



GEOG 3195 / IAFF 3190:

Global Environmental Justice: Issues and Places

GW

Origins of Environmental Justice

Scott Odell, he/him
Visiting Assistant Professor
Department of Geography

NO + CONTAMINACION

Today's outline

- Check-in, announcements
- Introduction to Praxis and Action Project: Tiffany Stahl
- Lecture: Historical background to EJ in the US
- Break -
- Discussion of readings
- How to cite

Getting started

- Announcements
 - Stay up to date on current events:
<https://libguides.brynmawr.edu/news>
- Syllabus updates:
 - Research project proposal: due September 23

Overview: The origins of Environmental Justice

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30xLg2HHg8Q>

Precursors: Environmental and Civil Rights movements in the US

- Criticism emerged that the environmental movement had ignored environmental racism
- The Civil Rights movement also tended to place the environment as a secondary priority, given the primary focus on human rights
- But evidence also pointed to the idea that human rights and the environment are linked

Precursor: Minamata Bay, Japan



Image source: [UN](#)

- Chemicals released by Chisso Corporation used mercury in plastic production, released waste into the bay.
- Local fishing population poisoned, including through consumption of contaminated fish.
- Disposal of mercury ceased in 1968, in response to protest

Precursors: Love Canal, NY, 1978

- New York Times front page, August 1, 1978:
 - “Twenty five years after the Hooker Chemical Company stopped using the Love Canal here as an industrial dump, 82 different compounds, 11 of them suspected carcinogens, have been percolating upward through the soil, their drum containers rotting and leaching their contents into the backyards and basements of 100 homes and a public school built on the banks of the canal.”
- Working class neighborhood
- 221 families evacuated, with support from President Carter, Congress, and NY State government



Image source: [NYTimes](#)

Source: Beck, 2016

Environmental Justice: Origins

- Warren County, NC (1982)
 - African American community protested planned siting of chemical waste by the state
 - Supported by NAACP
 - 500 protestors arrested
 - Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., United Church of Christ
 - Walter Fauntroy, US House of Representatives from DC
 - Did not prevent siting of the waste
 - But galvanized environmental justice organization



Image source: [Washington Post](#)

Source: Office of Legacy Management, DOE, n.d.

Environmental Justice: Origins

- Robert Bullard (1983): Waste sites in Houston, TX disproportionately concentrated in communities of color
- US General Accounting Office (1983): “Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills And Their Correlation With Racial And Economic Status of Surrounding Communities.” Examined four waste sites in the Southeast, including in Warren County; Black population the majority in 3 host communities
- United Church of Christ/Chavis and Lee (1987): Report showed race was the most important factor for the location of waste facilities in the US (Office of Legacy Management, DOE, n.d.).

Environmental Justice: Origins

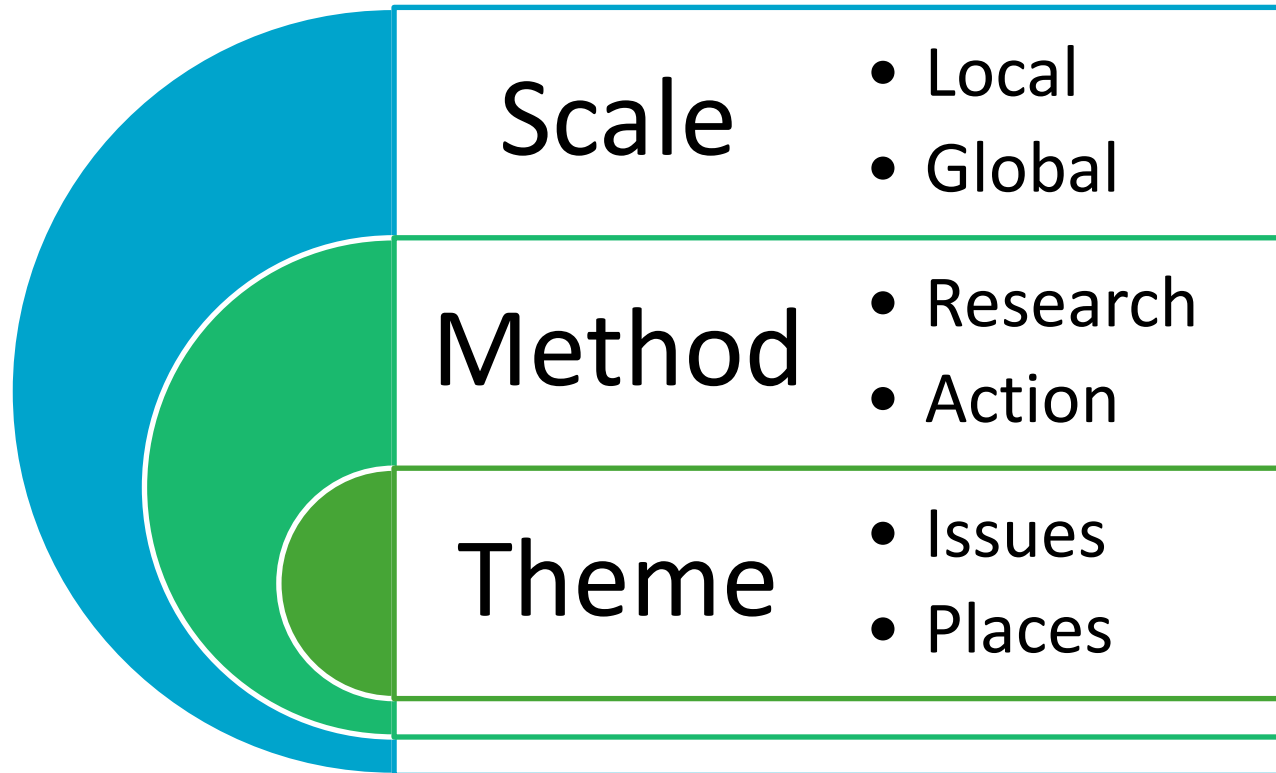
- First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (1991), Washington, DC. Sponsored by the UCC's Commission for Racial Justice
 - 1,100 participants from all 50 states and beyond
 - <https://wapo.st/3aVJ1uk>
 - Key outcome: [Principles of Environmental Justice](#)
- For more detailed history of EJ:
<https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice>

Refresher: What is Environmental Justice?

- “The right of everyone to enjoy and benefit from a safe and healthy environment, regardless of race, class, gender, or ethnicity. More specifically, environmental justice is a social movement that takes social justice and environmental politics as fundamentally inseparable.”

- Jake Kosek (2009), *The Dictionary of Human Geography*

Orientation of the class



Discussion of readings

Note:

- For this first week, I provided you with a set of specific questions to think through as you read
- I won't always do this, but wanted to give you a sense of how to approach the readings and what to focus on

Discussion

- Holifield et al. ch. 1 (introduction to the textbook). Please also flip through the rest of the book to familiarize yourself with it.
 - Who wrote this chapter? (see “contributors,” pp. xv-xxiv)
 - What is the orientation of the book? What positionality/perspective are the editors coming from? Authors?
 - Familiarize yourself with the style of writing (academic style, but informed by activism)
 - What are the origins of EJ scholarship and activism?
 - How is the book structured?

Discussion

GAO 1983: Read pages 1-6 then skim the rest

- Who wrote this report and why?
- How is the report written? Consider positionality, politics, language style. Why might it have been written this way?
- What were the primary findings?
- What is missing – what don't you see in the report?
- What might these findings have indicated for the environmental movement in 1980s US?
- Consider the longer history of these findings – what factors contributed to the results uncovered?
- Consider EJ in temporal context. The term was coined at this time. Was this the origins of movements for environmental justice?

Discussion

Bullard (1983)

- How does the author approach racism with regard to environmental issues?
- What historical context does he situate the report within?
- What methods did the study apply? Critically consider what might be pros and cons of these methods?
- What are key findings of the publication?
- Key recommendations?
- Consider the legacy of the publication. To what extent do you think US society/policy have responded to concerns

Discussion

Chavis and Lee (1987)

- Who published this report and why? What does this tell us about the origins of EJ in the US?
- What are the main findings of the report?
- What do the authors recommend be done based on their conclusions?
- How does this article fit into your historical understanding of US and global politics?

Discussion

Principles of Environmental Justice

- Who wrote these principles and in what context?
- Take note of terms used and language of the principles.
What stands out?

Preparing your first assignment

- Questions on the Research Project Proposal?
- Citations Tutorial
- Using Zotero

Next week

- Theoretical context: Classical, neoclassical, Marxist, feminist, post-structural political economy
- First: Keshav (2007): How to read an academic paper
- Second: Peet and Hartwick (2015):
 - Conventional political economic theory
- Third: Lawson (2007):
 - Marxist and Feminist political economic theory