Equity, Sustainability, and the Environmental Movement’s Connection to Higher Ed

Derek Nichols, UB Sustainability
FLOW

- Introductions
- Connecting sustainability and climate justice
- Sustainability and climate justice on our campuses What you can do! Action items
Learning Objectives

- Understand **sustainability** from a **social justice** and **equity** lens
- Identify the role that **higher education institutions** play in perpetuating social injustice
- Explore the **basics of environmental justice**
- Develop ways to **integrate sustainability and environmental justice** into our work
ORIGIN STORY
IBM CANCEROUS
CHEMICAL SPILL AREA

MISSING TOXIC CHEMICALS IF LOCATED CONTACT OWNER

IBM IS A RESPONSIBLE PARTY PEOPLE MATTER IN TOXIC SPILLS

IBM CHEMICAL SPILL AREA!

Hazardous spill occurred significant contamination exists
In the course of a day an avocado’s flowers can shift gender expressions. One moment they’ll open up in a femm form. After closing, they will reopen in a masc form later that same day.

What’s your favorite plant friend? Learned any lessons from them? Draw a picture and write a little something here.

Queer and Present Danger: Understanding the Disparate Impacts of Disasters on LGBTQ+ Communities

Leo Goldsmith, Vanessa Raditz, and Michael Mendez
Environmental Justice 101
Environmentalism in America

- Pre-1800’s –
- 1800’s –
  - Terms coined – “carrying capacity”, “ecology”, “acid rain”
  - US Dept. of Interior established
  - Yellowstone National Park established
  - Sierra Club founded

"We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children." — Native American proverb
Environmentalism in America

**1900 - 1950’s**
- Audobon Society founded
- President Teddy Roosevelt
  - Antiquities Act of 1906
  - National Conservation Commission
- National Park Service
- Wilderness Society
- The Nature Conservancy
- … and more!

**1900 – 1950’s**
- Asbestosis death
- CFC’s (non-toxic refrigerant)
- PCB’s created by Swann Chemical Company for transformer coolant use
- DDT Pesticide
Modern-Day Environmentalism

What's Going on - 1971

Love Canal - 1979

Warren County, NC – 1980’s
Modern-Day Environmentalism

- Exxon-Valdez Oil Spill - 1989
- Flint Water Crisis - 2014
- Global Climate Strike - 2019
- Kyoto Protests - 2001
- Standing Rock Protests - 2016
1992 – Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit

“The American way of life is not up for negotiations. Period.

~ Pres. George H.W. Bush
Power, Privilege and the “American Way of Life”

**CLASS**
- Classism
- Economic oppression
- “Owning” things
- Consumerism
- Endless, linear extraction of resources

**GENDER**
- Sexism
- Gender oppression
- “Mother” nature
- We “own” nature
- We can dominate nature/influence natural systems

**RACE**
- Racism
- Racial oppression
- “Saving the last great places”
- Stewardship of the planet as a concept of white supremacy
The American Way of Life upholds White Supremacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individualism</th>
<th>Paternalism</th>
<th>Neoliberalism</th>
<th>Universalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Needs of individual over needs of the group</td>
<td>• Inferring that a person or community is unable to make good decisions</td>
<td>• Emphasizes replacing entitlements with market-based solutions to social problems</td>
<td>• Assumes that all values held by whites are normal and widely shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People should be able to solve their own problems</td>
<td>• Making decisions on others without their consent</td>
<td>• Uses free market competition as an answer</td>
<td>• Non-conformers must be educated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Helping individuals that have fallen into hard times instead of combating structural inequalities for long term solutions

Personal responsibility and hard work will solve problems. “Pull yourself up by the bootstraps.”

Inhibits participation of non-white individuals
Environmental Injustice stems from Social Inequality
Who is leading on low emissions?

- Total emissions: 16,143 kg CO₂
- Top 10% earners: 5,026 kg CO₂
- Bottom 10% earners: 1,143 kg CO₂
## Solutions by Rank

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Solution</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>TOTAL ATMOSPHERIC CO2-EQ REDUCTION (GT)</th>
<th>NET COST (BILLIONS US$)</th>
<th>SAVINGS (BILLIONS US$)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Refrigerant Management</td>
<td>Materials</td>
<td>89.74</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>$-902.77</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Wind Turbines (Onshore)</td>
<td>Electricity Generation</td>
<td>84.60</td>
<td>$1,225.37</td>
<td>$7,425.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Reduced Food Waste</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>70.53</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Plant-Rich Diet</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>66.11</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Tropical Forests</td>
<td>Land Use</td>
<td>61.23</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Educating Girls</td>
<td>Women and Girls</td>
<td>51.48</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Family Planning</td>
<td>Women and Girls</td>
<td>51.48</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Solar Farms</td>
<td>Electricity Generation</td>
<td>36.90</td>
<td>$-80.60</td>
<td>$5,023.84</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Silvopasture</td>
<td>Food</td>
<td>31.19</td>
<td>$41.59</td>
<td>$699.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rooftop Solar</td>
<td>Electricity Generation</td>
<td>24.60</td>
<td>$453.14</td>
<td>$3,457.63</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Climate Change Perspectives
Examples of Environmental Injustice

- Flint, MI - Water Crisis
- West Oakland, CA – Gentrification
- Dakota Access Pipeline
- Puerto Rico – Hurricane Maria
- Cancer Alley - Louisiana
Examples of Environmental Injustice

What we wear

What we eat

Raising animals for food (including land used for grazing and growing feed crops) now uses a staggering 30% of the Earth’s land mass.

30%
Examples of Environmental Injustice

What we buy, and where we buy it

Where does our waste go?
Social/Environmental Injustice – Buffalo, NY

- Whose land do we occupy?
- Polluted Waterways
- Lead Poisoning
- Food Apartheid
- Legacy of Urban Renewal
- Industrial Past
- Air Quality and Asthma
- UB’s history with the city of Buffalo
Higher Education and Social/Environmental Justice
Injustice on College Campuses

What are examples of injustices in higher education?
Injustice on College Campuses

- Rising tuition costs, cost of textbooks, etc.
- Consequences of GHG’s and campus expansion
- Food insecurity
- Housing insecurity
- Transportation and parking infrastructure
- Campus placement
- Underrepresentation of POC, marginalized groups
HOW do we address injustice on campus?

- Using a “social justice” lens
  - How is the gender/class/race narrative being framed on your campus?
- Resources – from whom are resources being taken, and to whom are they being given?
  - Context of the larger communities your campus is situated in
- Who are the most vulnerable members of our community? What are their needs?
  - Put this at the heart of our work and beyond. How what does our work now look like?
Identifying Opportunities
UB’s 10 IN 10

- Put a Price on Pollution
- Not All Electricity is Created Equal
- Zero Carbon Mobility
- Keep It Cozy and Green
- Waste Not

- Increasing Efficiency
- Every Action Counts
- Taking Stock of Our Food
- Investing Locally to Provide Flexibility
- Responsible Investing
THE THREE INTEGRATORS

CLIMATE JUSTICE

RESILIENCE

MAKING IT HAPPEN
Discussion and Reflections

Identify some ways that we can address environmental injustice on campus and in our community. List as many as you can.
Discussion and Reflections

Where should we go from here?
Other topics/ways to engage?
More information in order to change practices?
Ways to get involved on campus

- Hired
- Food Recovery Network
- Student Sustainability Impact Team
- Climate Justice Coalition
- Interested in continuing this work?

Follow our social media
Contact

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