Narrative of the domestic environmental justice movement: The problem of class

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THE NARRATIVE OF THE DOMESTIC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

MOVEMENT: THE PROBLEM OF CLASS

By

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Presented for partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Science

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December 2004

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The Narrative of the Domestic Environmental Justice Movement: The Problem of Class

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The meaning of the narrative of the environmental justice movement is essential to the value of that narrative, which is its ability to aid in mobilizing for political change. This value is measured by the narrative's ability to 1) allow the movement's participants to understand their experience, 2) transmit the needs and means of the movement's particular brand of social change, and 3) disseminate the extent and success of the movement. Currently, the meaning of the movement's narrative inaccurately represents the entirety of the movement as it defines itself and, as such, its value to the movement is limited. In order to rectify the inaccuracies of the narrative's meaning one must identify the current narrative, understand the meaning of the movement by defining it, understand why the narrative exists as it does, and revise the narrative to incorporate events and incidents that accurately represent the meaning and reality of the movement. Correcting the narrative in this way will allow the movement's narrative to provide more of its potential value to the movement.
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Introduction

When viewed against the deep time of the struggle for environmental justice, the movement for environmental justice was a long time coming. The struggle for environmental justice is one of the oldest human struggles, known to every popular and far-flung corner of our kind;\(^1\) the movement for environmental justice is much newer to the scene. The difference between the struggle and the movement resides in the former being disorganized and the latter being an organized and coordinated effort. In the most general sense, it is the distinction between the struggle and the movement for environmental justice that is the subject matter undertaken in this paper. It is within that distinction that one is able to identify which groups of people comprise the movement and how the movement organizes to include those people.

Specifically, this paper will examine the environmental justice movement's efforts to organize itself inclusively by examining the movement's narrative. This examination will begin with the premise that the strength of the movement lies in its ability to be virtually all-inclusive and posit that the movement must reflect that strength in its narrative for accuracy and its organizational benefit.

There may be no more symbolic and singularly galvanizing event in the annals of the environmental justice movement's narrative than the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (Summit) held October 24-27, 1991 in Washington, DC. The Summit was held to unite the movement's activists of color struggling for environmental justice; from their efforts at the Summit, resulted *The Principles of...

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Environmental Justice. The Principles is the activists' attempt to put words to the vision, mission, values, and identity of the environmental justice movement and people, thereby guiding the entire movement. The Principles is a powerful statement.

The Principles begins "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..." The Principles goes on to state that the movement for environmental justice makes demands on behalf of "all people." Is it curious that an assembly solely comprised of people of color wrote demands on behalf of all people? How does the movement reconcile an authorship of one of its most defining documents that is far narrower than the people for whom it intends to speak? Specifically, how did it come to be that a small group of activists of color wrote the movement's words on behalf of all people? This instance questions the movement's ability to represent all of the people for which it is intended. However, this quandary is only an introduction to the difficulty the environmental justice movement has in that regard.

The question arising from this particular example is also a question that must be asked of the movement's narrative generally: How does race and issues stemming from racial factors within the movement affect the movement's narrative? This question must be answered in order for the movement's narrative to be faithful to the movement's all-

3 ibid.
4 ibid.
inclusive intent, to be representative of its activists, and, ultimately, to more fully provide its political value. In the end, the narrative's value is found in its ability to mobilize better for the political change the movement envisions.

As it exists, the narrative is not faithful to the movement's intent and activists and, therefore, detracts from the movement's ability to mobilize politically. Not having a narrative that reflects the intent and issue orientation of the activists—race-based and class-based—of the environmental justice movement is divisive. As Dana Alston notes, "In this nation and in the world, those in power stay there by dividing us from one another: rich from poor, white from black, black from yellow, men from women, and on and on. We must understand how these boundaries affect our movement from within."\(^5\)

I will begin this paper by answering the question I pose of the narrative by elucidating the meaning and value of narrative. I will then recount the movement's current narrative. Next, the paper will define the movement through a discussion of its central terminology. This discussion is more necessary than it might be in better-solidified social movements as the terminology of the environmental justice movement has been subject to a great degree of dissimilar use. Also, the definition of the movement will be used to identify its intent to be inclusive—multi-racial and multi-issue. Once the movement is defined, I will discuss the prevailing influences on the movement's current narrative. This will entail a chapter on the movement's academics and activists and another on the role of the environmental justice movements' two most influential antecedent movements—the environmental and civil rights movements. Finally, I will flush out the events missing in the current narrative in order to provide a more

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meaningful and, therefore, valuable narrative; I will also discuss deficiencies due to the absence of these events in the narrative.
Narrative—Its Meaning and Value

The Meaning of Narrative

Knowing the meaning and value of narrative is essential to grasping its significance to the environmental justice movement. So, what is narrative? What is the meaning of “narrative”? Narrative “offers a chronological order to events, an understanding to organize what has happened in between ‘before’ and ‘after’.”6 As William Cronon, one of the premier environmental historians of our time, claims

narrative is the chief literary form that tries to find meaning in an overwhelmingly crowded and disordered chronological reality. When we choose a plot to order our environmental histories, we give them a unity that neither nature nor the past possesses so clearly.7

More specific than a reference to “before” and “after,” narratives are stories with a beginning, middle, and end, or, in other words, a plot.8 The use of plot is one way in which narrative simplifies and organizes human experience; narrative offers a linear organization to events that offer no such luxury when experienced. This linear organization allows one to digest and communicate experience better, both for those within and outside a set of events.

Further, narratives are stories. Narratives “are stories that embody symbolic meaning and codes of understanding. Through ‘storytelling’ meaning is publicly shared, contested, and reconstructed” based on the symbolism contained therein.9 In other

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words, the symbolism of the elements chosen to relate an experience in a narrative conveys the meaning of that experience to the narrator. That meaning is then validated or discredited by those exposed to the narrative, further shaping the narrative.

In addition to plot and symbolism, narrative can exist in one or many different planes of social relation. I call this facet of narrative its "type." In an article on corruption in post-Maoist China, Carolyn L. Hsu discusses the circles of social relation in which narrative exists, which are collective, meta, public, and ontological. Collective narrative is part of what Carl Jung might call the collective unconscious. It is the grandest type of narrative, where no one knows who has authored the narrative and most are not even aware that the narrative exists, but everyone knows the narrative instinctively nonetheless. Collective narratives exist amongst all people and fundamentally shape how we process our lives. Meta-narratives are those that provide a unifying theory to life. For this reason meta-narratives are generally composed of abstract truths.

A public narrative is "published or disseminated by actors in the public realm, such as government, journalists, intellectuals, or political activists." The state of the public narrative remains in active flux and is the type of narrative whose process of formation is most transparent to an individual as the formation of a public narrative is a process undertaken by individuals in the public domain. They are the stories we tell that summarize the accumulation of individual experience. For instance, social movement narratives are public narratives.

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11 Hsu, 31.
Finally, the ontological narrative is that which exists at the individual level. This type of narrative is composed of the stories that we tell ourselves and the people we interact with about our experience as an individual.

The four types of narrative can be thought of as existing on a continuum as they proceed from being generated by an individual to generation by collective experience. The individual creates an ontological narrative; the public narrative then incorporates and manipulates ontological narratives into its formation. The meta-narrative utilizes a number of public and ontological narratives to arch an understanding of an element of life. Finally, the collective narrative is the marriage of all of these less comprehensive narratives that pass tests of time and reason and then settle as unspoken assumptions about existence.

The environmental justice narrative can be grasped as a concept by locating it along the three axes of narrative detailed above—plot, symbolism, and type. The narrative's type is public, which is fortunate, as this is the most transparent type of narrative. This means that the narrative of the movement is in constant flux and is being published and disseminated by the actors mentioned above.

The movement's narrative reflects the range of plot. As it currently exists, it has a beginning, middle, and an end in the sense that the story of the movement tells of its beginning at one point, then describes a series of events after that—its middle—and ends with the state of affairs as they exist in the present day. However, in another view, if the movement is assumed not to be in decline and to have the potential to continue on indefinitely, the narrative only tells the story of the movement's beginning and leaves off somewhere in its middle. However, this is not an issue undertaken in this paper; I will
simply argue that the plot of the environmental justice movement's narrative begins too late, missing nascent and looming events necessary to the movement.

The symbolism of narrative is something this thesis will also discuss in depth when considering the environmental justice movement's narrative. The events and occurrences the current narrative chooses to highlight symbolize the movement's concerns. The symbolism of the narrative as it exists today, I will argue, puts the movement's most successful future in jeopardy by not being representative of the entire movement. For this reason, it is possible that the end of the movement's narrative will occur much sooner in time than it would if it were crafted to better represent the meaning of the movement. This is a function of the diminished value that the narrative holds when constructed with inaccurate symbolism and plot.

Finally, in addition to the three elements of a narrative that comprise how it is constructed, a narrative has intention. The narrative of the environmental justice movement is intended to be political. Political narratives are "stories which make sense of political situations by connecting actions with virtues or vices, and to eventual consequences. By articulating casual connections, these narratives lay blame or direct praise for political circumstances, thereby shaping the response to those circumstances." The political intention of the movement's narrative is very pertinent to the nature of its value.

The Value of Narrative

It is essential to know what narrative is—the elements that give it meaning—in order to understand its value. The value of narrative is something ever more relevant in

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12 Hsu, 26.
academia as anyone reading heavily in the social sciences can affirm. The analysis of
narrative has taken on a much greater role in understanding social issues in contemporary
academics. This is demonstrated by the existence of the *Journal of Narrative Theory*,
launched in 1971. Scholarship has used narrative analysis to bridge disciplinary
divides—a phenomenon found increasingly productive in the world of academia, as
evidenced by the modern proliferation of interdisciplinary departments in institutions of
higher learning—and to find a jumping off point for many topical explorations. Narrative
analysis has inspired, or facilitated, a large amount of research and insight, which is
another affirmative indication of its importance in aiding our understanding of human
experience.

Reconnected to a traditional perspective on narrative, Wade Clark Roof, in his
presidential address to the Religious Research Association, states of story telling, which
he uses synonymously with “narrative,”

Haven't we moved beyond story-telling? Well, yes and no. We have certainly moved
into languages of research that formulate theories and hypothesis in more abstract terms,
and which are very different from stories. Pick up just about any research journal...and
you'll find a wide range of logico-scientific approaches...I'm not arguing that these are not
good methods. But are they more advanced than story telling as a research method?
There certainly was a time when I would have answered that question in a resounding
affirmative, but I am less convinced now that they are superior, on both practical and
philosophical grounds.13

Roof has rediscovered the simple truth that there is no format that relates
understanding so ably and clearly to the majority of people as narrative; he finds that the
narrative format should be indispensable to the conduct of human research and the
relation of its findings. For example, no amount of scientific analysis on pollution
resulting from automobile exhaust can relate an understanding of its detrimental effects to

13 Roof, 298.
humans as well as the story of one inner-city child coping with asthma developed after
having been constantly exposed to automobile and other exhaust in city streets. Roof’s
opinion on narrative is practical and purposeful. If what we learn in science and in the
analysis of academic discipline cannot be related to others, the value of that knowledge is
significantly diminished. A proven method of relating knowledge is found in the
narrative format.

Beyond the inherent value of narrative as a research method and method of
communication, narrative has even greater value. That added value is exemplified in the
political intention of the environmental justice movement’s narrative, which is the key to
deciphering this example’s greater value. What does the political intention of the
environmental justice movement’s narrative allow us to understand? What is its
meaning’s value? The value of a political narrative resides in its ability to

mobilize a group to attempt political change. They do not mobilize people to take action
directly...rather narratives provide deep and lasting insights into the need and methods of
change to individuals who lead social movements or support them despite risks to
themselves...the dissemination and expression of narratives measure the extent and
political success of social movement participants.14

To clarify, the value of narrative for the environmental justice movement lies in
its ability to mobilize for political change. Its narrative does this in first in its ability to
help its participants understand themselves and their experience within the movement,
second in its ability to transmit the need and means of the movement’s particular brand of
social change, and third in its ability to disseminate the movement’s extent and success.
However, it is essential to understand that this value is premised on the meaning of the
movement’s narrative, which is comprised of the accuracy of its elements of plot, type,

14 Richard A. Cuoto, “Narrative, Free Space and Political Leadership in Social
and symbolism. The success of the environmental justice narrative then becomes a question of whether the narrative’s meaning is accurate; if so, the movement will reap the benefits of its value.
The Narrative of the Environmental Justice Movement

The movement's academics, and those activists who double as academics in their published works, largely produce the public narrative of the environmental justice movement. This is particularly the case concerning the public narrative that is widely disseminated and available to students, scholars, and activists of the environmental justice movement.

This is not to imply that those who are solely activists of the movement do not produce narratives as well. They do, but they are ontological and the effects resultant from the dissemination of this type of narrative are not as far-reaching as those of the public narratives produced in academic pursuit. However, as is clear in understanding the construction of a public narrative, the ontological narratives of activists are much of the raw material that are used to compose the public narrative of the movement. For this reason, ontological narratives are quite important, but it is not necessary that I discuss them directly here.

One exception to the rule that public narratives are produced in academic pursuit is found in the publication of the movement's most central gathering—The National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The two Summits organized so far produced publications that have collected the ontological narratives of the movement's activists and distilled them into a public narrative. The "Environmental Justice Timeline—Milestones," formulated for the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 2002, is perhaps the most illuminating document outlining the narrative of the movement as activists alone perceive it to be.

See Chapter 2, p. 6.
There is no similarly singular academic effort devoted to the historical narrative of the environmental justice movement; instead, public narratives produced by academics are found in bits and pieces throughout their publications, generally included therein only to give context to the broader goal of the work. Narratives such as these are found in the movement’s books, journal articles, and newspaper articles.

In total, the narrative found in the documents mentioned above overlap substantially, commonly mentioning and giving emphasis to the same events and their role in the movement. From the events and occurrences held in common in these narratives one can find a complete and comprehensive public narrative of the environmental justice movement. I recount the narrative uncovered in this way below.

The Narrative

The historical narrative of the environmental justice movement begins with a nod to its deeper past—the struggle for environmental justice. David Pellow states, “the struggle for environmental justice is as old as struggle itself.”\(^{16}\) Robert Bullard, noted environmental justice activist and scholar, states that the “movement” for environmental justice was conceived much more recently.\(^{17}\) As such, the “Environmental Justice Timeline” begins the chronology of the movement in 1982 at protests in Warren County, North Carolina, the year that “historians may well look back at...and say, ‘That protest was the defining moment of the environmental justice movement.’”\(^{18}\) Truly, the vast majority of the movement’s academics and activists do look back on that protest as

\(^{16}\) Pellow, 73.


defining its emergence. Robert Bullard notes, “It was in 1982, in the rural, mostly African American Warren County of North Carolina, that environmental justice took root, earned a name, and was transformed from a local issue into a nationwide movement.”

The intention of county officials to site a landfill slated to house material containing 31,000 gallons of toxic polychlorinated biphenyl in the community sparked the protests in Warren County. This struggle—again, supposed to be the first of the environmental justice movement—spurred Reverend Benjamin Muhammed, then Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr. and the national executive director of the United Church of Christ (UCC) Commission on Racial Justices, to coin the term used to describe the type of environmental injustice experienced by the residents. The term they chose was environmental racism. The constituents of the protest were the mostly black residents of Warren County, joined by several leaders of various civil rights groups and a number of the white residents of the county.

Warren County was not simply a monumental protest in its own right; its effort produced rippling effects. Another reason for the significance of this event extends from the fact that the protest “caused further study of the relationship between minority communities and pollution.” Two of the people in attendance at the protests were District of Columbia Congressional Delegate Walter E. Faunteroy and Rev.

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19 Pezzullo, 2.
Muhammad. Upon returning to his duties in Washington, D.C., Faunteroy implored the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO), the legislative branch’s investigative and auditing agency, to “examine the relationship between the location of hazardous waste landfills and the racial and economic status of the surrounding communities.” This was the first nationally focused study of its kind. It “found evidence of racial discrimination in the siting of such [hazardous waste landfill] facilities” the very type of facility that was protested at Warren County.

The study’s impetus resided in the Warren County protests and retroactively contributes to its credibility and, therefore, it being considered the emergent event of the movement. Considered on its own, the GAO study is the second major piece of the environmental justice movement’s narrative.

The next major piece of the narrative, which also retroactively contributed to Warren County’s credibility, occurred when Rev. Muhammad enlisted Charles Lee, who was then the director of UCC’s toxics and minorities project, to produce a study examining the “association of race and socioeconomic status to the siting of toxic-waste facilities. This study found that race, more than socioeconomic status, was the major determinant of the location of toxic-waste facilities.”

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24 Edwards, 40.
UCC study “proved to be just what civil-rights groups had been waiting,” scientific validation of their issues. Similarly, summarizing its significance, Dorceta Taylor observes that the UCC study, “did for people of color and the environmental justice movement what ‘Silent Spring’ did for middle-class Whites in the 1960s.”

Along with the GAO study, the UCC study gave claims of environmental racism (and, therefore, the environmental justice movement) objective legitimacy not previously experienced. In concert with the protests at Warren County, the three are believed to have provided the movement its first glimpse of national significance and attention.

In 1990 another event occurred that became part of the narrative, the Michigan Conference on “Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards” and, in the same year, the infamous “Letter to the Big 10.” The Michigan Conference, organized by University of Michigan professors Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai, was designed to “debate the evidence for or against environmental racism.” From the conference Bryant and Mohai published the book *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards*. This book and the conference it was written to describe further increased the legitimacy and/or power of the environmental justice movement, particularly concerning its claims of environmental racism and, simply, racism.

The “Letter to the Big 10” actually consists of two letters, one written by the Southwest Organizing Project and one written by the Gulf Coast Tenant Union (both environmental justice organizations), now known collectively because of the virtually

26 Ibid.
28 Bryant and Mohai, 1.
identical substance communicated within.29 The letters were written for and received by the ten largest mainstream environmental groups in the nation (e.g. Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation, Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Environmental Policy Institute/Friends of the Earth, Izaak Walton League, National Audubon Society, Wilderness Society, National Parks and Conservation Association, and Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund). The letters stated that the ten organizations lacked adequate knowledge of and, therefore, inclusion of minority environmental concerns, attention to those concerns, and had few people of color in decision-making positions.30 It was an earth-shaking criticism of the environmental movement, prompting defensiveness and attempts at reform.

Then, in 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D.C. The Summit "raised the profile of... [environmental justice] issues and resulted in the adoption of the Principles of Environmental Justice."31 Charles Lee maintains, "the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was the defining event of the emerging movement for environmental justice."32 However, to be clear, the contribution he suggests that this event made is in it having provided the first national forum for the activists to meet in order to develop the movement, and not in it marking the actual emergence of the movement itself, which the narrative locates in Warren County.

30 Ibid.
32 Proceedings, v.
In the next year, 1992, a groundbreaking study in the *National Law Journal* titled “Unequal Protection: The Racial Divide in Environmental Law,” provided evidence of racially based disparities in the enforcement of federal environmental laws. The study found “that penalties under the federal hazardous waste laws were as much as 500 percent higher in predominantly white areas than non-white areas.” Importantly, this study was one of the first major recognitions of environmental racism by the legal community.

In 1994, the most significant governmental recognition of the environmental justice movement since the GAO report of 1983 came with President William Clinton’s Executive Order 12898. The Executive Order “mandated agencies like the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to incorporate environmental justice considerations into their operations.” It also created an interagency working group on environmental justice, to be coordinated by the EPA, which became known as the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. The Executive Order was a victory for environmental justice activists, who “spearheaded the effort that culminated in the signing” of the Executive Order.

The final piece in the environmental justice narrative as it stands today occurred in 2002. In that year the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held, producing many things, including the “Environmental Justice Timeline—Milestones.”

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34 Gauna, 702.
35 Newton, 23.
36 Taylor, 38.
37 Gauna, 705.
**Narrative Analysis—Its Meaning and Value**

The events in the current narrative of the environmental justice movement center on issues of and findings concerning environmental racism. Nowhere, from its beginning to its end, does the movement’s narrative highlight any class-based event of environmental injustice.

The tempered exception to that rule is found in the Executive Order President Clinton issued in 1994. The goal of the Order and the definition of environmental justice given therein—"disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects...on minority populations and low-income populations"—did not give priority to either race-based or class-based justice. This piece of the narrative is the only one neutral in its emphasis on the nature of injustice experienced—whether race or class based.

In sum, this narrative relates that the movement began in Warren County in 1982 (plot) and that race is the primary concern of the movement (symbolism.) The obvious question arising from these highlights is whether it is accurate or effective to state that the movement emerged then and concerns environmental racism issues exclusively. To qualify this query, it must be recognized that throughout the bits and pieces of narrative scattered within the work of academics, events and emphases emerge that speak to lines of plot and symbolism outside what I demonstrate here. However, as stated above, my account here reflects the strikingly pervasive commonalities of the various public narratives that exist; the cumulative effect of these commonalities is a powerful statement for the movement. I hold this statement to be historically inaccurate.

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Are there events that should be in the various renditions of the public narrative of the movement, prevalent enough to be clearly evident in their overlap? I will argue that this is the case. I argue that there is reason to identify the plot's beginning earlier, earlier than the transition from the struggle for environmental justice to the movement for environmental justice is identified currently. Also, I argue that there is reason to include events in the movement's narrative that have been defined as outside of the movement's purview, therefore reinforcing the inclusive meaning of the narrative conveyed in its symbolism.

But, before turning to this discussion, it is important to understand what influences the narrative as it stands today. To do this one must become familiar with how the movement is defined in order to identify the standard it sets for inclusion. Then I will discuss the antecedent movements of the environmental justice movement and its players, revealing the prevailing forces on the narrative as it currently exists.
Defining the Movement—Environmental Justice, Environmental Racism, and Environmental Equity

Virtually every piece of environmental justice literature will offer slightly, or strikingly, different definitions of the movement and its central terminology. As Edwardo Lao Rhodes notes, "environmental groups, civil rights organizations, and numerous community-action groups have developed their own definition of" its terms.\(^3^9\) Further, not only has the matter of the movement’s namesake terminology, "environmental justice," been subject to the confusion of being defined in various ways, the terms "environmental racism" and "environmental equity," the other two pieces of the movement’s central rhetoric, have been used as its synonyms. For instance, one scholar commented, referring to the movement’s seminal protests in Warren County, North Carolina, that these protests "propelled environmental injustice, sometimes called environmental racism, into the public purview."\(^4^0\) This jumble of rhetorical carelessness has greatly muddied the waters for practitioners (activists), academics, and onlookers of the movement. I will attempt to clarify what these terms mean and suggest that similar uniformity be pursued in larger circles.

Environmental Justice

“Environmental justice” is now relatively well accepted as the preferred rhetoric used to refer to the total movement and its redress.\(^4^1\) As such, envision “environmental justice

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justice” as an umbrella term for “environmental racism” and “environmental equity” and as the ultimate goal of addressing environmental injustice.

Most sources agree that “environmental justice” was coined in 1967 at a Houston, Texas, demonstration protesting “racially discriminate discipline in area schools and a black girl drowning in a neighborhood garbage dump.”42 However, its use came of age and into prominence, overtaking “environmental racism” and “environmental equity” to refer to the disproportionate environmental burdens of disadvantaged people, when President William Clinton signed Executive Order No. 12898.43 In that Executive Order “environmental justice” is defined as the redress of “disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects...on minority populations and low-income populations.” The Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Environmental Justice Office goes a step further than that definition by giving a more comprehensive definition of environmental justice.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement [emphasis added] of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or a socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies.44

However, even that inclusive definition doesn’t quite cover all of the bases of environmental justice, as it is was defined by some of its practitioners and beneficiaries at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. The Principles of Environmental Justice, which is the lengthy definition of the movement put together at

42 Bullard, 32-33.
the Summit, cannot be easily or quickly summarized. Suffice it to say, it consists of a *preamble and seventeen points* (See Appendix) of emphasis, including rights, calls, oppositions, affirmations, demands, requirements, and recognition of an array of issues “for all people.”

When speaking of “all people” the environmental justice movement assumes that middle-class and wealthy white people have access to a variety of well-established and effective avenues of protection from environmental hazards. So, the environmental justice movement refers to and strives in the name of disadvantaged people. The ignorance of wealthy whites in the movement can be seen in all three of the definitions referenced above.

Boiling down all of the groups mentioned throughout these definitions for inclusion in the movement, race and class identify the two categories of people who comprise the disadvantaged people the movement represents in this nation. For this reason, the environmental justice movement’s definition consists of two elements: 1) disproportionate environmental burdens on 2) minority and low-income people. Those elements clarify the population of the movement, but not the type of environmental burden that is of concern to the movement.

What is the nature of the disproportionate burdens experienced by the minority and low-income people of the movement? In order to understand the breadth of the environmental justice movement, one needs to take into account how the environment is defined as an element of “environmental justice.” It does not simply refer to non-built places or those untrammeled by human kind and relatively absent of evidence of human habitation, as “the environment” has so often been defined by the mainstream
environmental movement. The environmental justice movement’s definition of the “environment” considers it to be the place “where we work, live, and play,” in other words, the “built” and “non-built” environment. In defining the environment this way the movement “becomes virtually boundless.” This boundless quality is the bedrock of the movement’s inclusive strength. It is the key to constructing a collective organizational identity in order for the multi-racial and multi-issue environmental justice activists to function in unison.

At its base, the environmental justice movement is concerned with redressing the disproportionate burden of every person in an environment—built and non-built—who is disadvantaged by race and/or class. The inclusive and virtually all-encompassing definition is the foundation of the movement’s strength. It is this definition that should be kept in mind when asking why and how the movement has strayed from the issues of some disadvantaged socioeconomic classes.

**Environmental Racism**

“Environmental racism” was coined by Reverend Benjamin Muhammad in the release of UCC’s 1987 study *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States.* This term refers to a facet of environmental injustice. To illustrate how it should be perceived, a protest can be referred to as one for environmental justice, combating environmental

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47 Foreman, 12.
48 Charles Lee in Bryant and Mohai, 10.
Environmental Justice Narrative 28

racism. This type of injustice is a major constituent issue of the environmental justice movement’s agenda.

Environmental racism is an extension of traditional racism.

It refers to those institutional rules, regulations, and policies or government or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for least desirable land uses, resulting in the disproportionate exposure of toxic and hazardous waste on communities based upon certain prescribed biological characteristics. Environmental racism is the unequal protection against toxic and hazardous waste exposure and the systematic exclusion of people of color from environmental decisions affecting their communities.49

Beyond its essential use, the term serves three purposes, “it is provocative and evocative, it is a superb mobilizing claim, and it overtly galvanizes the strengths of two influential movements”—the civil rights and the environmental movement.50 Clearly, the influence of the civil rights movement and agenda can be seen in this term.

As alluded to above, “environmental racism” was the focus of many of the most prominent struggles and findings of the environmental justice movement’s very active days in the 1980s. The seminal struggle at Warren County, North Carolina was a struggle for environmental justice, combating environmental racism. Similarly, the 1967 protests in Houston, TX (where the term environmental justice was coined) combated issues of environmental racism and sought environmental justice.

Environmental Equity

“Environmental Equity” was, in the early 1980s, often mistakenly used as a term to refer to the disproportionate environmental burden of disadvantaged people [by race or class] and has now been replaced by the now more commonly used “environmental justice.” This is evidenced by the Environmental Protection Agency originally titling its

50 Foreman, 10.
more recently dubbed Office of Environmental Justice, "The Office of Environmental Equity." The name change came as a result of Clinton's Executive Order 12898, which helped define environmental justice in the government. This also initiated the cessation of the two terms being used synonymously and the development of a unique meaning for "environmental equity."

Environmental equity is now used to refer to "the equal protection by environmental laws" of individuals, groups, or communities regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status. However, due to its potential to imply that a goal of the movement is to simply redistribute environmental burdens, the term has largely been abandoned by activists in favor of rallying around the other two central terms of the movement—environmental justice and environmental racism. Instead, "environmental equity" has taken on a legal character and is primarily utilized in the legal arena.

**Putting it All Together**

Within the bounds of what the environmental justice movement defines as its goal, its population, and its environment of concern, one gets a sense of the gamut of issues and people that can be brought to its table. In the meaning of its rhetoric one can see the nexus of the issues of the two major movements of the 20th century—the environmental movement and the civil rights movement—and many others. All of the movements of the 20th Century can be thought of as seeking justice in the environment

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52 Foreman, 10.
“where we work, live, and play.” As Melissa Checker notes, “environmental [justice] organizing facilitated partnerships that crossed race, class, and social lines.”54

Environmental justice organizing can cross barriers between movements as well.

Environmental justice can cross barriers between people. It emphasizes justice for all people and, in particular, for lower class and minority people. As such, the people of the environmental justice movement are discussed below.

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The Players—Activists and Academics

The environmental justice movement is one that prides itself on its bottom-up formation; it is a grassroots movement. It is meant to represent and is largely formed of the people who have lacked redress from the disproportionate environmental burdens of this nation, minority groups and of disadvantaged socioeconomic classes. These people are the activists of the movement—one of the two key players of the movement that Luke Cole and Sheila Foster identify in their book *From the Ground Up.* The other group they identify as a key player is the academic community. There are also several other key influences in the movement, which Cole and Foster label tributaries; these are the antecedent and current social movements that have contributed to the formation and that currently contribute to the state of the environmental justice movement. Two of these tributaries, the environmental movement and civil rights movement, I will discuss in the next chapter of this thesis. But, first, let’s turn to the activists and academics.

How do these two players affect the narrative of the movement? As it is the actions and activities of the activists that affect the narrative and the publications of the academics that compose and promulgate the narrative, what influences these groups will manifest in the narrative. Further, the way in which these groups have conceptualized each other has had a significant effect on how these groups exist today.

*Academics*

“Academics...have played a crucial role in both sparking and shaping the Environmental Justice Movement, perhaps a larger one than they have played in any

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other broad-based social movement in the United States." The academics of the environmental justice movement are myriad; they range widely in their disciplines, areas of interest, and approach. Many, though not all, ride the divide between their academic interest and straightforward advocacy and, although those interests might put their academic objectivity into question, the logic that "much of the best writing rises from passion" is their accepted rule of thumb.

The primary role of academics in the movement has been to scrutinize support for or against environmental justice issues and to disseminate those issues and stories of the grassroots environmental justice groups. Most of the academic support of environmental justice groups comes in the form of quantitative and qualitative studies conducted that corroborate activists' assertions and challenges of environmental injustice. Dorceta Taylor, a respected academic of the movement, notes, "though much has been written on the environmental justice movement, attention is focused on case studies, analyzing the spatial distribution of environmental hazards, and examining policy formulation." The academics' ability to disseminate the stories and issues of the activist groups is done through their various publications, public talks, ability to meet with government and private officials, and training and education of current activists, aspiring activists, and/or

56 Cole and Foster, 24.
57 Robert Bullard is the quintessential example of an academic with advocacy interests in the environmental justice movement; Dan Flores, *The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001), 101.
students at their institutions. This function enables them considerable influence over the political agenda of the movement.\footnote{Foreman, 1.}

The most recent addition to their list of roles within the movement has been their limited examination and account of the historical narrative of the movement which, with increasing frequency and length, accompanies the case studies and issues disseminated in their publications. This allows the academics to have even greater influence over how the public perceives the movement. However, the academics have not devoted as much scrutiny to the effect of their function in this role as they have to the other functions in which they have served the movement. For this reason, and because this mistake can be compounded by their ability to propagate their findings, it is imperative that they examine the accuracy of the narrative they create so that they produce the most complete and accurate and, therefore, valuable narrative for the movement.

The danger is demonstrated by Carolyn Merchant, one of the most prominent academics in the field of environmental history. As the president of the American Society for Environmental History in 2003, she delivered a talk at its annual meeting in Providence, Rhode Island titled “Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History.” In that address, Merchant provides a moving argument as to why and how environmental historians should be vigorous in including the consideration of race in their scholarly activities. She gave the address not only to strengthen the rigors and scope of historical investigation but also with the goal of furthering the ends of the environmental justice movement.
During the course of her address she remarked that “the environmental justice movement includes justice for people of color, justice for women, and justice for nature. It reverses past environmental injustices disproportionately experienced by minorities.”

At second glance, one may wonder about this defining statement of her speech. Why does Merchant highlight only these particular groups when referring to the environmental justice movement? People of color, women, and nature certainly don’t comprise “all people,” for which the movement is intended to speak.

Having tacitly excluded a mention of class-based environmental justice may have been a simple oversight on her part, but it is a conspicuous one. Race and class are the two most classic and comprehensive definers of all people who are impacted by the environmental justice movement; as far as speaking for nature is concerned, this paper supposes that the relatively easier task of speaking for people should be tackled first. Why doesn’t Merchant mention that the environmental justice movement also includes justice for those people burdened by environmental hazards because of their class?

True, the title of her talk clearly pointed to the explicit attention she intended to give to the discussion of race, but why then mention women and nature and exclude a mention of class in her list of groups in the environmental justice movement? If she had simply mentioned that the environmental justice movement includes justice for people of color...

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61 For a discussion of the class and race base of the movement see Allan Craig Lummus, “Defining Environmental Justice: Race, Movement, and the Civil Rights Legacy” (Ph.D diss., University of Oregon, 2002).
62 This exclusion is particularly conspicuous as Carolyn Merchant is a scholar who has demonstrated a great awareness of class and class issues in other work. This oversight in her analysis seems to be the exception rather than the rule.
and for people of disadvantaged socioeconomic classes she would have constructed a holding tank for the recipients of the movement's justice without leaks.

As a reading of the narrative of the movement will show, unfortunately, Merchant's limited depiction of the breadth of people emphasized in the environmental justice movement is indicative of the larger limitation of the movement's narrative—excluding the issues and nature of its entire constituency. Compounding matters, her poorly considered speech was, presumably, given to provide inspiration and direction to the writings of the historians and academics of the American Society for Environmental History. A speech with this limitation suffers doubly with its own flaw and the potential that the academics listening might be encouraged to repeat the same mistakes. Further, those academics may pass those mistakes on to scores more of the public through their writings and teachings, a cycle whose potential to multiply the error of the unexamined narratives being produced by academics is exponential. Especially in a time when more and more people become supporters, activists, and academics of the movement by learning about the power of the environmental justice movement through reading and schooling, the message received from academics must be accurate, clear, and valuable.

There is a potential for great danger in the work of academics, i.e., they have the ability to give the wrong meaning to the narrative that they tell the public and scurry the value of that narrative. That ineffectiveness belies the movement's strength and its reason for being. Academic effort is the linchpin in reforming the narrative to reflect the meaning of the movement accurately.

Another danger of their work can be found in its role in shaping the conceptualization of activists. Academic research has helped to categorize the activists
of the environmental justice movement. The way in which academic writers have done this has added to the division of the movement and is reflected in the state of the narrative.

**Activists**

The first and foremost players in the environmental justice movement, as identified by Cole and Foster, are the grassroots activists. This conclusion is one that is quite simple and obvious to most. However, how these activists are identified through their definition and categorization is much less obvious.

Cole and Foster offer that environmental justice activists are united by three characteristics: motives, background, and perspective. On the first count, "motives," activists share in common that they "usually have an immediate and material stake in solving the environmental problems they confront." The "background" of the activists is "largely, though not entirely, poor or working-class." Finally, in terms of perspective, "most environmental justice activists have a social justice orientation, seeing environmental degradation as just one of many ways their communities are under attack." This is a vague and certainly not definitive methodology for identifying environmental justice activists, but that job is not an easy one in a movement that strives to be as inclusive as this one. However, this methodology provides a good basis to discuss the ways activists are conceived of and the difficulties with their current conception.

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63 33-34; this entire discussion and the quotations contained within the paragraph are taken from Cole and Foster.
64 Ibid, 33.
65 Ibid, 33.
66 Ibid, 34.
Cole and Foster utilize this methodology to categorize activists protesting disproportionate environmental burdens into two groups. Discussion of “anti-toxic” and “environmental justice” activists in *From the Ground Up* is found in separate sections—effectively separating the former out of the environmental justice movement. The division, pursuant to the vast majority of the writing on and thinking about activists combating disproportionate environmental burdens, is integral to understanding one of the reasons why the cohesive and inclusive strength of the movement is compromised. I will both describe the division and its rationale and elucidate why the anti-toxic activists should be included as part of the environmental justice movement. Further, I will indicate how this division is carried over into the narrative of the movement.

In the 1970s and 1980s the activists now separated as either “anti-toxic” or “environmental justice” were minority and/or poor and working class people concerned with toxic and hazardous substances located in their communities. This general characterization aligns these activists with the first two parts of the methodology Cole and Foster use to identify activists as those of the environmental justice movement. The explanation for the separation of the two groups of activists must then reside in the third part of the methodology—perspective. The question to ask becomes: Do these activists share a social justice orientation?

The answer is yes. The vast majority of these activists were struggling with a number of social issues that either contributed to or existed in addition to the

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67 For early case studies in the movement evidencing toxics as the common foe of activists see Schwab.
environmental burdens they protested.68 These activists had lost faith in their government to remedy their problems, and many sought reforms broader than those immediate to their community.69

So, if these activists are separately categorized in From the Ground Up, despite the fact that both groups meet the criteria of an environmental justice activist, why are they separated? In the end, one cannot find the distinction between activists made by the methodology, but only by their race. Why is that used as a dividing line between activists?

The rationale behind this dividing line began with the notion that, in general, the nature of the environmental injustices’ activists who protested at the outset of the environmental justice movement are best deconstructed as either attributable to class issues or race issues. As such, activists protesting against toxic environmental injustices who were white were “anti-toxic activists” with injustices attributable to their class, and activists protesting against toxic environmental injustices who were minorities became those struggling against “environmental racism” whose injustices were attributable to their race.70

There are three reasons for the current distinction of activists protesting the same or very similar injustices—toxic and hazardous substance siting—by the presumed class or race-based nature of the injustice they suffer: 1) early studies supporting the movement found that the effects of race in hazardous waste facility siting were greater than the

69 This is evidenced in the efforts of Lois Gibbs and the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice to pass the Comprehensive Environmental Response and Cleanup Liability Act.
70 Cole and Foster, 8.
effects of class,\textsuperscript{71} \textit{2}) the categorization serves to separate the different social movement backgrounds and influences of activists protesting disproportionate environmental burdens—presumed to be either white and influenced by the environmental movement or black and civil rights-influenced,\textsuperscript{72} \textit{and 3}) many early struggles for environmental justice were often pursued by homogeneous communities of either people of color or whites.\textsuperscript{73} When considering these supports, the distinction seems useful. However, the bases of these reasons are now dubious. In addition, the result of this categorization is often counterproductive for the movement.

First, it is often difficult (if not impossible) to determine whether class or race, or a combination of the two, have a greater impact upon the disproportionate burden of people of color.\textsuperscript{74} In the absence of a definitive method for determining the nature of causation, people of color activists are summarily found to be combating "environmental racism" falsely. On that false premise the rationale is continued when, since racial

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\textsuperscript{71} United States General Accounting Office, Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities, (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1983); Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ, Toxic Waste and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites, (New York: Public Data Access, Inc. 1987); despite the alienation anti-toxic activists felt when the environmental movement failed their issues, it is widely written that the environmental movement was the most influential to these activists issue development.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{72} For a discussion of the disparity between the background and influence of people of color activists and white activists see Lummus.\textsuperscript{72}

\textsuperscript{73} Two classic examples are the protests at Houston, Texas and Love Canal, New York; people of color conducted the former and mostly whites conducted the latter. For a discussion of the Houston, Texas protests see Bullard. For a discussion of the protests at Love Canal see Lois Gibbs, \textit{Love Canal: My Story} (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{74} Martin Melosi, "Equity, Eco-Racism, and the Environmental Justice Movement," in \textit{The Face of the Earth: Environment and World History}, ed. J. Donald Hughes (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 2000), 47-75.\textsuperscript{74}
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discrimination is not an issue for poor or working class white activists, only white people are categorized as “anti-toxic” activists who deal with class issues.

What of the validity of separating activists based on their presumed social movement background? It is undoubtedly true that people of color have been greatly influenced by the civil rights movement. It is also easy to surmise that we all have. Simply taken on its face, the issues, tactics, and effects of the civil rights movement have had a national and worldwide effect on all people, despite the best efforts of any person trying to remain in ignorance of their efforts. Granted, the influence of the civil rights movement has had a greater effect on minority populations than others.

Certainly, the environmental movement has also had a great effect on all people. To make a statement to the contrary would be to assume mistakenly that people of color do not have an environmental ethic.\(^{75}\) The environmental movement is rightly criticized for failing to consider the concerns of all people, but, regardless, it awoke at least a spectrum of awareness of the environment in all people. Further, even if the social movement background of some group combating environmental injustice is more influentially shaped by one or the other movement—civil rights movement or environmental movement—does either’s influence rightly factor into validly defining that group out of the environmental justice movement?

Finally, what of the fact that many early struggles of the environmental justice movement were pursued by racially homogeneous communities? This was often the case, as it was at the protests in Houston, TX, although, it is not the case in many other instances, such as in Warren County, where the protests’ multi-racial nature is generally

\(^{75}\) Taylor, 2002.
glossed over. Further, racially homogeneous organizing for environmental justice is not
the goal of the movement; academics must be careful not to perpetuate this in the way
they categorize activists by race.

The reasons supporting the distinction of anti-toxic and environmental justice
activists cannot be supported and, therefore, should not be made at all. The distinction’s
deleterious effects must also give caution to academics whose goal is not to polarize
activists by race. The continuance of this division puts a barrier between the activists
who, through academic mistakes in misshapen pursuit of clarity, now utilize different
categorizations and corresponding sets of rhetoric—environmental racism and anti-
toxic—to identify themselves, instead of focusing on the commonality of their issues
under the shared ground of the environmental justice movement.

This places a wedge in the environmental justice movement’s inclusive—multi-
racial and multi-issue—strength, which is reflected in the movement’s narrative. In fact,
as is done in the conceptualization of activists, narrative treatments define the struggles of
white environmental justice activists—anti-toxic activists—out of the environmental
justice movement altogether. The environmental justice organization of white activists is
attributed to other social movements, whether they are lumped in with a narrowly defined
“anti-toxic” movement or the broader environmental movement.

The point to be taken from this section of the thesis is that “anti-toxic” struggles
are a legitimate piece of the environmental justice movement as it defines itself.
Academics have divided activists by category and functionally removed white lower
class activists from the environmental justice movement, which is then reflected in the
narrative of the movement. The most heinous result is that both white and people of
color can suffer from environmental injustice and can protest it either in isolation of each other or in tandem. However, the goal of the movement is to be multi-racial and multi-issue, to share the movement's advance across racial lines; the categorization of activists must be unified in the environmental justice movement, despite the need to conceptualize and categorize them for analytical purposes.

In the future, activists of the environmental justice movement must not be separated by race or the potentially different nature of the environmental injustice they pursue; this is internally divisive for the movement. Again, as Dana Alston wisely warned, “In this nation and in the world, those in power stay there by dividing us from one another: rich from poor, white from black, black from yellow, men from women, and on and on. We must understand how these boundaries affect our movement from within.”76 The environmental justice movement must understand it is dividing itself.

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History of the Environmental Justice Movement

*From the Ground Up* lists a number of social movements that are antecedents to or are current contributors to the environmental justice movement and their influence is made clear. Two of those movements, the environmental movement and civil rights movement, I will discuss here due to their significant relevance to the state of the environmental justice movement’s narrative. I will not discuss the other movements—Native American rights, labor, public health, and women’s rights—considered tributaries to the environmental justice movement. In turn, the pertinence of the relationship of the environmental movement and the civil rights movement to the environmental justice narrative is detailed below.

**Environmentalists**

"America is the first civilization in history to turn its environmental imagination into a political movement.”77 The success of this imagination and the environmental movement clearly contributed to the emergence of the environmental justice movement; one needs only to look at the name of the “environmental justice” movement to find evidence of that. Without the environmental movement’s work to make the “environment” a viable social concern, the issues of the environmental justice movement would not have been ripe for its onset. The sensitivity and awareness to the environment that the environmental movement developed in the public is one that is leveraged by the environmental justice movement. Further, the laws and policies that environmental groups have helped develop and pass are many of those that have come to aid environmental justice advocates in redressing their issues. However, despite this, the

relationship between the movements is not entirely amicable.

The direct rift between them can be traced back to 1990 in the “Letter to the Big 10,” authored by environmental justice groups—Southwest Organizing Project and the Gulf Coast Tenant Union.\footnote{78 “The Whiteness of the Greening Movement.”} This letter accused environmentalists of the ten most prominent national environmental groups of the time—Isaac Walton League, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, etc.—of “racism and the whiteness of the environmental movement.”\footnote{79 Ibid.} The letter also accused these organizations and the movement of disregarding the environmental issues of anyone but those of their current constituency—the white middle and upper classes whose support had marked both conservation and environmentalism in America for a century.

However, the thought that the environmental movement was wholly uninterested in issues of environmental justice is inaccurate.\footnote{80 Gottlieb; Karl Grossman, “From Toxic Racism to Environmental Justice.” E 3 (May-June 1992): 35.} “Given the diverse nature of contemporary environmentalism, it is striking how narrowly the movement has been retrospectively described by historians.”\footnote{81 Gottlieb, 6; Melosi, 2000, 44.} Nonetheless, few would wholeheartedly challenge the fact that the environmental movement is largely composed of the white middle and upper class and that its issues have largely ignored direct address of the environment of concern to the environmental justice advocates—“where we work, live, and play.” Digging deeper, questioning the pertinence and necessity of the accusations made against the environmental movement in that letter will provide a better understanding of the relationship between the environmental and environmental justice
While it is arguably true that it would be helpful to any movement to reach out and touch the issues of another, is it realistic to assert that the environmental movement was remiss in not coming to the issues of concern to the environmental justice movement on its own accord? A logically valid point brought to bear on that assertion holds that "accusing a largely liberal national environmental group of institutional racism [in this way] is akin to blaming the NAACP for failing to highlight Native American or feminist concerns that it was not created to address in the first place."\(^{82}\) It is very presentist to chastise the environmental movement for failing to address concerns it was not founded to address. The environmental movement began out of specific concerns for the non-built environment—"nature"—and has been supported by people who share those concerns.

So, why was it necessary to critique the environmental movement in this way? As Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai noted in 1992, "the civil rights movement has faltered as government and corporate America have recorded their priorities and civil rights leaders have struggled in vain to bring currency to a movement that has lost its momentum."\(^{83}\) In the faltering momentum of the civil rights movement, the "Letter to the Big 10" legitimated the appropriation of the burgeoning environmental movement's discourse and inertia in order to "construct a new social movement, known as environmental justice" that would reenergize the issues of the civil rights movement, if not the movement itself.\(^{84}\) The letter was tactical: a tactic to take power for the "have-

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\(^{82}\) Foreman, 14.

\(^{83}\) Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards, 1.

\(^{84}\) Checker, 2001, 94.
nots” from the “haves.” It is unfortunate that the environmental justice movement had to take power from the environmental movement, when both, arguably, are striving to do very similar good for the people of the world. But as Saul Alinsky makes clear, one’s “concern with ethics increases with the number of means available and vice versa...to me ethics is doing what is best for most.” In other words, the environmental justice movement did what it had to do to gain power; it attempted to gain power by appropriating that of the environmental movement. This conclusion stands in contrast to the overt message of the “Letter.”

In the late 70s and early 80s the environmental movement actively pulled back from any areas in which they had pursued issues of the same nature as the environmental justice movement. This retrenchment was due to the election of Ronald Reagan and the arrival of a less favorable political climate for the environmental movement. At the time of Reagan’s election, Robert Allen, a board member of a major environmental foundation funder, organized the ten largest environmental groups to meet quarterly to format a united stance against the administration’s predicted attack on existing and future environmental initiatives. This coordinated strategic effort led to the environmental movement becoming more politically focused in technique and organization and isolated it from the burgeoning environmental justice groups that sought to expand the issues and population of the movement. “Unfortunately, once the Reagan/Bush administration

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85 Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals*, (New York: Random House, 1971), 126; it is also true that the letter was written to address very real issues of the environmental movement’s failure to include diversity in its organizations and issues.
86 Ibid.
87 Gottlieb, 124.
came in, people went back to protecting their own turf.”

Cutting the fat from the issue areas of the environmental movement in this way was seen as necessary to weather the relatively cool political climate. This became another reason for the division between the environmental and environmental justice movements, helping to seal the nature of their relationship as one blighted by issues of race.

In summary, the relationship between the movements is tenuous, which is a significant influence on the narrative of the environmental justice movement. The tension between the movements occurred at a time when the environmental justice movement was forming and so became fundamental to its perspective. The roots of the environmental justice movement were soaked in the issues and accusations of racism by this relationship and the environmental movement has thereby contributed to the weakening of the environmental justice movement’s inclusive strength. This result is then compounded by the division thrust between environmental justice activists in the way academics categorize them, a further detriment to the environmental justice movement’s relationship with race. The movement’s focus on race becomes even more clear when considering the influence resulting from its relationship with the civil rights movement.

*Civil Rights Movement*

The heyday of the civil rights movement came in the 1960s; the prominence of the environmental movement succeeded the heyday of the civil rights movement in the

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88 Vivien Lee in Panel Discussion, “A Place at the Table: A Sierra Roundtable on Race, Justice, and the Environment,” *Sierra* 78 (May-June 1993): 50.
If there is truth to the idea that there exists only so much space in the public forum to attend to a social cause, the environmental movement garnered much of what the civil rights movement lost in its rise to being the most prominent social movement of the 1970s. However, this transfer does not so much suggest resentment of the environmental movement on the part of the civil rights movement as it communicates that the civil rights movement knew that its continued success rested upon regaining its prominence in the public mindset, which had been occupied by the environmental movement.

Describing the turn of events in this way is not meant to imply that the civil rights movement then insidiously calculated how to wrestle the limelight back from the environmental movement. For instance, when Martin Luther King, Jr., addressed the plight of garbage workers in Tennessee suffering environmental burdens, he did so more out of a recognition that the physical environment needed to be a concern of the civil rights movement in order for it to achieve its goals than to muscle in on the environmental movement's territory. Similarly, in Warren County, when civil rights leaders were called upon by the community to aid in their protest of an environmentally burdensome hazardous waste siting, the leaders were called upon because the largely minority community knew them and not because the civil rights movement rushed to the scene in strategic hopes of appropriating the power of the environmental movement. The shift of civil rights leadership to the burgeoning environmental justice movement is due to a natural progression toward efficacy.

89 McGurty, 302.
Further, not only did the environmental justice movement inherit many of the leaders of the civil rights movement, it also inherited many of its tactics. It follows logically that this would occur as the environmental justice movement's leaders passed on their experience—the agenda and tactics of the civil rights movement. For these reasons, many believe that the environmental justice movement is merely a renewal of the civil rights movement. However, whether that is the case is not a concern here. The reality of the strong connection between the environmental justice movement and the civil rights movement only serves this thesis in identifying another reason behind the existence of a heavy focus on race-based events and incidents in the movement and, therefore, its narrative.
The Narrative that Should Be...

Luke Cole and Sheila Foster state, "Pointing to a particular date or event that launched the Environmental Justice Movement is impossible, as the movement grew organically out of dozens, even hundreds, of local struggles and events and out of a variety of other social movements. Nevertheless, certain incidents loom large in the history of the movement as galvanizing events." This statement closes in on accurately representing the movement as it is defined and practiced; however, it contains two issues I wish to address: 1) identifying events that "loom large" in the movement is a very subjective process and 2) there must be a way to represent those events that may not "loom large," but were crucial in beginning the movement.

First, how do the narrators avoid the negative effects of bias in the subjectivity of its construction? To begin with, we must recognize that subjectivity in narrative construction is inherent. On any popular subject there are bound to be several narratives that attempt to explain the matter; those narratives always differ to a greater or lesser extent. For example, William Cronon demonstrates this phenomenon as it is played out in the writings of two celebrated historians who address the Dust Bowl. These historians examine virtually identical documents on the Dust Bowl and proceed to locate events around which they build strikingly different meanings for the narrative. The construction of the environmental justice narrative must provide for this phenomenon and attempt to include the most rational thinking in its process; it must be open to revising inevitable flaws in the ongoing process of its creation.

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90 From the Ground Up, 19.
91 Cronon, 1347-1376.
Second, imagine a snowball rolling down a hill, getting bigger as it rolls. As the saying goes, “a few harmless flakes working together can unleash an avalanche of destruction.” In this metaphor for the development of the movement, antecedent movements are the forces that pushed the flakes of the environmental justice movements’ nascent events and incidents into the snowball that eventually became large enough and gained enough momentum to become what the movement is today. If there were no snowflakes to begin the snowball, there would be no snowball. So, how can the narrative of the movement represent its very important nascent events in portraying its infancy, those events that might not “loom large?”

It is important to recognize the nascent events of the movement and the events that “loom large” in it, particularly in the wake of an understanding that the experiences of some activists have been subjectively defined out of the movement and into a false “anti-toxic” categorization. We must accomplish this while maintaining the integrity and importance of the events already included in the narrative. I do not argue that the narrative of the movement as it stands today includes events that do not belong. I argue that the narrative needs to include additional nascent and looming events in order to accurately represent the meaning and practice of the inclusive environmental justice movement. Also, the narrative must alter its representation of Warren County in order to represent its full meaning for the movement.

Making the narrative more inclusive by adding events to the narrative requires adjusting the plot of the narrative; specifically, it requires beginning the narrative earlier than it is begun presently. As it currently exists, the narrative identifies the movement as having begun in Warren County in 1982, which is not the case. I will detail the most
accurate role of Warren County in the narrative at the conclusion of this chapter. This chapter will begin by outlining events that ought to be included in the movement’s narrative and revised historical timeline.

A more inclusive narrative also requires this chapter to address the symbolism of the movement’s narrative. As mentioned above, symbolism is a function of the significance that is given to the events encompassed in a narrative. The significance given to those events then reflects upon the significance given to the issues and agenda symbolized by those events throughout the movement. Environmental justice issues attributed to issues of race currently dominate the symbolism of the movement’s narrative. The events this chapter offers to add to the narrative by correcting its plot will also better symbolize the entirety of the environmental justice movement.

The Narrative

First, the statement beginning this chapter should precede all accounts of the movement’s narrative with some modification. However, the statement might be made better thus: “Pointing to a particular date or event that launched the environmental justice movement is impossible, as the movement grew organically out of dozens, even hundreds, of local struggles and events and out of a variety of other social movements.”

In its beginning, certain events mark its coalescence of thought and activity into a new social agenda that would be brought to the national stage by subsequent events that now loom large in the movement’s history.

After that opening statement, the first event in the environmental justice narrative are the protests of Houston, TX in 1960. This event marks the birth of the environmental justice movement, breaking with its emergence traditionally located in 1982 in Warren
County. It was at this protest that the movement's defining terminology was coined.

This is crucial because, in the case of the environmental justice movement, defining the new movement hinged on creating terminology. Humans have been struggling against environmental injustice for many centuries past and longer; however, there could not be a "movement" until humans began to organize, which required people to identify their struggle collectively. Identifying the struggle required the terminology coined in the Houston protests to frame the common ground of the issue.

Also, coining the term "environmental justice" allowed the movement for environmental justice to be shared between activists and identified it apart from otherwise similarly inclined antecedent movements. For instance, although its activists and issues were very influenced by the civil rights movement, the "environmental justice" terminology coined at the Houston protests in 1960 allowed it to distinguish itself from the civil rights movements. The terminology differentiated its nature from events such as when Martin Luther King Jr. supported the plight of Nashville's garbage workers. "Environmental justice" allowed activists to organize around a different linchpin than the civil rights movement.

Next, in 1971, the Urban Environment Conference (UEC), an initiative emerging out of the environmental movement, was a significant force in the environmental justice movement's coalescence "through its attempt to establish links among minorities, unions,

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92 Pellow, 73.
93 Patrick Novotny, Where We Live, Work and Play: The Environmental Justice Movement and the Struggle for a New Environmentalism (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), xvii: Framing is the way that the leaders in a movement “assign meaning to and interpret problems in such a way as to mobilize participants...it encompasses the culture and even the language that is used in a movement.”
and environmental groups." The UEC hosted many events in an attempt to initiate a working relationship between these groups. However, its efforts never succeeded in a lasting way. This effort, though failing to develop its own momentum, provided the first large-scale multi-racial and multi-issue collaboration of activists i.e., organizing around "environment" and "justice." Further, the failure of this effort to take hold under the umbrella of the environmental movement provided the stakeholders at this conference an opportunity to recognize that their organizing needed a new movement to be successful. Notable among the attendees at the conference were Lois Gibbs, founder of CHEJ, and Dana Alston, noted scholar and activist of the environmental justice movement. Their eventual success in creating the environmental justice movement is a signal that this event’s failure to take root in the environmental movement was a necessary and constructive setback for the participants.

The next large scale event that consciously coupled the terms "environment" and "justice" came in 1976, when the United Auto Workers (UAW) held a conference titled "Working for Environmental and Economic Justice and Jobs." The conference brought together "Native Americans, Chicanos, blacks, whites, the League of Women voters, building tradesman, Appalachian mountaineers, and UAW workers."

Though an effort of the labor movement, similar to the efforts of UEC, this initiative did not gain a foothold with its founders. After this constructive failure, activists organizing for environmental justice had found through experience that their issues were not to be served best by the civil rights, environmental, or labor movements. Between the terminology activists had coined in Houston, TX and their increasing efforts to organize

94 Gottlieb, 262.
95 Robert Bullard in Visiglio and Whitelaw, 6.
under different social movement orientations, activists began to become cognizant of the need for their own movement. However, it would take two protests to galvanize the activists in the environmental justice movement in a way that would solidify its identity and the national attention it needed to become known as new social movement in its own right.

In 1978 the mostly white, blue-collar community of Love Canal, New York had known that their children were sick or dead or dying slowly at a disproportionate rate for some time, but in that year they finally began to associate this and other illnesses in the community with the fumes that rose from the basements of their homes. These fumes were especially strong in the homes of 240 low-income homes built around the town’s namesake canal. The community found that the canal contained a chemical dump with 20,000 tons of toxic wastes buried beneath it, just below a thin ground surface layer of dirt laid on its top as a cap.

This discovery sparked Lois Gibbs, the mother of two children sick from being poisoned by the toxic fumes, to found the Love Canal Homeowners Association. The organization gave residents a voice in the decision-making concerning the dump affecting their community; government authorities assigned to address the situation did not hear their voices easily. At one point, the organization felt it necessary to kidnap and hold captive two Environmental Protection Agency officials in order to be heard. It was not until 1980 that the community received adequate recognition for their loss of life and

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continued environmental burden, when President Carter ordered the evacuation of the community. This recognition caught the attention of the nation and brought the people of America to the realization that "no one had immunity from the [toxic] silent killer...not blacks...not the poor."98

In conjunction with this newly realized sensitivity to toxic issues, Love Canal also forced President Carter to roll this political nightmare into a statute titled the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act.99 This statute produced regulations that are now often relied on by the environmental justice movement to address environmental burdens. In fact, the awareness and legislation resulting from the struggle at Love Canal laid the immediate groundwork upon which the protests at Warren County, North Carolina were made possible.100

Love Canal resulted in even more far-reaching effects when Lois Gibbs founded the Center for Health, Environment, and Justice (CHEJ), formerly the Citizens Clearinghouse of Hazardous Waste. This organization allowed Lois Gibbs to utilize the experience of her personal struggle to aid thousands of environmental justice groups comprising the larger movement. This result had longevity and points to the protests "looming" nature in the movement.

Love Canal resulted in the first nationally-recognized success for environmental (the built rather than the non-built environment) justice issues. However, its greatest contribution to the environmental justice movement is found in how its success validated the movement's redefinition of the "environment" from the non-built environment to

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98 McGurty, 308.
100 McGurty, 307; Foreman 16.
"where we work, live, and play," a shift so crucial to the movement's being. So, of the two elements of the definition of the environmental justice movement—1) disproportionate environmental burdens and 2) minority and low-income people—this solidification imbued the second with credibility. It would take another event to imbue the minority groups of the movement.

This event occurred in 1982 at Warren County. Warren County's soil contamination "occurred exactly at the same time when hazardous waste became a household word as a result of the Love Canal catastrophe in August 1978."\textsuperscript{101} As well, when the Warren County protests began in earnest, events and thoughts that could not be contained in the agenda of the labor, environmental, and civil rights movement had come to fruition, giving light to the new environmental justice movement afoot. For these reasons the protests at Warren County were poised to breathe lasting life into the environmental justice movement.

However, the key to the movement's development here is larger than generally indicated. The key development for the movement in Warren County is found in it combining the strength of the civil rights movement with the strength of the environmental movement for many minority people, which Love Canal had helped redefine, \textit{in a multi-racial coalition} (both white and black residents conducted the protests at Warren County).\textsuperscript{102} Not only were minority groups included, but it was done in a way that fulfilled the movement's desire to be multi-racial. Dollie Burwell, a key community member in the Warren County protests, speaking at the First National People

\textsuperscript{101} McGurty, 307.
\textsuperscript{102} Visiglio and Whitelaw, 7.
of Color Environmental Leadership Summit stated, “for the first time blacks and whites in Warren County united.”

However, this coming together was not captured in perpetuity and developed as a centerpiece of the protests. Instead, the combination of the community’s largely black population and its import of civil rights leaders resulted in the protest’s lasting legacy being one of race-based issues. As such, the protests sparked the creation of the term “environmental racism,” signifying the marriage of the environmental and civil rights movement in the environmental justice movement. The political cache developed in putting these pieces together in the environmental justice movement was monumental.

However, this myopic legacy has left the environmental justice movement trying to find its success as a multi-racial movement. Whereas realizing the full instance of Warren County caps the movement’s progression toward solidifying its definition and realizing one of its most innovative approaches toward political mobilization—multi-racial organizing—its innovation in multi-issue organizing was capped by the nascent events in UEC and UAW. Perceived in this way, the narrative of the movement combines the symbolic meaning of its UEC, UAW, Love Canal, and Warren County in order to solidify its transformative definition of the environment and demonstrate its innovation in organizing.

In addition to developing the meaning of the movement’s narrative in the way detailed above, the movement needs more. We must examine the breadth of minority groups represented in the narrative. The representation of minority groups in the current narrative seems decidedly focused upon black people only. Also, the environmental

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103 Principles, 126.
justice movement’s narrative has difficulties in continuing a fruitful relationship with and representation of labor issues in its narrative, likely inherited from the influence of its antecedent, the mainstream environmental movement. However, how these issues are resolved must be the focus of another work.
Conclusion-Fixing the Narrative

The irony in criticizing the environmental justice movement for lacking inclusion in its narrative is not lost here. Not only is this a criticism finding the movement to be in direct contradiction of its intent, its logic runs parallel to the critique that the environmental justice movement leveled at the mainstream environmental movement in 1990 with "The Letter to the Big 10." As an advocate of the environmental justice movement, I understand how a critique of this nature seems counterproductive and almost underhanded. How can anyone criticize a movement concerned with such laudable goals, a movement advocating for the disadvantaged people of the world? Shouldn't all academic efforts be devoted solely to furthering the advance of the movement? I argue that this paper does just that. The criticisms here are leveled with the best intentions and in the hope that they will strengthen the movement and aid in providing environmental justice for all people.

In fact, there are some academics in the movement who already realize that its nearly-exclusive focus on race-based issues and environmental racism must be broadened to include other concerns, such as class-based issues. Martin Melosi states, "Given the political goals of the movement, the unbending assertion of the centrality of race may prove unworkable if broadening the constituency is to be achieved." Similarly, Robert Figuero states, "It is good to avoid equating the environmental justice movement with the important history and literature of environmental racism." He also notes that

104 For similar anxiety of an author critiquing the environmental justice movement, see Foreman, 131.
105 2000, 10.
"educating about the movement still fundamentally means educating about environmental racism." This is one of the best examples of proper thinking about how the movement's narrative must be revised. Environmental racism, its activists, and its constituent issues are a large part of the environmental justice movement, but they are not its whole. We should revise the narrative as suggested above to reflect this fact. After all, if the narrative's meaning does not accurately reflect all of the groups within the movement, it will not contribute its full value to the political goals of the movement.

But, why is it that so few academics adopt the same thinking as Figuero in how they relate the narrative of the movement? Is the accepted rule of thumb in environmental justice academia, that the best writing rises from passion, flawed? Is it the case that the movement's academics are "simultaneously invigorated and hamstrung by [their] passionate advocacy?" Is their passion clouding the objectivity of their academic writing? I propose that some of the blame for the narrative of the movement being overly focused on race issues be devoted to this explanation. Many academics are surely advocates who are heavily involved in issues of environmental racism and that involvement is sure to be reflected in their writing.

However, that does not fully grasp my conclusion in this thesis. The more significant reasons behind the inaccurate meaning of the movement's current narrative stem from 1) presently dubious empirical studies of the early 1980s that found little evidence to support claims of environmental injustice based on socioeconomic factors, 2) the erroneous categorization of the movement's activists into divided "anti-toxic" or


108 See Chp. 5.
"environmental justice" groups, and 3) the relationship of the movement to its most influential antecedent movements—the environmental movement and civil rights movement—during its infancy.

The latter of these reasons, the influence of the civil rights and environmental movements on the development of the environmental justice movement, is the most significant of the three. As the civil rights movement invested in the environmental justice movement so that it could revive the momentum of its own issues, the more politically-solid environmental movement retreated to its core issues in order to weather the unfavorable political climate of the Reagan years. This pushing and pulling apart left the environmental justice movement with issue matter spread between the environmental and civil rights movements, an antagonistic relationship with the environmental movement, and leadership decidedly oriented by the civil rights movement. The result settled in the alienation of the environmental movement from the environmental justice movement and contributed to the similar alienation of the so-called anti-toxic activists. In the wake of the anti-toxic activists and their largely class-based issues being separated from the environmental justice movement, the issues of environmental racism were pushed into the limelight. These results are manifested in the narrative of the movement by emphasizing issues of environmental racism.

This flawed overemphasis injures the accuracy of the narrative’s meaning, which detracts from the full value potential of the narrative. However, the narrative of the movement is valuable even as it stands today. The narrative’s overly-heavy emphasis on race-based issues and events serves the activists and academics in the movement who choose to concentrate on issues of race well.
So then, how exactly does the narrative’s inaccurate meaning transfer into a diminished value for the movement? It affects the narrative’s ability to mobilize politically for class-based issues and, therefore, greater people power for the entire movement. The diminished value of the narrative is assessed based on its satisfaction of the three counts on which we can measure the value of a political narrative. Again, a narrative is politically valuable for a social movement in 1) its ability to help its participants understand themselves and their experience within the movement, 2) its ability to transmit the need and means of the movement’s particular brand of social change, and 3) its ability to disseminate the movement’s extent and success. On these counts, this thesis has established that the current narrative of the movement 1) does not help the movement’s class-based participants understand themselves and their experience within the movement, 2) does not transmit the fullness of the movement’s particular brand of social change—race-based environmental justice and class-based environmental justice—and 3) does not disseminate the fullness of the movement’s extent and success.

The validity of this paper’s finding on the first count stems from the fact that the movement’s narrative does not reflect all of the movement’s activists, particularly, those defined as “anti-toxic” activists. It is simply not possible to understand yourself or your experience in a narrative that has defined your activities outside of its story. However, the revised narrative’s inclusion of the protests at Love Canal allows activists that struggle against class-based environmental injustice to begin to locate themselves.

Also, including the stories of UEC, UAW, and Love Canal in the movement’s revised narrative allows it to transmit the need for consciousness of class issues within the movement and more fully represent its unique multi-issue and multi-racial brand of
environmental justice. Finally, including class-based issues in the revised narrative of the movement allows for the dissemination of a more full and accurate account of the movement's extent and success in the larger society. Describing the success the movement has had in this way also increases the clout of the movement and its ability to mobilize more people, for the benefit of all people.

So, the argument here is not that the narrative is invaluable, but that it could be more valuable. By representing class-based issues and correctly symbolizing the development of the movement's greatest innovations as a social movement in Love Canal and Warren County, the narrative can inspire fruitful collaboration and participation by activists and academics of race-based and class-based issues, increasing the power of people involved in the movement. This development would help fulfill the potential of the movement, but how that realized potential might affect the success of the movement can only be speculated upon.

In adding four events—the Houston, TX protests, UEC, UAW, and Love Canal—to the narrative of the environmental justice movement, many of the flaws in its meaning (symbolism and plot) can be corrected. However, solving problems with the narrative's representation of class-based activists only alleviates a symptom of the movement's undue emphasis on race. It is also clear that the addition of these events cannot solve every issue presently affecting the narrative. The narrative of the movement has difficulties outside of its need to represent class-based environmental justice issues better. These difficulties must be addressed in a much more comprehensive manner in another work.
Finally, I should make clear that revising the narrative in the way I describe does not attempt to falsify the movement. It is clear that academics looking at the very same documents and facts can discover startlingly different patterns for a narrative.\textsuperscript{109} The revisions suggested here are simply an attempt to balance the representation of class-based issues and events in the movement with the movement’s intent and strength. This balance will counteract the issues of environmental racism that are currently overly weighted and have come to dominate the movement’s agenda. In fact, the additions to the narrative suggested here are not novel, they are only largely absent from the majority of academic writing on the environmental justice movement and nonexistent when considering the common emphases found in the body of narrative produced in the works of the movement’s academics.

Similar to the concerns stated in “The Letter,” Dorceta Taylor, in the seminal book *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse*, asked the mainstream environmental movement: “How [can it] restructure so as to attract and retain support from minority groups?”\textsuperscript{110} Taylor believed this support to be central to the movement’s ability to harness the people power it would need to change the country. Just more than ten years after “The Letter” was sent and *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards* was published, the inverse of the dilemma Taylor was concerned with stares the environmental justice movement in the face: the environmental justice movement must learn how to include the actions and issues of non-minority members.


The question it faces is how the environmental justice movement's structure can represent both minority groups and lower class groups in its narrative and concern.

Some 40 years into the environmental justice movement its academics must look inward and guard against going too far in protecting the representation of people of color and their interests to the detriment of the movement. They must guard against reflecting the movement's most salient issue to the exclusion of others. They must actively develop the movement's narrative to represent the contributions of all its people fully—lower class, people of color and white people, women and men, all of the groups that it is meant to represent—for the continued strength of the movement.

Again, Dana Alston sets the correct tack in stating, "The only way for the environmental movement to achieve its goals is to restructure society, and the only way to do that is to overcome the societal barriers within the movement."\textsuperscript{111} The challenge for the movement now is to avoid orthodoxy and "complacency, address real issues with vigor and vitality, and always, innovate."\textsuperscript{112} It must reflect its inclusive strength in its narrative and in all of its endeavors.

\textsuperscript{111} "Grassroots Flowering," 37.
\textsuperscript{112} Rothman, 21.
The 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 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.

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 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 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.

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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Wilderness Act


42 United States Code 9601.


Wilderness Act


42 United States Code 9601.