

Environmental Justice: Origins, Evolution, and Theories of Justice

David Schlosberg
Erkko Visiting Professor, Helsinki
Collegium of Advanced Studies

Professor of Environmental Politics
Director, Sydney Environment Institute



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Environment
Institute



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Overview

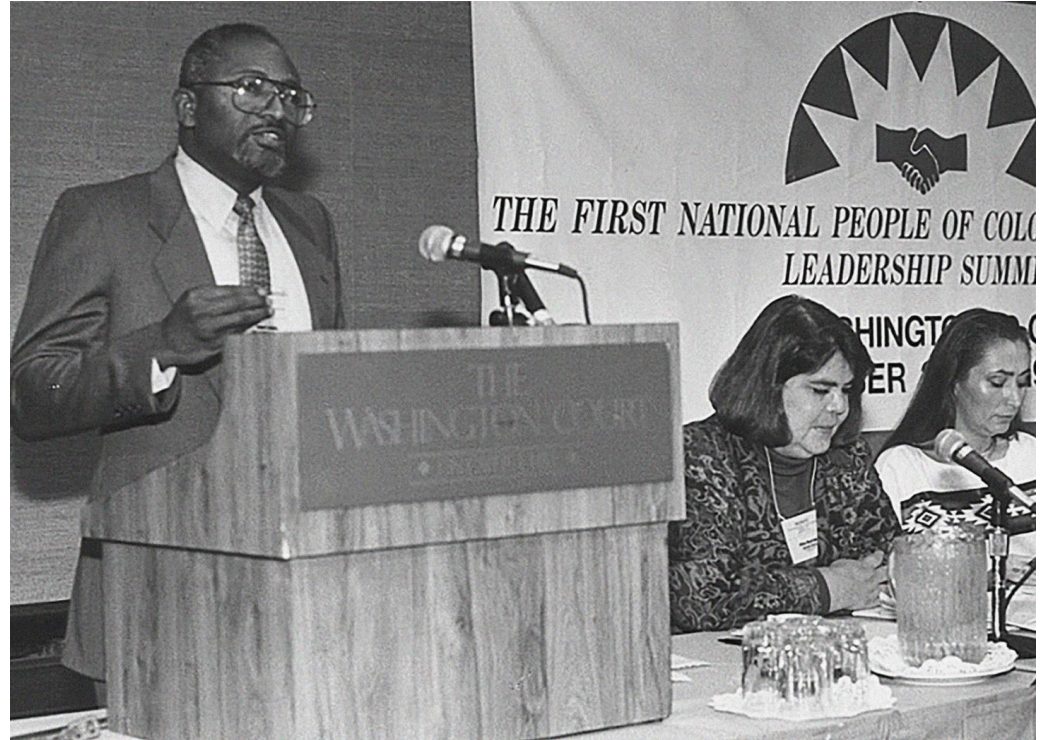
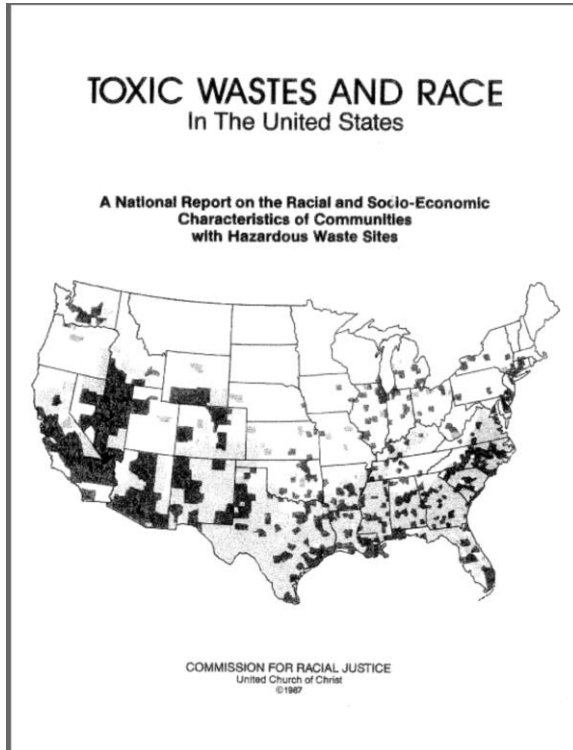
- Origins of EJ
- The ‘justice’ of EJ as a broad and plural concept
- The idea of EJ has become more critical and focused on power
- Multiple barriers to achieving EJ
- Clear ways to enable EJ

Origins of Environmental Justice in the US



Left to right: Love Canal, Warren County

Environmental Justice: Evidence and Organising

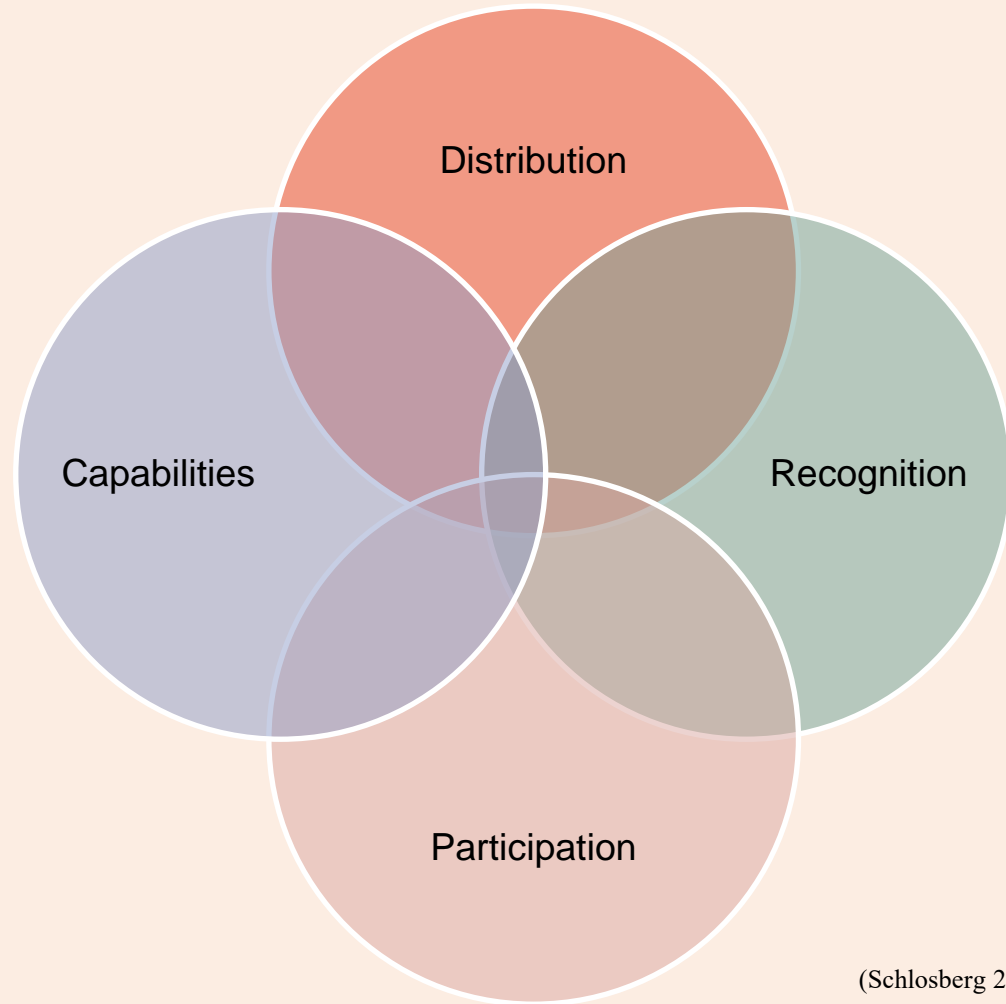


1) **Environmental Justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

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.

Principles of Environmental Justice, 1991

Meanings of Justice in the US Environmental Justice Movement



Types of Environmental Injustice

- **Distribution and Equity**
 - Inequity in distribution of environmental harm and risks
 - Unequal protection under the law
 - Inequity in environmental goods
- **Recognition**
 - The ‘why’ of inequity
 - Racism and institutionalized discrimination
 - Domination, non-recognition, and disrespect
 - At both individual and community levels

Types of Environmental Injustice

- **Procedural and Participatory**
 - Participation and voice
 - Core to the all-affected principle of democracy
 - “We speak for ourselves,” “A seat at the table”
- **Capabilities**
 - Basic needs for individual and community functioning
 - Political and economic, including health, housing, political rights



Why look at contemporary EJ discourse?

- Theoretical expansion of the term and its use since earlier, US framework.
 - EJ brought into an increasing number of issues
 - EJ spreading geographically
 - EJ thinking on a planetary, ecological scale – climate justice
- At the same time, over 40 years after Warren County protest, environmental injustice continues to expand, including via climate change.

A New Consensus: Critical EJ

Global Q study of environmental justice scholars and movement organisers across five continents.

Three key questions:

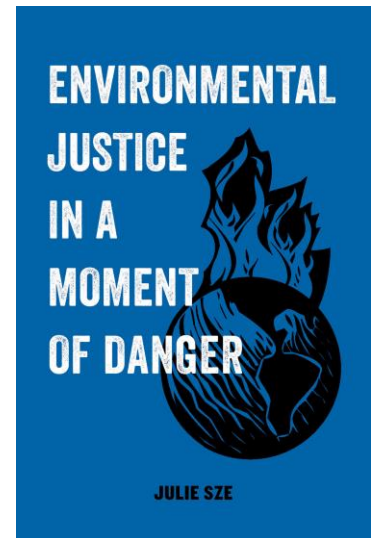
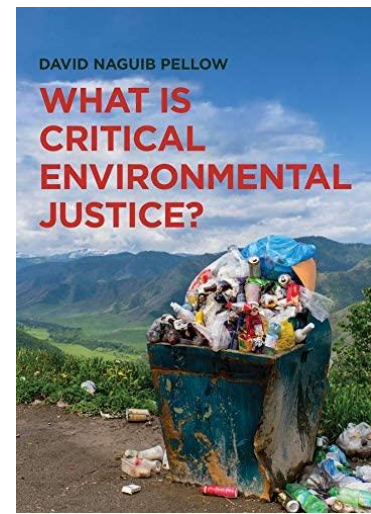
What does EJ mean to you?

What are the barriers to achieving EJ?

What enables the realisation of EJ?

On meaning, there is general agreement on Critical EJ, focused on a need to:

- transform power relations,
- increase decolonial analysis and practice, and
- transcend the Western roots of the movement,
- along with demands for recognition and inclusion.



Barriers to EJ: Consensus on Power and Corruption

Statements most agreed on focus on institutionalised collusion and exclusion:

- Political connections, collusion between industry and government (Leonard 2018)
- Corporate influence on democracy (Leonard 2018)
- Resource sovereignty impacted by local elites and predatory companies (Hamouchene 2020)
- Conventional policy processes exclude diverse communities and knowledges (Mendez 2020)

Four Barriers to Achieving Environmental Justice

1. General political marginalisation, exclusion, oppression
 2. Institutional obstacles
 3. Non-inclusive policy processes
 4. Socio-cultural barriers
- Multiple, institutionalised forms of exclusion that are linked, converging, and compounding.

Three Enablers to Achieve Environmental Justice

1. Community Focus:

Indigenous rights, community knowledge, mobilized network

2. Systems Focus:

Political disruption, transformative action, reset political terms

3. Methods Focus

Elevating local knowledges with crowdsourcing, storytelling, citizen science, mapping, drone and smartphone tech

Conclusions – The Evolution of EJ Discourse

- Critical Environmental Justice as a consensus frame
- Recognition and analysis of a broad range of institutionalized obstacles
- Potential in, and need for, the inclusion of community knowledges

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