

No Sustainability Without Justice

An Anthology on Racial Equity & Social Justice

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Introduction

The need for racial equity and social justice has perhaps never been greater as society works to address and put an end to systemic racism in the midst of a global pandemic. Racial injustices continue to harm and extinguish Black lives. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately impacting Indigenous People and People of Color. The linkages between sustainability, racial equity and social justice are more apparent now than ever.

In Volume II of *No Sustainability Without Justice: An Anthology on Racial Equity and Social Justice*, higher education sustainability and social justice practitioners share perspectives on how racial equity, social justice, diversity and inclusion are integral components to sustainability, and are particularly relevant within today's context. The eight essays in this Anthology share insights on the following topics:

- How community-campus partnerships can enhance equity and promote change (Essay 1 - Spoma Jovanovic and Etsuko Kinefuchi)
- Authentic calls for decentering whiteness and decolonizing the Academy (Essay 2 - Todd LeVasseur)
- The unique role of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in advancing the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (Essay 3 - Helen Bond)
- Centering the impacts of Black, Brown, Indigenous, Melanated Peoples (BBIMP) and infusing racial equity and social justice in sustainability curricula at the introductory level (Essay 4 - Delia Byrnes and Brittany Davis)
- Strategies to address racial inequities and their impacts on higher education access and success (Essay 5 - Scott Werts and Monique Constance-Huggins)
- A reenvisioning of higher education toward sustainability that is informed and inflected by justice (Essay 6 - sourav guha)
- The concept of Inclusive Sustainability, and sharing practitioner stories as a strategy for inclusion and engagement (Essay 7 - Elida Erickson, Ariel Stevenson & Juliana Goodlaw-Morris)
- Pedagogical principles for teaching sustainability and cultivating critical consciousness (Essay 8 - Jordan King and Carlos Casanova)

Addressing the intersections of sustainability, racial equity and social justice is critical within higher education and society as a whole. It is equally important to recognize our own individual places on the journey toward racial equity and social justice. What have we already learned? What more can each of us learn? How is the movement for racial equity and social justice evolving, and how are we showing up in the moment? This Anthology aims to provide tools for answering some of these questions. We hope that these essays will provide useful answers and inspire readers to commence, continue or ramp up their journeys toward sustainability, equity and justice.

Change Comes from the Margins: Sustainability Efforts in Community-Campus Partnerships

By Spoma Jovanovic and Etsuko Kinefuchi



Spoma Jovanovic (she/her)

Spoma Jovanovic, PhD, is a professor in the Department of Communication Studies at University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She teaches and conducts research in collaboration with community members on programs and activist strategies related to civic literacy, racial equity, democratic participation, and social justice. Her newest book is *Expression in Contested Public Spaces: Free Speech and Civic Engagement* (2021, Lexington Press). She is also author of *Democracy, Dialogue and Community Action: Truth and Reconciliation in Greensboro* (2012, University of Arkansas Press) and was a 2019-2020 Fellow with the University of California National Center for Free Speech and Civic Engagement. She is currently Director of the UNCG National Communication Association's Center for Communication, Community Collaboration, and Change. Her communication activism has included launching, with the community, a truth and reconciliation process, bringing participatory budgeting to her city, advancing political engagement with an urban high school, as well as expanding public spaces for free speech.

Etsuko Kinefuchi (she/her)

Etsuko Kinefuchi is an associate professor of Communication Studies and is affiliated faculty in Geography, Environment, and Sustainability at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro. She is interested in advancing the study of culture, identity, communication, and community beyond anthropocentrism to recognize humans' inseparable connections to and dependence on what we often take as inanimate and inferior "nature." Her current research projects center on the examinations of hegemonic discourses that perpetuate anthropocentric practices that oppress both human groups and the natural world as well as articulating alternative stories that remember human self and human culture in sync with the rest of the Earth community. She is author of an upcoming book, *Competing Discourses on Japan's Nuclear Power: Pronuclear versus Antinuclear Activism* (Routledge, 2022). She is a member of UNCG's Sustainability Council and also served as the university's Academic Sustainability Coordinator (ASC) for 2018-2020.

Coming to Terms with Racial Inequalities and Social Injustices

The past year brought with it unprecedented disruption, turmoil and change fueled by unsettling police brutality and ongoing racial tensions, an attempted political coup at our nation's Capitol in Washington, DC, and the reverberating impacts worldwide of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, civic engagement in communities and on college campuses soared.

The murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer brought racial injustices into sharp relief. In tandem with the pandemic, many saw more clearly how racial disparities relate to economic and physical well-being as evidenced by mortality rates that soared among Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other historically marginalized communities. Confronted with these horrific losses came troubling ontological questions. Looking inward requires that we ask, who are we, individually, as communities, and as a society? How can we best express what we value? Looking outward, we wonder how our public policies and practices demonstrate appreciation for diversity, inclusion, and sustainability? What authentic moves, if any, can each of us make to amplify voices from the margins that can lead us to needed changes?

Amid strife, community members in some cases joined with, and in others, pressured institutions of higher learning to plan and attend protests, advance social justice education, challenge legislation deliberately undermining free speech and dissent, and implement creative solutions to address complex issues in a country seemingly at war with itself. Statements supporting equity, diversity, and justice poured forth, with anxious eyes wondering if genuine change would follow. Time will tell.



Survivors of the Greensboro Massacre, and friends, walk to the first of three public hearings hosted by the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Photo credit: International Center for Transitional Justice

These epic disruptions caused some to reconsider what should be the focus of higher education in advancing sustainability to address unjust economic, political, health, gender, environmental, racial, and cultural conditions. A distant or neutral approach to teaching and learning no longer suffices; it ignores the material conditions of students and community members unable to pay their rent, get medical care, afford the rising costs of food, and manage the state of fear in which they are living. It also fails to examine how these conditions are entangled with anthropogenic ecological crises such as climate change and diminishing biodiversity. Instead, the time is right for radical, local changes to name the oppressions built into the fabric of our systems, on our campuses, and in our communities.

For academic staff not yet involved in their communities, as well as those already active in communities, redoubling efforts to teach how democracy works is a crucial step toward achieving sustainable social change. Students (and in some cases, academic and non-academic staff) benefit when instructors: present language, arguments, and research that illuminate the interlocking nature of oppressions; introduce students to local places and people where they can actively work with others to address injustices perpetrated against under-resourced populations; educate about the many advances in our society that have historically come from community organizers and activists; and provide the instruction needed for students and community members to confidently express themselves in contested public spaces and build empowering relationships.

Cultivating Resilient Community Collaborations

One of the profound lessons of this past year of concurrent public health crises and racial injustices is the imperative of cultivating resilient community collaborations to advance sustainability. For colleges and universities, this means heightening the importance of community engagement that focuses on building knowledge and power to create social change (Stoecker, 2016). Indeed, sustainability is just only when communities actively collaborate in “setting the table” (Agyeman, 2013, p. 148). Sustainability is strengthened when community engaged academic staff and students work as allies, with deep respect for community members who resist oppression and domination. Iris Marion Young persuasively writes that while respect needs to be reciprocal in the encounter, the relationship itself remains “asymmetrical in terms of the history each has” (1997, p. 41). Colleges are large and integral to the human and ecological systems of the communities in which they reside and thus bear a greater responsibility to sustainability efforts than the under-resourced organizations with whom they partner. Community allies are uniquely positioned to guide society in identifying the social justice issues to which higher education ought to pay attention, and in animating how the issues can be best addressed through strong partnerships.



Community members, 16 years and older, cast votes for favored projects in final phase of Greensboro's Participatory Budgeting. Photo credit: Spoma Jovanovic

We all benefit when we pay attention to how larger societal and ecological problems manifest themselves in our communities and the ways in which communities respond to those problems. The racial and public health crises, for example, have magnified already existing problems. The shutdowns due to COVID-19 exacerbated the financial hardships of vulnerable segments of our communities, compromising their ability to maintain the most basic human needs such as food and housing. Feeding America (2021) estimates that the food-insecure population in the United States jumped from 35 million in 2019 to 45 million in 2020. While food insecurity is complex, consisting of multiple concomitant social and individual factors, research shows that people of color are at higher risk for food insecurity even when other factors are removed, thus signaling the impact of structural racism (Odoms-Young, 2018; Morales, Morales, & Beltran, 2020).

Greensboro, NC Partnerships

Across the country, community organizations have stepped up to address these urgent needs. In our city, Greensboro, North Carolina, for instance, amid the pandemic, a new non-profit organization, [the Guilford Urban Farming Initiative](#) (GUFI), set up a weekly farmers market featuring mainly Black farmers and vendors. In a largely Black, low-income neighborhood, the market offers affordable fresh food access to the residents and provides additional income opportunities for [historically marginalized Black farmers](#). GUFI also partnered with a Black church to transform its expansive lawn into a dynamic urban farm offering a myriad of fresh vegetables, nutrition education programs, and community-building activities. Local university students and academic staff have been integral to these efforts by investing time through service-learning courses, internships, and research. In the process, the students, instructors, and staff have increased their knowledge about racial and social inequities by becoming part of important, place-based solutions that are already making positive impacts, and in the future, could be adapted for campus programming as well. The community is leading the way in demonstrating how sustainable change happens.



GUFI volunteers weeding at the Garden of Peace. Photo credit: Etsuko Kinefuchi

The racial injustice exposed through the killing of Black Americans by police officers across the country is another sustainability exigency where colleges can play a critical role with student and academic involvement. [The Beloved Community Center](#) (BCC), also in Greensboro, has been on the front lines of community organizing for police accountability since its founding more than 30 years ago. The organization's doors are open to students and community members for weekly inter-generational dialogues, where people from different backgrounds and races share their personal stories of injustice, part of a larger discourse that too often is denied to People of Color in our society. The process leads young people to a social justice consciousness even if they have been previously sheltered from the experience of prejudice and discrimination (Sanford, 2019). The weekly dialogues are a base that the BCC uses to support grassroots coalitions prioritizing change targeted at the systemic roots of injustice. That the effort is Black-led in a country dominated by white ideology is significant, and offers a prime learning ground for students of all ages and races. It illustrates how campus sustainability efforts will proceed best when led by those whose voices have previously been silenced (and are often most heavily impacted).

Taking cues from community members ensures that their experiences of how power operates and how ethics are advanced or undermined are the bases of social change action. In Greensboro, two major efforts in the 21st century, both led by ordinary people and supported by area students who invested their time and efforts over a period of years, brought democracy directly to the people: first, a truth and reconciliation process and second, participatory budgeting.

As it would turn out, the [United States' first Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#) (TRC) launched in 2004 in Greensboro. For two years, and using a variety of discourse models, approximately 10,000 members of the community considered how policing, race, political ideology, and economics led to the fatal [Greensboro Massacre](#) 25 years earlier. In seeking truth, the community secured sustained changes including new government anti-racism programming, a commitment to pay a living wage, a new media-community board, development of related educational materials, long overdue apologies and a historical marker (Jovanovic, 2012).

Buoyed by the impact of the TRC, residents organized again, this time to secure a [participatory budgeting](#) (PB) process in 2016. PB empowers communities through a social justice model of dialogue, deliberation, and change to impact how the city's budget is used (Russell & Jovanovic, 2019). People begin by brainstorming together to surface ideas they believe will benefit their community before narrowing those down to detailed project proposals for voting by anyone 16 years or older. In Greensboro's first PB process, 26 projects totalling \$500,000 were implemented at the direction of the people, using money in the city's general funds. Residents educated each other about the city and neighborhood needs, as well as how to navigate the processes of government to secure the projects desired, in a cycle to repeat every two years.

The Impacts of Strong Partnerships and Deep Listening

Environmental educator-scholar David Orr (2004) writes that "we cannot say that we know something until we understand the effects of this knowledge on real people and their communities" (p. 13). This suggests the primacy of community and campus-community partnerships in generating and validating knowledge as shown in the above examples. Such partnerships require authentic and sustained presence in the community - presence that begins with listening. Darby Ray (2016), director of the Harvard Center for Community Partnerships at Bates College, emphasizes the importance of deep listening, where our preconceived purposes are bracketed, and listening occurs for the sake of others and on others' own terms. Deep listening, Ray observes, can be both unsettling and emancipatory as it can expose blind spots in our thinking and inspire new approaches and priorities.

Racial equity education and action emerge from deep listening to local communities, and can spark meaningful campus equity, diversity, and inclusion programming. Similarly, working with local organizations to address fundamental community needs such as food security, offers a pathway for generating grounded knowledge and putting into practice changes in the community and on campus that focus on social and environmental justice. Students and academic staff who work to address food insecurity, for instance, may learn that the lack of affordable, fresh, nutritious food in particular neighborhoods is not best called a "food desert" but instead is a problem of the food system entangled with racial, economic, and other injustices that is better understood as [food apartheid](#). This knowledge and new language, in turn, can invigorate new food programs and related pedagogy, as well as actions on campus to feed hungry students and community members as a communal responsibility and a matter requiring structural change. Educating students on how to communicate ethically about food policy builds confidence and skills needed for advocacy and social change.

AASHE defines sustainability as “encompassing human and ecological health, racial equity and social justice, secure livelihoods, and a better world for all generations.” It is important to note that none of these goals can be achieved without also examining how power is woven throughout decision making and the ways in which the ethical stance of responsibility for others is forwarded, recognizing that all spheres of the lifeworld are interconnected. In fact, the notion of interconnectedness is one of the most primary ecological principles (Commoner, 1974) to which humans are also subjected. This principle needs to guide the relationship between colleges and their surrounding communities.

College campuses may be able to elevate their sustainability status by increasing the number of environmental and social justice-related courses and improving campus operations. However, campus sustainability is not fully addressed without engaging the members of the local communities. If they are struggling with inequities that do not directly impact our campus cultures, we must not ignore or turn away from our neighbors’ plight, for sustainability is linked to our collective, not individual well-being. Deep listening to community voices is vital for changing the discourse of sustainability on campus to reflect complex rather than simple solutions. This latter point is worth emphasizing, more specifically by following the advice of scholar Henry Giroux (2021) who says we need to question and find in language the narratives of resistance that challenge inequities.



Neighbors gather to brainstorm about what their community needs in the first phase of Greensboro’s Participatory Budgeting. Photo credit: Spoma Jovanovic

Higher Education's Role in Supporting Social Change

Social change comes from coordinated and collective action, over time. Institutions of higher education can be more active partners in the process by:

- Recognizing that community members are the experts in their own communities, and thus should be supported in leading social change efforts.
- Committing to concrete deeds in the community to publicly advance social justice that seeks to ensure equity for all.
- Making it a priority to build and sustain partnerships with under-resourced grassroots organizations in addition to well-established nonprofits and government entities.
- Supporting new and importantly, long-term academic-community partnerships with funding, recognition, and other forms of institutional support.
- Developing meaningful opportunities for community partners to be compensated fairly for assisting with instruction and research.
- Encouraging collaborative, diverse partnerships on campus and in community-campus projects.
- Prioritizing spaces for public expressions of dialogue, deliberation, debate, and decision-making.
- Providing resources and encouragement for academic staff, students, and community partners to participate in local, democratic processes that promote equitable, just community-building.



GUFI volunteers (students and community members) seeding on MLK day. Photo credit: Etsuko Kinefuchi

If we want educational institutions and the students who attend them to be active civic agents in advancing sustainable actions, ones resilient enough to withstand the difficult times in which we live, then we all “need to be exposed not only to social problems, but also to the democratic means by which change happens within political systems” (Jovanovic, Moretto & Edwards, 2017, p. 26). By doing so, we become members in what Benjamin Barber (1984) calls a strong democracy with involved citizens who recognize conflict as a means of airing differences worthy of consideration. Confronting conflict while also coming to a deep understanding of our communities, offers the most hopeful path to expressing principles of sustainability to resist injustice in all its forms. In this way, we can work collectively to bring about solutions befitting the human condition.

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Decentering Whiteness, Growing Racial Equity, and Rethinking the Call to “Decolonize” Sustainability in Higher Education

By Todd LeVasseur



Todd LeVasseur (he/his)

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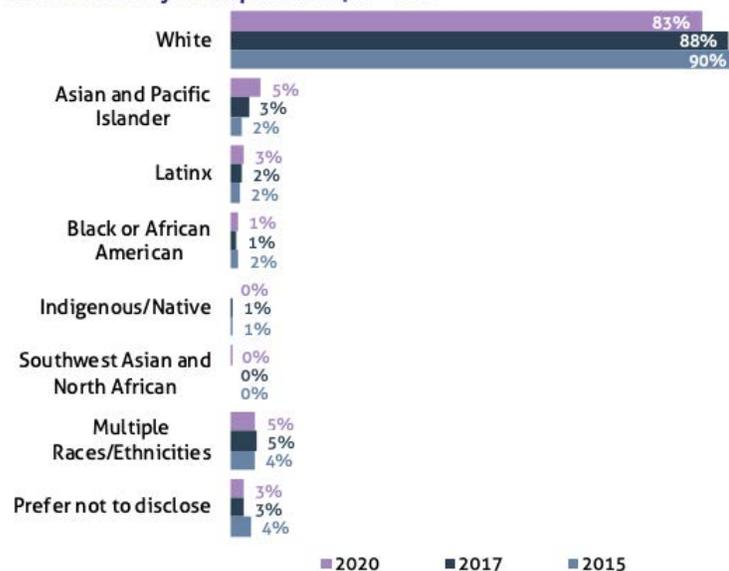
Introduction

This essay reflects on experiences directing a sustainability-across-the-curricula reaccreditation project at the College of Charleston (CofC); and the growing calls to bring diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) competencies, practices, and policies into the Academy. The latter includes a growing recognition about the cost of emotional labor in DEI initiatives and the need to create spaces of emancipation and structural empowerment for those “otherized” within the to-date whiteness of the Academy (Ballard, et al 2020). The (sadly still) needed calls for DEI competencies (the ability to understand what diversity, equity, and inclusion are/are not), practices (how to create truly equitable spaces that center diversity and inclusion across the entirety of curricular, co-curricular, and operational spaces within a university), and policies (how to structurally and financially support DEI initiatives and embed them throughout an institute) have gained further impetus with the public lynching of George Floyd and subsequent global protests for Black lives in 2020. This essay begins with discussing whiteness in the Academy, including problematic calls to “decolonize” higher education. It then shares the author’s experience grappling with DEI/sustainability issues at CofC, and concludes with possible action items for those laboring within sustainability in higher education (SHE) spaces to address ongoing structural gaps around diversifying sustainability within SHE and in the Academy, more broadly.

Whiteness in the Academy

To discuss the confluence of SHE and DEI issues in the Academy, it is important to recognize that the Academy is still a largely white space, perpetuating the pernicious ills, whether knowingly or unknowingly, of settler colonialisms. Here whiteness means the centering and privileging of white images/constructs of value, white knowledge systems, and white approaches to educational administration and research. This whiteness is derived from European antecedents and is historically codified in the formation of the Academy through publishing houses and tenure/promotion; and is structurally seen by the approximately 73% of faculty with tenure/faculty of teaching in the Academy who are white (Espinosa, et al., 2016). This whiteness is also in the built environment of higher education, with many of the US’s oldest campuses benefitting from enslaved labor in the construction of buildings, often on unceded and stolen lands of Indigenous peoples. Thus, the Academy is grafted onto the violent dispossession (past and present) of Indigenous communities. This means that those in DEI/SHE spaces must be honest about what the Academy has always been and still largely is: both a justification for and of settler colonialisms; and the still-ongoing violent takings of BIPOC bodies and the ecologies-of-alive places of a living earth. In short, the Academy, and for the most part the to-date history of SHE, are built on Eurocentric logics of extraction, domination, growthism, and fungibility of non-white bodies (Yusoff 2018), as well as poor white bodies.

Race & Ethnicity of Respondents | N = 439



Respondents to the question, “What is your race/ethnicity?” in AASHE’s 2020 Higher Education Sustainability Staffing Survey.

Within SHE, one immediate example of the to-date hegemonic centering of whiteness is seen in the demographics of those in attendance at most AASHE meetings, or the self-reported 83% of respondents to AASHE's most recent Sustainability Staffing Survey who identify as white (vs. 14% as BIPOC or mixed [2020]). One must ask why sustainability is demographically still seen as a thing largely for white faculty and administrators and campuses. And a follow up example, based on available data on the STARS reporting website: Why have so few HBCUs participated in generating a STARS report, if such a report is the standard reporting on SHE issues for any institution in the Academy (AASHE STARS, 2021)?

The Colonization of "Decolonization"

This perpetuation of whiteness and settler inequalities is expertly shared by two scholars on the Academy's "ironic colonization" (my term) of the term "decolonization." As Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang write, using decolonization to update well-meaning concerns about social justice and racial justice issues to now include the need to address wrongs to Indigenous voices and agency as perpetrated by settler society, including in the Academy, is a "kind of inclusion [that] is a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonization" (2012: 3). They continue, adroitly pointing out how decolonization as metaphor "kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future...The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation" (pg. 3). Given this, in their reading, "Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (pg. 35) and suggests (demands?) an "ethic of incommensurability" (pg. 28) between various liberation movements, including those in education (and thus the DEI movements as theorized in this collection of AASHE-sponsored essays), and the actual verb-and-noun needs and demands of decolonization.

For Tuck and Yang, doing/enacting decolonization in the Academy must be an Indigenous led movement based on Indigenous needs, futures, self-governance, and consensus. This does not mean that white and Black/Latinx/Asian/Pacific Islander advocates for equity and emancipation in educational spaces (including sustainability spaces) cannot partner with Indigenous decolonization movements in specific contexts. Here, Tuck and Yang end by explaining that where incommensurate temporary coalitions may be built is in "Breaking the settler colonial trifecta, [which] in direct terms, means repatriating land to sovereign Native tribes and nations, abolition of slavery in its contemporary forms, and the dismantling of the imperial metropole" (pg. 31).

The indigenous doctoral student Nikki McDaid (2021) continues in this vein, tweeting that "All y'all non-Indigenous 'decolonial' scholars aren't really doing decolonial work unless you are collaborating with Indigenous scholars and communities. If your work doesn't have Indigenous sovereignty as one of the end goals, it isn't decolonial." Campus and SHE leadership who are committed to decolonial coalitions must grapple with this sentiment, as well.



Nikki McDaid
@nikkimcdaid1

All y'all non-Indigenous 'decolonial' scholars aren't really doing decolonial work unless you are collaborating with Indigenous scholars and communities. If your work doesn't have Indigenous sovereignty as one of the end goals, it isn't decolonial.

2:33 PM · Jun 12, 2021 · Twitter for Android

456 Retweets 15 Quote Tweets 1,985 Likes



Source: Twitter, 2021.

Sustainability and DEI Issues at CofC

The issue of whiteness in the Academy is one that many in DEI/SHE spaces struggle with, and CofC is no exception. For example, CofC has found that students are not internalizing consistent messaging about social equity within the sustainability triple bottom line. One of the first topics covered during a triple bottom line presentation offered to all students during a first year experience (FYE) course is “Sustainability is not about just recycling, and it’s not about white environmental concerns.” This is strategically covered early in students’ first year to provide a pathway for discussing social and economic systems and environmental racism as sustainability issues, therefore making sustainability more relevant to the 20% of students at CofC who are BIPOC. It is also emphasized because sustainability has historically been collapsed into recycling by those who are not doing SHE work. Do CofC students internalize this message? Data from an end-of-semester survey of these same students suggests that they are not. When asked a question about ways they can be more sustainable in daily life and how those choices connect to the triple bottom line, 80% of answers are a succinct “Recycle, to protect the environment.” This suggests that CofC’s largely white student body carries with it the perception that sustainability is just about recycling, and despite efforts to broaden this understanding, students do not seem to dislodge this stereotype. The centering of whiteness stands, despite decentering whiteness throughout the 50-minute sustainability module and through other sustainability and social justice programming offered to first year students via partnerships with DEI offices on campus.

This collapsing of sustainability to recycling in order to protect the environment, seen consistently over five years of survey data, is a continual frustration, as Charleston is a rich location for numerous discussions about how social, environmental, and economic systems interact to have made unsustainable systems. Charleston was the key port of entry for enslaved African bodies to the United States; the 2015 Mother Emanuel terrorist attack by white supremacist Dylan Roof occurred 2 blocks from campus; and the city is going through rapid gentrification that has a strong climate justice component. Lastly, and as at many higher education institutions, the history of colonization and settler power is literally constructed into the landscape of both the city and the campus itself, where many buildings were made by enslaved labor, and where at CofC, the “inner sanctum” of the central administrative building has plaques on the wall glorifying white colonizers of the African continent who were CofC alum.

This FYE end-of-semester survey data from CofC suggests that SHE faculty and staff who support strengthening DEI goals in the Academy have their work cut out for them, as it will likely require consistent labor and messaging to educate faculty, staff, students, alum, and donors alike that sustainability is not just about recycling; and that sustainability must center DEI issues in order to have relevance. Those in SHE must challenge SHE as a structural whole, especially if those operating in a campus’s sustainability space are white, to proactively build capacity and partnerships around campus with those leading DEI efforts. This means sharing sustainability resources while decentering programming needs to support-from-behind those on campus leading DEI issues.



The central ceremonial space of the College, within one of its oldest continually used buildings. Photo credit: Todd LeVasseur

Possible Pathways Towards Bridging DEI and SHE

To bridge the divide between DEI and SHE, SHE practitioners should advocate and argue for an imagined future of SHE that moves beyond its current construction as a largely white space featuring white techno-optimist moves (Zylinska, 2018) of carbon and zero waste management and piecemeal curricular interventions. Such a hoped shift actively centers social issues along with environmental concerns, and builds upon to-date ineffective criticisms of neoliberal capitalism. It would involve transitioning SHE to something deeper, more transformational, and more intersectionally just that decenters whiteness and advocates for degrowth (on degrowth, see Pilling, 2018, and how neoliberal capitalism negatively impacts BIPOC communities, see Chattopadhyay, 2019). Given the current demographics of SHE, this imagined future is in support of SHE “Being well and White [by] rejecting Whiteness for the good of humanity,” (Love 2019, 160). This rejection must be central to SHE in its staffing, goals, operations, and outcomes, as signaled by this larger collection of essays.

These efforts to decenter the inherited whiteness of SHE should be done based on DEI metrics with a focus on how climate change tipping points rapidly being crossed will exacerbate climate justice issues. Such a focus will allow for SHE to address the triad of Tuck and Yang shared earlier: “Breaking the settler colonial trifecta, [which] in direct terms, means repatriating land to sovereign Native tribes and nations, abolition of slavery in its contemporary forms, and the dismantling of the imperial metropole.” Are those in SHE/DEI spaces ready and willing to advocate for the active repatriation of resources at respective institutions and campuses back to Indigenous communities, first, and then to other communities of color? Will AASHE take the lead in advocating for repatriation or including it in STARS metrics? As for abolition of slavery--are those in SHE spaces ready to demand of Procurement/Business practices that campuses become Fair Trade and Fair Labor campuses, despite increases in costs this would entail? And what of the hidden enslavement tethered to the Academy’s collective use of fossil fuels, and the very real damages the violent extraction of such ancient sunlight has on frontline communities the world over, often through forced labor of those in such communities? And if these DEI-focused strategies are currently nonstarters, then how authentic are those in SHE spaces in enacting sustainability on campuses and throughout the Academy?

This brings SHE to a tension and inflection point. This collection of essays is a recognition by AASHE that on issues of DEI, SHE has failed, and is still failing. This is not an indictment of AASHE or SHE, but rather a reflection of systemic racism and the Academy’s to-date failing on these issues. As degrowth expert Jason Hickel explains, “We are not permitted to question capitalism and the conquest of nature. To do so is considered a kind of heresy” (2020, 248). Yet true sustainability requires a rapid degrowth and dematerialization of [Global North economies](#). It means stopping the use of fossil fuels, and redefining what counts as a good life while foregrounding climate repatriations and intersectional justice. This means rapid decarbonization, changing metrics of economic success, and moving to a closed-loop, steady state economy. The Academy must shift to supporting this new mandate, and those operating in SHE must catalyze these conversations and actions.



Diagram of Global North economies, as depicted by the Brandt Line. Source: Royal Geographical Society

Given the strong overlap between environmental racism, wealth inequalities based on race, and the ongoing power of whiteness in the Academy, the SHE movement must study “Whiteness, White rage, and violence [as] a fundamental step to moving from ally to coconspirator” (Love 2019, 144). What this study and teaching (Kernahan 2019) of whiteness will resemble is up for each campus to determine, but unless there is a deep commitment by sustainability leaders to incorporate a DEI presence, then SHE will remain complicit in the ongoing violence to BIPOC bodies while being stunted by white fragility (Diangelo 2018). A DEI focused SHE must also learn to co-become with the bioecological places where each campus dwells in its operation (Bawaka, et al. 2015, 2016), or SHE will remain complicit in the ongoing violence against earth and non-human earthen bodies, as well.

While repatriation may be a non-starter at this time at most higher education institutions, to aid in moving SHE into actively incorporating DEI insights, the following ideas, in no particular order, are offered (recognizing that some of these may also be non-starters for cultural, financial or other reasons). Nonetheless, a sustainable future requires efforts to bring these, or similar actions, to fruition:

- Establishing a student fee where monies raised will support a BIPOC-staffed and focused sustainability group; and/or be used to transition facilities to a decarbonized future through BIPOC student involvement;
- Working with students and Boards to pass resolutions that require a campus become Fair Trade and Fair Labor certified, and requiring a living wage for the lowest-paid workers;
- Working with Academic Affairs, Faculty Senates, and Deans to require all new teaching hires, at whatever level, to have basic fluency in DEI and Sustainability competencies, and ensuring that these competencies are taught, regardless of discipline;
- Working with Administrators and/or Advancement Officers to pass a resolution calling for the creation of a Center for Repatriations (or some such title) that offers scholarships to BIPOC students and that works with Indigenous communities to give back land;
- Combining the physical spaces, and eventually administrative support, for DEI and SHE efforts on a campus, to facilitate collaboration and alignment of mission, fit, and purpose;
- Advocating for STARS metrics that reward points for the above, and working toward improving performance for those DEI metrics that are already covered.

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Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Sustainable Development Goals, and Race

By Helen Bond, Ph.D.



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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



Progress on Meeting the Global Sustainable Development Goals

How close is the United States to achieving a just and sustainable future and why should we care? A sustainable future is one that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability to meet the demands of the future. A just and sustainable future should leave no one behind. The new [2021 Sustainable Development Report](#) gives us glimmers of hope that such a future is forthcoming, but it also provides reasons to be concerned, and plenty of reasons to care about the intersections of justice and sustainability (Sachs et al., 2021). Given their missions to advance underserved populations, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) as well as other Minority-serving institutions (MSIs) are uniquely positioned to address the intersectionality of sustainability and justice.

For the first time since the adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015, the global average [SDG Index Score](#) for 2020 has decreased from the previous year: a decline driven to a large extent by increased poverty rates, inequality, and unemployment following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The global average SDG Index Score is a progress report that indicates how well nations are progressing toward achieving the 17 SDGs and the 169 associated targets that all United Nations Member States agreed to work toward achieving by the year 2030.

The pandemic has created setbacks on all fronts of sustainable development here in the U.S. and abroad. The impact of COVID-19 on specific goals was greater among the most vulnerable groups, the poor, and marginalized communities. The UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network USA (SDSN USA) report, [In the Red: the US failure to Deliver on a Promise of Racial Equality](#) measured the achievement of the SDGs based on how well they were delivered to the least served ethnic and racial groups. The findings revealed that white communities are receiving SDG related resources and opportunities at three times the rate of minoritized communities (Lynch, et al., 2020). These results suggest that SDG delivery in the U.S. is highly unequal and unjust, and that the SDGs will not be fully realized without significant progress to end systemic inequality in the U.S. Gaps in how states have implemented the SDGs in communities of color are so wide that, unless the inequality is targeted like a tumor and removed, the SDGs have no chance of taking root across the U.S (Lynch, Bond, & Sachs, 2021).

Leave No One Behind

The UN's [Leave No One Behind \(LNOB\) Principle](#), a central commitment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, requires a firm commitment to racial equality and justice. LNOB not only entails reaching the poorest of the poor, but also focuses on combating discrimination and paying attention to root causes of systemic racism. Race, ethnicity, and gender are not only relevant to the SDGs, but essential to determining who is being left behind in the realization of sustainable development. The SDGs cannot be attained in part, or for some. People are often left behind due to a combination of intersecting identities and factors. They remain hidden in averages, and only revealed through data collected and refined on personal characteristics and categories, such as race, ethnicity, gender and other relevant demographics, such as location. Disaggregating data along two axes such as race and location is revealing. But an even more refined analysis using multilevel disaggregation, such as looking at women and race in urban settings, can reveal the faces at the bottom of the well that Derrick Bell, the noted civil rights scholar, says stares back at us when we dare to look (2018). Evidence shows that women and girls can be some of the most marginalized individuals within other highly marginalized people. Future research conducted by universities around the SDGs and the LNOB agenda should seek to better understand these and other intersections.



The Role of HBCUs and Other MSIs

Universities play an increasingly important role in helping communities realize the SDGs, and minority serving institutions can lead the way (SDSN, 2020 & Lynch et al., 2020). MSIs play a critical role in the education of learners from minority and low-income communities that have been left behind in SDG delivery and implementation. With missions focusing on serving the nation, while bettering their constituent communities, MSIs are often referred to as the preeminent “engines of upward mobility” for millions of disadvantaged students (Espinosa, Kelchen, & Taylor, 2018, p. iii). They serve in this capacity while financially disadvantaged themselves when compared to predominantly white institutions (PWIs). MSIs include, but are not limited to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Asian American and Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AAPISIs), and Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs). Single-sex institutions are sometimes included under the broad category of MSIs.

MSIs are key partners in expanding research and awareness to better understand root causes and connections between groups left behind. SDG 4.7 calls for ensuring that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development broadly. Education for the SDGs (ESDGs) provides learners the knowledge, skills and mindsets to address the SDGs. MSIs apply ESDGs through their distinct missions of working with the disadvantaged. While ESDGs is founded on the more established area of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), it has a broader mission and is particularly suited to the university sector in engaging with the SDGs (SDSN, 2020).

HBCUs, with their deep connections to underrepresented communities, can further extend the research agenda by considering the intersections of racial identity and their impact on the delivery of the SDGs. HBCUs and other MSIs can help expand the availability of racially disaggregated data required for such an analysis. There is a lack of disaggregated data around many of the areas outlined by the SDGs. HBCUs possess strong and historical ties to underserved communities with strong commitments to their success that can help drive the research agenda around sustainability and race. Participatory research of this type requires trust. HBCUs can harness the power of culture to help localize SDG research for a deeper understanding of the connections between sustainability and race. Thought leaders, influencers, musicians, actors, sportspeople, religious leaders, community leaders, educators and others can serve as ambassadors of trust to involve local communities in research, equitable data collection, and in creating awareness that the SDGs are relevant to everyone and especially to communities that are being left behind.

ESDGs incorporates an action-based experiential learning component that can situate learners in the context of real-world problem solving on HBCU campuses. Solving SDG-related challenges like racial injustice in education, healthcare and the criminal justice system cannot be pursued through the classroom only. During the pandemic, HBCUs collaborated by sharing resources and ideas, which was helpful in surviving a pandemic which impacted African Americans at twice the rate of white communities (Murray, 2020). Focusing the ESGDs curriculum around collaborating to solve SDG related problems can help students integrate SDG theory into real-life practice.

For example, Howard University, an HBCU located in the heart of the nation's capital, offers an [Alternative Spring Break \(HUASB\)](#) that incorporates a break in formal studies in March for an experience tackling social justice issues. What is unique about this experience at Howard is that it is grounded in the historical and cultural community of an HBCU. This community embeds its underrepresented and often minoritized members into a historical context of social justice that infiltrates every aspect of the campus program, including co-curricular activities, curriculum and research, and academic and non-academic staff who are invested in transformational approaches to teaching, learning, and living. This enables students at HBCUs to have sustainable lifestyles that are not in conflict with their culture. The skills, knowledge and mindsets that result from this are well positioned to address the challenges posed by the SDGs within disadvantaged communities. During the 2019 spring break, Howard University sent more than 800 students throughout the world to develop leadership and community building skills as they gained first hand experience in helping restore blighted communities (Regman, 2019).



Partnerships to Bridge the Gap

HBCUs help create the science, technology and innovation that must be harnessed to promote equity, justice and sustainability. The Building Green Initiative created by the United Negro College Fund (UNCF) recognized the University of Maryland Eastern Shore and Spelman College as leading in the area of campus sustainability at HBCUs. MSIs stand at the ready to assist in developing solutions that incorporate diverse perspectives, including local and traditional knowledge, as well as community driven best practices and solutions based on science. Yet, Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and the Higher Education Sustainability Movement are also important actors and can play a role. PWIs and other sustainability organizations, like the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education. (AASHE) can help bridge knowledge, capacity and resource gaps where MSIs may be limited in reach and scope.

As an example of intercampus collaborations, Virginia Tech (2020) engages students and academic staff from HBCUs and MSIs through its annual [HBCU/MSI Research Summit](#), and has evaluated the impact of the program with the focus on students' engagement and recruitment (Jalali, Lee, Grimes, 2021).

Partnerships can help HBCUs and MSIs in general to expand their networks and capacity, enhancing both reach and impact. Achieving the SDGs will require multiple approaches and partnerships so that no one is left behind.

Goal 17 recognizes that multi-stakeholder partnerships that incorporate diverse perspectives, expertise, technologies and financial resources support the achievement of the SDGs across all communities, particularly ones that have been left behind. No justice, no sustainability. No sustainability, no justice.



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Sustainability Without Race?:

Disrupting Whiteness at the Introductory Level

By Delia Byrnes and Brittany Y. Davis



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Abstract

This essay advocates for the importance of racial equity and social justice in sustainability curricula at the introductory level. Focusing on ubiquitous concepts in the environmental classroom, we discuss the critical absences which emerge when sustainability concepts, methods, and practices are detached from their racial, economic, and geopolitical contexts.

To illuminate these absences and move toward alternative possibilities, we discuss a conventional sustainability course taught from a Western, white, perspective that centers the natural sciences and technology to illustrate the exclusion by design of non-Western voices and perspectives. The implicit assumption in classroom discussions of “what we can do” (which typically focus on individual behavior--reducing ecological footprints, recycling, consumer choices, etc.) implies that we all have equal autonomy over our environmental impacts. Discussing the limits of individual sustainability provides an opportunity to reflect on systems of exclusion, from food and transportation apartheid to broader patterns of organized abandonment that target Black, Brown, Indigenous, Melanated Peoples (hereafter, BBIMP, a term coined by [Louiza “Weeze” Doran](#)) globally while also harming folks with disabilities. By failing to center questions of equity, justice, and power in environmental curricula, we argue that sustainability educators not only reproduce the invisibility of marginalized communities; they also neglect to prepare students for the urgent world-making work that needs to be done.

How We Talk About Sustainability at the Introductory Level

As students enter the college classroom with an increasingly acute awareness of the climate crisis, disciplines related to environmental science, environmental studies, and sustainability studies (hereafter, ESS) gain in popularity. Students bring a range of backgrounds and interests to the classroom, and one of our foremost responsibilities as educators at the introductory level is to provide a comprehensive overview of the interlocking fields, methodologies, and subjects that come together under the interdisciplinary banner of ESS. While ESS programs are as diverse as the instructors and students who comprise them, the typical ESS curriculum closely aligns with Western scientific practices and approaches to understanding the different scales and relationships between and among humans and the environment. Because the traditional Western approach obscures other understandings of the environment, we argue that in order to disrupt whiteness within the ESS curricula, introductory ESS courses must include critical engagement with how environmental knowledge is produced and used, and intentionally introduce alternatives to traditional Western thought throughout the course. This, in turn, can empower students to take action beyond the neoliberal framework of individualist choice (consumer and otherwise) and instead imagine new coalitions and collectivities centered on racial and environmental justice.

The “wicked,” complex nature of environmental problems can be overwhelming for students, especially those in introductory courses. When faced with pressing and difficult-to-solve challenges like climate change mitigation and adaptation, sea level rise and coastal flooding, or ending the production and use of single-use plastics, students find themselves wondering what they can do to make a difference.

Environmental educators often focus on practical problem-solving approaches to the environment, with sustainability taking center stage as an analytic for thinking through ecosystem conservation, people and the environment, agriculture, energy systems, and a range of other topics. Indeed, by the time students enter college classrooms, they’re often familiar with the term sustainability, which carries an aura of objective value and common sense evident in both its ubiquity and vagueness—it appears across a vast range of contexts yet is rarely defined concretely. Like many concepts that assume the mantle of objective common sense, sustainability is freighted with unspoken values, assumptions, and power hierarchies. Moreover, the widespread branding of sustainability as techno-scientific—and thus seemingly apolitical—has been remarkably effective at excluding the everyday (non-credentialed) experts whose firsthand knowledge of environmental problems illuminates what is often willfully overlooked by credentialed researchers, including issues such as lead contamination, food apartheid, and urban heat islands, all of which disproportionately impact BBIMP and low-income communities (Alaimo, 2012). It is therefore the responsibility of ESS educators to provide students with the tools to critically interpret and evaluate sustainability discourses in both the ESS curriculum and the complex, overwhelmingly white worlds they’re enmeshed in. This means teaching students to think critically about the politics of environmental knowledge production: Whose voices, perspectives, and knowledge traditions assume the authority of objective truth, and whose are devalued, dismissed, or absent? Teaching these histories and ongoing legacies has been viewed by some as “politicizing” the ESS curriculum. However, as further suggested in the accompanying essay, “Pedagogies for cultivating critical consciousness,” the ESS curriculum is already political. The overarching politics of the ESS curriculum are closely aligned with Western science, colonialism, systemic racism, and white supremacy. As ESS educators, scholars, and practitioners, it is our duty to deepen our understanding and provide a more complete picture, in all of the spaces in which we work, of the relationships between environment and power that we all inhabit.

ESS educators can start to address the challenges of a Western science-focused curriculum by posing different kinds of questions to students: What are we sustaining, and for whom (Alaimo, 2012)? This question implicitly disrupts the problematic discourse that often surrounds discussions of global climate change and other environmental crises in dominant (i.e., white middle-class) US culture. The mainstream discourse of sustainability, which appears everywhere from greenwashed ad campaigns to global NGOs, implicitly assumes that a “sustainable future” means sustaining our increasingly-threatened present in a way that doesn’t perpetuate environmental harm—in other words, an “environmentally-friendly” status quo. But this neglects to consider the ways that our present is built on systemic injustice, including racial capitalism, settler colonialism, uneven and unequal relations, and other inequities. Technological advancements related to solar, wind, and hydropower won’t fix this. As ESS teachers and practitioners, the question of what we’re sustaining, and for whom, is one which is rarely discussed. Thus, it’s unsurprising that students are ill-prepared to answer this question for themselves. By posing this simple question, students can begin to untangle the invisible power structures that perpetuate environmental harm for specific communities while excluding these same communities from meaningful participation in environmental redress.

The Individual Above All?: Interconnectedness in Social and Political Contexts

First and second-year students often have a general awareness of the vast scales of climate change, but this may come freighted with universalizing language: “Humans are ruining the planet.” “We’re all responsible for climate change.” “We all need to pitch in to solve the problem.” According to sustainability orthodoxy, these student-directed messages are right. But this universalizing frame, which suggests that all humans are equally responsible (and equally in jeopardy), conceals the ongoing systems of injustice that overburden marginalized communities with the collateral damages of unfettered economic growth. While viewing climate change and its solutions as shared responsibilities (“We’re all in this together”) can facilitate collective calls to action, it can also shore up long-standing Euro-American values of individualism: “we all need to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps to save the planet.” The emphasis on acting on our shared responsibility by buying green or voting with your dollar results in consumers who feel they have done their part without lending any real, material support to marginalized communities.

Our contemporary neoliberal capitalist economic system is dependent on individuals while simultaneously constraining their choices. It cannot function without individual actors who uphold its values, pursuing limitless economic growth in an effort to better their own lives. That economic wealth is the priority—rather than living in a symbiotic or harmonious relationship with the more-than-human world—leads to the overexploitation of resources and the shifting of ecological burdens from one place and people to another.



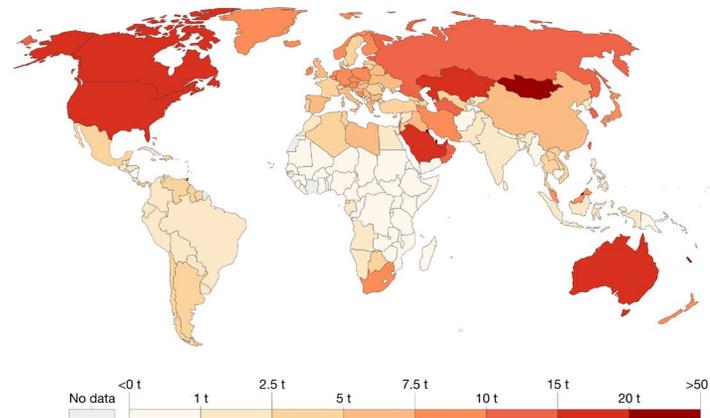
A global view of carbon footprints illustrates the problems of sustainability orthodoxy and its universalizing frames. If, for example, everyone is equally complicit in “ruining the planet” and thus equally responsible for climate change, why do Australia, the United States, and Canada have average per capita CO₂ emissions that are more than three times the world average (Ritchie and Roser, 2017)? Countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and the Maldives will be greatly affected by sea level rise despite having per capita CO₂ emissions below the global average. Why, then, should they be burdened with remediating the effects of CO₂ emissions produced elsewhere? Assuming that everyone bears equal responsibility and burden hides the ways in which goods produced or consumed in one place rely on the natural resources and exploitation of other places around the world, thus obscuring the interconnections, flows, and movements of underlying environmental problems. This heightens the focus on the individual’s rights, roles, and responsibilities, without considering the systems they are enmeshed in.

Individuals are embedded in social, cultural, political, and economic systems which constrain and shape their choices. While some have the privilege of autonomy over their choices, most people’s “choices” are profoundly shaped by their racial, economic, and geopolitical contexts. For example, the lives of those living in southern Louisiana are shaped by the fishing and fossil fuel industries, the threat and reality of hurricanes, and the legacy of regional disinvestment. Much of the infrastructure of the modern petrochemical industry in Louisiana stands on former plantation grounds, testifying to the exploitative geographies that continue to define the region. These challenges are further exacerbated by legacies of white supremacy that see white employees over-represented in the local oil & gas industry. At the same time, following sustainability orthodoxy, many students recommend that people simply change jobs to something less overtly harmful to the environment or move away from the area, not recognizing the sheer impossibility of this for many.

As with the example above, students frequently suggest individual changes as a way to “fix” the system: “Recycle everything possible,” “Turn off all the lights when you leave the room,” or “Adopt meatless Mondays.” This emphasis on the individual is already freighted with assumptions about one’s autonomy over their home and lifestyle. What about those living in places without recycling collection, or who already eat little meat because of their religion, income, or lack of access to refrigeration? These questions typically go unasked—and thus unanswered. If we ask and seek to answer these questions, we necessarily connect social, political, and ecological contexts and begin addressing environmental inequities at multiple scales, allowing us to have more robust conversations with students about sustainability beginning in our introductory courses.

Per capita CO₂ emissions

Carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions from the burning of fossil fuels for energy and cement production. Land use change is not included.



Source: Our World in Data based on the Global Carbon Project; Gapminder & UN
Note: CO₂ emissions are measured on a production basis, meaning they do not correct for emissions embedded in traded goods.
OurWorldInData.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions/ • CC BY

Source: Our World in Data - ourworldindata.org, 2021.

What's Missing?: Making the Invisible Visible

The order in which instructors teach the introductory ESS concepts itself reflects individual values and politics: who and what are our “entry points” into understanding the environment? What information is prerequisite for other knowledge about environmental issues? The constellation of these concepts builds a narrative for our students about our relationships as humans with the more-than-human world. Yet as instructors, we rarely talk about how we subjectively and individually understand the environment and communicate that understanding through our syllabi. To demonstrate the stakes of how we as educators build an environmental narrative for introductory students, we walk through key concepts in the ESS curricula below.

Teaching students about ecosystems often begins with biological, chemical, and physical mechanisms—how sunlight is converted into energy and cycled through the food web. These lessons are grounded in the Western earth sciences and provide a disinterested overview of the complex workings of an ecosystem, while also universalizing these processes into a single and definitive way for ecosystems to function. This approach invisibilizes, however, Indigenous scientific approaches to the environment (including traditional ecological knowledge), (Dudgeon and Berkes, 2003), which emphasize place-based knowledge cultivated over time, with careful attention to the specifics of each individual environment and the relations it sustains. By foregrounding Western scientific approaches in the classroom, we reify the dominance of Western and colonial perspectives at the expense of marginalized peoples and land relations.

When ESS educators teach about food systems and the relationship between human population growth and the rise of agriculture, we often focus on the twentieth-century transition to large-scale industrial systems and their environmental harms. Monocultures deplete soil, perpetuate a pesticide treadmill, and require increasing amounts of additional inputs like fertilizer. It's undeniably valuable for students to understand the relationship between the food on their plates and the broader environmental and industrial systems that sustain it. But when we teach agriculture as an apolitical world-system, we do not give students the full picture, such as the ways that agriculture is intimately connected to ongoing legacies of racial and social injustice right here in the United States. For example, what if all students understood the US's rise to unparalleled imperial and economic power as a direct result of plantation agriculture, a brutal system dependent on chattel slavery and the stolen labor of African peoples? What if all students understood that the American colonial fantasy of the wilderness frontier (the basis of the National Parks system) is built on the genocide of Indigenous peoples? What if they learned about how the US government deliberately disenfranchised and discriminated against Black farmers, a recent effort to address this, and the discrimination lawsuit filed by white farmers to stop payments to Black farmers approved as part of the March 2021 coronavirus relief bill (Jordan, 2021)?



Similar absences emerge in other ESS introductory subjects, such as energy and climate change. While there's value in teaching students about the chemical reactions that produce the greenhouse effect (especially in an era of climate denialism), focusing only on distant and often abstract consequences such as melting polar ice caps obscures the environmental injustices happening in our homes and communities. As environmental educator Sahar Arbab (2021) entreats, "When did images of sea turtles start motivating us more than images of brown tap water?" (para. 1). Contaminated tap water is disproportionately found in BBIMP and lower income communities throughout the globe, making it a prominent environmental justice issue. Yet the relationship between disinvestment in municipal services, redlining, racism, and climate change often remains underdeveloped in ESS curricula, or is relegated to niche upper-level courses that only a handful of students may take. By introducing environmental justice as a framework for understanding connections between environmental, social, political, and economic realities, rather than simply as one topic among many, we demonstrate that the lived experiences of BBIMP and other marginalized communities are core--not elective--concerns in the ESS curriculum.

Reimagining the Intro Course: Toward Inclusive Knowledges

ESS has long been celebrated as an interdisciplinary venture, a testament to the strength of varied methodologies for addressing some of the world's most wicked problems. Nevertheless, it remains a norm across ESS programs for the natural sciences to form the nucleus, while humanistic, social-scientific, artistic, activist, and community-science methodologies hover at the periphery as supplements to the scientific curriculum. Students must be taught about the historic and ongoing environmental injustices experienced by marginalized and disadvantaged communities, many of whom are BBIMP. As a society, how do we make their voices, perspectives, and views visible? We must begin by listening to and centering their stories. For example, discussions of climate change should also address climate justice and climate equity. When talking about how individuals can reduce their energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions by making home improvements, it's important to discuss why homes are in need of rehabilitation. This brings redlining, white flight, the wage gap, and discrimination into the conversation. Thus, the conversation becomes one about how home improvements can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the structural constraints and systemic barriers which keep people from making such improvements. For instructors, integrating these stories can be intimidating because they are often absent from introductory textbooks. Turning to online news and magazine sources can help.



For example, a recently highlighted story about the above convergence of individual action, home rehabilitation, and climate equity (Charles, 2021) could be a welcome addition to an introductory ESS course. Another example that can be incorporated into ESS curricula is a curated Earth Day reading list that centers BIPOC voices from *Wear Your Voice*, a digital magazine by and for LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC in the US (2020). Educators may be interested in exploring other strategies and examples found in an [instructor resource](#) on Creating a Culturally Inclusive Course, part of AASHE's Campus Sustainability Hub (Cagle, 2021).

Interdisciplinarity can't address the inequities that are built into the structure of the academic disciplines. ESS educators need to work beyond the cloisters of academia. Christina Sharpe (2016), a Black studies scholar, advocates for researchers and teachers to "become undisciplined" (p. 13). This means unsettling the authority of Western and colonial knowledge traditions and encouraging students to think critically about not only what they know, but how they know. Whose voices are included, and whose are silenced? Part of the work of becoming "undisciplined" means decentering the presumed authority of natural and quantitative social sciences and instead centering additional ways of knowing. These marginalized forms of knowledge include storytelling, art, music, oral narrative, community organizing, activism, and social media, which are often seen as "supplements" to environmental studies curricula, but not as rigorous, nuanced, and dynamic forms of knowledge in their own right. When educators teach humanistic methods such as textual analysis, students are quick to observe that cultural works (novels, short stories, poetry, visual art, music) can translate scientific abstractions into meaningful knowledge for a broader public. It also opens the door for questions like, "how does environmental art produce its own alternative knowledges?" which introduce students to the politics of environmental knowledge production by asking what other forms of expertise emerge beyond the bounds of academic (inter)disciplinarity.

For example, Thomas RaShad Easley (2020) explains that engaging with hip-hop music, a traditionally Black form of art deeply rooted in social protest, opens up conversations with BBIMP students on environmental issues that face their communities, such as lead contamination, toxic waste dumping, and food apartheid; and the exclusion of those communities from discussions about environmental policy. Educators can assign Dr. Easley's writing alongside his own lyrics, show video clips from community-led events featuring environmentally-themed hip-hop or spoken word performances, or invite students to collaborate on their own playlist of environmental hip-hop songs. In this way, learning from hip-hop about environmental concerns offers not only a way to connect with a more diverse range of students; it also recognizes African-American expressive culture as a vital form of environmental knowledge-making.

The re-centering of beyond-academic forms of environmental knowledge invites students to think critically about the politics of knowledge. This works in tandem with centering the environmental expertise of marginalized groups, such as BBIMP, and disabled, immigrant, and LGBTQIA+ communities. Imagine that students walk into their upper-level research methods class prepared to engage in epistemological discussions about how and why we conduct ESS research, or that they come to their conservation biology course ready to discuss how and why Lakota, Chicanx, and Western conservation practices differ. This requires inclusion in the ESS classroom to go beyond adding one or two "diverse" scholars to the syllabus. Instead, ESS educators must require students to think critically about how we collectively and individually define "environmental expertise" in the first place. This shift can ultimately be transformative as the lessons will extend well beyond the introductory course. A more inclusive ESS curriculum can empower students to imagine and cultivate more liberatory environmental practices.

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College Campuses as the “Great Equalizer” – Or Are They?:

A Critical Perspective to Sustainability

By Scott Werts and Monique Constance-Huggins



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Introduction

College campuses have often been touted as the great equalizer, a place where those who are marginalized, either racially or economically, have as much ability to succeed as their non-marginalized counterparts. After all, the thought is that everyone has access to the same professors, same computer labs, same residence halls, and eats the same food, more or less, when living on campus. Yet, the disadvantages that accompany many students when they attend college, coupled with the Eurocentric positioning of the college learning environment, makes this equalizer elusive. As colleges seek to integrate sustainability into the explicit and implicit curriculum, they must pay attention to the factors that hinder the equalizing effect of education for disadvantaged students. We purport that a lack of attention to factors that stifle opportunities for those most marginalized actually undermines the sustainability agenda of “changing our ways of being and working collaboratively to create regenerative, interconnected, just, and thriving systems and communities” (Burns, 2016, p. 250). For example, it becomes challenging for individuals from minoritized groups to focus on the sustainability agenda if they are grappling with limited resources and opportunities, or experience violence that threatens their physical, social, and economic survival. The focus on meeting their immediate basic needs therefore makes it more challenging to attend to sustainability in a holistic sense. Hence addressing factors that may hinder opportunities for some is critically important for advancing the sustainability agenda. Should higher education remain serious about integrating sustainability into the curriculum with the aim of creating change agents among students who can address sustainability issues (UNESCO, 2014), they must take a critical view of the context in which this sustainability is taught. This paper uses a critical perspective to highlight the student and institution-related factors that impact student outcomes and reshape the context for sustainability education.

Student Backgrounds

Students from economically depressed areas are often plagued by inequities that stretch far beyond simply lower income. Oftentimes, these areas have lower water or air quality due to the lack of investment in infrastructure or the neighborhoods are closer to highways or manufacturing pollution. Minority families in general are less likely to have health insurance than their counterparts (Breslau et al, 2017). Medical services in some of these regions may not even be readily available, or overstressed and inadequate. In addition, these areas are sometimes located in what is increasingly referred to by food justice advocates as “food apartheid”, where the only convenient source of food may be attached to a gas station (Brones, 2018). These areas may have populations that are fraught with lower life expectancy and higher cases of disability than communities that have better environmental quality and more robust infrastructure. The concept of sustainability in these disadvantaged environments may be a foreign concept as the primary focus for individuals in these communities is on striving to keep their heads above water.

Students who come to campus from these communities are entering a very different kind of world. They are exposed to the same overall higher level of environmental quality as their counterparts. At least on the surface, they have convenient access to the same healthy foods as all the other students. What they were lacking in technological advantages in their previous schools regarding out-of-date computers and software or calculators that may not have all the capabilities needed for courses like trigonometry, is seemingly available to them in computer labs. However, overall, these students are less likely to be able to afford a meal plan on campus that would provide for them all semester long, reducing their access to food. In fact, hunger is reported to be far more prevalent with minority students (Dubick et al, 2016). In response to the high rate of student hunger, many universities have developed on-campus food banks designed to serve students. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to be able to afford technology on par with other students. While computer labs are available on campus, they can sometimes have hours that do not agree with the students’ combined class and work schedule, especially since these students are more likely to report that they are not able to attend college unless they also work significant hours in addition to classes. In some cases, students may drop a major altogether that requires significant material purchases like art supplies, laptops capable of processing mathematical modeling, or even just requiring students to attend course or program related activities outside the normal class times. These challenges may hinder many minorities from fully integrating into the University and taking advantage of the resources that are available.

College Environment

Concomitant to the students’ backgrounds is the learning environment on campus, which can impact success for disadvantaged students. The university learning environment is defined as the physical spaces, approaches to teaching, social supports, available technology, and contextual learning places outside the campus, in which students learn and thrive (Valtonen, et al. 2020). These elements can work independently or collectively to hamper the experiences of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

When discussing colleges as the great equalizer and its implications for building a sustainable agenda, the diversity of academic staff, which is a key element of teaching approaches and the social support, must be highlighted. In general, college campuses lack diversity among academic staff, which means that students from minority groups are not likely to interact with staff and instructors who look like them and understand their cultural backgrounds. In addition to the lack of diversity, colleges have implicit and explicit curriculum that centers whiteness. Accordingly, when discussing issues of sustainability, “to create regenerative, interconnected, just, and thriving systems and communities,” students from minority groups are less likely to see themselves in the material and in discussions, making them feel even further marginalized. For example, discussions of the benefits of electric cars and solar panels on houses may be foreign to marginalized students’ from lower income communities. Readings on conservation of forested and ocean environments may be discussing places that marginalized students have never seen and therefore may not be part of the world that they know. All of this can result in students feeling that sustainability may be for other people who can afford it. Unfortunately, we are disenfranchising the very students who need these sustainable and environmentally beneficial actions the most.

Strategies

The presence of deep and persistent barriers to fully infusing sustainability requires a commitment to implementing strategies that address both the student and the institution-related barriers. Some of these strategies are highlighted below.

Strategies Related to Students and Learning

One strategy is to create avenues for these students to gain access to all the advantages held by students of higher income. As mentioned, a campus food bank that students can utilize without having a stigma associated with it is helpful, particularly late in semesters. An exchange where students who no longer need graphing calculators and can donate them to a math or engineering department for under-resourced students to access may provide a hand for some students. It may benefit an arts program to hold campus wide or community sales of some of the work of students with the proceeds being returned to the students for art supplies or financial aid. And as simple as this sounds, flexibility with the timing of assignments in all courses and flexibility of program requirements allow disadvantaged students to fulfill work and family obligations and still receive that elusive degree.



A second approach is to incorporate sustainability issues across many disciplines (e.g., social work/psychology/math/education). Over the past two decades there has been a push for the inclusion of more topics of sustainability across the curriculum. In fact, there have been calls for this more times than we can really cite in one article. Robert Turner at the University of Washington and some of our colleagues (Kelsey Bitting at Elon University and Chelsie Romulo at the University of Northern Colorado) have been accumulating references to these calls and are producing ideas of how to generate action on them (Turner et al., 2021). One of the hopes is that students from a wide variety of backgrounds would be exposed to these concepts of sustainability and how improving the environment would benefit them. This would increase the likelihood that students would be able to carry this knowledge and apply it regardless of the communities they joined after graduation.

Another approach is to infuse the content into introductory level general education courses such as environmental justice or other courses to highlight the pervasive impact of the environment to marginalized communities. This idea is of huge importance to minority and marginalized communities and is explored in an accompanying essay "Sustainability Without Race? Disrupting Whiteness at the Intro Level". For students that come to the college system hoping to gain knowledge to improve the communities they came from, allowing them to see that some of the chronic problems within these communities are directly tied to environmental health can increase the likelihood that we will attract the best advocates to help solve those problems.

Strategies Related to Decentering Whiteness

The impact of the college environment on sustainability goals begs that approaches focus on decentering whiteness on college campuses and in the curriculum. Decentering whiteness is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "decolonization", a challenge that is explored more in the accompanying essay on "Decolonizing Sustainability in Higher Education". Some scholars (Tuck & Yang, 2012), however, caution against this, suggesting that the term is more than a metaphor for inclusion in the school curriculum. Notwithstanding, when used in the context of decentering whiteness and inclusion, it "involves a paradigm shift from a culture of exclusion and denial to the making of space for other political philosophies and knowledge systems. It's a culture shift to think more widely about why common knowledge is what it is, and in so doing, adjusting cultural perceptions and power relations in real and significant ways" (Keele University, 2018). Accordingly, decentering the University curriculum would mean creating a curriculum that shifts from the largely Eurocentric positioning of the curriculum, which often reinforces various forms of oppression and dominance.

Decentering whiteness in the curriculum to aid the sustainability agenda can be achieved in several ways. First, through raising everyone's critical consciousness of the persistent exclusion and oppression experienced by minoritized groups. Part of this critical consciousness is for people to see the role that they can play in helping to address social injustices. Second, shifting the culture of exclusion could be achieved through diversifying classroom materials and content. Students from minoritized populations should be able to see themselves in the content that is taught across the curriculum. This also includes using materials that are authored by people from minority groups and from different regions of the world. A third way to decenter whiteness on campuses is to diversify academic and non-academic staff. A diverse instructional staff would not only help students to feel more at home but would help to ensure that class content reflects other cultures and intellectual traditions. Fourth, styles of teaching and evaluation of student knowledge should be varied to allow students from different backgrounds and abilities to truly unleash their truest potential. The diversity that students bring to the college campuses must be seen as an opportunity to generate creative approaches to education and not as a burden to the system. Lastly, students from diverse backgrounds must be given the space and resources to share their experiences in the classroom. Such information must be valued and regarded as legitimate sources of knowledge.

Conclusion

As universities strive to infuse sustainability into the curriculum and develop co-curricular opportunities, they must at the same time consider the various backgrounds of their students and the quality of the learning environment in which this content is taught. Given that these can widen gaps, instead of equalizing outcomes, universities must adopt strategies to address these gaps as they strive to create “regenerative, interconnected, just, and thriving systems and communities” (Burns, 2016, p. 250).

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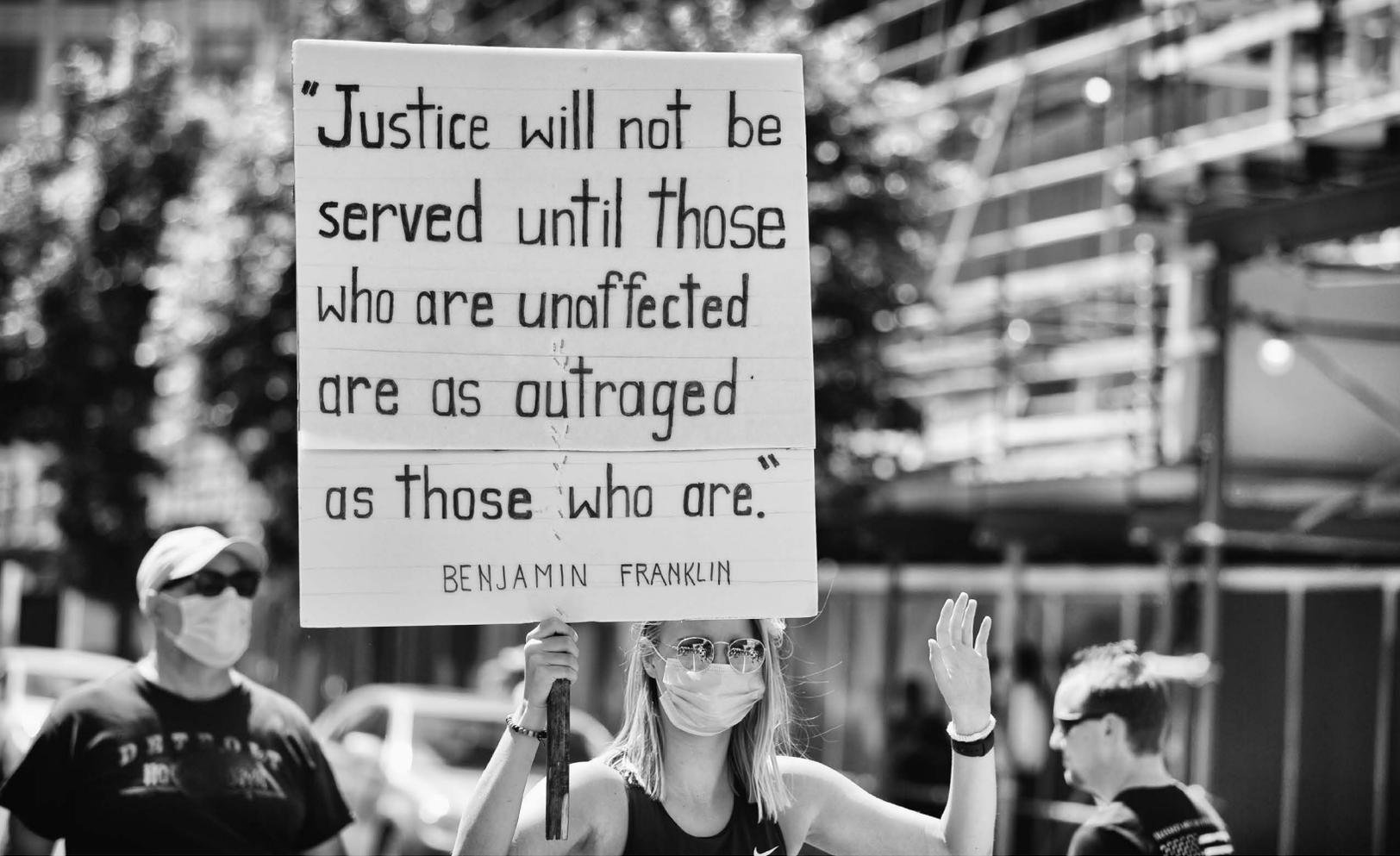
Sustainability Without Justice Just Sustains Injustice

By sourav guha



sourav guha (he/his/they/them)

sourav guha is executive director of the Consortium on High Achievement and Success (CHAS), hosted by Trinity College, in Hartford CT. CHAS is a platform for peer learning and professional development opportunities aimed at advancing strategies to better support students, faculty and staff of color at member institutions. sourav earned a Master of Natural Resources from Virginia Tech's Center for Leadership in Global Sustainability (CLiGS) and a Certificate of Graduate Study in Environmental Leadership from the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF).



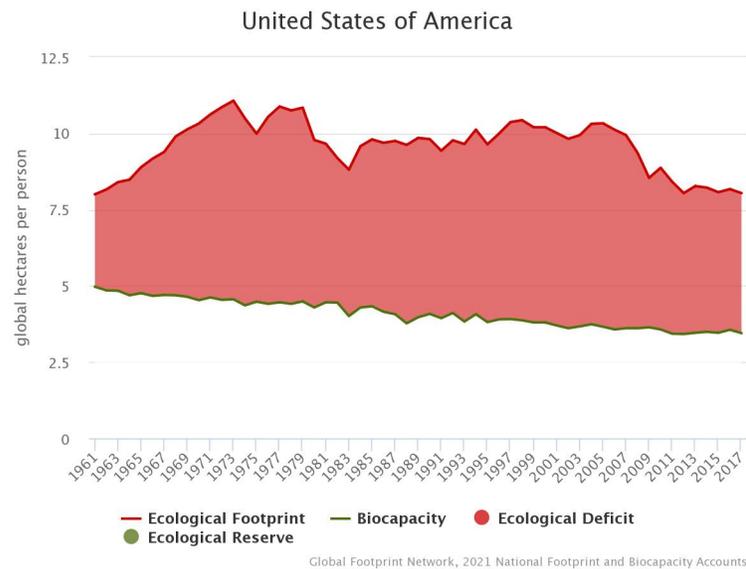
Sustainability of What? Sustainability for Whom?

Any inquiry into sustainability must first be situated within social and ecological context. Regarding the latter, Working Group I of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently summarized the scientific consensus in their contribution to the forthcoming Sixth Assessment Report (AR6), "Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis" (IPCC, 2021). Its conclusions are harrowing: "Global surface temperature will continue to increase until at least the mid-century under all emissions scenarios considered," the authors warn, adding that "every region is projected to increasingly experience concurrent and multiple changes in climatic impact-drivers."

As we continue careening toward planetary ecological catastrophe, climate change poses fundamental existential questions for all human institutions, and postsecondary institutions are no exception. For higher education, such existential questions compel us to consider the ends and obligations of academia: What are the purposes of intellectual inquiry? To whom do we owe what? What is the nature of learning in a world that is burning?

Professor [Thomas Princen](#), a scholar of environmental policy and planning at the University of Michigan, suggests two foundational questions every sustainability professional should ask: Sustainability of what? Sustainability for whom? The fundamental premise of these two questions is that challenges of sustainability demand an interrogation of system boundaries, of social-ecological systems, and of distributional effects. These questions, moreover, must be considered within the context of sustainability in higher education *in the United States*.

Due to the ravages wrought by consumer society, the enormous ecological footprint of Americans far exceeds our country's biocapacity, per decades of data collected by the [Global Footprint Network](#) (2021). The US is, by far, the largest contributor to cumulative global carbon emissions (Irfan, 2019), and per capita American carbon emissions today remain triple the global average (Ritchie, 2019). Higher education in the US is geared to generate private wealth in a world where the "richest one percent of the world's population are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the 3.1 billion people who made up the poorest half of humanity," from 1990 to 2015 (Oxfam, 2020).



Source: Global Footprint Network, 2021.

The most extreme impacts of environmental hazards, however, are experienced most intensely by the vulnerable people of the poorer half, in what UN researchers have described as "a vicious cycle, whereby initial inequality causes the disadvantaged groups to suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of climate change, resulting in greater subsequent inequality" (Islam & Winkel, 2017). The same dynamics play out domestically as well, which is why environmental justice issues comprise a central plank of contemporary civil rights work (for activists from establishment organizations like the [NAACP](#) to those engaged in newer grassroots initiatives such as the [Movement for Black Lives](#)), reflecting a recognition of the disproportionate impacts of environmental injustice on communities of color (Thompson, 2020). From climate to food, energy, materials and the built environment, it is impossible to imagine any aspect of sustainability that would not be better understood through equity and justice lenses (Center for Sustainable Systems, 2020).

Who, then, are the beneficiaries of dominant campus sustainability initiatives on traditional college campuses? And, what ends do current campus sustainability efforts serve? Just what is it that sustainability officers seek to sustain? Such questions are particularly pressing and vexing for institutional leaders in a diverse and unequal society poised on the precipice of multiple social and environmental crises.

Higher Education Confers Privilege Upon the Privileged

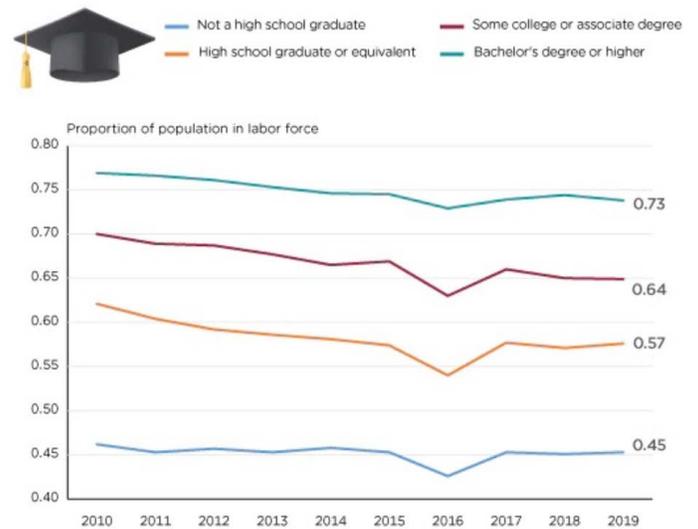
Those working in academia often overlook the fact that undergraduate education remains a relative rarity for most Americans. In fact, as of 2019, Census Bureau data indicates that, across varying regions of the United States, 70-80 percent of Americans over the age of 25 do not possess four-year college degrees (McElrath & Martin, 2021). Degree attainment fluctuates by region, with 30% of the Northeast population over 25 earning a Bachelor's degree, as compared to 20% in the South (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

While higher education may offer a potential pathway to social mobility for a select few, the post-secondary education sector in the US is predominantly premised upon – and perpetuates – vast social inequalities. The affluent purchase educational access for their children through “opportunity markets,” which is a reflection and culmination of the transformation of education into a commodity (Grusky, Hall & Markus, 2019). It should come as no surprise, then, that many of our most esteemed institutions function most effectively as “[engines of inequality](#),” with students from working class and lower income families being few and far between (The Education Trust, 2015).

Despite US higher education institutions being advantageous to only a select few, many continue to subscribe to what might best be described as a trickle-down theory of higher education. Neither [rates of labor force participation](#) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020) nor [indicators of social progress](#) (The Social Progress Imperative, 2020) suggest that those outside the formal reach of our institutions experience substantial benefits from the educational products and credentials that colleges and universities are selling. Vis-à-vis labor force participation, college grads are nearly thirty percent more likely to be employed than high school grads. Meanwhile, on the Social Progress Index, the US excels in only one major category, “Access to Advanced Education,” a ranking driven by the presence of an abundance of world-class “quality weighted universities,” while achieving middling scores in delivering on “Basic Human Needs,” “Foundations of Wellbeing,” and “Inclusiveness.”

Although we may very much like to believe that the rewards of higher education are broadly societally beneficial, the spillover effects of academic excellence are limited. Higher education in the contemporary United States is a private good with limited positive externalities.

Labor Force Participation by Level of Education Among Population Age 25 and Older



United States[®]
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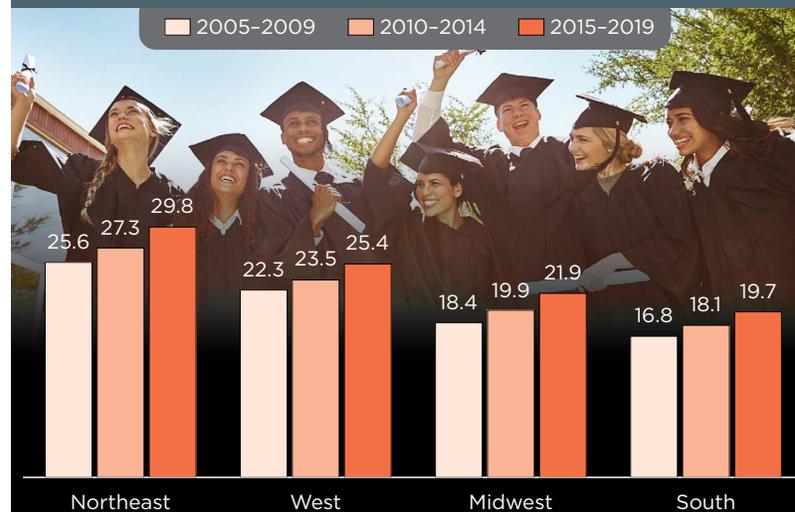
U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2010-2019
<www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment.html>

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2020.

College Degree Attainment Remains Highest in the Northeast

Average Percentage of Population With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher by Census Region



Note: Population refers to those 25 years and over. Bars display the average percent of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher among counties.

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U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. CENSUS BUREAU
census.gov

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, and 2015-2019 American Community Surveys, publicly released 5-Year estimates
www.census.gov/acs

Source: United States Census Bureau, 2021.

Conventional Approaches to Campus Sustainability

The American academy aspires to corporate models and platitudes, and current campus sustainability efforts are essentially adopted and adapted from the business world. Consequently, equity and justice are typically relegated to afterthoughts when envisioning flashy environmental initiatives. Sustainability itself is likewise seen as secondary to university business, as reflected in three dominant approaches to “greening” campuses.

The most common approach to campus sustainability appears to be via various efficiency improvements and operational savings. These are typically marginal cost-minimization strategies that fail to make much of a dent in the scale and scope of an institution’s overall environmental impact. The primary motivation of such tactics is reducing costs, without challenging the modus operandi of an institution, much as consumerism continues to ravage the planet despite incidental reductions in packaging waste by some businesses. The fact that [AASHE’s roots](#) reach back two decades while fossil fuel divestment has gathered only modest momentum over the past few years reveals such fundamental hypocrisies and the lack of meaningful sustainability commitments at the core of the U.S. higher education sector. Furthermore, while student-led divestment movements continue to achieve some notable successes (Wirz, 2020; Whitford, 2021), university commitments to divest have been notoriously disingenuous (Thakker, 2021).

A second, related approach concerns the planning of new capital investments in buildings and grounds, employing architecture, landscaping and aesthetic strategies to communicate environmental concern. Chief among these is LEED certification, a process so robust and holistic as to allow organizations such as the [Abu Dhabi National Oil Company](#) to achieve plaudits for the construction of its new corporate headquarters. Notwithstanding upfront expenditures, such investments are made with an expectation of savings in long-term operational costs, while accruing near-term reputational benefits.



The third approach to campus sustainability strategy, and a thread that runs through the first two, is [greenwashing](#) (de Freitas Netto et al., 2020). For example, one prevalent public promise is the claim of carbon neutrality, typically calculated through some combination of tightly constraining the operational dimensions considered and “[offsetting](#)” the carbon production therein through the purchase of carbon credits (Irfan, 2020). Not only are many dimensions of carbon use excluded or excused when staking the net zero claim, an overemphasis on carbon neutrality often serves to obscure an institution’s broader impacts on many other critical [planetary boundaries](#) (Stockholm Resilience Centre, 2015). Moreover, as recently published research regarding California’s state carbon offset program reveals, purported carbon credits frequently fail to accomplish genuine carbon savings while acquitting continued pollution (Song & Temple, 2021). In a society plagued by disinformation and distrust, educational institutions must aspire to model humility, integrity, specificity, and transparency, by clearly and honestly communicating motivations, achievements, limits, and failures.

None of the above outlined approaches could seriously be said to accomplish very much from any holistic systems perspective, and all are absent any meaningful equity or justice component. Dominant approaches to campus sustainability are narrowly defined to benefit dominant segments of society. And as the fight for fossil fuel divestment demonstrates, sustained pressure from multiple constituencies inside and outside the academy may be necessary to effect a paradigm shift.

The Campus in Historical and Geopolitical Context

Even when sustainability initiatives are moderately successful with respect to relatively narrow measures, any efforts that do not extend beyond campus grounds to engage and benefit surrounding communities at best constitute limited local efforts to reduce environmental bads and hoard environmental goods, while ignoring and possibly exacerbating environmental injustice and relative environmental vulnerabilities. Genuine sustainability on campus would entail looking backwards as well as forwards – and certainly looking well beyond the nicely manicured groves of academe.

To begin thoughtfully incorporating racial equity into an understanding of something such as a sustainable campus landscape, one must begin by interrogating the very origins of our buildings and grounds. The foundation of our land-grant institutions are [expropriated Indigenous lands](#): the Morrill Act enabled funds from the sale of 80,000 land parcels taken from 250 tribal communities, together totaling more than the combined area of Connecticut and Massachusetts, to endow 52 universities (Lee & Ahtone, 2020). Nearly a third of these institutions have held on to a portion of the stolen lands and are [still profiting](#) today from land use revenue streams (Goodluck, Ahtone & Lee, 2020). Meanwhile, many of our most prestigious private institutions were built by the [labor or sale of enslaved peoples](#) (Smith & Ellis, 2017).

Just, equitable and inclusive sustainability initiatives would seek to acknowledge and engage responsibly and collaboratively with present-day descendants of the dispossessed and enslaved, as well as with other contemporary marginalized members of neighboring and nearby communities. How many of those descendants and unaffiliated neighbors could articulate concrete advantages that they have gained from any sustainability projects in the postsecondary sector? How do they experience the benefits of campus beautification efforts?

These issues are especially relevant for institutions located in communities facing structural disadvantages. As Davarian Baldwin has noted, “because most wealthy schools sit in largely Black and Brown communities, their unjust and inequitable relationships with their neighbors are precisely ‘DEI’ issues” (Greene, 2021). If racial equity and social justice are ever to come to the fore of sustainability efforts on campus, then conceptions of community and appreciations of system boundaries must extend far beyond the groves of academe.

Toward Sustainability Informed and Inflected by Justice

Without consistent, deliberate effort, there is little reason to believe that institutions designed for the benefit of a limited segment of society will ever pursue campus sustainability initiatives that meaningfully address any dimension of racial equity or social justice. Sustainability that fails to consider injustice is a sustainability that will only sustain injustice. A just sustainability could transform post-secondary education from a private good to a public one.

The mission and purpose of higher education demand that we always ask ourselves: Sustainability of what? Sustainability for whom? Higher education institutions exist within the context of time and space, and our conceptions of sustainability must expand accordingly to acknowledge historical and geographical circumstances. A morally informed and expansive notion of sustainability would afford institutions the opportunity to reimagine social responsibility and our obligations to the past, present and future.

Successful sustainability professionals cannot be mere technocratic managers but must endeavor to be compassionate, humanistic partners – partners who recognize that they inhabit a particular place with a specific history. As humans, we are embodied creatures acting in the context of complex social-ecological systems, creatures embedded and emplaced in both social and physical geographies. Sustainability that aspires toward justice is a sustainability that acknowledges, appreciates, and holds itself accountable to these realities, and to the peoples and trajectories of suffering born of them.

We must move beyond current accounting methodologies for sustainability to broader accountability orientations. What do we owe society? Reimagining campus sustainability offers us an opportunity to grapple with that central question, one that too often we seek to elude or elide.

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Moving from “Sustaina-splaining” to Inclusion:

Three Practitioners’ Learning Journeys

By Elida Erickson, Ariel Stevenson, Juliana Goodlaw-Morris



Elida Erickson (she/her)

Elida Erickson joined the University of California Santa Cruz (UCSC) campus in 2005, and the Sustainability Office in 2011. She has collaborated with the local Santa Cruz community, students, faculty and staff to support waste reduction and education, as well as reduce campus water usage by 25% at the height of the California statewide drought in 2014-15. In her current role as Sustainability Director, she is a strong advocate for student engagement and professional growth, and is passionate about challenging the sustainability movement to open up to multi-culturally relevant interpretations of how to care for the environment. She played a foundational role in the development of UCSC’s award-winning People of Color Sustainability Collective. Elida holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Loyola University New Orleans, and Master of Science in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from Indiana University.

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Ariel Stevenson is the Director of Programs & Initiatives for the Office of Inclusive Excellence at California State University, San Marcos (CSUSM). She has over 15 years of experience in higher education as a facilitator, instructor and practitioner in the area of equity and social justice. She is a co-creator of the Environmental Justice Internship program, received the 2021 President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence & Diversity and the 2021 Employee of the Year at CSUSM. She currently works closely with students, faculty, staff and the wider campus community. Ariel received her M.A. in Sociological Practice from CSU San Marcos and her dual B.A. degrees in Sociology and Political Science with a minor in Latin American studies from Albright College in Pennsylvania. Currently, she is an educational doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign.

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Juliana Goodlaw-Morris joined California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) as the Sustainability Manager in 2015. Juliana works with students, staff, and faculty to create a culture of inclusive sustainability. She engages with faculty to create transformative academic opportunities for students to connect their education to real-life learning through developing the campus as a living laboratory. Juliana is a mentor and advisor to many students and is committed to connecting sustainability with social justice and diversity and collaborates closely with the Office of Inclusive Excellence, including the development of the award winning Environmental Justice internship program. In demonstration of her inclusive sustainability efforts, Juliana was honored with CSUSM President’s Award for Inclusive Excellence and Diversity. Juliana holds a M.A. in Sustainable Community Development and a B.A. in Environmental Studies from the UC Santa Cruz.

Three Practitioners' Stories

How can our campuses become more socially and environmentally just? As practitioners at CSU San Marcos and UC Santa Cruz, we have been exploring this question through a framework that we call Inclusive Sustainability. Before we deep dive into this theoretical concept and explore critical questions, we'd like to share our own personal stories and learning journeys along the way. These stories are being shared to emphasize the importance of multiple perspectives and contextualize the Inclusive Sustainability discussion.

Ariel's Story: Weed and Seed

I grew up in a community where Blackness was honored and celebrated. My entire identity was shaped around being a Black woman, not a woman who happens to be Black. For some, it may not be a distinction at all, but for me, it is the very thing that has shaped my life. The difference for me is emancipatory in the same way that Frantz Fanon distinguished Blackness in itself and Blackness for itself (Welcome, 2007). That very concept offers my entrée into justice work as I posit Blackness for myself in the work of environmental justice. Environmental justice work is already rooted in the fight for racial justice. As a youth, local leaders taught me about Black identity and the importance of resiliency. While the Department of Justice used the ["Weed and Seed" program](#) to remove men and women who were deemed "criminal" in my neighborhood (U.S Department of Justice, 2008), they were only successful in furthering the distrust of law enforcement and the mass incarceration of Black men and women.



Formerly incarcerated men re-entered my neighborhoods, and when they returned, they returned as [Pan-African](#) community scholars (American Historical Association). Through the community center, they took children to open fields and planted gardens. I know this now as guerrilla gardening. They reimagined what "weed and seed" meant. They weeded out harmful ideals of Blackness and criminality. They seeded in me the importance of having fresh, healthy food that was homegrown and taking care of our own community. These community scholars showed me what Black leadership looked like and introduced me to the notion of sustainability without ever using the term while connecting me to a life-long passion. Environmental and racial justice work are bound together, therefore there is no liberation of the earth without the liberation of Black people.

Juliana's Story: A Sense of Place and No to Grapes

One of my first memories was when my mother signed up for an edible nature hike in the mountains behind our house outside of Los Angeles. We foraged for all sorts of vegetables and then cooked them on the mountaintop with other families that were a part of this experience. At the time, my brothers, sister and I thought it was outlandish, yet now I recognize that my mother was trying to instill a sense of place and how a community can be formed through a connection to the land. A second memory that is imprinted in my mind was when I learned that my mom wouldn't buy grapes when available at the grocery store. I asked my mother to buy them, but she just said "no, we don't buy grapes." Later, she told the story of Cesar Chavez and how many of our family members marched with him during the [farm workers strikes in the 1960-1970's](#) (Kim, 2017). She shared the importance of supporting farm workers, pay equity and justice. This story expanded my understanding of our world and gave me my social justice foundation. My last memory I want to share connects the importance of place, justice and nature. I was lucky enough to have grandparents that lived next to a butterfly grove and when I was in high school, I learned that they were spearheading a community fight to protect the monarch grove from development. This fight lasted many years, but now the [Coronado Butterfly Preserve](#) is open space in perpetuity. My world has been shaped by these memories and so many other moments - but one thing has remained constant, connecting people with nature, fighting for social justice and ensuring a sense of place have shaped my sustainability understanding.



Elida's Story: Students' Lived Experiences Matter

When I joined the Sustainability Office in 2011, our work was viewed as separate from diversity, equity and inclusion. The gap was noticeable to me, following a 7-year career in student affairs where we had regularly prioritized diversity and inclusion training and discussions. Something was clearly missing.

It comes as no surprise that it was the students who challenged this. As our student population became increasingly diverse, it was difficult for staff to ignore the glaring fact that sustainability spaces across campus were predominantly white. BIPOC students were regularly experiencing microaggressions - often within campus environmental spaces that espoused the values of being open and accepting - and [they were speaking up about it](#).



In one instance, a student felt shamed by a student employee at a zero waste station about how to properly sort their recycling. My colleagues at the [Ethnic Resource Centers](#) shared that this incident made them feel so unwelcome that they were seriously considering leaving campus. I was troubled to learn that my work had the potential to negatively impact a student's success in such a profound way, and I wanted to dig deeper.

I have learned that the "environment" is not something that many of today's students see as separate from their lived experiences. Whether they are literally over-policed by law enforcement - or figuratively over-policed in an environment that shames people for different ways of knowing - it directly impacts their success as a student. Students' lived experiences matter. This realization was the start of a journey that led to amazing collaborations with colleagues across campus and the UC system in the years to follow, including the development of the concept of [Inclusive Sustainability](#).



Inclusive Sustainability

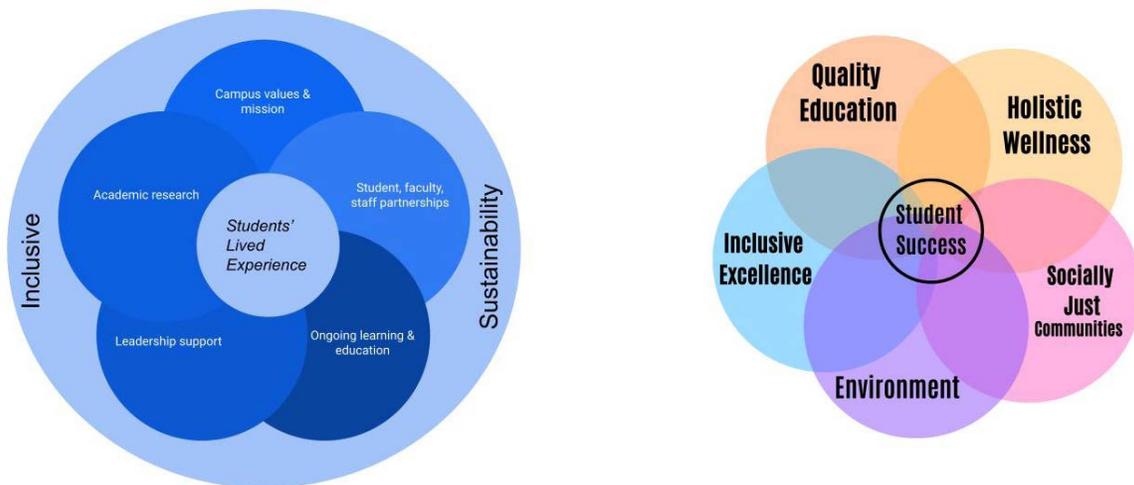
The theoretical framework for Inclusive Sustainability (IS) recognizes that historically, the work of sustainability alone rarely addresses environmental injustices, intersectionality or social justice. This has changed in recent years and conversations are expanding. For example, social movements like [Black Lives Matter](#) or the "Water is Life" [Mní Wičóni Movement](#) have played a part in jolting the conversations forward. Coined by the University of California Santa Cruz in 2015, Inclusive Sustainability denotes the connection between sustainability and social justice in higher education (Lu et al., 2017). There was a need to actively strive to advance different cultural definitions of how to care for environmental spaces and human communities, and promote multicultural inclusion in sustainability initiatives across the campus.

California State University San Marcos (CSUSM) utilizes the IS framework by directly connecting the work of the [Office of Inclusive Excellence and the Sustainability Program](#). Inclusive Sustainability attempts to offer institutions the ability to examine and consider environmental systemic and institutional barriers that prevent student success, as it is normally not included when identifying equity gaps for students. Institutions often use data and other demographics such as race, ethnicity, first generation or other indicators of underrepresentation. Including IS as an intersectional indicator can offer a deeper analysis of what it means to provide students with what they need to succeed.

Similar to how the U.S. Department of Education’s [College Assistant Migrant Programs \(CAMP\)](#) identifies and addresses the needs of students who come from migrant farmer worker families, IS can be utilized to support students who come to our campuses from environmentally disproportionately burdened communities. Some environmental barriers range from exposure to air pollution leaving many students with asthma or breathing problems, transportation issues leaving some students and families with limited to or no access to public transportation, or communities that are impacted by poor water quality leaving them no option but to buy single use water plastic bottles.

Programs that are already dealing with environmental injustices - whether intentionally or unintentionally - can be examined to help sustainability and social justice practitioners think creatively on how we can expand to serve additional student populations that face different forms of environmental injustice. Over the last year, we unfortunately saw firsthand what it means when a virus such as Covid-19 exposes the environmental injustices that disproportionately affect low-income neighborhoods or large portions of our student communities and their families (Koma et al., 2020).

The IS model applied very similarly at CSUSM and UCSC uses the following graphics to center student success, their lived experiences, and contributions of knowledge that advance and are foundational to the work of sustainability. [Academic research](#) conducted through the [People of](#)



[Color Sustainability Collective \(PoCSC\)](#) at UCSC demonstrates how students experience the issues of diversity and sustainability.

When approaching the work of IS while centering students, it is important to understand that students themselves are cognizant that institutions of higher education have not fully confronted their own racial-colonial foundations (Stein, 2018). Students are challenging and pushing the way that everyday institutional business is conducted. They are demanding that institutions that have ancestral remains on display return them to appropriate ancestral communities for proper burial, they are pushing to stop burning fossil fuels, and they want institutions to refuse to do business with companies and places that are devastating people and the planet. IS offers the opportunity for students to reimagine and “vision forward” what it means to advance environmental justice in higher education.

Exploring Critical Questions: Opportunities to Reframe the Conversation

What does it look like and feel like to put IS into practice? Opportunities abound on the path ahead, and so do stumbling blocks. Common missteps by traditional sustainability practitioners may include:

- Assuming that one's own understanding of sustainability applies to everyone
- Not prioritizing growth and learning around diversity and social justice issues
- Not learning other languages, lived experiences, and ways of knowing to effectively interact with local communities
- "Sustaina-splaining" environmental justice to folks who own it as their own lived experience
- Viewing "diversity, equity, inclusion, justice (DEIJ)" and "sustainability" as separate issues

It is important to approach IS work with an open mind and a willingness to learn from mistakes. Sustainability practitioners at CSUSM and UCSC have found it helpful to adopt a mindset of being on a continual learning journey. One approach to help enable that mindset is by exploring critical questions, such as the ones offered in this [self-assessment developed by UCSC](#).

One way that traditional sustainability practitioners, particularly [well-meaning white folks](#) (Kendall, 2010) have been known to make missteps is through the art of "sustaina-splaining" (think [mansplaining](#) or [whitesplaining](#)). Sustaina-splaining is the tendency to oversimplify an environmental issue that we're passionate about with someone (often BIPOC or a member of an under-resourced group) whom one assumes is a sustainability novice. Sustainability enthusiasts tend to do most of the talking and continually walk a fine line between being enthusiastic and condescending. The conversation often ends with some kind of "invitation" to engage further, such as:

- Join our sustainability strategic planning process
- Participate in a research project
- Fill out a survey
- Attend our event
- Try to care more about the environment

This well-meaning approach usually results in more damage than good, by centering our own approach to sustainability without leaving space for other ways of knowing. The message being communicated is: "Come get involved in our solution because we think it will save you and your community". Let's unpack that.



University of California, Santa Cruz's 2018 "Dig In" conference co-hosted by People of Color Sustainability Collective. Courtesy of University of California, Santa Cruz

Critical questions for you and your institution to consider:

- Are we being inclusive when we reach out to under-resourced groups on campus or in our local communities? What are our intentions?
- Do under-resourced groups see themselves represented in the work that we are doing?
- Do we see ourselves showing up to support the work that under-resourced groups are already doing?
- What is our current understanding of different cultural interpretations on how to care for the environment, and how can we learn more?

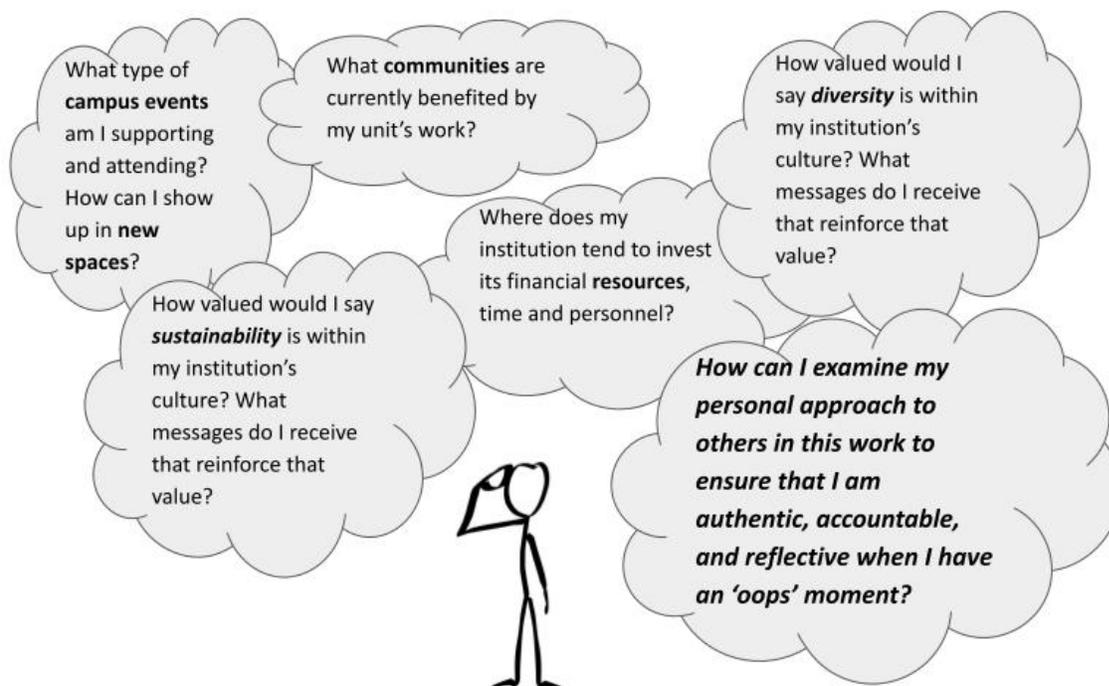
Through the lens of IS, the equation can be flipped to center under-resourced community member voices, build meaningful relationships over time, and learn how to most effectively support the work that is already happening.

Another common misstep is viewing sustainability and DEIJ as separate issues. By approaching our work through an IS framework that centers student success and their lived experiences, the intersection of these issues becomes impossible to miss. Today's students have grown up in an environment of structural inequities within an extractive consumer economy that has been actively feeding off of the planet, as well as BIPOC folks.

In a [TedTalk](#), Van Jones (2010) said "In order to trash the planet, you have to trash people. But if you create a world where you don't trash people, you can't trash the planet." By centering the goal of student success, a core value at most academic institutions, this opens up avenues for conversations with campus colleagues and administrators, and encourages them to start viewing diversity and sustainability as intersectional issues. For example, CSU Monterey Bay recently merged their diversity and sustainability offices and are now the [Office of Inclusive Excellence and Sustainability](#).

At CSUSM and UCSC, building collaborative relationships across diversity offices, resource centers and sustainability offices has been a good starting point. This takes time, often years. That can be hard to grasp for sustainability practitioners in particular, who are accustomed to enacting solutions in a race against the clock of climate change.

There are several critical questions that can be explored to ensure success as these important relationships are being built:



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Pedagogies for cultivating critical consciousness:

Principles for Teaching and Learning to Engage with Racial Equity, Social Justice, and Sustainability

By Jordan King & Carlos R. Casanova



Jordan King (he/his)

Jordan King is a Doctoral Student in the School of Sustainability and College of Global Futures at Arizona State University. His work focuses on how to enable students to become change agents in creating more equitable, just, and sustainable futures. More specifically, his research and practical work aims to support educators to understand and assess what it means for education to facilitate personal and social transformation. In the past, Jordan has helped to train nonformal educators and pre-service teachers in sustainability education, seeking to promote greater access to quality education in both K-12 and higher education.

Carlos R. Casanova (he/his)

Carlos R. Casanova is an assistant professor of education in the Education Studies program in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. His research interests include social issues and social justice education, and critical education for sustainable development. Specifically, Casanova explores the socio-political context of community-based organizations or afterschool education programs. Casanova's research focuses on the learning and critical development that takes place as Latinx youth participate in consciousness raising and culturally relevant program activities. Casanova's teaching experiences include undergraduate courses in sociological theory, social problems, and social justice education.



Reorienting Higher Education Pedagogies

The prospect of sustainability has become increasingly relevant in higher education. Academic staff at higher education institutions are finding ways to teach about sustainability, operations staff are changing approaches to practice sustainability, and research efforts seek to understand sustainability and the changes it necessitates. Most importantly, students are eager to engage with sustainability and dimensions of social change as they recognize the complex challenges as well as opportunities that their generation faces. While this trend is promising, it also demands reflection on how higher education and sustainability are connected to broader societal challenges. These challenges especially highlight the need to pursue racial equity and social justice. Yet in the context of sustainability and higher education, racial equity and social justice have received marginal attention until recently when an emerging emphasis on these issues has created new possibilities for learning, action, and change.

In this context, we focus our reflection on a key area of opportunity for sustainability in higher education, specifically the pedagogies and purposes employed by instructors. Pedagogies are the philosophical approaches and practical activities that instructors use to shape educational experiences. This essay presents a series of pedagogical principles gleaned from literature on social justice and critical pedagogy that can help to infuse sustainability in higher education with tools to reimagine how and why pedagogies can shift to operate at the intersection of transformation for sustainability, racial equity, and social justice.

Critical Consciousness for Learning and Change

In this shift, a need exists for education to cultivate critical consciousness. The idea of critical consciousness emerged from the work of Paulo Friere (1968) and details a process for students to enable their capacity to create change through reflection and action. Critical consciousness entails three key aspects: (1) deep reflection on existing power structures and dynamics, (2) sense of agency to seek and enact change in inequitable systems, and, (3) intensive action in working both individually and collaboratively to pursue emancipation from these oppressive systems and structures.

For sustainability in higher education, critical consciousness represents a meaningful learning outcome in several ways. First, nourishing critical consciousness can support students to examine the world around them and recognize how the social, cultural, political, economic, and ecological systems that they are embedded in can result in structural issues that perpetuate not only unsustainability but inequity and injustice as well. Second, as the critical consciousness of students emerges, they may gain motivation and feel empowered to address the sustainability challenges around them. And third, raising critical consciousness can support students to become sustainability change agents capable of navigating and disrupting unsustainable systems to work toward better futures.

Infusing Sustainability Education with Social Justice Pedagogies

While sustainability education has not fully engaged with issues related to racial equity and social justice (Maina-Okori et al., 2018), there are existing approaches that can be utilized to engage with these topics. Experiential learning can support students to analyze issues related to inequity or injustice by providing tangible learning opportunities that scaffold toward real-world application. Transdisciplinary projects, where students collaborate to design solutions with community stakeholders, can allow for students to learn from and with those already working on these topics, but can also help to build the interpersonal skills and individual resilience to manage the demands of dynamic social challenges. Integrating diverse ways of knowing into educational opportunities, such as traditional ecological knowledge, can also help students to reflect on their own approaches to knowledge and action, as well as how experiences are shaped by one's perspectives, values, and identities.



Each of the approaches described above can be relevant for teaching and learning that engages with racial equity and social justice in addition to being appropriate for sustainability education. However, more intensive and targeted efforts to elevate students' critical consciousness can benefit from insights from areas of discourse such as social justice education and critical pedagogy. Having a basic set of principles to guide and frame teaching that raises students' critical consciousness can better support instructors to meet the needs of their students and promote learning, action, and change for racial equity, social justice, and sustainability. The five principles presented below can help to achieve these goals.

Pedagogical Principles for Raising Critical Consciousness

Education is a Political and not a Neutral Site

From a critical pedagogy perspective, education is always going to be a reflection of individuals in political power, who historically have been heterosexual upper-class white men. This stance was advanced by one of the key figures of critical pedagogy, Brazilian educator and activist Paulo Freire. In his 1968 book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire stated, "all education is political, teaching is never a neutral site" (p.19). Examples of education as a political site include an Arizona legislative bill that banned the teaching of Ethnic Studies and certain books in high school classrooms. Seven years later a federal judge ruled the state violated students' First and Fourteenth amendment rights. More recently, legislators in Idaho, and several other states, organized to forbid the teaching of Critical Race Theory (CRT) tenets in public schools and universities. CRT includes a commitment to social justice by centering the experiences and knowledge of people of color, and using multiple approaches from a variety of disciplines (such as women's studies, sociology, history, law, psychology, film and theater) to analyze racism within both historical and contemporary contexts (Solorzano, 1997). These examples demonstrate how certain values become privileged in education and society, leaving other value sets and social groups marginalized through politically charged educational approaches and policies.

Recognizing education as a contested space is essential to reorienting education toward the possibility for social change. When academic and non-academic staff reject education as a political site, their pedagogy can be reduced to a "technician engaged in formalistic rituals unconcerned with disturbing and urgent problems that confront society" (Giroux, 1997, p. 265). Pedagogies that teach to the test, focus on accountability, and aim to achieve objective standards, are all designed to limit opportunities to raise students' critical consciousness. To challenge the political power embedded in education and leave behind the "formalistic rituals" of commonplace modes of education, instructors can become participatory citizens in a democratic classroom. This happens when instructors and students make decisions about how we should live together, what should be included in the curriculum, as well as when students have opportunities to research and take action toward racial equity, social justice, and sustainability.

Aim to Foster Problem Posing Process and Dialogue

Problem posing process is a strategy to support learning related to social problems that directly impact students and community members. This process is cultivated in classrooms where there is equal opportunity for students and instructors to engage in authentic dialogue by displaying mutual respect, love, and support for each other's voices and ideas. Thus, dialogue is an indispensable characteristic of teaching and learning that engages with racial equity, social justice, and sustainability. The problem posing process and dialogue breaks away from characteristics of banking education, in which the instructor is the primary knowledge holder and deposits knowledge into students who are silent, passive, and empty vessels. One of the key characteristics of problem posing education is that the instructor is no longer the one who teaches but is taught and teaches through dialogue with students (Freire, 1968).

When instructors and students teach each other they both become responsible for a process that cultivates critical consciousness. They become co-investigators in dialogue with each other as they critically examine material, social, and ecological issues to reveal the way their social identities shape their world. In essence, their world is no longer something to be described but becomes viewed as a dynamic process and an object to be transformed. One way to apply problem posing education and dialogue is to offer students opportunities to facilitate classroom discussions. Student facilitators should refrain from practices common to formal presentations and banking education (where the instructor talks and the students listen and are silent) and instead pose questions to their peers that link readings and activities to social, political, and ecological contexts, student identities, and historical events. Instructors should actively participate in these student-led activities to foster an inclusive and equitable learning community. AASHE's Campus Sustainability Hub includes an [instructor resource](#) for more ideas on creating culturally inclusive courses (Cagle, 2021).

Base Curriculum and Materials on the Needs and Interests of Students

There is no set curriculum in sustainability education, nor in teaching related to racial equity or social justice, because texts and activities need to incorporate content that directly connects to students' lived experiences, their multiple identities, and the issues that they face in these contexts. First and foremost, instructors and students must collectively engage in critical self-reflection, meaning they must understand the intersection of their own identities as both privileged and marginalized, examining the socialization process that has shaped their social position and understanding of social groups and events (Garcia, 2020). Second, there needs to be an authentic dialogue about the bodies of knowledge taught in the course, such as whose knowledge is valued and whose voices are centered in the text.

When instructors and students apply these practices they can develop a collective understanding of whose identities, voices, histories, and knowledge have been excluded from the curriculum. To address this inequity, instructors can integrate marginalized students' stories and counternarratives into the curriculum. This can be done through marginalized students sharing lived experiences, text or media created by marginalized groups, or other material that reflects the social, cultural, and political experiences of groups who have been excluded from the curriculum. Another way is through a social action approach, where students critically examine how inequities are embedded into social institutions and society through laws, policies, and practices. Students also need to engage in meaning-making processes that explore inequities and the connections to their own identities. These opportunities can make learning meaningful and increase the potential for students to understand root causes of social inequity while providing a foundation for action.

Seek to Facilitate Praxis to Achieve Transformation

Praxis is “critical reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1993, p.51). The critical reflection component involves collective dialogue among students and instructors, aimed to critically understand the social institutions and ideologies that shape their daily lives and lived experiences. The action component emerges from collective dialogue among students and instructors that is positioned toward transforming those social institutions and ideologies that have historically marginalized social groups by restricting them from full participation as members of society. This includes challenging the dehumanizing practices often promoted by educational institutions (Torres & Mercado, 2004). In this way, praxis aims to be culturally and contextually relevant, facilitating meaning-making, action, and learning driven by students.

Participating in praxis highlights the need for higher education to emphasize more than nurturing an understanding of social institutions and society. Praxis cultivates a space for students and instructors to come together in solidarity to critically reflect upon their reality and to transform it through collective action. This means engaging with tensions and changes in their ideologies and seeking change in specific historical and geographic educational and social spaces. Authentic community-university partnerships and collaborations can cultivate these processes. In these spaces (which can be both on college campuses or in community spaces) college students and historically marginalized community members can critically reflect on theories and real-world issues related to racism, social justice, equity, and sustainability, leading to collective action to transform their reality. An accompanying essay in this anthology, *Change Comes from the Margins: Sustainability Efforts in Community-Campus Partnerships*, explores this topic more fully.

Implications for Learning, Action, and Change in Higher Education

These principles offer a pathway toward more meaningfully engaging with racial equity and social justice in relation to sustainability in higher education. Issues in each of these areas can be deeply entangled, and the teaching and learning strategies to address these issues can also be intertwined. Seeking synergies in how to teach, learn, take action, and create change for a more equitable, just, and sustainable future is thus a key goal for academic staff, non-academic staff, and students. Advancing towards these ambitions demands new roles, responsibilities, and possibilities in higher education. New roles will entail students acting as facilitators, change agents, and leaders, as instructors devote their energy toward fostering and supporting success in these capacities. New responsibilities means focusing not just on knowledge or economic development, but authentically advancing social change, particularly through transforming higher education institutions themselves to better meet the needs of students and society. Finally, new possibilities can emerge for higher education as it takes on these new roles and responsibilities, fully engaging with the challenges and opportunities of pursuing racial equity, social justice, and sustainability. Implementing pedagogies to cultivate critical consciousness seems like a good place to start this journey.

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