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# The Fierce Green Fire

A Newsletter of the Wofford College Environmental Studies Program

Volume 10, Special Issue



## *ENVS Statement on Equality and Environmental Justice*

We, the faculty and staff of the Wofford College Environmental Studies department, are horrified and heartbroken by the centuries of racism, marginalization, and repression that have devastated communities across America, in particular Indigenous, Latinx and Black communities. We refuse to be silent.

Black lives matter. Institutional racism and white supremacy are omnipresent, deep-rooted forces that must be vehemently and consciously opposed. We honor the memories of George Floyd, David McAtee, Breonna Taylor, Sandra Bland and the many, many other victims of senseless racism whose names are known and unknown to us. We stand with communities of color and all victims of racism and injustice.

Communities of color suffer disproportionately from environmental degradation and injustice. Black communities are more likely to be exposed to environmental hazards like toxic air pollution, unhealthy infrastructure, like landfills, and the negative impacts of ecological degradation. Environmental injustice can be seen in industrial contamination in Spartanburg's Arkwright neighborhood, in contaminated drinking water in Flint, Michigan, in PCB waste dumping in predominantly-Black Warren County, NC, in the siting of the Dakota Access Pipeline, and in the aftereffects of uranium mining on the Navajo Reservation. Unjust actions by law enforcement and air pollution's aggravating effect on Covid-19 are only

the most recent examples of the ways that multiple forms of inequality intersect to drive and shape unequal outcomes in communities of color. Privileged communities, separated from these problems by time or space, often fail to perceive them at all.

Race and environmental issues are inextricably linked. As scholars of the environment, we recognize that all members of our society are indispensable elements of building socially and environmentally just and resilient communities. It is our mission to show, through our teaching and research, the impacts of environmental injustice, and paths beyond it.

We commit to the following actions:

- *Conduct our own research to raise the department's collective awareness of issues that impact communities of color, and Black communities in particular.*
- *Build anti-racist programs and curriculum, in our department, at our college, and within our professional organizations.*
- *Create an Environmental Justice course to help others understand the rampant environmental injustices facing communities of color.*
- *Listen to and amplify historically marginalized voices to gain a fuller understanding on all issues.*
- *Help our students find their voices to promote and defend the causes they believe in.*
- *Foster and promote diverse and resilient communities by partnering with individuals and organizations that share these goals.*

**We welcome the opportunity to have open and frank discussions regarding any of the views included in this statement. Please feel free to reach out. Signed,**

**Jennifer Bradham    Peter Brewitt    Taylor Brorby  
Terry Ferguson, Professor Emeritus    John Lane, Professor Emeritus  
Christine Overcarsh    Kaye Savage    John Simmons  
Amy Telligman**

## Links to Learning About Environmental Justice Issues

[Environmental Racism has Left Black Communities Especially Vulnerable to Covid-19](#) by Casey Berkovitz

[Environmentalism Was Once A Social-Justice Movement](#) by Jedediah Britton-Purdy

[Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality](#) by Robert Bullard

[Has the Moment for Environmental Justice Been Lost?](#) by Talia Burford

[The Green Movement is Talking About Racism? It's About Time](#) by Brentin Mock

[Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge](#) by David Pellow

[Flint, Environmental Racism, and Racial Capitalism](#) by Laura Pulido

[Toxic Communities: Environmental Racism, Industrial Pollution, and Residential Mobility](#) by Dorceta Taylor

[How Environmental Racism is Fuelling the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) by Harriet Washington

[Read Up on the Links Between Racism and the Environment](#) by Somini Sengupta