

Final proposal for submission to Stanford's Sustainability Initiative CFP. All comments or questions are welcome: [empolk@stanford.edu](mailto:empolk@stanford.edu), [sdiver@stanford.edu](mailto:sdiver@stanford.edu)

**Collaborators:**

- Rob Jackson (PI), Professor, Earth System Science, Senior Fellow, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, Senior Fellow, Precourt Institute for Energy
- Emily Polk (co-PI), Advanced Lecturer, Program in Writing and Rhetoric
- Sibyl Diver (co-PI), Research Scientist, Department of Earth System Science; Affiliate, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment
- Esther Conrad, Director of Community Engaged Learning for Environmental Sustainability, Haas Center for Public Service
- Richard Nevle, Deputy Director, Earth Systems Program
- Students for Environmental and Racial Justice (SERJ)
- Rodolfo Dirzo, Bing Professor of Environmental Science, Department of Biology; Senior Fellow, Woods Institute for the Environment,
- Gabrielle Hecht, Frank Stanton Foundation Professor of Nuclear Security; Senior Fellow, Center for International Security & Cooperation; Professor of History and, by courtesy, of Anthropology
- Gabrielle Wong-Parodi, Assistant Professor, Earth System Science; Center Fellow, Woods Institute for the Environment
- Lisa Goldman Rosas, Assistant Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Population Health and the Department of Medicine, Division of Primary Care and Population Health at Stanford School of Medicine
- Margaret Levi, Sara Miller McCune Director, Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS); Professor, Political Science; Senior Fellow, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment
- Christopher Field, Perry L. McCarty Director, Woods Institute for the Environment
- Nicole Ardoin, Emmett Family Faculty Scholar & Sykes Family E-IPER Faculty Director, Emmett Interdisciplinary Program in Environment and Resources; Associate Professor, Graduate School of Education; Senior Fellow, Woods Institute for the Environment;
- Pamela Matson, Goldman Professor, Department of Earth System Science; Director, Sustainability Science and Practice Graduate Program; Senior Fellow, Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment
- Stephen Luby, Professor of Medicine (Infectious Diseases & Geographic Medicine); Director of Research, Center for Innovation in Global Health; Senior Fellow, Woods Institute for the Environment; Senior Fellow, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies
- Donald Barr, Professor (Teaching) of Pediatrics (General Pediatrics), and by courtesy, at the Graduate School of Education
- Patrick Archie, Lecturer, Earth Systems Program; Director, O'Donohue Educational Farm
- Jorge Ramos, Associate Director for Environmental Education, Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve; Environmental Justice Section Chair, Ecological Society of America
- Penelope Van Tuyl, Associate Director, Center for Center for Human Rights and International Justice
- Jessie Brunner, Senior Program Manager, Center for Human Rights and International Justice
- Thomas Hayden, Director of the Master of Arts in Earth Systems, Environmental Communication Program
- Jonelle Whiting, Assistant Director of Student Services, Earth System Science Department
- Brian Sharbono, Associate Director, Programs, Woods Institute for the Environment

Final proposal for submission to Stanford's Sustainability Initiative CFP. All comments or questions are welcome: [empolk@stanford.edu](mailto:empolk@stanford.edu), [sdiver@stanford.edu](mailto:sdiver@stanford.edu)

- Mele Wheaton, Research Scholar, Graduate School of Education, Woods Institute for the Environment

## **Initiative for Environmental Equity and Sustainability at Stanford**

**The Goal:** The Initiative seeks to infuse environmental justice (EJ) principles into research; curricular, co-curricular, and residential education; outreach; and university operations across all of Stanford. The Initiative will ensure that Stanford can pioneer diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) within the sustainability space. We will also attend to fundamental student needs and expectations regarding sustainability education. This proposal addresses at least two of the required Stanford criteria: "Creating a Social-Political-Economic Framework" and "Enabling Communities to Flourish."

**A Critical Challenge: Sustainability and Equity:** Solving the sustainability challenges of the 21st century requires solutions that are grounded in equity, collaboration, and positive impacts for all people and societies. Disparate health impacts of COVID-19 have highlighted acute problems of environmental inequity, and demonstrate the need for sustainability solutions that include communities of color and economically disadvantaged groups. In April, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) found that African-Americans, who account for 13% of the total US population, represent 33% of COVID hospitalizations—a considerable overrepresentation. In May, research demonstrated that if Native American Nations were counted as states, Native Nations would be the five most infected states in the country, ahead of New York (Kristof, 2020). This is largely because Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities experience high rates of chronic health conditions and increased vulnerability due to living with disproportionately high levels of environmental pollution exposures and severe income inequality (e.g., Friedman, 2020).

To attend to these urgent problems, we propose a new initiative to develop the infrastructure and community we need to support Environmental Justice at Stanford. If we do not take action now, we will be ill prepared to advance a more inclusive approach to sustainability research and teaching at Stanford, to engage with the inequities of climate change, and to fulfill the commitments we have made to advance the [Movement for Black Lives](#).

Environmental equity seeks to achieve equal access to environmental benefits, and to prevent and mitigate the disproportionate impact of environmental harms for all people. Achieving environmental equity through sustainability means addressing the intersections between environmental science and human rights scholarship; engaging with historical legacies that shape the relationships between race, class, gender and environmental issues; and centering the voices of the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, both globally and locally. We can accomplish this at Stanford by integrating [environmental equity scholarship](#) (Agyeman et al., 2016; Bullard, 1993, 1996, 2000; Pellow, 2016; Pulido 2000; Pulido and Peña, 1998; Taylor, 1997, 2000) into our research and teaching, and also by engaging more directly with impacted communities, in order to center their voices and leadership (Polk and Diver 2020).

**Launching a Campus-Wide Hub for Equity and Sustainability:** Expanding upon the successes already achieved by the [Stanford Environmental Justice Working](#)

Final proposal for submission to Stanford's Sustainability Initiative CFP. All comments or questions are welcome: [empolk@stanford.edu](mailto:empolk@stanford.edu), [sdiver@stanford.edu](mailto:sdiver@stanford.edu)

Group (*EJWG*), an interdisciplinary group of faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduates, we aim to create the resources and programming needed to address environmental equity issues at Stanford and in the world, and to ensure that this work is fully integrated into the design and launch of the new school of sustainability. To forward our goals, we will implement the following objectives:

1) **Foster community-engaged research on environmental equity and sustainability through the *Environmental Justice Clinic and Learning Community***. The Clinic will serve as an intellectual hub connecting environmental justice research and teaching across campus. Our team specializes in developing, incubating, and implementing research on environmental equity challenges in partnership with community leaders. We will advise students pursuing research on environmental equity issues, and connect undergraduate and graduate researchers across departments, including connections with the social sciences. Our Clinic will also support graduate fellowships for engaged research on environmental equity, which are currently not available. We have already piloted a highly successful version of the Clinic in winter 2020. Our accomplishments thus far include, for example, 1) enabling graduate students to effectively bring EJ approaches into their dissertation research, 2) supporting campus leaders on DEI initiatives, and 3) educating our community on how to integrate critical EJ scholarship into our work. Clinic research interests include the inequitable impacts of climate change and the pandemic, and [additional EJ research topics](#).

2) **Develop a 21<sup>st</sup> century curriculum for environmental equity and sustainability at Stanford**. This work includes supporting previously offered classes focused on environmental equity, as well as developing new courses and teaching modules. Our work will build towards a specialization in environmental equity offered through the new school of sustainability at Stanford. We will also lead workshops and training that expose more faculty to environmental equity issues, which can serve as a lens through which various disciplines approach their work. Workshops will support the integration of environmental justice pedagogy into existing syllabi and coursework. Our teaching, training, and outreach has already had a broad impact. For example, this year our [Intro to EJ course](#) brought over 14 frontline EJ community leaders to campus, and reached over 100 Stanford community members through our open lectures and symposium. Over the past year, our students have led campus-wide conversations on DEI issues, pursued EJ careers, and helped restructure campus advocacy to support greater solidarity with BIPOC communities. However, given the lack of funding for these courses, we are currently planning a more limited intro class, and our companion course [Shades of Green](#), which was oversubscribed last year, will not be taught unless funding is provided.

3) **Maximize impact through long-term partnerships with diverse communities**. This work would sustain long-term collaborations that center community voices within and outside of Stanford. This initiative will support the infrastructure needed to sustain academic-community relationships to meet real-world challenges, such as an ongoing research collaboration with the [Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment](#) on participatory environmental monitoring in the San Joaquin Valley. In partnership with the Haas Center for Public Service, we will facilitate environmental equity connections between faculty, students and community partners through classes, research, and internships. This will involve lifting up environmental equity initiatives on campus, such as the proposed "Closing the Gaps" residency project, and ongoing *EJWG* collaborations

Final proposal for submission to Stanford's Sustainability Initiative CFP. All comments or questions are welcome: [empolk@stanford.edu](mailto:empolk@stanford.edu), [sdiver@stanford.edu](mailto:sdiver@stanford.edu)

locally in East Palo Alto, and regionally. We will also host workshops for community leaders, and workshops designed by community members for the Stanford community. To maximize our impact, we will continue to build EJ collaborations with other universities in the region through the cross-institutional *Northern California Environmental Justice Network of Community-Academic Partnerships*, a network we helped to create last year.

To advance a more diverse and inclusive community partnership approach to our sustainability efforts, our team will take a coalition approach. This will involve collaborating with our respective departments, programs, and communities—Earth System Science, History, Biology, Education, the School of Medicine, the Woods Institute for the Environment, Earth Systems Program, Program in Writing and Rhetoric, the Haas Center for Public Service, Center for Human Rights and International Justice, the Stanford Educational Farm, Students for Environmental and Racial Justice, and additional supporters—in order to achieve a more just and sustainable future for all.

### References Cited:

Agyeman, J., Schlosberg, D., Craven, L., and Matthews, C. (2016). Trends and directions in environmental justice: from inequity to everyday life, community, and just sustainabilities. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* 41, 330–336. doi: 10.1146/annurev-environ-110615-090052

Bullard, R. D. (1993). Race and environmental justice in the United States. *Yale J. Int. Law* 18, 319–335.

Bullard, R. D. (Ed.). (1996). *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*, 2nd edn. San Francisco, CA: Sierra Club Books.

Bullard, R. D. (2000). *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*, 3rd edn. Boulder: Westview Press.

Eligon, J. Burch, A. D. S., Searcey, D., and Oppel, Jr., R. A. Black Americans Face Alarming Rates of Coronavirus Infection in Some States. *The New York Times*. April 7, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/07/us/coronavirus-race.html>

Friedman, L. (2020, April 8). Race, pollution and the coronavirus: A troubling story for communities of color. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://tinyurl.com/sprrfhj>

Kristof, N. The Top U.S. Coronavirus Hotspots are All on Indian Lands. *The New York Times*. May 30, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-native-americans.html>

Pellow, D. (2016). *Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge*. *DuBois Rev.* 13, 1–16. doi: 10.1017/S1742058X16000175

Final proposal for submission to Stanford's Sustainability Initiative CFP. All comments or questions are welcome: [empolk@stanford.edu](mailto:empolk@stanford.edu), [sdiver@stanford.edu](mailto:sdiver@stanford.edu)

Polk, E., Diver, S. 2020. Situating the Scientist: Creating Inclusive Science Communication Through Equity Framing and Environmental Justice. *Frontiers in Communication*. 5:6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2020.00006>.

Pulido, L. (2000). Rethinking environmental racism: white privilege and urban development in southern california. *Ann. Assoc. Am. Geogr.* 90, 12–40. doi: 10.1111/0004-5608.00182

Pulido, L., and Peña, D. (1998). Environmentalism and positionality: the early pesticide campaign of the United Farm Workers' organizing committee, 1965-71. *Race Gender Class* 6, 33–50. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41658847>

Taylor, D. (1997). American environmentalism: the role of race, class and gender in shaping activism 1820-1995. *Race Gender Class* 5, 16–62. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41674848>

Taylor, D. E. (2000). The rise of the environmental justice paradigm: injustice framing and the social construction of environmental discourses. *Am. Behav. Sci.* 43, 508–580. doi: 10.1177/0002764200043004003