving definition and inspiration to environmental justice at the

grassroots, and to the struggle for ecological integrity, self-determination, and human rights around the world.

Another milestone in environmental justice history occurred in 1992 with the publication of a *National Law Journal* study that highlighted the failure and unequal protection and enforcement of environmental law by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Specifically, it was found that the EPA took 20 percent longer to clean-up abandoned hazardous sites in communities of color than to do the same in white neighborhoods. Additionally, the fines and penalties assessed on sites in minority communities were much lower than in white communities. The EPA responded by establishing an Environmental Equity Workgroup, and their findings proved a disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards among communities of color. As a result, the EPA created the Office of Environmental Justice, which coordinates the Agency's efforts to address environmental injustice. What followed next at the federal level was the momentous Executive Order No. 12898 issued by President William Clinton in February 1994, which reinforced the 1964 Civil Rights Act Title VI, and directed all federal agencies to achieve environmental justice by identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects on minority and low-income populations.

Since this event, environmental justice has gained momentum and the attention of state and municipal governments as a vital policy issue central to the rights and health of low-income communities and people of color. Following the example of the federal government, several governors have issued executive orders on environmental justice. In the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, state policymakers developed an environmental justice policy, which was adopted in 2002 by the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The policy defines environmental justice for implementation by state environmental agencies:

Environmental justice is based on the principle that all people have a right to be protected from environmental pollution and to live in and enjoy a clean and healthful environment. Environmental justice is the equal protection and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits.

In Massachusetts and around the country, the environmental justice movement and related policies continue to unfold through grassroots activism, and through the work of neighborhoods, communities of faith, Native Americans, nonprofits, academics, and many others.

### **Entrusted**

Although the idea of conserving land dates back to the preservationists of the nineteenth century, the land trust movement galvanized in the 1980s to advance land conservation in its most grassroots form. Following the example of early organizational models such as the Trustees of Reservations (the nation's first land trust founded in Massachusetts in 1891), conservation land trusts began to form and organize in large numbers—many all-volunteer—across the United States to protect lands and natural resources that were important to their local communities but that were threatened with development. Unlike many of the long-standing national land advocacy organizations such as the Sierra Club, land trusts were established locally at the grassroots protecting land in perpetuity by direct action—outright purchase or partial interest in a property through the application of conservation easements. For many landowners weary of government regulation, land trusts offered a private and innovative approach to land protection.

In 1980, there were approximately 400 land trusts in the U.S., and today there are nearly 1,700. This rise in numbers can in part be attributed to the decline in government action to conserve land, which had begun under Teddy Roosevelt's leadership. The Reagan Administration's disinterest in resource conservation became a call to action for many citizens who were concerned about the changing landscapes across the country; from farmland to parking lots and shopping malls, from forests to suburban subdivisions and highways.

As the number of land trusts grew, so did the need to communicate and coordinate efforts and approaches among groups. In 1981, two national meetings of land trusts took place—one on the East Coast and one on the West Coast—in an effort to bring disparate groups together to

build a unified vision to strengthen conservation land trusts' collective efforts. What resulted from these meetings was the creation of the Land Trust Exchange—now called the Land Trust Alliance—a national nonprofit umbrella organization for land trusts across the United States. The Land Trust Alliance has been instrumental in building the capacity of land trusts through training, networking, and public policy advocacy.

According to the Land Trust Alliance's 2005 National Land Trust Census, local and regional land trusts have protected 11.9 million acres of land throughout America and an additional 25 million acres have been protected by national conservation groups. Without doubt, the land trust movement has accomplished extraordinary work in the last several decades in the face of unprecedented development and natural resource consumption and destruction. With 2 million acres currently being lost each year to sprawl development in the U.S. alone, one could imagine what the landscape of this country, and the world, might look like today if organizations such as the Nature Conservancy, Conservation International, the Trust for Public Land, and the many hundreds of local and regional land trusts across the country did not exist. The loss and further degradation of our natural landscapes would be tremendous. With its successes, in recent years the land trust movement is beginning to diversify, albeit nominally, representing Native American communities, urban neighborhoods, farmers, and ranchers, among others. Steeped in commitment and community activism, land trusts are protecting family lands and setting aside new public spaces to grow food, hike trails, and find respite, leaving a legacy of our natural landscape for future generations.

### **Divisions**

The work of both environmental justice activists and land conservationists is critically important, and both contribute to two key aspects of sustainability—equity and ecological integrity. Yet, despite these common threads and efforts to do “good” in the public interest, there are divisions among these activist groups, creating a further split in the broad environmental movement, and weakening the whole. On a surface level, this split is difficult to understand given that *social equality* is inextricably linked to *environmental quality*, and one cannot truly be achieved without the other. However, beneath the surface, echoing from

the origins of this nation's environmentalism, are accusations of elitism, indifference to the natural world, and disregard for the poor and disenfranchised.

Academics and environmental justice activists note time and again that mainstream natural resource groups and environmental justice groups rarely see eye-to-eye. Many believe that land conservation is elite in nature, and functions to the exclusion of low-income and minority groups who primarily make up the environmental justice constituency. Moreover, for those who experience discrimination, injustice, or great poverty, the very idea of environmental protection such as land conservation, is often thought to be a luxury, especially when large open space areas remain private or are inaccessible to impoverished urban residents who often lack mobility. In his book, *Dumping in Dixie*, Dr. Robert Bullard describes the relationship (or lack of) between traditional environmentalists—including land conservationists, and lower income communities:

Mainstream environmental organizations, including the “classic” and “mature” groups, have had a great deal of influence in shaping the nation's environmental policy. Classic environmentalism continues to have a heavy emphasis on preservation and outdoor recreation, while mature environmentalism is busy ‘tightening regulations, seeking adequate funding for agencies, occasionally focusing on compliance with existing statutes through court action, opposing corporate efforts to repeal environmental legislation or weaken standards.’ These organizations, however, have not had a great deal of success in attracting working class persons, the large black population in the nation's inner cities, and the rural poor. Many of these individuals do not see the mainstream environmental movement as a vehicle that is championing the causes of the “little man,” the “underdog,” or the “oppressed.”  
(Bullard, 2000: 12)

Despite the grassroots nature of the land trust movement and its kinship with the community-based activism of the environmental justice movement, conservation land trusts straddle the mainstream with their “market approach” and their historical ties to the preservation era of environmentalism and its legacy of anti-urban bias, elitism, and wealthy white constituencies.

One of the heroes of this era, John Muir, often remembered as the “father of conservation” for developing a conservation ethic in the nineteenth century, exemplifies this divided legacy. In

his writings he decried injustices to nature and yet neglected to account for the simultaneous human injustices of the ongoing Civil War and the takings of Native American lands. On the one hand, he is rightly praised as a conservation leader—the founder of the Sierra Club and integral to the creation of our National Park System—and on the other, he ignored profound racial injustices across the American landscape. Muir certainly did not, and does not, represent all conservationists but he is—for better *and* for worse, a part of the heritage of land conservation. Additionally, and perhaps more subtle, the methodology to achieve success in land conservation requires an acceptance of a market-based “business-model” (the purchase of land or deed restrictions) as the means of conservation, which although surely effective, affirms the institutionalization of a dominant paradigm that has a history of injustice, racism, and privilege.

Land can bring people together, and tear them apart. The complexities of land cannot be underestimated. For some, in western culture, land is simply real estate, an asset, a measure of wealth representative of a position in a social and economic hierarchy. This understanding of land highlights an inherent and long-standing inequality between those who have, and those who don't. Conversely, to Native Americans and perhaps others who understand land as a part of an ecological system, the very idea of land “ownership” is philosophically and spiritually absurd. This notion of ownership took hold of the landscape with the arrival of European settlers in North America in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Across what is now New England, boundaries were created, stone walls were built to mark “mine and yours.” Grave injustices emerged particularly for the first African-Americans who were bound to land as sharecroppers and worse, in the South, as slaves cultivating another man's bounty while they were themselves imprisoned in degradation, abuse, and humiliation. And too, Native peoples were round up and sectioned off; their reservations and federal designations became the reward of the dominant white population. These tragedies are, in part, the legacy of our American landscape—its ownership, abuse, management, cultivation, and preservation. And this legacy, although not embraced, is inextricably bound to the land conservation movement as remnants of oppression, racism, and white privilege. This history is not lost on environmental and social justice activists. Today, still, struggle over boundaries on the

landscape persist; among individuals and among nations—we need only look to the line between California and Mexico... moved, over time.

### **NIMBY**

Contributing to the divisions among conservation organizations and environmental justice groups, is the “not in my backyard” (NIMBY) phenomenon. While certainly some mainstream conservation groups are concerned with pollution and hazardous materials, and the affects on both humans and the natural world, many of their successes to defend against these toxic industries have resulted in regressive impacts on minority populations. The NIMBY coalitions, which are often white and more affluent and generally support conservation as an environmental priority, have been more successful in mobilizing political power and resources to prevent “locally unwanted land uses” in their communities. This reflects the common trend that political power is disproportionately concentrated among the wealthy, often white, and most advantaged members of society. Essentially, the political economy of many communities of color amounts to an *inequality of place*, where residents’ lack of economic power directly correlates with their lack of political power.

Many neighborhoods in urban and industrial areas represent an inequality of place, affected by suburban NIMBY actions. These places of human habitat are impacted by those who want a pristine environment, and at the same time, are often forgotten by conservationists in their quest to protect the pristine. Herein lies divisive contradiction. As a modern society that enjoys the benefits of technology, we must begin to examine the environmental equity of our lifestyles and material “stuff” that is the product of industry. People want the stuff but they don't want to live near the places that produce it or that process its waste. Essentially, industrial production is fine—just not in *my* backyard. And yet, the disproportionate consumption of resources by wealthy and middle-class people—many who consider themselves environmentalists—correlates with the disproportionate industrial burdens that many of those who live in poverty endure. A prime example of this trend—intrinsically connected to conservation—is our energy economy. Energy consumption is far greater by those who “have,” and yet those who “have not” bear the burden of energy production—

namely, polluting fossil fuel power plants, which are often sited in impoverished, minority communities; places of least resistance due to the lack of political and economic power.

As the U.S. begins to make strides to transition to a renewable and clean energy economy, wind generation has become controversial among environmentalists, particularly land conservationists. Again, the NIMBY phenomenon has come into play as opposition to wind power has become a political and economic struggle with debates primarily over aesthetics, property values, and avian populations. The “NIMBY-ism” over wind energy development holds a unique characteristic because wind does not discriminate—the political and economic power of a community has no influence on site selection.

Opposition by conservationists to wind turbines on suitable ridgelines and off-shore wind farms such as Cape Wind (off Cape Cod, Massachusetts), is difficult to understand, particularly for environmental justice communities. When the choice is a diesel power plant among people with high rates of asthma and cancer or nonpolluting wind turbines, is there really a choice? When the health and well being of a community is at risk, NIMBY must become NIABY—not in *anyone’s* backyard, something that surely all environmentalists could agree on.

A more unified and whole environmental movement, and a just and sustainable society, requires equity of both environmental burdens as well as assets. The community-based activism shared by the land trust and environmental justice movements is integral toward advancing this most important goal.

## **Confluence**

*If success or failure of this planet and of human beings depended  
on how I am and what I do...  
What would I be? What would I do?  
---R. Buckminster Fuller*

Despite historic divisions, confluence between the land conservation and environmental justice movements is not only possible but is happening in communities across the country. Advancing environmental assets in cities, particularly in lower-income and minority neighborhoods, has been a starting point of collaboration as diverse groups are coming together to create parks and greenspace, remediate brownfields, develop affordable housing, reclaim urban river corridors, create bike paths and greenways, grow food, and expand urban forest canopies. These efforts to restore and green the urban landscape are breaking down political, economic, social, and organizational barriers.

A holistic understanding of the interconnections between urban and rural, people and landscape is emerging. From Boston to Los Angeles, and many communities in between, disparate groups are recognizing that conservation requires livable cities and livable cities require conservation. The health of one place is dependent on the health of another and our moral obligation and collective commitment must be to the whole landscape—urban and wild.

Although often cited for his writing about the natural world, author and naturalist Aldo Leopold perhaps considered the whole landscape in 1948 when he wrote:

A land ethic then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity.

Recognizing the capacity of land for self-renewal in its most pristine and degraded forms is central to whole environmentalism. This understanding has the potential to inspire conservation and advance environmental justice, becoming an impetus for protecting a redwood forest on the coast of northern California or transforming a brownfield to a greenfield along the edge of the Bronx River and ultimately, connecting people to landscape and making communities whole.

Since the fracturing of the environmental movement during the 1970s and 1980s, recent years reveal progress toward whole environmentalism. However, much work still needs to be done

to advance holistic approaches to conservation that champion the stewardship of the natural and built landscape as well as the health and equity of diverse communities. We must rethink “business as usual” as laws, regulations, and strategies of the past are not adequately solving the grave disparities across American society, particularly as it relates to land and people and the interconnectedness that we all share. With a human population growing exponentially around the globe and a scarcity of natural resources looming, there is an urgency emerging that requires conservationists and social justice activist to join together in partnership to foster an ethic of sustainability—one of innovation, possibility, and personal and civic responsibility.

Environmentalism is at a moment of self-renewal. The challenges of globalization, climate change, depletion of natural resources, and the growing divide between rich and poor require a new environmental movement for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The divisive brands of environmentalism fractured by ideologies, race and class, and separated by issue-based silos cannot address our global and local challenges of environmental degradation, social equity, economic justice, clean and affordable energy, and community health. Since the 1960s, generations of activists have engaged in struggle to advance natural resource conservation, environmental protection, civil rights, and social equity; it is this struggle that binds today’s disparate environmental groups and is a vital source of renewal.

Harkening back to a period of confluence, in 1965 President Lyndon Johnson called for “a creative conservation of restoration and innovation.” Today, more than ever, his words challenge us toward *whole environmentalism*. Are we ready?

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*Janet Curtis works on environmental justice and urban environmental policy and planning issues in Massachusetts. Her land conservation background includes positions with the California-based Peninsula Open Space Trust and the Trust for Public Land. She holds a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, a M.A. in landscape design and planning from The Conway School, and a M.P.P. in urban and environmental policy from Tufts University.*

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## **PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

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 sage 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 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 all 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 of our communities, and providing 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 multinational 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 re-prioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

**Adopted: October 27, 1991**

*The First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit  
Washington Court on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., October 24-27, 1991.*