



Module 3 Environmental Justice

45 minutes

Purpose of this lesson

- Introduce students to the concept of environmental justice
- Research and review case studies of environmental justice

Materials

Copy of the lesson
Computers with internet access

Background and discussion

Every person on the planet has a right to clean water and clean air, and no individual has a right to degrade and destroy the environment. Focused specifically on human welfare, environmental justice is concerned with the pursuit of equal justice and equal protection under the law for all environmental statutes and regulations without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and /or socioeconomic status. This concept applies to governmental actions at all levels -- local, state and federal -- as well as private industry activities.

The following list was adopted as the Principles of Environmental Justice at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. This list was adopted on October 27, 1991, in Washington, D.C. (<http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/EJSUMMITwlecome.html>)

1. Environmental justice affirms ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.
2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
10. Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.
13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.
17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of the Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Procedure and Assessment

1. Review the environmental justice case studies
2. Select one case study to investigate further. Your research should focus on the following:

- The Problem and Background Information (briefly describe, in 1 - 2 paragraphs, the issue)
 - Key Players (organizations, companies, people involved with the case)
 - Demographics (who is affected by the issue)
 - Solutions and/or Recommendations (based on your research, how should the case be handled?)
4. Discuss the results of your research with the balance of the class.
 3. Group discussion question: Are there local examples of environmental injustice?