

Racial Justice and Sustainability



sustainability

Supporting a university-wide commitment

Agenda

1. Context and Purpose
2. Common terms
3. Breakout groups
4. Report back & connect to Tufts
5. Selection of Black environmentalists
6. Closing

Relevant Concepts

Sustainability: “The ability to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs.”

-1987 Report from the UN World Commission on Environment & Development

Traditionally includes environmental, social (people), and economic needs/well-being.

But is this all?

Why can't we talk about sustainability without talking about race?

- Racial injustices and injustices against the earth oftentimes rise out of the same histories, ideologies, and systems
- The well-being of people and the well-being of planet are connected
- Harmful environmental infrastructure and policy decisions have disproportionate effects on Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities

Environmental Racism: “Refers to public policies and industry practices disproportionately placing the burden of pollution, waste, and the climate crisis on Black people, indigenous people, and people of color.”

...Pollution, waste, and risk of disaster are assigned to communities of color through intergenerational discrimination and political neglect.”

-Marie Beecham, Black racial and climate justice activist

Example



Affordable housing and historically redlined communities typically built near highways → increased pollution levels → elevated risk for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases

Environmental Justice: "The principle that all people are entitled to equal environmental protection [and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulation], regardless of race, color, or national origin. It's the right to live and work and play in a clean environment."

-Robert Bullard, Black sociologist

Intersectional Environmentalism:

“An inclusive version of environmentalism that advocates for both the protection of people and the planet.

Identifies the ways in which injustices happening to marginalized communities and to the earth are interconnected.

Brings injustices done to the most vulnerable communities, and to the earth, to the forefront and does not minimize or silence social inequality.

Intersectional Environmentalism advocates for justice for people + the planet.”

-Leah Thomas, Black environmentalist

Break-out Questions

1. What are the systems and conditions that have led to Black, Indigenous, and POC communities being hardest hit by Covid-19, climate change, environmental pollution, and police brutality? How do we call these systems out and respond?
2. In what ways is the white environmental movement inaccessible to Black people, Indigenous people, people of color, and low income people? What does just, inclusive, intersectional environmentalism look like?

**What did we learn
and discuss?**

How can Tufts address and
make forward movement in
these issues?

Black Voices in the Green Space

Dr. Robert Bullard

“America is segregated and so is pollution.

Race and class still matter and map closely with pollution, unequal protection, and vulnerability.

Today, zip code is still the most potent predictor of an individual’s health and well-being.”



Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson



“I need [white environmentalists] to understand that our racial inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis. If we don’t work on both, we will succeed at neither.”

Dr. Na'taki Osbourne Jelks

“The fight for climate justice and racial justice are connected because Black and other communities of color are often impacted first and worst by the effects of climate change.”



Leah Penniman



"To farm while black is an act of defiance against white supremacy, and a means to honor the agricultural ingenuity of our ancestors."

Mary Annaïse Heglar

“If climate change shares roots with police brutality and the prison industrial complex and Indigenous genocide and disenfranchisement — in a word, racism — then the climate justice movement is inextricably linked to Black Lives Matter and the movements for Indigenous rights and for immigrant rights.”



Ekua Holmes



The Roxbury Sunflower Project is a community-wide, collaborative initiative that has planted 20,000+ sunflowers "as a symbolic representation of modern Roxbury, its people and history."

Nicola “Nikki” Williams

“Let us plant a sunflower and sow seeds of love and healing for our country. So many of us are in pain because of the pandemic and the racial unrest nationally. I wanted to do something positive and I am hoping you can join me too.”



Wanjiku "Wawa" Gatheru



"It's time to open up your purse, listen, and change. It's time to reimagine what it means to affirm Black life, reimagine what this movement could look like, made in the image of all of us."

Leah Thomas

“Green Girl Leah”

“The systems of oppression that have led to the deaths of so many Black people were the same systems that perpetuated environmental injustice”



Action Items

- What are the top 2 things we can say to the administration?

Additional Resources and Articles

Environmental and Racial Justice Resources

This list is meant to be ever-growing. Please email sustainabilityoffice@tufts.edu to contribute resources.

Environmental Justice

Books + Readings

- [Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States](#)
- [Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability - Julian Agyeman and Alison Hope Alkon](#)
- [Just Sustainabilities - Julian Agyeman](#)
- [How Sustainability Professionals Can Uplift the Black Community - Jarami Bond](#)
- [Vice: It's Time for Environmental Studies to Own Up to Erasing Black People](#)

Web Resources

- [Environmental Justice - Racial Equity Tools](#)
- [The Green Program: Racial Justice is Climate Justice: An Open-Sourced Library to Educate, Advocate, & Take Action](#)
 - [Link to TGP's Black Lives Matter Blog Post](#)

Lectures

- [Solving the Pandemic and Climate Crises with a Just Transition](#)

Videos

- [PBS: Robert Bullard: How Environmental Racism Shapes the US](#)

Racial Justice

Books + Readings

Questions or Advice?

Contact: sustainabilityoffice@tufts.edu

Visit: go.tufts.edu/sustainability

Covid, Climate, and Racism

- “I can’t breathe”
 - In POC communities, people are suffering from asthma and upper respiratory disease, and have been fighting for the right to breathe for generations.
- Black communities spatial placement
 - Urban renewal and redlining policies led to underinvestment
 - Food deserts
- Economic policies
- Green New Deal
 - Centered on frontline solutions and leadership
 - A climate activist will be like, “Okay, we need offshore wind” But a climate justice activist will be like, “Okay, let’s look at it a little closer and let’s figure out what the process looks like and how we can engage in remediation to make sure we are not only reducing carbon but we’re also reducing co-pollutants, and let’s make sure that the people that are hired are hired locally.”
Elizabeth Yeampierre, Climate Justice Alliance