WOMEN OUT FRONT: HOW WOMEN OF COLOR LEAD THE ENVIRONMENTAL

JUSTICE MOVEMENT

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree
Master of Arts
in the Department of Political Science,
Indiana University

July 2019

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty of Indiana University, in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts..

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This thesis is dedicated to the Black Feminist Movement and the women of color whose leadership is often erased.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge the time, commitment, and support of my thesis adviser, Dr. John McCormick, without whom this document would not have come to fruition. I would like to acknowledge the perspective and enthusiasm of Dr. Amanda Friesen, whose influence allowed me to explore the parts of political science that norms often leave unknown. I would like to acknowledge the guidance and questions of Dr. William Blomquist, who helped me to answer the question, "Why political science?"

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge my friends and family who have remained a constant support in my life. Madison Stout, I would not have been able to finish this thesis without your wit, humor, and friendship.

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Environmentalism has incorrectly, historically been canonized as a primarily white, primarily male, led movement. This thesis argues that the history of the environmental movement has been whitewashed. Women of color have been the main arbiters of change as leaders in their community who organize against the environmental degradation that disproportionately affects communities of color. Change is implemented by these women through representation, grassroots organizing, and coalition but these strategies have been unrecognized and undervalued for decades. As the rate of environmental degradation rapidly increases, specifically affecting communities of color, the voices of women of color need to be recognized, elevated, and heeded in order to make an environmental movement that prioritizes justice and the importance of intersectional voices.

John McCormick, Ph.D., Chair

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CalEPA	: California Environmental Protection Agency
CCSCLA	: Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles
EJ	: Environmental Justice
EJH	: Environmental Justice Hotspot
EJM	: Environmental Justice Movement
EJSCREEN	: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool
EPD	: Environmental Protection Division
EPOC	: Environmental Professionals of Color
MELA	: Mothers of East Los Angeles
PSR-LA	: Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles
WAND	: Women's Actions for New Directions
WAWA	: West Atlanta Watershed Alliance

Chapter 1: Introduction

As the environmental justice movement (EJM) has expanded and evolved over the past three decades, the movement has come to encompass a new range of issues and has motivated the organization of communities around the world. The movement has been most prolific in the United States, with grassroots organizers and local politicians leading efforts that change the way policy addresses inequitable environmental policies. This focus on challenging policy that leads to inequitable degradation is what separates the EJM from traditional environmentalism. The movement specifically addresses the burden on communities that have historically been social, economically, and politically disadvantaged. At the center of the EJM are women of color who have acted as the central and vocal agents of change in the evolution of environmental policy. Thus the focus of this thesis will be an investigation of how women of color influence environmental policy.

There are many reasons why such an investigation is important, but there are a few reasons that deserve to be highlighted before moving forward. The United States has had a long history of systematic oppression against marginalized populations based on sex, race, and affluence. Inequitable policies have led to living and working environments that disproportionately degrade the lives and health marginalized groups. Women of color are arguably the most negatively impacted by inequitable policy because of their position at the intersection of multiple marginalized groups based on their race and gender. This places women of color in a unique position of living in the intersections of these inequitable policies while often not being recognized for either their struggles or for their leadership. So the primary purpose of this investigation is recognition because for too

long the actions of women of color have remained unrecognized and misrecognized, which only contributes to further systemic inequalities and propels the narrative that largely attributes environmentalism with white men and women (Anthony, Ellis, and Blackwell 2003, Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2001). By focusing on recognition, this analysis is meant to combat the traditional assumption of who really are the agents of change when it comes to environmentalism.

The first section of this thesis will focus on providing the historical context and political framework for the EJM. Since the Industrial Revolution, the EJM has experienced an evolution. While conservation and preservation of natural lands and resources is still a top priority of many environmentalists, other issues related to the environmental impact on individuals and community's quality of life has become more pervasive over time. This change in focus from conservation to focusing on the quality of life of real people was the beginning of the EJM that began in the United States in the mid-1980s (Bullard 1992, Sze and London 2008). The illegal dumping of toxic waste in Warren County started a movement that has continued to morph into a political machine as the movement has become more defined. Many early critics of the movement believed that the purpose of the movement would be too constrained to singular issues like the illegal dumping in Warren County or that it would be ambiguously all encompassing of quality of life issues to be successful. Fortunately, EJ leaders early on recognized this potential branding problem and have used both of those concerns as effective political tools. A certain degree of ambiguity in message has allowed flexibility of the movement and the concentrated, singular campaigns have proven to be powerhouses of grassroots organizations. By continually focusing on the "justice" concept of the movement, EJ

supporters are able to maintain a consistent message across their many platforms (Bullard 2000, Bell 2014).

For these reasons, the EJ platform has become an effective platform for women of color to combat issues that are explicitly and implicitly impacted by race, sex, and affluence. While intersectionality has not always been an explicit cornerstone of the EJM, the movement's focus on ensuring justice through equal opportunity of quality of life is inherently related to the idea of intersectionality. Environmental justice demands that its audience take into consideration the experiences and perspectives of the individuals and communities who have historically been oppressed or ignored (Agyeman 2002). Those individuals and communities experiencing environmental injustices are often not isolated in one social category, but instead many times encapsulate life at the intersections. Environmental injustices are actions or policies that disproportionately affect populations based on race, gender, education, economic status, language ability, and many other qualities, as compared to how those policies impact more privileged citizens that are often White, often male, and often more affluent (Bullard 1992, 2000) The threat, or at least the perceived threat, to quality of life thus directly related to women of color whose experiences have been influenced by a system that has historically punished them for having these intersectional identities. Thus, another purpose of this thesis is to encourage the integration of intersectionality into the dialogue of traditional environmentalism.

In order to understand how women of color are influencing environmental policy, this thesis compiles two case studies of Los Angeles, California and Atlanta, Georgia. These two cities provide insight into how the actions and strategies for EJ advocates in metropolitan areas differ between an environmentally progressive state like California

and a more environmentally conservative state like Georgia. These two case studies also provide a comparison of a more established EJM that has formed over the past 30 years in Los Angeles, compared to the relatively new EJM that has grown in Atlanta over the past decade. Due to the difference in these states' approaches to environmental policy and regulation, there is more detailed information available for Los Angeles, but the investigative process is still relatively the same. The focus in both cities will be on the EJ "hotspots" that exist in each city. EJ hotspots are determined based on their demographic make-up, such as race, gender, education level, poverty level, and language isolation, and this information is paired with the number of pollution points in close proximity. In both L.A. and Atlanta there are dozens of hotspots in which the individuals living within those neighborhoods bear a higher environmental burden than the neighborhoods that are more white and more affluent. Once these hotspots are identified, this thesis investigates how women of color in these cities have brought about change through their political office, grassroots organizing, and coalition building.

The case study of Los Angeles focuses primarily on EJ hotspots in East L.A, South Central L.A., and Pacoima. These areas of L.A. have experienced numerous problems with the environmental impact of city projects, have very limited greenspace, and have major concerns about pollution from nearby facilities the emit toxins into the air and produced wastewater. Environmental justice has been a cornerstone of local women of color involved in politics on the County Board of Supervisors and City Council such as Gloria Molina, Hilda Solis, and Nury Martinez. EJ grassroots organizations have also had a long history in L.A., with the two mammoth-sized organizations of Mothers of East Los Angeles and Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles acting as role-models

for EJ organizations across the nation and the world. Women of color in L. A. have also played an instrumental part in coalition building, which has led to strategic plans that promote a holistic EJ agenda on a very localized level through education, empowerment, and development of organization within the community.

The case study of Atlanta identifies EJ hotspots in central downtown Atlanta, the Chattahoochee River neighborhoods, the Fulton Industrial Boulevard, and Southwest Atlanta. These areas of Atlanta have been involved in a major development project with an EJ focus called the Atlanta Beltline Project. As such, these areas have a high number of brownfields, wastewater facilities, hazardous waste storage facilities, and in the closer downtown area, have very limited greenspace and neighborhood development. Many of these areas are represented by women of color on the City Council and the City Board of Commissioners, most notably Joan Garner, Emma Darnell, and Natalyn Archibong. These women are not only responsible for bringing EJ initiatives to Atlanta but have continued to each respond to EJ concerns by using their own unique sphere of expertise and influence. Atlanta has a much newer EJ movement, so the study also focuses on interviews from 33 women involved in grassroots EJ efforts in Atlanta as well as some of the recent coalitions, particularly public and private partnerships lead by women of color, that have been created to further EJ projects.

While the case studies selected for this thesis are densely urban areas, it is important to point out that environmental injustices are a persistent problem across the United States and is not isolated to cities. Some of the most burdened communities exist in rural areas, where the EJM has been slower to progress. Native American reservations face some of the most threatening environmental danger due to a lack of influential

representation in government, their isolated locations, and the misrecognition is mainstream society. Women in these communities lead environmental efforts as can be witnessed in protests like the one at Standing Rock, their position on local Councils that promote environmental projects on reservations, and in their traditional cultural position as "water protectors" in many of these communities. Leaders like LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Faith Spotted Eagle, and Gracey Claymore are just a few examples of how women have led the fight for environmental justice in Indian Country (Women Warrior Water Protectors, 2017). Recognition of these efforts is an essential part of expanding the EJM beyond the confines of urban areas that are often associated with this particular movement.

The conclusion of this paper is that women of color have a leading and central role in shaping environmental policy in the United States but have continued to be overlooked and forgotten in the narrative that surrounds environmentalism. While often times this role has been misrecognized and miscategorized, it is undoubtedly true that as the environmental movement has branched out to incorporate social justice, so too has women of color's role grown in environmental policy. Women of color have used their unique perspectives and experiences to utilize a platform that has the flexibility to foster the upward mobility of women of color's political role, but is often times localized enough that the platform still empowers pragmatic solutions to local problems. In order to overcome the political, social, and economic obstacles involved in political organizing and political systems, they are able to utilize their existing social positions and networks within the community to garner results.

While grassroots organization can be effective, representation of women of color in local politics results in increased recognition of community EJ concerns as well as policy that more accurately reflects the experience of women of color. In order to achieve the environmental goals set by these grassroots organization and political officials, women of color also engage in coalition building that can help to expand their influence by recruiting expert advice while also fostering inclusivity with those that have overlapping interests. Thus, it is through this three-pronged approach of representation, grassroots organizations, and coalition building that women of color in these cities have been able to shape environmental policy. So as the environmental justice movement evolves, it is likely that intersectionality will become a more robust part of the discussion surrounding the movement because women of color are going to have an increased role in leading and enacting environmental policy moving forward.

Chapter 2: The Evolution of the Environmental Justice Movement

The year 2017 marks the 30-year anniversary of the United Church of Christ report titled 'Toxic Wastes and Race' (Bullard 1992, Sze and London 2008). The report released in 1987 was in response to the dumping of over 100 million pounds of contaminated soil in Warren County, North Carolina that occurred in 1982 (Bullard 1992, 2000). The events that took place in 1982 and the consequential reports that followed were the beginning of a new social justice movement that is now widely known as the Environmental Justice Movement (Bullard 2000, Bell 2014, Agyeman 2002). In 1982, Warren County had the highest concentration of Black Americans in all of North Carolina, leading many to believe that the decision to relocate the toxic materials into this community was influenced by the demographics that lived there (Bullard 1992, 2000, Agyeman 2002). Before this time, the social aspects of environmentalism had been widely ignored, but as new information became available, social justice advocates discovered that some communities faced a greater environmental burden than others. The dumping of contaminated in Warren County was only the latest in a consistent pattern of actions by the government, private sector, and special interests that has led to marginalized communities facing greater environmental threats than their more affluent neighbors.

The efforts by the United Church of Christ to bring recognition to this consistently harmful pattern of behavior were the first step toward achieving environmental justice (Bullard 2000). While the report illustrated only a small, micro-chasm of the type of behavior that has continuously plagued American citizens that are already marginalized socially, the report also showed the race and class must be a

recognized component of environmental policy. Environmental justice advocates argue

that without such recognition, environmental policy loses its pragmatism and its ability to

address the real underpinnings of environmental issues (Barrett and Graddy 2000, Bullard

and Wright 1992). In order to promote this recognition, grassroots efforts, international

coalitions, and environmental advocates have continued to promote an agenda of

inclusivity, recognizing that a disproportionate environmental burden exists in

marginalized communities (Heaney and Rojas 2014, Collins, Beatley, and Harris 2001).

To combat this issue, individuals and communities have developed pragmatic solutions in

order to obstruct a continued pattern of environmental injustice. This type of organizing

has resulted in education efforts, local ordinances, coalition building, and legislation that

attempt to directly address the issues of these communities that are often ignored or

misrepresented.

      To begin this discussion on environmental justice, this thesis will look at the

origins of the movement as well as the aims for justice that the environmental justice

movement is aiming to achieve. Once the contextual framework has been constructed,

this work will investigate the many theories that suggest why environmental inequalities

are so ingrained in the United States government, private sector, and in the public. Lastly,

this thesis will discuss the role of the population that is arguably negatively impacted the

most, women of color, and examine how this particular population has used their

personal agency to combat the corrosive impact of environmental racism. This will

require not only an analysis of environmental policy but will also be an exploration into

feminism and the sometimes tension-riddled relationship that have existed between

traditional feminists and minority women.

In evaluating each of these sections, it will be important to remember that these types of issues, the ones that exist at the intersections of gender, race, and class, are hardly ever simple to categorize or fully understand. There exist several correlating and mitigating factors across social, political, and economic fields that researchers and theorists are still trying to identify, argue, and establish. The purpose of this thesis is thus to first, examine the changes in environmental policy that women of color are advocating and the means by which these aims are accomplished, and then to analyze how these contemporary instances of activism fit into the larger conversation of environmentalism.

Defining 'Justice' in Environmental Justice

The earliest struggle of the environmental justice movement was creating a clear framework that defined the movement's stakeholders, opposition, platform, and goals (Kibert 2001, Osofsky 2005). Since the environmental justice movement is inherently working for the minority against majority oppression, the movement depended on grassroots organization in order to mobilize the minority communities that are often the most politically, socially, and economically disadvantaged (Osofsky 2005, Rasmussen 2004, Heaney and Goss 2010). As Heaney and Goss (2010) found in their studies of grassroots organizing, the importance of framing a movement is often undervalued. If the frame is too narrow, then the movement could be perceived as exclusive, resulting in a lower number of people getting involved. If the frame is too broad or ambiguous, citizens could view the movement as disorganized or too chaotic to be effective. As most scholars tend to agree, the environmental justice movement leans more toward ambiguity due to the nature of the cause (Osofsky 2005, Rasmussen 2004, Wapner 1996, Williams 1999). That being said, instead of this ambiguity being a burden upon the movement, it has

actually been an important aspect of the movement's ability to grow, flourish, and directly address the problems of a diverse range of issues.

As was previously stated, the most agreed upon beginning to the environmental justice discussion in America was in Warren County, North Carolina (Bullard 1992, 2000). While there had been other research and scholarly work done in the field of environmentalism, much of the research failed to address the problem of environmental equity. Researchers were often analyzing isolated events or the shortcomings of institutional regulation but failed to investigate the populations that were most directly affected by a deteriorating environment (Rasmussen 2004, Sze and London 2008). The events in Warren County brought into the spotlight how different races experienced environmental threats at differ levels. Thus, environmentalism was no longer an issue that existed exclusively in the realms of science, nature, or policy (Sze and London 2008). Instead, environmental justice advocates began to frame the movement as existing in the crossroads of social, political, and economic life.

In the report released by the United Church of Christ, authors Chavis and Lee (1987) coined the term "environmental racism". Their use of the term refers to the explicit or implicit behaviors that disproportionately cause higher rates of pollution in communities that were predominantly composed of people of color than those that were majority white. Scholars have worked to expand on the use of environmental racism beyond purely looking at pollution (Rasmussen 2004). Recent scholars thus refer to environmental racism as the disproportionate relationship that people of color experience within their environment due to an unequal distribution of environmental benefits caused by limited access to benefits and higher pollution burdens (Prilleltensky 2001, Rasmussen

2004, Sze and London 2008). The cause and existence of this disproportionate relationship has become known as environmental inequity (Sze and London 2008, Wissenberg 2006).

The modern environmentalism movement began between the 19th and 20th century, when environmental discourse began to evolve from the "Manifest Destiny" mindset of conquering nature toward an understanding of the need to preserve and protect the habitat and natural resources (Carmichael, Jenkins, and Brulle 2012, Brulle 2000, Nash 1967). The environmental movement in the United States experienced a dramatic increase in interest in the mid-20th-century, leading to expansive discourses on the meaning of environmentalism (Brulle 2000, Carmichael et. al 2012). Scholars, politicians, and activists soon energized the movement, building a new discourse that emphasized attention to environmental quality (Mertig, Dunlap, and Morrison 2002) and established major changes in execution of environmental public policy (Petulla 1988, Andrew 1999). The environmental movement also experienced an influx of organizational influence due to the flourishing discourse, which resulted in the creation and expansive membership of environmental movement organizations (Carmichael, Jenkins, and Brulle 2012).

Due to the explosive growth of interest and membership of the environmental movement, there was disagreement over the meaning and purpose of the movement. This has led some critics to call the movement unfocused, but for some the ambiguity of purpose has been a benefit by allowing the movement to adapt to the diversity of issues related to the environment (Bell 2014, Brulle 2000, Schlosberg 2007). So in order to have an effective discussion on environmentalism, it is most helpful to begin by defining a few

terms in the context of the discussion occurring in this particular thesis. A brief introduction is thus needed to discuss the difference between preservation and conservation, as well as defining the key concepts of environmental security, environmental knowledge, and the difference between environmentalism and the environmental justice movement.

The terms preservation and conservation in environmentalism are used to describe the tools and methods by with resource management is undertaken (Meyer 1997, National Parks Service 2016). Conservation is often used in terms of taking action or using a particular resource with the intention and knowledge that nature is a finite resource and that long-term sustainability is necessary when interacting with nature (Bell 2014, Martin et. al 2016). Minteer and Corley (2007) emphasize that conservation is an action in their definition, writing that "conservation is active management" ensuring the sustainable use and maintenance of the ecosystem. Preservation differs from conservation in that preservation entails the protecting a resource from use, even the sustainable use referred to in conservation (Minteer and Corley 2007). From a public policy standpoint, the United States National Parks Service (2016) refers to preservation as "protecting nature from use" and conservation as "proper use of nature".

Alongside conservation and sustainable management is the concept of environmental knowledge. This concept is often mistakenly used exclusively to mean a scientific background in the biology or hard sciences of a particular habit, but as it pertains to this discussion on the environmental movement, environmental knowledge is not so restrictive to those fields (Nadasdy 2005, Bell 2014). Environmental knowledge is knowledge that can be acquired through day-to-day interactions within the habitat that

one lives (Nadasdy 2005, Alvard 1993, Bell 2014). This knowledge exists on a spectrum.

It is important to emphasize that environmental knowledge is not necessarily about

comprehending all the ways nature is working around an individual. Instead,

environmental knowledge is often a conglomerate of individual experiences combined

with the collective memory of the community about the conditions and tendencies of

their surroundings (Bell 2014, Nadasdy 2005). A term associated with environmental

knowledge is Traditional Ecological Knowledge, which Deborah McGregor (2004)

believes has gained popularity because there is a belief that there is inherent knowledge

in the relationship between people and the environment they interact with every day,

which includes housing, the workplace, towns, cities, transportation, etc.

The Indigenous people the Amazon have environmental knowledge pertaining to

their habitat such as when animals migrate, how often it may rain, and what plants are

dangerous (Toohey 2012). This is knowledge not gained by going to a university and

studying but is instead built up over a lifetime of observations, which is complimented

with the added education from community interaction. Environmental knowledge is not

restricted to solely knowledge of nature, plants, and animal life. People living in a more

urban environment also possess this environmental knowledge by noting things like smog

levels or clean drinking water. Karen Bell (2014) explains how residents of an apartment

building in urban areas develop their own brand of environmental knowledge as well.

Residents in a particular building are aware of the factors that affect the living conditions

within their habitat such as the air quality, waste management, the existence of harmful

materials, and access to necessary resources such as food, water, and shelter (Bell 2014).

Recognition of these unique perspectives of the people who are living every day in these

habitats is important to the environmental movement that is trying to find pragmatic solutions to build the highest quality relationship between individuals and communities and the habitats they maintain (Nadasdy 2005, Alvard 1993, Bell 2014).

Environmental knowledge is essential to finding solutions to the environmental problems that many individuals and communities face today. These solutions are necessary because without them, large populations of people are in jeopardy of losing their way of life (Toohey 2012, Krech 1999). The United Nations (2016) refers to environmental security when discussing the individuals who are most at risk from environmental devastation and how to provide stability and protection from a potential onslaught of issues caused by the degradation of their habitat. The Amazonian Indigenous population needs environmental security because their community is being threatened by toxic waste pollution, deforestation, and dwindling biodiversity in their traditionally occupied lands (Toohey 2012). Communities such as Flint, Michigan or East Chicago, Indiana also face equally daunting environmental obstacles. Both of these communities discovered that they were being exposed to toxic levels of lead, which can often lead to development issues for children and health problems for adults. So these environmental issues need to be framed as relatable, real issues. Often times, people will hear about environmentalism and think of saving the rainforest. In reality, environmental issues are much more real and close to home, which is why recognition of these issues needs to be established.

If one were to ask a number of political scientists the definition of justice, many would revert to the Rawlsian conception of a veil of ignorance (Rawls 2005, Schlosberg 2004). This distributive form of justice depends on the objectivity of the rules for justice

and impartiality to individual's personal conceptions of "the good life" (Rawls 2005, Schlosberg 2004). In environmental justice literature, many scholars find that this traditional and popular conception of justice to be inadequate in its application. Most scholars would agree with the objectivity to the rules of justice (Young 1990, Schlosberg 2004). The public policies and institutions mentioned in Bullard and Wright's (1992) definition should certainly be explicitly enforcing rules in an objective manner. However, a problem arises when these same institutions utilize the veil of ignorance as a means to implicitly ignore the pervasive inequalities that are already plaguing disadvantaged individuals and communities.

In the book *Achieving Environmental Justice,* author Karen Bell discusses the conceptual definition of environmentalism as well as how it is measured. Bell (2014) begins the discussion by summarizing the history of the recognized environmental justice movement. She emphasizes that much of the grassroots environmental justice movement began because of the outrage over toxic work conditions of mainly minority workers and also the pollution of communities with improper disposal of waste materials (Bell 2014). The author emphasizes that very earlier on, there were claims of "environmental racism", citing the disproportionate toll that environmental issues took on poor, minority communities. The reason for this emphasis is to put the environmental justice movement into a scope that does not restrict itself purely to greenhouse gas emissions, global warming, or water pollution, but rather brings these issues into a broader social context (Bell 2014).

Framing environmental justice as a social issue and social policy concern has long been a point of contention in academic and institutional circles (Schlosberg 2007,

Scandrett 2007). Those who oppose referring to environmental justice as a social issue believe that in order to effectively target solutions to things like greenhouse gases, water pollution, and sustainable resources, the discussion needs to be limited to the unambiguous (Schlosberg 2007, 2013). Discussion on disproportionate burdens on minorities or discussion of a set of environmental individual rights seemingly confuse and create obstacles toward actually combating environmental degradation (Bell 2014, Scandrett 2007). For Bell, this separation of the issues not only ignores the origins of the movement but also disregards the voices of those who arguably have the most to gain from being involved in the discussion. An attempt to limit the definition of environmental justice is an attempt to limit the scope of effectiveness that environmental justice advocates otherwise could have since a bridge realistically exists between an environmental justice and social justice coalition (Bell 2014, Kennet 2001).

Once Bell has created a framework for the concept of environmentalism, it is important to then begin a discussion on the types of justice exhibited and how that justice is measured. Bell (2014) breaks environmental justice into three interrelated parts: substantive, distribute, and procedural. This is a helpful breakdown to measure effectiveness and fairness, but environmental justice experts differ on how these different facets should be measured. Some experts measure distributive justice by purely environmental racism (Bullard 1990, Scandrett 2007) while others widen the scope of distributive analysis to include race, age, gender, and class (Buckinghamn and Kulcur 2009, Bell 2014). Procedural justice evaluates the process of justice, focusing on aspects like fairness, transparency, and open dialogue (Bell 2014). Experts differ evaluate procedural environmental justice on whether the process recognizes the struggles of the

affected population culture and identity (Schlosberg 2007, Habermas 1984). Lastly, researchers evaluate substantive environmental justice loosely based on the discussion of an individual's right to live in a healthy environment (Agyeman and Evans 2004).

When discussing the measurement and evaluation of justice, especially when these issues often affect entire communities, it is important to differentiate the discussion between a discussion on the individual's good and the collective's good. In an article concerning Indigenous community capabilities and environmental justice, David Schlosberg and David Carruthers (2010) present an argument in favor of a community capability-based approach for evaluating environmental justice. Instead of focusing on an equal *distribution* of environmental justice, with each group receiving equal portions oversight, support, etc., Schlosberg and Carruthers believe environmental justice must be evaluated on whether the community affected has the equal *opportunity* to flourish despite varying capabilities between communities (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010). The authors defend their decision to use community-based capabilities as opposed to individual-based capabilities by citing that the community's issues often envelop individual struggle, and that the struggles of the community often precipitate the individual's struggles (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010). This same community based assessment has been used by researchers to look at urban communities to see if some neighborhoods have more of an environmental burden than others. Once again, these studies focused on the ability of the neighborhoods to flourish equally, not necessarily just a distributive analysis.

Another strong reason for this approach is that it includes a wider range of environmental concerns. Environmental concerns can often affect an entire minority

communities' ability to flourish by threatening their traditional ways of living, their cultural and economic stability, and their health (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010). No two groups face identical environmental injustices and consequential misfortunes, which make the capabilities-based approach a larger net to capture the more specific breaches of justice that can occur in one community but perhaps not the other. The authors present case studies in the United States and Chile as empirical evidence supporting this approach. In both instances, cultural survival and social reproduction were threatened in the name of economic development in the form of ski resorts and dams threatened sacred spaces within nature and the local Indigenous people's spiritual connection with nature (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010, Di Chiro 2008).

In her book *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach*, Martha Nussbaum approaches the struggles of environmental justice on an individual basis rather than a community-based approach like Schlosberg and Carruthers. In the chapter on "Central Human Capabilities", Nussbaum depicts the question of environmental justice not as a rating given by a person on how satisfied they are with their predicament or her current wealth, but rather the question should focus on what the woman is able to be and do (Nussbaum 2000). Nussbaum writes, "ask not just about the resources that are sitting around, but about how those do or do not go to work, enabling [her] to function in a fully human way." (Nussbaum 2000) This statement seemingly echoes the same sentiment that Schlosberg and Carruthers emphasize: environmental justice cannot be judged by equal distribution but by equal capability to flourish (Schlosberg and Carruthers 2010).

Nussbaum more clearly defines what exactly proposing the capabilities approach entails by framing these capabilities as a foundation for "political principles" that should be depicted in "constitutional guarantees" (Nussbaum 2000). Nussbaum then defends a "capability set" which includes the basic necessities for the full development of human life. Included in the capability set are items such as physical health, life, emotion, thought and imagination, play, and basic control over one's environment (Nussbaum 2000). The author argues that the items within this list are currently often vaguely facilitated by members of the community, but Nussbaum's insistence that these are constitutional guarantees required for a fully functioning life brings a more critical view of current political efforts. Unlike Schlosberg and Carruthers, she explicitly denies that the community-based approach is an efficient basis for discourse, citing that while community-based approaches help to articulate an environmental movement that such as approach ignores the individual protections that are the basis of a flourishing community (Nussbaum 2000).

The different methods of evaluation presented in the individual-based approach and the community-based approach brings to the forefront one of the most important aspects of environmental justice, that of recognition. Earlier in this paper Bell's (2014) breakdown of justice was lain out, with a brief mention of the importance of the cultural and identity recognition in the effectiveness of justice. Martin et. al. (2012) presents an argument for why this recognition is so important for substantive justice as well as why more recognition needs to focus on both the individuals and the communities that are experiencing injustices. As has been stated, no instance of environmental injustice is exactly identical to another. Institutions and policy often fail to recognize that their

discussion or proposed solutions often ignore the plight of some or even worse, make the environmental conditions and injustice inflicted even more devastating for those they ignored (Martin et. al. 2012).

The authors of this work admit that ideas or suggested patterns that attempt full recognition are almost assuredly going to fall short, but that the risk of falling short is accomplishing more than ignoring the lack of recognition (Martin et. al. 2012). While much of the research on misrecognition focus on the psycho-social consequences of the phenomenon, Martin et. al. attempts to make the connection between misrecognition and material harms. Psychological harms manifest in lack of self-esteem, increased stress, and inability to create relationships, as some researchers have theorized about past injustices like colonization and slavery for the minority members (Sze and London 2008, Hollifield 2001). The connection between material harms and misrecognition exists when discussing the role that social capital and institutionalized misrecognition affect the disproportionate distribution of resources and support (Hollifield 2001, Martin et. al. 2016). If an individual or group is not offered a place in the discussion, or even recognized as a victim of injustice, the gap caused by ignorance creates a developmental problem toward progress.

Iris Young (1990) believes that while distributive theories of justice can offer some short sighted pragmatic solutions in the form of models and procedures, many distributive theories do not investigate the root causes of the unequal distribution. Specifically, Young believes the error lies in distributive forms of justice equating social goods to a quantified state where justice can be simply distributed (Schlosberg 2003, 2004). In reality, the social goods being contested within the environmental justice

movement are the result of fluctuating conditions that are have been purposefully, deeply

rooted in the system, so a solution based solely in distribution would be incomplete

(Wapner 1996). In order to solve social justice issues, key parties need to participate

actively in the recognition of group differences. Lack of recognition or misrecognition by

majority parties, mainly in this context, whites, results in the degradation and devaluation

of minority groups whose differences are not being recognized (Miller 2003, Schlosberg

2004). In this work, women of color are the subject of discussion. This population is

oppressed not only by racial inequalities that foster white privilege but also suffer due to

their gender and the disadvantages that come with it in a patriarchal system. The

application of Young's theory thus requires that an evaluation of justice not only looks at

contemporary policies and laws that seemingly place men, women, and all races equally,

but at the historical context that has made these inequalities possible in the first place and

still relevant today (Miller 2003, Schlosberg 2003, Schlosberg 2004) .

Fraser (2001) shares a similar critique of distributive justice as Young, but

focuses less on the flaws of distributive justice and more on the need to incorporate

recognition into distribution. Fraser (2001) insists that justice must be "bivalent" – it

requires both distribution and recognition to function fairly and properly. This approach

is once again different from traditional ideas of justice that often work to produce ideal

procedures and processes. Recognition is essential to these scholars because it is through

recognition that the activists, politicians, and officials can really investigate the real

impediments to justice that are happening at the forefront of these marginalized

communities (Fraser 2001, Young 1990). For these scholars, the evaluations of real life

scenarios are much more comprehensive and more useful than the often intangible and

idealized theories that are produced by traditional distributive justice theories (Schlosberg 2004). Miller (2003) does not believe that the distinctions made by Fraser (2001) and Young (1990) are substantially different than the traditional forms of distributive justice. Instead, Miller argues that respect and dignity (the types of recognition that critical scholars are promoting) are conditional parts of the social justice formula. He argues that respect and dignity are precursors to justice, and that recognition occurs implicitly behind the veil of ignorance because all stations are assumed to be equal at that point. Miller's (2000) main contention is similar to mainstream theories of justice in that recognition is assumed in the procedures of distributive justice (Schlosberg 2004).

These theories of justice are important in analyzing the many branches and campaigns that have been the products of the environmental justice movement. Many of the critiques coming from the movement focus this idea that recognition is an integral part of achieving justice. Most scholars agree that this recognition is integral to the establishment of justice procedure and none of the scholars necessarily vouch for moving beyond the distributional model, but some differ on how this recognition is actually utilized when the problem-solvers and decision-makers are actually distributing justice (Schlosberg 2003, 2004, Low 1998). Without recognition, government and the public create environmental policies that are facially neutral in their stance toward majority and minority communities in that in theory, they fairly distribute burdens and benefits. However, these solutions often do not go below the surface of the problem and actually respond to the root causes of the issue. The stance of this work is that the recognition that Young and Fraser are calling for is different than Miller's critique. If Miller was right in his assertion that procedural justice must intrinsically have respect and dignity as

preconditions, then the distributive justice policies of the United States would arguably

produce more fair results. The recognition Young and Fraser promotes seems to go a step

beyond Miller's respect and dignity (Schlosberg 2003). It goes beyond simply

acknowledging the existence and equal-value of minority communities and instead seeks

to examine the very reasons for the often implicit devaluation of social capital that

minority communities face.

This is integrally important to environmental movements because of the

pervasiveness of environmental issues in the everyday of life of those negatively

impacted. In a speech given in 1999, Robert Bullard described the expansive nature of the

movement by stating:

> The environmental justice movement has basically redefined what
> environmentalism is all about. It basically says that the environment is
> everything: where we live, work, play, go to school, as well as the physical
> and natural world. And so we can't separate the physical environment
> from the cultural environment. We have to talk about making sure that
> justice is integrated throughout all of the stuff that we do. (Bullard 1999)

The reasons given by Bullard are the very reasons why recognition is so important.

Justice has to go beyond political procedure that establishes citizens as equal. It must be

an active discussion that evolves as scenarios of injustice arise because justice does not

exclusively exist in the political realm. Environmental issues are complex, social issues

that can negatively impact health, education, social movement, economic development,

and many more areas of life. So for such an expansive list, there must be more than

idealized theories of justice, and instead there should be a more pragmatic approach that

specifically recognizes the voices of marginalized groups on the issues they are facing.

The issue of recognition is the central concept that this work is attempting to

investigate. Women of color are arguably the most marginalized group in the United

States. They are up against an oppressive racial and patriarchal system, often kept at the fringes of justice talks. There is a lack of social, cultural, economic, and political representation for many of these women in local, state, and national government. This makes the obstacle of recognition difficult because they are not even given a seat at the table when decisions are made. Due to this lack of representation, and the lack of resources and support for many to run for office and achieve concrete representation, women, specifically women in racial minorities, have found other means to make their voices heard (Hughes 2008). By utilizing the platform of the environmental justice movement and grassroots organization, women of color are able to achieve the recognition that the procedural systems have failed to implement (Bell and Braun 2010). So, the next section of this paper will examine how identity and lack of recognition have played a role in motivating women of color to act, organize, and gain the recognition that has long been denied to them.

Exploring the Intersections

In the field of women's studies, most contemporary scholars have come to accept the realities of intersectionality (Buckingham and Kulcur 2009, Baca and Dill 1994, Holvino 2008). Intersectionality refers to the convergence of identities including race, class, and gender (Holvino 2008). In the case of environmental inequalities, these identities are fundamentally important to understand because it is often at these intersections that the injustices occur. For women of color, this intersectionality has impacted the ability to flourish fully in the confines of the United States' system (Buckingham and Kulcur 2009). This has caused and produced inequalities in economic viability, political power, and social desirability (Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007).

In her discussion on intersectionality, Evangelina Holvino (2008) examines the unique position of women of color in social movements and how identity plays a role in participation and organization.

Holvino (2008), who identifies as a woman of color, frames the importance of recognizing intersectionality by stating that at these intersections there exists "a different consciousness and a different way of knowing". This different way of knowing exists because the majority of power and influence lays in the hands of White people, particular White men. This influence has been sustained and exclusive for so long that the perspective of this majority has managed to construct the social, economic, and political norms of society. For centuries, the white population in America has held on to this domination of norms through explicit and implicit systems of oppression toward all racial minorities (Collins 1986, 2000, Zinn, Dill 1994). Women of color are, unfortunately, unique in their position as living in the most subordinate interstices of the spectrum in regards to race, class, and gender. In feminist literature, this identity at the interstices has been referred to as a third gender category (Sandoval 1991), triple jeopardy (Ward 2004), double consciousness (Du Bois 1999), and interstitial feminism (Perez 1999). Holvino's (2008) research and her own personal experience has led her to depict this unique positioning of identity within the context of the United States' system as a "both/and" orientation in mainstream society. At all times, women of color are both facially legally-able and expected to integrate into the society that has been created by the majority, but at the same time are "other-ed" by the deeply ingrained inequalities that set them apart.

Some scholars believe this "both/and" depiction to not only be accurate, but useful for women of color who decide to organize. Hurtado (1996b) describes this multi-consciousness as a:

> shifting consciousness...the ability of many women of colour to shift from one group's perception of social reality to another and at times, to be able simultaneously to perceive multiple social realities without losing their sense of self-coherence.

Hurtado (1996a) describes this shifting of consciousness as "successful marginality". The experience of a woman of color in America is certainly one of oppression, but Hurtado (1996a) and Collins (2000) also argue that it is a position of knowledge. The experience of the woman of color is one of constantly being taught the norms established by the majority, taught the rules of resistance to oppression by associated minorities, while simultaneously obtain copious amounts of knowledge from the multiple avenues of identity that converge at the intersection of their identity (Collins 1986, 2000). This has led to a population of women who are able to relate to large demographics within the population who share their class, race, and gender struggles. This ability to appeal and relate to a wider population is something that can be missed by White men, White women, and men of color, who all benefit in some way from the privileges bestowed on them by their race and/or gender (Hurtado 1996, Heaney 2004, Paxton, Kunovich, and Hughes 2007).

Many scholars have tried to articulate their own experience as women of color in order to depict the struggles that they face when confronted with mainstream norms and theories. As Ruiz (1990) reminds us in his study on alternative feminisms, "the history of women cannot be studied without considering both race and class….and working-class culture cannot really be understood without reference to gender and race." This reminder

from Ruiz calls for a closer dissection of how identity and norms impact the perspectives and actions of women of color. Because of their gender, these women in the United States face obstacles toward economic success and independence due to the wage gap that has been sustained despite federally mandated equal pay and employment laws. Because of their race, they face stigmatization that has negatively impacted their ability to gain an education, their access to healthcare, and their political participation. Most of these women also depict their differences with traditional feminism (Holvino 2008).

For example, a common critique of "white feminism" is that the agenda has been commandeered by middle-class, white women who have different economic realities than women of color (Holvino 2008). This has been reflected in the long-term goals of the feminist movement that has focused on work-family balance and equality in family responsibilities with their husbands. Women of color on the other hand, who historically have had to work (often as domestic workers for white families) have always had to balance work and family, and do not necessarily view husbands as the main form of oppression because racial oppression is often prioritized (Collins 1986, Holvino 2008). These perspectives are not to say that all women of color have had this experience, but these scholars found their own perspectives reiterated in the research they were doing on the historical role of women of color in America. The aims and goals of white feminism fail to recognize the unique position of women of color who exist, once again, at the intersection (Collins 1986, 2000). The political, economic, and social realities of each do not necessarily exist in the same sphere. There may be overlap, but if the feminist movement hopes to produce justice, then a reevaluation of recognition is necessary to truly foster equality.

These claims of intersectionality are not to say that all women of color should be categorized the same or that they should be framed solely as victims of oppression. The situation is quite the opposite. The unique perspective of these women thrives on their diversity of experiences as individuals, without these diverse experiences, the multi-consciousness would never have the chance to develop within their identity. Intersectionality is thus so important because it does give women of a color unique knowledge that they have demonstrably turned into individual and community empowerment. In their position as a bridge between identities and communities, women of color are uniquely qualified to be agents of change, and it is with this agency that this work is most concerned (Holvino 2008). The remainder of this work will focus on how women of color are able to utilize their perspectives and experiences and turn it into a plan of action for combating environmental injustices that plague minority communities.

The Importance of Perceived Threat

One of the main reasons the environmental justice movement began was because there was a real perceived threat to marginalized communities (Flynn, Slovic, Metrz 1994, Finucane et. al. 2000). The threat was not only to the health of individuals in polluted areas but also to the cultural, social, and economic degradation of the communities involved. While many communities face health hazards from pollutants, other communities face the devastation of their economic and cultural lives when the very communities in which their lives and cultures are fostered are then threatened (Platt 1997, Flynn, Slovic, Mertz 1994). The perception of these threats varies from individual to individual, but researchers have found qualitative and quantitative patterns that show

that some populations have a much higher probability of perceiving environmental threats than others.

Studies of environmental risks in the United States have revealed that there is a substantial gap between threats that the government perceives and threats that the average citizen perceives (Laws et. al. 2015). This gap of knowledge that exists is important in understanding the obstacles involved in motivating grassroots movements to combat environmental hazards (Finucane et. al. 2000, Laws et. al. 2015). When the government started taking environmental risks seriously, the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) assessed environmental risks, "the use of factual base to define the health effects of exposure of individuals or populations to hazardous materials and situations." The result of these new standards was the construction of a formal process by which the government can identify, analyze, and remedy environmentally hazardous scenarios. This involves four steps: (1) identification (2) dose-response assessment (3) exposure assessment (4) risk characterization of the potential burden on a subject (Laws et. al 2015). This is the process by which lawmakers create policy in order to make institutions take action. These risk assessments used by policy makers have been shown to be a much different perception of threat than the average citizen on the ground in these situations. The main difference being, the average citizen is much less aware that a hazardous material is present and is less educated on the potential consequences to their health (Laws et. al. 2015).

In many surveys of the U.S population, it has been a consistent finding that white men have a lower tendency to report concern over perceived threats than do women or members of racial minorities. This phenomenon has since been termed the "White Male

Effect" (Laws et. al. 2015, Finucane et. al. 2000, Flynn et. al. 1994). The results of this finding are contentious for multiple reasons. Some researchers believe that because white males tend to have better political, economic, and social standing they automatically are less perceptive to threats be their lives are consistently low-risk and threat perception is not a skill they need to necessarily survive (Flynn et. al. 1994). Other researchers believe that there is a cultural divide, resulting in racial minority communities fostering a culture of environmental awareness within their social traditions (Anthony, Ellis, Blackwell 2003). While it is doubtful that there is a singular explanation for this difference in perceived risk, it has been consistently documented by researchers and certainly impacts individual's willingness to resist environmental inequalities.

In their study of environmental risk perception, Laws et. al. (2015) hypothesized that the perception gap was not necessarily due to psychological or cultural dispositions, but rather proximity to hazards. Their study surveyed Boston residents that lived within the area of two interstates. The results of the study seemed to support the "White Male Effect" (WME), with a substantial disconnect between white males and the other populations in the identified area. But once the researchers controlled for proximity to hazards (such as the interstate due to air pollution), the WME no longer existed. The results of their research suggest that previous studies into threat perception needs to be reexamined to see if location is more telling than gender or race. That being said, the study still presents some crucial information on why racial minorities and women are more likely to perceive environmental threats.

Within the Laws et. al. (2015) study, there are some questions that arise that can aid in discussing who perceives risks. Finucaine and Satterfield (2000) found similar

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results, and sought to answer why minority communities and women are more likely to live in these at-risk areas. It really comes down to a chicken-or-egg scenario on why risks are located near marginalized communities. Women and minorities who typically have less economic means tend to reside in areas that have cheaper land prices. This can appeal to heavy polluters such as toxic waste storage and chemical manufacturing who are looking for the best bargain for their purchase of land (Krauss 1993, Minkoff 1999). It could also be the reverse scenario in which those in a lower class are forced to take up residence in the cheapest areas with these heavy polluters (Krauss 1993). In many environmental disputes, communities have petitioned cities and towns who have been accused of environmental racism by zoning industrial zones on top of residential zones heavily populated with racial minorities rather than in predominantly white communities.

In a study done specifically identifying 25 potential threats such as cigarettes smoking, chemical pollution, ozone depletion, pesticides, etc. women of color rated almost every incident at a higher risk level than white males, white females, and nonwhite males (Flynn et. al. 1994). Even once separated by race into Hispanic, African American, and Asian, almost every group of women of color rated each hazards as more of a risk. Even if one argues that these perceived threats are the result of educational or rationale differences, as some of the most condescending researchers argue, the information itself is alarming. Women of color are experiencing a heightened sense of risk in their daily lives and in their concerns for the community. This perception of risk is a result of their intersectionality and one of the powerful tools by which women of color have been able to combat oppression. Perceived threat can be a catalyst for action for the members of these communities. When there is a real, substantial threat present in a

community, it can provide a means of motivation for organization. Due to their gender and their race, women of color are subjugated to the worst of these environmental threats. This often places them in a unique position to identify a threat and mobilize their community to make the changes necessary to eliminate the threat.

Struggles of Grassroots Movements

Many of actions associated with the environmental justice movement also exist within the sphere of grassroots movements (Rainey and Johnson 2009). Often times, environmental outcries, and thus grassroots responses, often occur when a community is targeted by a specific inequality. Examples of this are environmental hazards such as lead poisoning near housing developments, manufacturing plants polluting air near neighborhoods, or the storage of toxic materials near disadvantaged areas (Sandoval 1991, Robnett 1997). The cause of these hazards will be discussed in this section but the majority of work will be examining individual reactions and community responses to environmental hazards. Grassroots efforts that are aimed to resist or remove a potential hazard run into political and economic obstacles, as well as problems with participation and mobilization. This section will focus on how women of color have been able to successfully organize efforts to resist the oppression that comes from environmental racism.

In their research on women's role in grassroots organizing, Kristin Goss and Michael Heaney (2010) investigate how gender affects the participation and organization of grassroots movements. One of the main obstacles for any grassroots organizations is the issue of focus. During the mid-1900s through the 80s, grassroots movements that catered exclusively to a one gender or another experienced a sharp decline in

participation (Goss and Heaney 2010, Skocpol 1999). Many scholars attribute this decline to the growing numbers of more tolerant youth in the 1980s and 1990s who seemed to display attitudes that were more open and accepting of diversity, making exclusive organizations appear archaic (Goss and Heaney 2010). In order to combat this decline, social movement leaders and organizational scholars developed new ways of framing movements in order to motivate collective action and mobilize more expansive groups of people. Goffman (1974) defines a frame as the "definition of a situation". Goss and Heaney (2010) expand on this by adding that the frame a grassroots organization utilizes instructs their audience what details to pay attention to, who to ignore, who to listen to, etc. These frames are utilized by organizations in different capacities.

One of the most agreed upon struggle of grassroots organization is the ability to create a collective sense of urgency (Heaney 2004, Goss and Heaney 2010). Leadership has to be able offer a reason for activism that appeals to a wide demographic of people, but creating this frame is often more difficult than it sounds. Organizations have to attempt to straddle the line between specifics and ambiguity in order to motivate the greatest amount of people (Minkoff 1990, Heaney 2004). If a frame is too simple or singular, then the appeal may not be able to reach a large number of people. If the organization has too ambiguous of an agenda, if they are simply casting to wide of a net, then their message can get confused and it can translate to participants as either disorganized or as not focused enough on the issue they are most concerned (Heaney and Rojas 2014). The obstacle of framing can often time help women of color in their efforts to enact change because through their intentionality they are both able to pinpoint an appeal while also relating to an expansive range of demographics.

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In situations of environmental racism, the framing issue is initially not the biggest hurdle. Communities who experience a targeted act of environmental racism are able to identify the problem, the hazard, and identify the goal, the elimination of the hazard. Since the environmental conditions are the reality that many of these people are living with, it is real enough to act as a motivator (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2011). The problems for these groups often arise in broader appeal and sustaining that initial motivation (Beamish and Lubbers 2009). Since environmental racism occurs mostly in marginalized communities, those in impoverished areas often with a high concentration of racial minorities, the visibility and effect of these issues are not readily available to large parts of the more privileged population (Anthony, Ellis, and Blackwell 2003, Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2001). The most recent example of this can be seen in the situation that occurred at Standing Rock in North Dakota. The geographic isolation of the reservation may have played some part in the longstanding media blackout on the issue that occurred for the majority of the protest, but the social and cultural isolation of Native Americans no doubt played a role. Once the media started covering the incident, the power of public opinion seems to have given the protest most viability and more power. Such is the case with many of these instances of environmental racism. The grassroots organization that takes place in response to these events struggle to connect with general public and thus lack viability that more mainstream movements take for granted.

In order to combat this problem of appeal, women of color have been able to frame their social justice movements in a way that optimizes their position. In her study of the Civil Rights Movement, Belinda Robnett examined the role that women played in movement. Specifically, Robnett (1997) emphasized that the women of color who were

involved acted as "bridge leaders" who helped to unite the movement by creating and sustaining the critical relationships between local communities. The role of women as "bridges" is explored further by Heaney and Rojas (2014) who found that the American norm that portrays women as "maternal caregivers" has allowed them to employ this leading guardianship role that helps to unite these movements with their communities. In his study on the political participation of immigrant women, Jones-Correa (1998) found that women were much more likely to associate political participation directly to their actions within their community. The men in his study often associated politics with voting and holding political office, while the women associated politics with community participation and mobilization at local levels. These studies illustrate women of color as leaders who prioritize their community and who have found ways to use their unique identity as a means to build-up their communities.

Once in these leadership positions within their communities, women of color have shown a proclivity toward coalition building by acting as bridges between the environmental justice movement and other social justice issues (Robnett 1997, Beamish and Lubbers 2009). As was stated above, environmental hazards are concerns in every part of life such as health, economic development, education, and housing. These issues are not always subsumed into environmentalism. Housing discrimination has long been a problem for minorities who have experienced a history of being placed in highly polluted areas and/or highly hazardous housing structures. Struggles with economic development due to gender and racial professional opportunities make moving from polluted areas nearly impossible for many. Pollutants and other toxic materials have also been closely associated with cancer, heart disease, liver disease, and reproductive challenges as well.

Women, who have often been at the forefront of health, housing, and education issues, have successfully been able to build coalitions between different movements in order to create a frame that has a maximum lasting impact.

While some organizational scholars might say that including these issues within an environmental agenda might confuse or turn off potential participants, many environmental justice advocates see coalition building as an essential element of the movement. Combatting multiple issues allows the movement to bring attention to those underlying conditions that were precursors to the unfair distribution of justice. The additional benefit of women of color being at the intersections of identities means that building these coalitions can be easier. Their knowledge of injustices within the system is more detailed because they are often experienced by the leaders themselves. This firsthand account of injustice is arguably essential to solving environmental racism. When someone is sick, it is dangerous to simply offer a blind prescription to heal them. Trying to solve the environmental justice issues without first recognizing the injustices and the experiences of women of color is equally futile. The solution to the problem relies on recognition of their struggle and of their agency, and that will be the aim of the following case studies.

Chapter 3: Case Study Los Angeles

In California, the environmental justice movement has been a statewide phenomenon. Multiple initiatives have received resources from the state government, alongside support from city statutes and local organizing (Meija 2006, Cushing et. al. 2015, Clarke 2015). This creates a different theatre for the environmental justice movement as compared to the movement taking place in the more conservative state of Georgia. While obstacles certainly still exist for environmental justice advocates and disadvantaged communities, there are more established means of creating environmental change. Instead the local powers of the City Councils and Board of Commissioners always taking the lead on cementing environmental policy, the state of California has provided leadership in the form of funds and strategy to promote and endorse environmental equity (Sze et al. 2009, Cushing et al. 2015). This case study will thus reflect the experience of women of color who live in areas where the increased awareness and resources surrounding environmental policy issues.

California - A Pioneering State

In 1999, five years after President Clinton signed E.O 12898, California Governor Gray Davis signed the first pieces of legislation that solidified environmental justice issues into state law (Sze et. al. 2009, Meija 2006). No other state in the nation had been able to pass such a law, causing the state to become a progressive outlier on environmental issues. For many California residents, it was far past time for environmental equity considerations to be codified in statute. Advocacy for environmental equity was already a widespread activity throughout California (Fritz 1999, Cuajunco, Anderson 2015). One of the earliest environmental justice victories

occurred in Kettleman City, California eleven years prior when grassroots organizing and protests led to the closure of a toxic waste incinerator located near primarily low-income Latino communities (Fritz 1999, Clarke 2015). But as slow and laborious a process as some advocates perceived the process to be, this legal acknowledgement of environmental justice was still a pioneering piece of legislation. Other states soon followed California's model, copying many of the systems of accountability and transparency that California initiated (Young 2011).

Governor Davis signed two pieces of legislation that created the foundation for the state government's environmental justice initiative. Senate Bill No. 115 (1999) defines environmental justice in California as, "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies". The bill created coordination out of the California Environmental Protection Agency, whose responsibilities then included conducting new programs for proposed planning methods, encouraging public participation in regulations and policies, and to review statues to ensure the fair treatment of all populations, regardless of race, culture, or income level. Senate Bill No. 89 (2000) was passed shortly after environmental justice was initially codified as a means ensuring that the new legislative initiatives actually garnered results that helped local neighborhoods. The legislation thus provided for the creation of the Working Group on Environmental Justice, which must include representatives from the following groups: two from local or regional land use agencies, two from air districts, two from certified unified program agencies (CUPAs), two from environmental organizations, three from

the business community, and two from community organizations (Sze et al. 2009, Young 2011).

Since this was the first successful passage of a policy of this kind, the initial efforts were robust and broad. Over the past twenty years, California have amended these laws so that there are more specific project initiatives, more emphasis on data accumulation, and increased public participation in environmental decisions. Further legislation has reflected these improvements. Senate Bill No. 1542 (2002) brought the California Integrated Waste Management Board into the coordination since many advocacy efforts arose from neighborhoods angered by solid waste facilities sites being built in predominantly Latino, immigrant, and low-income communities. Assembly Bill No. 2312 (2002) established additional funding for local environmental projects through the CalEPA's Environmental Justice Small Grant Program. The legislature even passed Senate Bill No. 535 (2012) that requires that revenue from the carbon cap-and-trade program had to be dispersed to benefit marginalized communities. The most recent development was Assembly Bill 1071 (2015) which requires that every office under the supervision of the CalEPA is required to provide supplemental policy projects that could benefit disadvantaged communities. While this is not an exhaustive list, it shows the diversity and consistency of California's efforts to address environmental justice issues. This statewide awareness and support has created a political and social climate that goes beyond addressing current problems by proactively methodologically seeking where environmental injustices occur (Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment).

The City of Los Angeles

The CalEnviroScreen Scores in 2014 revealed five areas with the highest 25% scoring census tracts. The single greatest swath was in the San Joaquin Valley, stretching from Bakersfield to Fresno. However, the most concentrated high score in an urban area was Los Angeles, far surpassing cities like San Francisco, Oakland, San Diego, and Sacramento in the number of people at risk from environmental degradation. Within the top 25% scores, the difference in the impact on different racial and ethnic groups is rather staggering. The following are the results if one is looking at the groups scoring from 8 to 10:

> Score 8 – 24% (White), 53% (Hispanic), 12% (Asian/Pacific Islander),
> 8% (African American), 3% (Other)
> Score 9 - 17% (White), 61% (Hispanic), 11% (Asian/Pacific Islander),
> 8% (African American), 2% (Other)
> Score 10 - 11% (White), 72% (Hispanic), 7% (Asian/Pacific Islander),
> 8% (African American), 2% (Other)

From these results the situation is rather clear in terms of which racial and ethnic community faces the most environmental risk. An analysis of these areas scoring from 1 to 10 reveal that Hispanics are the only groups whose percentage of population affected increases as you move from areas least impacted to most impacted. In the least impacted areas in with a score 1, Whites accounts for 69% of the population, Hispanics only account for 12%. If there were truly environmental equity in California, categories 1 through 10 would all have populations that were generally similar. However, this is clearly not the case, and in denser more diverse metropolitan areas like Los Angeles, this situation is very clearly reflected (Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment).

Building a Sustainable City

Los Angeles is a prime example of how the environmental justice movement has evolved from a grassroots organizing outlier to a mainstream political movement. Evidence of major actions from environmental justice advocates date back to at least the 1980s with the campaign started by the Mothers of East Los Angeles (Pardo 1990, Platt 1997). It was over three decades ago that information was released that the California Waste Management Board contracted Cerrell Associates, an outside lobbying firm, to provide information on which communities would be least likely to oppose waste incinerators (Platt 1997). The "Cerrell Memo" identified mainly low-income communities of color as the communities that would be least likely to resist a project. This led to the establishment of Los Angeles City Energy Recovery, a group founded and organized by mainly Hispanic women (Sarathy 2013). What started out as women at the intersections organizing to keep their communities healthy eventually turned into an environmental political machine with many moving parts. This growth has not been isolated to any one group. The number of environmental justice groups, particularly those started, operated, and led by women, has exploded all across California (Research in Action 2004, Robinson 2014).

Environmental groups in Los Angeles benefit greatly from state support. The Environmental Justice Small Grant Project established by the state legislature has led to increased funding for many groups working on projects in L.A. These funds have gone to programs ranging from securing clean groundwater for neighborhoods to educating high school students on climate change. In 2015 alone, projects based in L.A were able to secure over $100,000 grants from state funding, representing roughly one fifth of the

entire EJ Small Grants budget. This depicts L.A's environmental justice movement as an actively growing movement that has continued to evolve with help from state leadership (California Environmental Protection Agency 2016).

The city itself has established arguably the most robust environmental strategy in the nation, particularly in terms of how the city is addressing environmental burdens in low income and communities of color. In 2015, the Mayor of L.A, Eric Garcetti, released the first annual report for the Sustainable City pLAn. An analysis of this report shows a city that is not only focused on reducing pollution and hazardous sites near marginalized neighborhoods, but provides a well-rounded strategy for providing more greenspace, access to healthy foods, and affordable, livable communities, all under the umbrella of the city's environmental justice initiative (Los Angeles Office of the Mayor 2015). Many of these projects, though supported and funded by the city, require the involvement of private and public partners, as well as participation by the neighborhoods affected by the projects. Projects that began as grassroots organizations now have access to resources and sponsorship from city representatives. This expansion of projects has created a social and political climate that fosters the growth and involvement of women of color who are combatting the systematic burdens placed on disadvantaged communities.

Demographics and Dangers

Los Angeles is the second largest city in the United States, with over 3.9 million people recorded as residents in the 2010 Census. The City of Los Angeles covers 468 square miles, including the downtown metropolitan area, a port on the Pacific Ocean, and hundreds of miles of urban residential sprawl. An analysis of the data shows a race and ethnicity breakdown of 49% identifying as Hispanic or Latino, 28% identified as White,

11% identified as Asian/Pacific Islander, and 9% identified as Black or African American. A breakdown of educational attainment shows that 24% have no degree, 20% complete only a high school degree, 24% have some college, and 33% attained a Bachelor's degree or higher. The number of households that speak a language other than English at home is significantly higher than anywhere else in the nation, with nearly 60% of people reporting that a language other than English was spoken at home, mostly Spanish speaking, but a significant portion also identified Asian/Pacific Islander languages as the main language spoken at home. Lastly, L.A is unique in the number of foreign-born residents in the city, accounting for approximately 37% of the population (U.S Census Bureau 2010).

The unemployment rate in Los Angeles was right just over the national average of 4.8% in January of 2017 at 5.1% (Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale Metropolitan Division, 2017). Of the nearly 4 million people living in L.A, approximately 22% are living below the poverty line, accounting for nearly 800,000 people. This is higher than the average poverty rate in California, which is at 15%. The business market in L.A is diverse, with half of the business firms being minority-owned, and 192,358 of the nearly 500,000 are owned by women (U.S Census Bureau 2010).

These numbers give a cursory overview of potential causes of environmental justice in L.A. Such a high poverty level demonstrates that there is a large portion of residents in L.A who do not have economic mobility, moving away from pollution points or safer housing is not always an option. Households and individuals that experience language isolation not only have a harder time finding employment, but also experience a social and political participation barrier due to the language barrier that English-speakers

do not. This leads to communities with these barriers being more likely to be targeted for the construction of environmentally degrading sites. In a city that has a minority majority, one might suppose that the political and social power that comes with numbers would inhibit environmental racism, but this is demonstrably not the case.

One of the greatest assets to environmental justice advocates and leaders in California is the accessibility of information. States that have not legislated agency accountability and data accumulation related to environmental equity put private interests and local organizations in the position of collecting that information, a task that requires time and resources that are often limited. California has modeled their environmental justice data hub similarly to the EPA's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool (EJSCREEN). CalEPA's used information from EJSCREEN and integrated their local and state available information into the system. In 2013, CalEPA tasked the state's Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment to create guidelines on evaluating the cumulative data and turning it into a publicly accessible, easily navigated tool. The result is the CalEnviroScreen, which takes into account environment, health, and socioeconomic data and places it on a map that gives a rating to an area based on their vulnerability to pollution and environmental burden.

The Office of Environmental Health and Hazard Assessment (2014) CalEnviroScreen takes into account two major categories alongside census tract data to establish the CalEnviroScreen Score. The census tract scale is the unit of analysis, with the boundaries based on the 2010 Census Bureau measurements. The score for a certain area is calculated by multiplying pollution burden (exposures and environmental effects) and population characteristics (sensitive populations and socioeconomic factors). The

choice to use multiplication for risk assessment was chosen by the architects of the program because established risk scoring systems have used the formula "Threat x Vulnerability = Risk" (Brody et al., 2012). Each component has a maximum score of 10, so the highest score an area could have is 100 (Pollution Burden of 10 multiplied by the Population Characteristic of 10).

When calculating the pollution burden, CalEPA found scored exposure indicators by combining relative information on pollution sources, emissions discharged, and environmental concentrations. Exposure indicators included ozone concentration, PM2.5 concentrations, diesel PM emissions, drinking water contamination, pesticide use, toxic releases from facilities, and traffic density. Environmental effects are immediate or delayed effects from environmental degradation and ecological threats to communities. CalEPA thus assigns a half weighted score for environmental effects such as cleanup sites, groundwater threats, hazardous waste, impaired water bodies, and solid waste site facilities.

When calculating the population characteristics, the CalEnviroScreen analyzes sensitive population indicators in order to identify demographics that have biological traits that dispose the individual to greater vulnerability to pollutants. Typically this population includes those experiencing physiological development or changes, including children, pregnant women and their fetuses, the disabled, individuals with preexisting conditions, and the elderly. These are measured by the number of children and elderly in the specified zone, the number of low birth-weight infants, and the number of asthma emergency department visits. It also takes into consideration socioeconomic factor

indicators of the population including low educational attainment, linguistic isolation, poverty, and unemployment.

By integrating census information with environmental data it is possible to identify the environmental justice hotspots around Los Angeles. Upon first glance at the tool as it maps L.A, it seems as if the entire city is an environmental justice hotspot. Due to the population density of the city, the high rate of poverty and the large number of communities of color, there is seemingly a greater number of areas that fall into a region that would be considered a hotspot than the average city. This is especially true due to the number of disadvantaged communities in close proximity to interstate and roadway systems. Due to the sheer number of people in L.A there are a greater number wastewater sites and incinerators, as well as many chemical storage facilities due to the location of the port. However, upon closer inspection there are a number of disadvantaged communities that face a disproportionately concentrated number of pollution threats than does the rest of the city.

South and Southeast L.A contain communities that have concentrated amounts of toxic air emissions, particularly in the communities of Boyle Heights, Huntington Park, Vernon, and Compton. The amount of traffic in these communities contributes to the amount of air pollution and related health issues, especially affecting communities that live in the downtown area and in close proximity to major roadways. Measurements of PM2.5 (pollution particles that are small enough to enter the lungs) show that neighborhoods in this area are in the top 20% of concentration in all of California. Diesel PM emission measurements are even more telling, with southeast L.A scoring in the top 10% of emissions in the state. These highly trafficked areas in South L.A are also home

to numerous processing facilities, giving them high scores in toxic releases to the air from facilities as well. Hazardous waste facilities are also abundant in this area of L.A, with a number of treatments, storage, and landfill located South L.A.

On the North and Northwest side of L.A the communities of Glendale and Pacoima are also considered hotspots but face environmental burdens that are different than those neighborhoods on the Southside. These neighborhoods are bordered are surrounded by Interstate 5, Highway 118, and Interstate 210. North L.A, while also experiencing heavy traffic and diesel emissions, reports a much higher amount of daily ozone concentration than South L.A. Pacoima also houses a greater number of cleanup sites, as well as hazardous waste storage sites. These communities also face a greater threat to their groundwater and drinking water, ranking in the top 10% of California communities in regards to the number of contaminants in their drinking water. Since it is on the northern outskirts of L.A, Pacoima also has its own private airport and a rail line, which introduce hazards that are not necessarily present in neighborhoods closer to downtown.

This tool can now be used by individual households, community organizers, and policy advocates to analyze what problems a neighborhood or community faces. There are numerous uses for this tool, starting with families being able to identify hazards in their neighborhoods to the Los Angeles Parks and Recreation Department using the tool to map what areas need greenspace the most. For the purposes of this case study, it will be used to identify disadvantaged neighborhoods and the potential hazards in Los Angeles and how women of color are taking action to change environmental policy affecting those areas.

Representation in Local Governance

      California is certainly an example of how states can promote a progressive environmental agenda that promotes state and local government accountability. Tools like the CalEnviroScreen demonstrate the state's commitment to transparency to the public, and their continual increase in investment in environmental justice project shows that unburdening disadvantaged communities is a priority. However, there is still plenty of work that needs to be done in California to counter injustices from environmental policy. The concern of inadequate representation has been a constant theme in the environmental justice movement. This concern follows from the understanding that the government's ability to address a problem is constrained by their ability to understand the problem. Even in a city like Los Angeles that has a longer and established history of environmental justice and political participation from minority populations, the issue of equal representation continues to be problem.

      The perceived need for environmental justice did gain momentum in L.A until advocates who could relate to the experiences of those disadvantaged communities gained a platform from which they could speak. This platform can appear in the form of grassroots leadership like the Mothers of East L.A as well as leadership in local political institutions like the City Council or Board of Supervisors. When people of color are represented in the discussion, there is more insight to be had on the impact of implicit and explicit racism. When women have a seat at the table, there can be a more informed perspective on their unique experience of being a minority. Following this line of logic, one might come to the conclusion that the local powers in Los Angeles are very constrained in their ability to address and understand environmentally. While there have

been a number of women who have held elected office in Los Angeles throughout the city's history, they are few in number. The situation is perhaps best depicted by the political climate of 2013, in which a woman did not hold a single elected city office. The situation seems even more concerning considering this means that only a handful of women of color have held elected office in Los Angeles. Though despite that fact, it is important to give recognition to the accomplishments of the women of color who have served and who are serving, because unsurprisingly, they have led many of the projects that serve the environmental justice agenda.

Utilizing Local Power for EJ

The first woman elected to L.A City Council was Estelle Lawton Lindsey in 1915. She served until 1917. Another woman was not elected until 1953. Since Councilwoman Lindsey's election in 1915, over 180 men have served on L.A City Council. In that same time, only sixteen women have served on the Council (Schaben et al. 2013). Of those sixteen, only four of them have been women of color. That means that out of over 200 people who have served on City Council, only four women of color have been elected to that position. The history of the County Board of Supervisors is just as dismal, but perhaps provides some reason for optimism for women's representation. In the entire history of the Board, only six women have been elected. Of those, three have been women of color. Currently, women hold four of the five Board positions. There will be more analysis of this situation in the final analysis portion of this work, but this clearly presents issues for a city that is trying combat injustices that arguably effect women of color the most. It is especially alarming due to the fact that roughly a fourth of the city is women of color according to the Census information (Schaben et al. 2013).

The first woman of color elected to City Council was Gloria Molina in 1987. She

served the First District in this position until 1991, and then was elected to L.A County

Board of Supervisors where she served for ten years until 2001. She is also known for

being the first Latina woman elected to State Assembly in 1984. During her time in local

politics, Molina represented portions of the city that were home to disadvantaged

communities that were majority Hispanic (Mellado 1991). Molina is credited by many as

the first politician to endorse the activities of the Mothers of East L.A (MELA) , which

brought public attention to environmental justice issues in the late 1980s (Mellado 191,

Wertheimer 2006). In an interview in 1993, Molina cited the importance of MELA,

stating:

> The environmental issues within the inner city community are not treated
> as seriously as some of the wilderness issues, a lot of, you know, the issues
> of beaches and so on. So to have this group of people lends an awful lot of
> credibility to, think a movement that sometimes seems very avant-garde,
> very out of touch with what's going on in everyday lives. (Molina, 1993)

By bringing this important issue to the forefront, Molina demonstrated why

representation is crucially important. Her comments brought environmental justice into

the mainstream political discussion of L.A while also highlighting the power and

importance of grassroots organizing in these communities.

Later in her political career, Molina continued to be the leader of environmental

justice issues in local L.A. politics. During her time on the Board of Supervisors, Molina

represented District 1 on the east and southeast sides of L.A. This includes the toxic

hotspot in the Vernon neighborhood, which was the site of grassroots organizing against

an Exide Technology battery recycling plant near residential areas. Molina was

concerned about the pollution hazards, and placed some of the blame on the lack of

institutional protections for these neighborhoods by the Department of Toxic Substance Control (Wertheimer 2006). It was found that numerous houses near the site were found to be contaminated and that emissions could pose an unacceptable cancer risk for 110,000 living in the area, and Molina motioned for the Board to prepare a joint letter addressing the issue (Barboza, 2014). Molina also sponsored efforts that led to L.A's local ban on plastic bags. In an article she wrote about the ban in 2014 for the Los Angeles Daily News she critiqued the state legislature for placing economic cost above community environment and health. She also stated the disproportionate impact plastic bags use has on Latino neighborhoods and communities of color, since landfills are often placed in their neighborhoods (Molina, 2014). Molina's political engagement undoubtedly changed the dynamic of environmental justice initiatives in the city by not only leading the discussion, but also providing real solutions to the problems that the mot burdened in her district faced.

Hilda Solis, the daughter of two Nicaraguan immigrants and the first Hispanic woman elected to California State Senate, replaced Molina in 2014 on the L.A Board of Supervisors representing District 1 (Solis 2013, Rocca 2011). Currently, she is the only woman of color serving on the Board. In this position, Solis inherited many of the environmental justice problems that Molina identified, and Solis also recognized the importance of being a leader in order to address these issues. Solis served in the U.S Congress, during which time she received the Profile in Courage Award for environmental justice because of her leadership in environmental issues (Solis 2013). She was the first woman to ever receive the award. Solis then served as President Obama's Secretary of Labor from 2009 to 2013, and her departure from that position, was in her

words, a desire to reconnect with her community and solve problems on a local level (Solis 2013).

In 2014, she continued to campaign for increased funding for cleanup associated with the Exide plant contamination. So far in her term as Supervisor, she has made problems associated with gentrification and the lack of affordable housing two of her top concerns. Her district, which contains a large portion of downtown as well, has a high poverty rate and very few affordable housing options. She connected this issue with that of the plant contamination by commenting that both issues derive from the divide between poor Americans and wealthy Americans (Favot, 2016). Solis has credited her own personal history for her motivations to fight environmental injustice. She grew up in a low-income, blue-collar neighborhood. She states that there were many "adverse projects" including factories and plants that contributed to air and water pollution in the neighborhood as well as being in close proximity largest landfill in the state. By advocating for environmental justice issues on a national level, she believes she was providing a voice that her community never had (Solis, 2013).

Another leading figure for environmental justice on the Southside of L.A. was Councilwoman Jan Perry, who served District 9 from 2001 to 2013. District 9 is a long district on the Southside that runs along the 710 roadway, which includes the communities of Boyle Heights, Chinatown, and Skid Row. During her time on the Council, she sponsored legislation and led projects to respond to the environmental concerns in Boyle Height and worked to cleanup Skid Row. Her efforts brought in millions of dollars to for improvements to parks and recreation centers, and led a partnership with the Department of Public Works for a massive cleanup of "dumping

zones" in in both neighborhoods, resulting in the cleanup of 4,000 bulky scrap and trash items (L.A. Chamber of Commerce, 2014).

She helped to plan the Augustus Hawkins Wetlands, now named the Jan Perry Wetlands, which was the first of its kind man made wetland in an urban area. The Wetlands not only serve as a green space for recreation, but also as an outdoor classroom for teachers and students in downtown L.A (Fuentes, 2012). Perry co-authored and is credited for the success of Proposition O, which is a project that secured massive funds aimed at stopping pollutants and bacteria out of the water flowing into the disadvantaged neighborhoods (Daunt 2003). While on the Council, Perry also served on the governing board for the South Coast Air Quality Management District (South Coast AQMD, 2003). In these two positions, she helped to successfully negotiate the closing of the Palace Plating plant, which generated hazardous waste and had charges of illegal dumping, which negatively impacted the health of students and teachers at a nearby school as well as residents in the area (Miles 2011).

Currently, the only woman holding one of the 15 L.A. City Council seat is Nury Martinez, who is only the second Latina in over 25 years to be elected to have a seat on the Council (Nury Martinez for L.A, 2017). Martinez represents District 6 on the Northwest side of L.A., which includes North Hollywood, Panorama City and Sun Valley, as well as the hotspot in the Pacoima community. Martinez initially gained political acclaim and popularity in her district in her role as Executive Director of Pacoima Beautiful. Pacoima's population is 99% Latino, many of who are low-income and in poverty. Pacoima was identified by the city as a disadvantaged community faces a number of environmental issues including water contamination, hazardous levels of air

pollution from traffic and factories, and very little greenspace. In her role as Executive Director, she was responsible for securing private and public support for cleanup projects in the Pacoima neighborhood by organizing the community on environmental justice issues (Nury Martinez for L.A, 2017). She led the successful effort to stop the installation of a Price Pfister toxic waste site, which was then replaced with a facility that was Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified (Martinez, 2015). Not only did her campaign prevent hazardous materials from being introduced to the neighborhood but also brought hundreds of jobs that contribute to the economic revitalization of the area. This role led to her election to the City Council, a platform that she has continued to use to prioritize environmental justice projects (Martinez, 2015).

Growth of a Movement

While by present standards the state of California is exemplified as a beacon of environmental leadership, this perception is the product of an evolution that has occurred over the past forty years. For example, in 1984 the state contracted a public affairs team to analyze potential obstacles of "undesirable projects", such as wastewater facilities, hazardous waste storage, landfills, and factories (Koenenn 1991, Pardo 1990). The report concluded that lower socioeconomic groups, the elderly, and those at a high school education level or lower would be less effective at opposing a potential project than neighborhoods a majority of middle and upper socioeconomic households (Gold 1999, Pardo 1990). State action shortly reflected the conclusions of the study with the planned construction of a toxic waste plant in the predominantly Latino, low-income neighborhood of Commerce and the construction of the first state prison in Los Angeles County in the predominantly Black and Latino, low-income neighborhood of Boyle

Heights (Sahagun 1989, Platt 1997). These two projects stirred a reaction in the community that led to the creation of the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA).

Women in the community started organizing after being warned by then Assemblywomen Gloria Molina that a prison was going to be built in their neighborhood, on an industrial site without an environmental impact study and in a two-mile proximity to 34 schools (Koenenn, 1991). This information motivated women in the community to hold a meet at the Resurrection Church. This initial opposition to the prison project resulted in a group of around 400 Latina women, a number of whom only spoke Spanish, who became the volunteer based for MELA initiatives (Sahagun 1989). While the prison was the first project MELA opposed, many of the women realized that ensuring a high quality of life in the neighborhood was not a one-policy issue (Pardo 1990). This led them to join forces with other community organizers against the Commerce toxic waste plant. Both these projects involved the women taking on news roles and overcoming the state's assumption that disadvantaged communities would not put up resistance to undesirable projects (Sahagun 1989).

In interviews with six of members of MELA, researcher Mary Pardo (1990) breaks down the narrative the women used to describe their experience becoming involved in environmental policy. A constant thread that existed in many of the women's motivations is that their neighborhoods have been historically and systematically targeted. Many women remember their families being displaced by the construction of freeways and interstates that carved up neighborhoods and displaced hundreds of families (Estrada 2005). Tired of seeing their neighborhoods taken advantage of, the women used their existing roles in the community to start grassroots organizing. Soon, the women were

bringing their husbands and children to the community meetings that started in the church, but soon spread to households throughout the community.

Many of the women had never been involved in politics. Two of the women interviewed by Pardo (1990), stated that their past organizing experience was limited to the Neighborhood Watch and Parent Club meetings at school. When Juana Gutièrrez But the women saw were able to transfer their ability to talk with and organize mothers in the neighborhood about "traditional" family issues like school policy, neighborhood safety, and park cleanups, and instead began talking with those in the neighborhood about the niche political theatre of environmental impacts and land use issues. The narrative surrounding their motivations leans heavily on the role of mothers as protectors within a community. In her interview, Juana Gutièrrez (1988) explained her role by saying:

> Yo como madre de familia, y como residente del Este de Los Angeles, seguird luchando sin descanso por que se nos respete. Y yo lo hago con bastante carifio hacia mi comunidad. Digo "mi comunidad," porque me siento parte de ella, quiero a mi raza como parte de mi familia, y si Dios me permite seguir luchando contra todos los gobernadores que quieran abuser de nosotros. (As a mother and a resident of East L.A., I shall continue fighting tirelessly, so we will be respected. And I will do this with much affection for my community. I say "my community" because I am part of it. I love my "raza" [race] as part of my family; and if God allows, I will keep on fighting against all the governors that want to take advantage.)

This perspective is important in understanding how the members of MELA saw themselves and how this impacted their organization. While the name of the group refers to 'mothers', the women who started the group recognized the importance of inclusivity. Erlinda Robles (1989) recalled the events of one meeting where a young Latina woman wanted to become involved, but worried that since she had no children and was not a mother, that she was not qualified. Robles stated, "When you are fighting for a better life

for children and "doing" for them, isn't that what mothers do? So we're all mothers you

don't have to have children to be a "mother." This ambiguity of identification led to the

growth of the group, with even some men in leadership positions, despite women being

responsible for the day-to-day operations of the organization (Pardo 1990).

The importance of keeping the MELA operation founded in grassroots organizing

was tested many times. During talks with a group out of the Pacific Palisades on the

potential to form a coalition against the construction of a pipeline through their two

neighborhoods, MELA refused to meet with the lobbyist they sent, instead demanding

they send their grassroots people instead (Pardo 1990). The leaders of the group believed

that their actions and representation reflect the community. It is for this reason that then

Assemblywomen Molina arranged for representatives of MELA to fly to Sacramento to

present their opposition to the prison. This was in contrast to a number of businesses and

organizations that had sent lobbyists and wealthy business owners to speak on the issues,

which Molina did not believe represented those who would be hurt most by the

placement of the prison (Montoya et al. 2000). In the decades following their victories in

stopping the construction of the prison and the toxic waste facility, MELA has expanded

their advocacy efforts to include bussing protestors to Kettleman City to protest the

construction of a toxic waste facility, providing scholarship awards to students in their

neighborhoods, and their capabilities have far exceeded the one-project opposition that

spurred their initial actions (Pardo 1990 Vargas 1999).

Another group that began organizing around the same time as the members of

MELA was the members of the first African-American environmental organization in

Southern California, the Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles (CCSCLA).

The group first began organizing in South Central L.A. in 1984 after it was announced

that City was allowing, and bonding funds for, the development of the LANCER

Municipal Waste Incinerator. The organization started with a phone call from Robin

Cannon, who was working as a data processor in the city, to Charlotte Bullock after

Cannon had heard that the LANCER project was being built in her neighborhood of

Vernon. Cannon (2009) stated, "When I read the notice, I knew right away they were

talking about burning trash in a neighborhood where we already were susceptible to

respiratory ailments." The LANCER project would dispose of 100,000 gallons of

wastewater a day, operate 24/7, and would emit potentially toxic fumes (Bullard 1993,

Diamond 2006). Cannon and Bullock met with a few dozen members of the

neighborhood at the library in Vernon, which was at the time contained one of the highest

percentage of African-Americans in the city, in order to begin organizing (Winton 2010).

As a community based effort in the mid-1980s, they sought the expertise and

political clout of organizations like the Sierra Club and the Environmental Defense Fund,

but were informed that polluting an urban neighborhood was a "community health issue",

not an environmental one (Winton 2010). While the organizations have mended relations

since then, this is a classic example of the resistance of traditional environmental to

acknowledge the disproportionate impact that environmental policy has depending on

one's race and class. The founders of the group new that their fight depended on two

things: power and money (Cannon 2009). Since the more powerful, wealthy

organizations were not going to be of assistance, Bullock and her few companions began

a block-to-block organizing strategy because they knew that there was power in numbers.

As founding members Cannon, her sister Sheila Cannon, Roberta Stephens, Randy Ross,

Wilson Smith, and Halisi Price began an aggressive door-to-door education strategy to educate the public on the potential risks and how to get involved, mainly pushing for attendance at the next public hearing by the City Council (Winton 2010). The product of their efforts was a public hearing that was so packed that they had to shut the doors. Two years later in 1987, CCSCLA was able to claim victory when the City announced they were dropping the plans for construction (Diamond 2006).

The CCSCLA that exists today is much different than the one that opposed the LANCER project in the 1980s, and many aspects are different than the way MELA chose to organize. While members of the CCSCLA used local organizations like churches and Neighborhood Watch groups to begin their organizing, none of these groups acted as grounding for the group's political actions. Instead CCSCLA organized based on the geography of the neighborhood, building a network of 57 "block clubs" throughout the 1990s and early 2000s in the Vernon-Central Area (Winton 2010). These block clubs are comprised over an average of eight to twelve people who hold regular meetings to discuss the concerns on the block. These block clubs were a means of localizing power, diversifying involvement, and creating more self-sufficient grassroots organizations. CCSCLA leadership offers training to block leaders as well as provides technical assistance like flyer printing and educational pamphlets (CCSCLA 2017, Hosey 2011. CCSCLA helps by identifying issues that are specific to each block and educate residents on those issues. These block-related issues included illegal trash dumping, alley cleanup, drug traffic and crime, too few street lights. These are issues that individual blocks can address within their own group through organizing local efforts as compared to large

policy projects like facility construction that might require more political organizing and legislative expertise (CCCSCLA 2017).

CCSCLA has arguably seen more growth in their campaigns than those of MELA because they have been more open to incorporating private and public partners into their projects. The organization is currently led by two women of color, Chairman of the Board and founder, Robin Cannon, and Executive Director Noreen McLendon, who has served in her position since 2002. CCSCLA now addresses a variety of issues including housing and economic development, youth outreach and development, as well as their many environmental efforts. For example, through a partnership with the city in January of 2017, CCSCLA has coordinated efforts to respond to local needs by hiring and training residents of these neighborhoods, including the formerly incarcerated, to cleanup alleys, illegal dumping areas, and even fill potholes. Understanding that environmental justice is related to economic mobility, CCSCLA has teamed up with entities such as the City of Los Angeles and the federal Department of Housing and Development to develop and secure of 700 affordable housing options in South Central L.A. Through a partnership with the Employment Development Department they have organized a job referral program, as well as secure jobs on their construction sites for qualified residents seeking employment (Sentinel News Service 2017). Alongside the University of California L.A., CCSCLA has also developed an educational curriculum called People Organizing for Workplace and Environmental Rights (POWER) to help students understand their neighborhood environment and empower them to take action when they see a problem. CCSCLA's growth show that even though CCSCLA is a robust environmental justice

organization that responds to a variety of issues, they can still be a sustainable, effective

political machine (CCSCLA 2010).

Coalitions in Action

Concerned Citizens of South Central L.A. and the Mothers of East Los Angeles

have both grown into mammoth organizations that have extended their spheres of

influence beyond their neighborhood. However, the majority of their concerns and policy

issues have remained localized in their relative communities in East and South Central

L.A. Due to the city's sprawling tendency and the size of the population it is logical that

these two groups cannot respond and organize around every environmental dispute that

appears in the city's neighborhoods. Fortunately, MELA and CCSCLA have provided

two different models of organizing that other L.A grassroots organizations can look to for

participation and policy strategizing. Many of these organizations have histories and

leadership similar to that of these two groups in that there are a number of organizations

that are founded, organized, and led primarily by women of color.

As was mentioned before, Nury Martinez, before her election to City Council, was

the Executive Director of the group Pacoima Beautiful (PB), but this was an organization

that existed long before private and public partnerships made it the organizing machine it

is today. Currently the population of the Pacoima neighborhood is 99% Latino, and while

that number has varied over the years, the neighborhood has historically been comprised

of predominantly Latino, Black, and immigrants, with a high percentage of them being

low- or middle- income (Pacoima Beautiful 2016). The 1996 origin of Pacoima Beautiful

resembles the founding story of MELA. Five mothers of the neighborhood noticed the

threats to quality of life in their neighborhood, met at a local library, and soon organized

their first program: The Community Inspectors. This program was similar in practice to the block clubs organized by CCSCLA. The program's purpose was for individuals in the neighborhood to identify and report pollution concerns and potential toxic hazards ranging from illegal dumping, to lead condemnation, to toxic emissions. The program was successful and eventually led to the Safer Homes for a Healthy Community (SHHC), a program that focused on training community members to become Promotoras, or health educators (Pacoima Beautiful 2016, Podemski 2014).

Since the leadership of co-founder and first executive director Marlene Grossman, women of color have remained the leaders of this group. Nury Martinez was replaced by Veronica Padilla-Campos as executive director, and whose deputy director Yvette Lopez-Ledesma. Under their leadership, Pacoima Beautiful has formed coalitions under private and public partnerships to increase the impact they have in Pacoima and the surrounding communities. In the early 2000s, Grossman joined a coalition of other environmental justice groups for the Clean Up Green Up campaign, one of the most comprehensive environmental justice initiatives supported and partially funded by the city and state. Clean Up Green Up is an ongoing project that connects the city and state to grassroots organizations to support the identified neighborhoods in toxic hotspot including Pacoima, Boyle Heights, and Wilmington (Sahagun 2011). The purpose of Clean Up Green Up essentially lies in ensuring that the community and their concerns are engaged in the development of their neighborhood by consulting with the coalition of grassroots organizations like Pacoima Beautiful.

Nury Martinez led efforts to support the Don't Waste L.A. Coalition, a group whose purpose is to establish a waste and recycling program for commercial, industrial, and

household trash, so that the city can reduce the number of harmful incinerators near neighborhoods (Karlamangla 2014). One of the major policy pushes under Martinez was the Pacoima Wash Vision Plan, a plan that would restore almost three miles of the L.A. River. The project would not only cleaning up contaminants and trash, but would create trails and landscaped parks within walking distance to many of Pacoima's residents who currently do not have much greenspace at all (Barragan 2014, Jao 2014). Pacoima Beautiful has also been pioneer for community education and youth development. They founded a youth environmentalists summer institute for fifty high school student ever summer to teach them about the science and social factors related to environmental issues, while also enhancing their leadership skills by teaching public speaking skills and the mechanics of the planning process (Garcìa 2016).

The broad impact of environmental hazards on quality of life in these neighborhoods has resulted in diversity of organization. Many groups focus on securing greenspace and cleaning up neighborhoods, while other groups like the Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles (PSR-LA) specialize in how environment impacts physical health. Women, predominantly women of color, currently hold all the full-time staff and leadership positions for the operation of PSR-LA. The current executive director of the organization, Martha Dine Argüello, is a Latina who grew up in the Pico-Union area of L.A. Since PSR-LA (2017) is a citywide organization, the group addresses a number of issues specifically related to improving community health by providing scientific data on the real impact that hazards have on individual's health. One of the major campaigns was in 2013 when they developed the "Don't Gag Docs" campaign, which advocated in front of the State Assembly for more transparency regarding toxins

released by oil and gas extraction. The campaign brought health experts to advocate for the disclosure of those toxins so that they could adequately inform individuals of health risks (Morello-Frosch 2002). This campaign has continued before the L.A. City Council, with PSR-LA campaigning for the prohibition on all gas and oil extractions in Los Angeles (Physicians for Social Responsibility L.A. 2017).

PSR-LA has also formed coalitions with other health and environmental groups to provide a health expertise on how toxins can impact the reproductive health of women and child development. Members of PSR-LA are involved with multiple events hosted by other grassroots organizations so that they can present information and educate communities on the toll of environmental degradation on women (McCally 2002). They are also currently moving beyond education, and have supported efforts to secure funding for lead contamination cleanup in South L.A., specifically in the Jordan Downs housing project in Watts L.A. (Barboza 2014b, Ross 2015). Recently, PSR-LA has teamed up with Californians for a Health and Green Economy (CHANGE) to lead a multimedia campaign for the proliferation of environmental education in the mainstream media. The campaign, titled "The Toxies", aims to take often obscure, removed information about environmental risks in one's neighborhood and make it into a form of media that is more easily digestible by the average citizen. PSR-LA stands out as an example of how coalitions can be particularly effective by partnering with organizations to supply a different, sometimes specialized, perspective on environmental justice initiatives (McCally 2002).

The founder and president of Mujeres de la Tierra (Woman of the World), Irma Munoz, became involved in the environmental justice movement because when she

looked at the leaders of larger national environmental groups, she mostly saw White men (Munoz 2013). In an interview in 2013, Munoz emphasizes the importance of representation by describing her experience as a Latina woman growing up in L.A. Specifically, she cites that her cultural heritage, taught to her by her parents and community, ingrained in her the reciprocal nature of her relationship to her environment. That she must take care of the Earth because it was providing resources for her (Munoz 2013, 2014). Alongside this cultural difference, Munoz believes that the lack of equal resources of marginalized communities as compared to White, middle- and upper- class communities, makes their environmental efforts fundamentally different. For this reason, she advocates for grassroots organizing so that individuals living in burdened communities are the ones driving the policy and not an outside that is not equipped with the cultural heritage, background, and perspective necessary to produce viable solutions.

In regards to partnering with traditional environmental organizations, Munoz states:

> At the end of the day, it is about all of us. And most of these traditional organizations have the financial resources; they have the capacity…most of them want to work with us because they want to learn how to work in our communities. Don't come in with the thought that you're there to save our day. We can save our own day, and we know what we want for that to improve. (Munoz 2013)

She provides the hypothetical example of traditional groups protesting a polluting factory with the intention of shutting it down because pollution is bad for everybody. Munoz's organization takes a different approach. Instead of demanding the closure of a facility, Munoz and her members meet or contact the owner or managers to discuss how to make the facility less of an environmental hazard. They take this approach because if the facility is shut down, this perpetuates a cycle of poverty that is just as relevant to the

environmental burden of communities, but is something that is not always taken into consideration by mainstream environmentalists (Munoz 2014).

Munoz's ability to understand and respond to the complex factors underlying environmental justice issues has translated into a variety of small-scale programs all over L.A. The La Paletera De Los Angeles is a program that addresses the economic realities of many women in L.A. who have a difficult time entering into male-dominated fields. The program employs women, provides them with training, and gives them the foundations for their own micro venture in selling paleta (frozen fruit bars) and ice-cream in local parks. In March of 2017, the group launched their "Telenovelas in the Park" project which combines the desire to bring more people to the parks with an entertaining education program set in a Latino soap opera with a storyline surrounding water conservation and other environmental issues that Latino families typically face in L.A. While these efforts may seem diminutive in impact compared to larger organizations, these programs reflect a deep understanding of the needs of a particular community. By combining their environmental efforts with issues of race, culture, class, and gender, Mujeres de la Tierra shows the importance of representation and recognition can have on marginalized populations that many mainstream environmental often do not even realize (Mujeres de la Tierra 2017).

Chapter 4: Case Study - Atlanta

Georgia: A Stagnant State

In the years following President Clinton's signing of E.O 12898 in 194, all five states neighboring Georgia have launched environmental justice initiatives on a state level. Highlights for these efforts include: The Center for Environmental Equity and Justice (Florida, 1998), the Environmental Equity Initiative (North Carolina, 2000), the Environmental Justice Program (Tennessee, 2005), the Environmental Justice Unit (Alabama, 2006), and a multi-agency Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (South Carolina, 2007) (Rhode Island Legal Services 2006, Bonorris 2010). Alongside Alabama's establishment of an Environmental Justice Unit, the state also created the position of and appointed the first statewide Environmental Justice Coordinator (Alabama Department of Environmental Management). These environmental justice initiatives on the part of the states initiated new strategic plans for the environmental justice movement. The progress of environmental issues was no longer the sole responsibilities of non-profit programs or local grassroots organizations (Kar et. al. 2010). The roll out of the state programs was for some communities, the first public regional acknowledgement of the problem. For many, it seemed like a beginning step for states' taking accountability for the environmental burden that specific populations face (Rhode Island Legal Services 2006).

While all five of Georgia's neighboring states have recognized the issue of environmental justice and have begun to create initiatives to counteract its negative impact on marginalized communities, Georgia's state officials has not launched a statewide coordinated an effort. If one were to peruse state resources, only statewide

agencies even mention environmental justice: the Georgia Department of Environmental

Health and the Georgia Department of Transportation. In regards to public health, the

mention is only a paragraph long blurb on the negative impacts environmental injustices

can have on individual and community health before directing the user to further research

on the federal government's Environmental Protection Agency website (Georgia

Department of Public Health 2017). The Georgia Department of Transportation only

refers to environmental justice in the frame of what is legally mandated by the federal

government when building and maintain infrastructure (Georgia Department of

Transportation 2015). The Environmental Protection Division (EPD), a division of

Georgia's Department of Natural Resources, makes no mention of the existence of

environmental justice, let alone any resources to current initiatives or means of advocacy.

Numerous times in recent history, Georgia has had the opportunity to begin better

stewardship programs aimed at learning more about environmental injustices in the state

and how to solve the problem. Such initiatives have continually failed to gain enough

approval in the Georgia state legislature. The Georgia Environmental Justice Act of 1995

would have mandated that the Georgia EPD would have to closely consider an area's

demographic before approving any project permits (DiLuzio, Henderson, and Wurzel

2012, Deganian 2012). It would have also created a twenty-two member Environmental

Justice Commission, as well as set goals on pollution output for the state (DiLuzio,

Henderson, Wurzel 2012). The Environmental Justice Act of 1997 would have created a

systematic risk assessment tool for the EPD for any new projects that could impact

community health (Deganian 2012, Bonorris 2010). Then again more recently, in 2006,

the Georgia legislature failed to pass the Brownfields Rescue, Redevelopment, and

Community Revitalization and Environmental Justice. This legislation would specifically targeted highly industrialized zones, known as brownfields, for revitalization projects since many brownfields are disproportionately located in minority and low-income communities (Deganian 2012). All three of these efforts failed to even make it to the Georgia governor's desk for approval, despite wide support from environmental justice advocates, conservationists, and grassroots activists.

It is important to note that Georgia is not the only national outlier on this issue though. Of the fifty states, twenty-seven states have an environmental justice employee focused on statewide coordination, and another eighteen at least have a policy in place that addresses environmental justice concerns (Bonorris 2010). This leaves Georgia in the small minority of states that has failed to address the issue directly. Georgia is also such a unique case because its neighboring comparable, competitive states are already taking such progressive steps ahead of Georgia on this issue (Deganian 2012). On the map, Georgia has noticeable hole in the patchwork of environmental projects that are being organized in that corner of the South by the other state governments. That hole in environmental awareness is perhaps even more noticeable because environmental issues notoriously do not simply halt at state lines. Streams cross over state boards, as does air pollution and other environmental hazards. So in investigating the conditions in Georgia, it is important to keep in mind the unique position of Georgia's residents. These communities and individuals are working in a location that is controlled by a state government that has willfully, arguably even hostilely, behind where other states have made progress.

Progress in Fulton County

In Georgia, Fulton County is certainly unique in their progressive environmental initiatives. Due to that lack of state leadership, local government officials in Atlanta have sought to fill the environmental leadership vacuum in the absence of a statewide strategic plan (DiLuzio, Henderson, and Wurzel 2012). Fulton County, which comprises the bulk of the downtown Atlanta metropolitan area, has tried to be a role model of the effects of local environmental stewardship. Fulton County's leadership has now led to a ten county regional planning cooperative that considers environmental justice projects within the Atlanta-region, including the downtown area and surrounding suburban areas (Fulton County Board 2013). Even with this expanded role of county-led stewardship, few other counties have explicitly stated their recognition of an environmental racism problem or taken any action to curb its adverse effects.

Fulton County's environmental justice recognition began in 1996 when the county announced it initiative to make sure that private or public land use that was "environmentally adverse" was not concentrated in low income communities or in communities that are predominantly racial and ethnic minorities (Model Practices: Fulton County Environmental Justice Initiative 2013). This initiative was followed by a major development in 2010 when Fulton County launched its own countywide Environmental Justice Program, which created the new position of environmental planner to coordinate project planning related to environmental justice and adverse health impacts in Atlanta (Model Practices 2013). Without state leadership, funding, and even cooperation, the role of county and city politics is greatly amplified in this battle. Through these initiatives, local government is combating their local issues by turning the focus to the individual

communities that carry the greatest burden. While the results of these efforts are mixed, there is undoubtedly progress still being made because local efforts have created an environmental awareness within Atlanta that has contributed the empowerment of localized agents of change.

The absence of acknowledgement or action on the part of the state government relates back to the idea of recognition and accountability. The conditions that lead to environmental injustices do not suddenly appear overnight. The heavy environmental burden on marginalized communities is the result of systematic inequality that stems in some part from action and inaction of the government. By not taking on the role of guardianship or leadership on environmental issues, the state is failing to recognize the negative impacts that some past and current policy has had on its poor and minority communities. Without the first step of recognition, those communities that face the most potential harm from the states lack of environmental concern have a much more difficult task ahead of them to improve the state of their environments. Failure to progress in this arena has created a vacuum that grassroots organizations and local advocacy groups have begun to fill. This elevates the role that environmental advocates have taken on environmental policy, and especially impacts the role of women of color in leading and coordinating many of these efforts in Atlanta.

Demographics and Dangers

The city of Atlanta is comprised of fourteen counties, with the majority of downtown Atlanta residing inside the boundaries of Fulton County as well as DeKalb County. Inside this fourteen county city-region, there exist numerous spatial regions such as urban residential areas, suburban sprawls, and industrial corridors. As of July 2015, the

United States Census Bureau estimated Atlanta's population at 463, 878 people living within the 132-square mile limits of the city. Of those nearly half a million people, 51% are female and 49% are male. A breakdown of race by the 2010 census showed that 38% of the population was white, 54% identified Black or African-American, 5% Hispanic or Latino, 3% Asian or Pacific Islander, and .2% identified as American Indian or Alaskan Native. Census information also shows that a little above 7% of Atlanta's population is foreign-born. A breakdown of education demographics shows that 89% of those living in Atlanta have a high-school degree or higher, with nearly 48% having a Bachelor's degree or higher (United States Census 2010).

An analysis of the economic climate in Atlanta shows that 62% of women in Atlanta are in the civilian labor force. The unemployment rate in December of 2016 was only slightly above the national average at 5.5%. The total of women-owned firms in business in 2012 fell just over 28,000, with the number of men-owned firms at just over 31,000. A breakdown of businesses owned by minorities shows an almost equal distribution of business ownership, with 30,104 minority-owned firms residing in Atlanta in 2012 and 31, 750 White-owned firms. A look at the poverty rate in 2015 shows that that approximately 24.6% of residents in Atlanta are living below the poverty line. In correlation to this, the census also found that between 2011 and 2015 an estimated 17.6% of Atlanta residents were living without any form of health insurance (United State Census 2010).

A breakdown of race, education, and on the economic conditions of Atlanta are important to keep in mind as the discussion moves into the environmental threats and projects that exist in the Atlanta area. Demographic information is important in analyzing

whether specific populations are being disproportionately targeted by adverse policies. Since a large percentage of Atlanta residents do identify as racial and ethnic minorities, evaluating whether that population faces more environmental risks than their White counterparts is an essential part of understanding the environmental dynamics of Atlanta. Information on employment and the business climate help to understand the close relationship between environmental hazards and economic mobility. Furthermore, unemployment and inability to possess health insurance are important indicators to consider when looking at how poor environmental standards only amplify other systematic issues. In order to improve environmental health, it is not enough to just carve out areas for park or to just curb pollution that leads to health problems. The goal of environmental justice must be to provide all individuals with equal ability to flourish in the spaces they live, learn, and work.

As has already been stated, Georgia's state government has taken little initiative to actually track patterns of environmental racism that lead to injustices. This absence of recognition really impacts how advocates are able to combat environmental burdens. State's that make environmental justice a priority are able to allocate funds, develop data, and identify statistical trends in order to curb policy that discriminates. However, advocates that organize and seek to educate others on these issues encounter problems due to disinterested state like Georgia. The main problem is that there is a limited amount of data or local government transparency to track instances of environmental injustice. So while county and city governments might have the sincere desire to start environmental justice initiatives, they do not always possess the means or the tools to identify effective strategies moving forward. If the state is not collecting data on pollutants and

discrimination, then they are only perpetuating the ignorance, which further establishes the systematic issues that are at the root of environmental justice. This problem in the past has led to a stalling on environmental initiatives in Atlanta, which creates a baseline for any environmental projects moving forward. In order to solve this problem, the women of color in Atlanta have taken a leading role in educating and empowering Atlanta's marginalized communities so that these environmental injustices cannot be ignored.

In order to combat the environmental ignorance that plagued Atlanta, local organizations began to study the problem of pollution in Georgia. Green Law, a non-profit organization based in Atlanta, made environmental justice a priority of their campaign for a greener Georgia. In March of 2012, after synthesizing 2010 census data and new federal EPA data, Green Law researchers produced a report titled "Patterns of Pollution: A Report on Demographics and Pollution in Metro Atlanta." The report identified the major pollutant risks in Atlanta as well as outlined what they believed to be the most important environmental priorities in combating environmental degradation (DiLuzio, Henderson, and Wurzel 2012). The results of the study were likely not surprising for many environmental justice advocates. Within the Atlanta area, the report identified concentrated areas of major polluters located in close proximity to residential areas.

The investigation conducted by Green Law was conducted in three steps. The first step created a spatial analysis of pollution in the fourteen counties that make up the Atlanta area. This was done by creating a grid based on 10 square kilometer "blocks" and identifying the number of pollution points in each block. Pollution points are facilities

that are permitted and whose pollution is regulated on a state or federal level. Such activities include hazardous waste storage, active solid waste landfills, air pollution facilities, nuclear waste storage, wastewater treatments, and others. Step two required the comparison of high- and low- pollution blocks with demographic data in the following categories: race, vacant housing units, median housing value, median family income, poverty, linguistically isolated households, and high school degree holders. The third step created a ranking of environmental justice hot spots based on the number of pollution points and the demographic compilation of each of the determined 1,282 blocks in Atlanta.

The final results of the report showed a number of correlations between the demographic compilations of a block and the number of pollution points. Race was the most direct correlation to pollution. Blocks with a 75% minority rate on average contained twice the number of pollution points than blocks that had below a 25% minority rate. The second strongest demographic correlation was found to be linguistic isolation. Blocks in which more than 20% of the households are linguistically isolated likely contained on average three times the number of pollution rates as compared to blocks with lower than 5% linguistically isolated households. The two other factors that showed a strong correlation were poverty and vacant housing rates (DiLuzio, Henderson, and Wurzel 2012).

This analysis was the starting point for many of the current environmental justice movements taking place in Atlanta today. Due to the lack of a statewide governmental environmental justice strategy, there was not a scientific collection of data that environmental advocates could use to educate the public on these issues. It took the

involvement of an outside entity to collect and provide this information. 105 of the 1,282

blocks identified in Atlanta had nine or more pollution points. 741 blocks had no

pollution points. Those blocks rated as high-pollution had an average minority population

of 44.2%, while those 741 low-pollution blocks had an average minority population of

25.4%. With this information, advocates began identifying these "environmental justice

hotspots" which have now become the epicenter of current grassroots operations

(DiLuzio, Henderson, and Wurzel 2012).

This detailed evaluation of Georgia's, and more specifically Atlanta's,

environmental policy climate is an essential part to understanding women of color's role

as change-makers in their communities. There are many systematic and socially ingrained

obstacles that prevent progress for the environmental justice movement, and many of

these problems coincide within the existing political, economic, and social struggles that

women of color already face. In Georgia, women of color are facing a government with a

long history of racism and sexism, with state and local officials lacking diverse

representation for decades (Rosser-Mims 2006). The current state administration and all

previous administrations have adopted an attitude of stagnant cooperation for

environmental justice. So in analyzing how women of color are impacting environmental

policy, this study of Atlanta focuses on how women of color in the city combat the issues

concerning recognition, representation, and action in a state that seem slower to actively

participate in the environmental justice movement.

Community Involvement

In a work released in 2011, researchers Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson analyze

women of color's involvement in the environmental justice movement in Atlanta

communities. Their study involved interviewing 33 women of color who are active members or leaders of the movement in Atlanta, using their oral histories to document their motivations and involvement in creating a safer, greener community. Through these interviews, the authors identified six key motivations: family concern, concern for community health and welfare, family involvement on the issues, community concerns and environmental justice issues, spirituality, and environmental racism. For the purposes of this case study, these interviews can give a crucial perspective on how women of color use their position in their communities to develop effective strategies for combating environmental degradation. While these interviews were not specifically geared toward strategy analysis, the oral histories of these women of color give important insight into how grassroots organizing, coalition building, community education, and mentoring have been utilized to develop pragmatic solutions for the problems facing their communities.

In the interviews of these 33 women of color, one of the most striking threads of discussion is the immediacy of the issue. Many of these women felt a direct threat to the wellness of their family and community. Interviewees remarked that they felt hazardous sites were engulfing their neighborhoods, pointing out the establishment of numerous landfills, wastewater treatment, and storage facilities creating "toxic donuts" around their communities (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson 2011). Other interviews revealed many of the women believed the hazardous sites releasing chemical and odors around them contributed to respiratory and cardiac issues in young children and the elderly, keeping even the healthy indoors so that they could avoid the fumes and smell. And while these threats were major concerns for these women, and certainly acted as motivators to

become involved, many women also cited the lack of means of resistance as a major part of their decision to become involved.

Hazardous facilities were being built unopposed by the community, unlock in more affluent communities where the residents banded together in opposition. Some women became involved because no other leadership existed and the "men were not as aggressive" (Peterson, 1998). So it was not just that there was a present danger, it was also that there was no perceived viable solution for dispersing the danger. These women saw the degradation occurring in their communities, realized there was no existing means to solve it, and decided that personal action was needed to protect their neighborhoods.

Many of the women interviewed narrated how they used their existing social networks to help their communities. Individuals became involved through their churches, many of which involved themselves with the environmental justice movement. Churches in environmentally comprised areas were reliable bodies of community organization, which some compare to church involvement in the Civil Rights Movement that occurred in the 1960s. Some churches became congregation of individuals impacted in the immediate area, making it a channel of both collecting information and dispersing it. Other existing groups like the Newton Florist Club (NFC), who initially were founded to provide funeral flowers to bereaved families, soon began to pursue education and advocacy efforts related to air and water quality (Gomez, Shafiei, and Johnson, 2011). Other women were concerned with the lack of maintained greenspace in their neighborhoods for their children to play and for their family to spend time outdoors, so they established new groups like the Concerned Citizens for Chosewood Park and the Lakewood Heights Civic Association. These groups became hubs of environmental

justice advocacy for communities impacted by environmental discrimination. These organizations led by women of color provided a means of political participation and activism for communities that had historically lacked environmental leadership and awareness.

By focusing on raising awareness and increasing participation, these efforts have resulted in environmental justice being an ingrained part of political and social life in Atlanta. Many of the women interviewed stated that their family's involvement in these issues launched their desire to be advocates. Advocacy became a cross-generational activity, with mothers and daughters educating their families on the environmental justice movement, and inspiring them to get involved themselves. The motivations and strategies for organizing that are mentioned by the participants in this study suggest that in their centralized role in the family and in the social fabric of their communities, women of color are in a unique position to identify issues and formulate pragmatic, grassroots-based solutions.

County Commissioners

Perhaps one of the most directly influential governing bodies in Atlanta's struggle for better environmental justice is the County Board of Commissioners. The County Board is responsible for the regulation of many environmental projects and potential points of pollution. The Fulton County Board is responsible for tasks such as managing county parks, trash collection, ensuring water quality, and coordinating with the County-commissioned environmental planner mentioned earlier (Fulton County Strategic Plan 2012). The lack of state leadership in this arena elevates the role of the Board in ensuring environmental protections for marginalized communities. All elections before 1975

resulted in a County Board dominated by only White men. Despite the high percentage of the population, it was not until 1975 that the Board contained some diversity (Fulton County Board of Commissioners 2017). In 1987 Nancy Boxill was elected to the Board, becoming the first woman of color to serve on the board. In the following years, Nancy became vice chair and then chair of the Board, becoming one of the longest serving commissioners, with 23 years in public service. Currently, two women of color sit on the County Board of Commissioners.

Vice Chair Joan P. Garner represents District 4, comprised of the heart of downtown Atlanta, midtown, and the neighborhoods west of downtown to the Fulton Industrial Boulevard. Commissioner Garner's district houses many neighborhoods adjacent to the Fulton Industrial Boulevard, one of the high-pollution areas that have both a high number of pollution points as well as a high-number of minority and linguistically isolated individuals. In her role, Garner has made the development of these neighborhoods a top priority. The primary content of most of her authored legislation while on the Board was the development of these neighborhoods (Fulton County Board of Commissioners 2017). Development of these areas not only included economic development strategies, but required cleanup initiatives and the construction of affordable housing for the neighborhoods residents (Wickert 2013).

Vice-Chair Garner made the revitalization of the Fulton Industrial Boulevard, on the border of her district, one of her main priorities in her recent reelection campaign. These neighborhoods have been subject to emissions for factories, illegal dumping, and blight due to poverty stricken individuals abandoning their houses. Garner's response was to lead efforts for the creation of the Fulton Industrial Boulevard Working Group. The

group's primary responsible is identifying hazards in the community, educating community members on potential threats, and coordinating local agencies to improve the area. Garner was also appointed to the Atlanta Beltline Board of Directors, a position that places her as a lead in the largest revitalization effort in the city (Garner for Commissioner, 2016).

Commissioner Emma Darnell represents District 6, comprised of southwest Atlanta and South Fulton County. During her time in leadership on the Board as vice-chair, Emma Darnel led efforts for the establishment of the Environmental Justice Initiative in 2010. Darnel's district borders the Chattahoochee River, putting many neighborhoods close to wastewater facilities, drainage areas, and factories that utilize the river (Fulton Board of Commissioners 2016). Due to the limited resources and powers of the Board, she has continually cosponsored and supported legislation urging the Georgia Environmental Protection division to enforce environmental justice regulations, an effort that has been unsuccessful (Kass 2016). Garner and Darnell have both also both been involved and sponsored projects geared toward affordable housing, affirmative action in government jobs, expanding green spaces for families and children, and more affordable public transportation (Might 6 District Office 2017).

These efforts directly represent many of the environmental justice issues that their districts are facing that other, wealthier, less diverse districts might not have otherwise recognized. Particularly important are how these two women have recognized the importance of supporting women, through means of affirmative action, child care, and accessible transportation. While both districts are plagued by high poverty, single-parent households, led by women, are particularly burdened by poverty and thus environmental

issues. If a woman is living in poverty, they often do not have the money to afford housing outside of low-cost regions, which are disproportionately found in heavily industrialized areas. In order for a single parent household to operate successfully and to end the cycle of poverty, Garner and Darnell have sponsored numerous development projects that can make life easier for those living in poverty, especially women (Carlisle 2016).

Atlanta City Council

The County Commissioners are not the only unit of local government that is attempting to make Atlanta a more environmentally conscious city. Alongside the commissioners' agendas, the City Council has also set a particularly progressive environmental agenda, helping to fill the void in accountability left by the state. The Council is composed of 15 council members, with the responsibilities of the council delegated to seven different committees. Those responsibilities most closely align with environmental justice initiatives include to powers of the Utilities Committee, the Community Development/Human Services Committee, the Public Safety Committee, the Transportation Committee, and the Zoning Committee. These committees provide much of the local legislation, issuing laws that pertain to the regulation of pollution, residential development, public transportation, zoning industrial areas, and many more areas. The history of the City Council is another story of a homogeneous council consisting of White males, until the 1980s and 1990s when the council began to diversify. After the 2016, the board now consists of five women of color out of the fifteen individuals that serve as the Council (Atlanta City Council 2016).

As was discussed earlier in this work, all these women possess a unique perspective that would be critically absent if all the members elected where White men. The importance of this perspective is perhaps best understood by looking at the districts that each of these women represent. Council Member Cleta Wilson represents District 4, the most central metropolitan district, which contains the population with the one of the highest poverty rates as well as the highest number of minorities. Natalyn Archibong represents District 5, the easternmost districts, containing multiple of the environmental justice hotspots as well as numerous industrial sites and few greenspaces in comparison with neighboring districts. Council Member Felicia Moore represents District 9, the largest district, with the most land bordering the Chattahoochee River, which has led to its labeling as an environmental justice hotspot (EJH) by Green Law because of the numerous facilities that utilize the water from the river and due to the high poverty rate surrounding these facilities. Keisha Bottoms serves as the Council Member for District 11, which only partially contains an EJH and has the one of the lowest rates of poverty, but still has a high minority percentage of the population. Council Member Joyce Shepherd serves as the representative of District 12, the southernmost district, and seemingly the most heavily saturated by EJH (DiLuzio, Henderson, Wurzel 2012).

The purpose of the recitation of these women is to provide an example that can be a analyzed by investigating where, why, and how women of color are setting an agenda that is conscious of environmental justice, even in a region and state that does not recognize that it is a problem. That being said, it should be recognized that the areas that have high poverty rates, high numbers of racial minorities, and that are home to many marginalized communities are turning to women of color to represent their interests and

take the lead on solutions. The results of this decision are arguably considerable strides in how Atlanta is combating environmental racism. Under the leadership of, and with the participation of, these women, the Atlanta City Council has overseen projects that relate directly to more responsible, more just environmental leadership.

To provide more substantial evidence of a more progressive agenda, it is helpful to study the projects that these women have sponsored that directly correlate to improving the state of environmental justice. During her time as Chair of the City Utilities committee, Archibong was able to establish 10 acres of greenspace in her District as well as secure additional funds for testing the lead levels in water, a problem that disproportionately affects minorities and those living in poverty that often reside in poorly developed areas with aging or deficient infrastructure (Lundin 2015). Wilson has secured over $10 million of investments in her district as part of the Beltline parks improvements as well as sponsored the development of the West End Community, which has now seen a growth in affordable housing as well as jobs with the development of commercial and retail space in place of space that was once industrial (Florio 2012).

Moore has tackled environmental issues in her communities with a grassroots focus, organizing "Community Clean-Ups" which tackles issues such as neighborhood clean-up, road maintenance, and scrap recycling, while also hiring a person to her staff whose main responsibility is responding to constituent concerns over zoning code enforcement and blight in her District. While she was chair of the City Zoning Committee, Council Member Bottoms sponsored numerous land use bills that changed the designated land use of many neighborhoods to strictly residential zones, protecting the incorporated neighborhoods from potential pollution the future industrial facilities

could cause. Shepherd sponsored an allocation of funds for an expansion and education

on recycling programs in the city, led an effort to procure services for city recycling and

city use of renewable resources, and orchestrated the use of funds from the sale of the

city's land in Southside Industrial Park to be specifically used for clean-up and

maintenance of the surrounding neighborhoods (Atlanta City Council 2017, Carlisle

2016).

Each of these women has contributed in some part to an environmental justice

crisis impacting their area. Fortunately, these women have continued to produce solutions

for their impacted neighbors by responding with strategies ranging from education on

environmental issues to the protection and clean-up of areas that are under threat from the

hazards of industrialization. Moore is currently leading the crusade for the protection and

expansion of greenspace and parks by sponsoring legislation at the beginning of this year

to oppose any takeover of such spaces on the basis of imminent domain by the state.

Wilson has continued sponsoring strategies for neighborhood development, including the

Turner Field Neighborhoods Livable Centers project, which seeks to create a strategy for

smarter use of space, allowing more greenspace, greater access to public transportation,

and more affordable housing in an area that has seen the deterioration an aging residential

neighborhood (Kahn 2016). Council Member Archibong currently sits on the Board of

Directors for the Atlanta Beltline Project with Commissioner Garner as a lead in the

city's largest revitalization project with an environmental justice initiative (Florio 2012).

The reason that each of these women and their projects deserve to be analyzed is

because these individuals are responding to complex, institutionally engrained

environmental injustice issues with pragmatic, local strategies that had previously not

existed. Projects protecting and expanding parks and greenspaces are a real response to community concerns that they see a shrinking amount of open space for their families. Many of these communities have experienced pollution related health problems ranging from lung cancer, to cardiovascular disease and lead poisoning. In response to that, many of these women have led the Zoning Committee, and have sponsored legislation protecting residential areas so that their district's residents do not have to worry about their child's development being stunted or their family members' life expectancy decrease. Perhaps the most widespread initiative is the development of areas that are experiencing poverty so that there is more affordable housing, more public transportation options to cut pollution and make jobs more easily accessible, and more attention to areas that were showing signs of deterioration (Atlanta City Council 2017).

Coalition Building

One of the most powerful tools for grassroots and community organizing is the creation of coalitions. Since the environmental justice movement in Atlanta encapsulates a desire for better overall quality of life and the ability for all residents of the city flourish equally, there are many points of crossover with movements that are not facially environmental. In Atlanta, there is evidence of women of color establishing coalitions between environmental justice groups with reproductive rights advocates, economic development strategists, women's leadership organizations, neighborhood associations, This crossover with other movements has allowed for advocates to reach individuals and groups of people who may not have heard about the movement and certainly had not been actively working toward environmental.

One of the most diverse coalitions, in terms of membership demographic and types of activism, is rooted in the Georgia Women's Action for New Directions (WAND). WAND is a national organization with numerous state chapters that identify and organize based on local issues. Georgia WAND is a unique chapter of the organization in that identifies environmental justice as one of its three major issues, alongside peace in action and political empowerment. WAND's activity in local politics in Atlanta has been consistent over the years, with advocacy on local and state legislative issues, as well as focusing on increasing political participation and education on local issues. In the past decade, WAND has helped connect advocates and communities, producing a strategy that focus on community-based initiatives that respond directly to real concerns (Georgia WAND 2016).

Members of WAND represent women from many different organizations, including Planned Parenthood, the Chattooga Conservancy, 9to5, Project South (focused on developing south Atlanta), Green Going Forward Platform (multimedia advocacy platform), and many others. The power of this group is evident in results they have produced. In 2016, a representative from the Georgia WAND, Yolande Tomlinson, served on the Human Right to Water Coalition with the US Human Rights Network, highlighting the need for more recognition of disproportionate contamination of drinking water for communities with high minority populations and high poverty rates. The Board of Directors President, Dianne Valentin, led the expansion of the coalition to now include work with the Georgia Water Coalition, focusing on protecting groundwater from radioactive contaminants, and the Just Energy Circle, helping to plan the inaugural Just Energy Summit. While projects like these were focused on elevating discussions and

partnerships surrounding environmental issues, other organizers in WAND focused on political empowerment of individuals in Georgia, particularly Atlanta (Georgia WAND 2015)

In their legislative and political empowerment efforts, organizers within WAND found that groups most affected by environmental degradation in Georgia were also the same people that were most likely to not be politically engaged. Their findings showed that in terms of registered voters, 28 percent of those unregistered were unmarried women, 42 percent were young people between 18 and 29 years old, 12 percent were African-Americans, and 41 percent were Latino. Over 70% of unregistered voters also lived in urban areas, with the largest portion residing in Atlanta. When compared to the data on environmental injustice, this is extremely disturbing for these populations, particularly women of color who arguably bear the most burdens. This is a large untapped voting base that arguable has the most to gain from political participation. To combat this gap in participation, WAND launched an effort alongside their community partners and volunteers to not only register these voters, but also education them on the power of politics in environmental issues that were affecting them. The result of this campaign was over 2,800 doors knocked on in Fulton County alone, as well as the distribution of over 10,000 community-specific educational materials. These materials contained not only information on legislative candidates, but also on potential hazardous projects planned for certain communities, local health screening initiatives offered local non-profits, as well as information on how to get more involved in WAND's initiatives in the future (Georgia WAND 2017).

Another example of pragmatic environmental stewardship by women in Atlanta is the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA). WAWA is an example of a grassroots that has grown from its partnerships in the community. WAWA is an all-volunteer organization that was formed after grassroots advocates working to stop discriminatory waste water treatment practices that was taking place in predominantly Black neighborhoods on Atlanta's West side, which is home to eleven landfills, four superfund sites, and two sewer overflows (Bellows 2015). Under the leadership of Evonne Blythers, who serves as WAWA's Environmental Educator Coordinator, and of Na'Taki Osborne Jelks, Alyssa Combs, Patrice Francis, and Sheri Davis-Faulkner, who currently hold four of the five seats on the Board of Directors, WAWA has seen dramatic growth in community participation and successful conservation projects (West Atlanta Water Alliance 2016).

Where WAND and other environmental justice advocates have more focus on political empowerment, WAWA has made concentrated efforts to educate the community on the effects of environmental racism and the negative impacts of an unhealthy environment. These efforts led to the inaugural Environmental Health Symposium, in partnership with Southern Alliance for Clean Energy and the Atlanta Black Nurses Association, as well as the founding of WAWA's educational programs at the Outdoor Activity Center which provides educational opportunities for Atlanta area families and school districts. Their conservation efforts to preserve greenspace in West Atlanta has been extremely successful by raising over $2 million to preserve 400 acres from any sort of retail, industrial, or residential development (United States Department of Environmental Protection 2016). The importance of women from the community leading

these environmental stewardship efforts can be seen in the benefits that the communities are experiencing due to their leadership. Their ability to build coalitions with public partners like the Atlanta Bureau of Parks, recreation, and cultural Affairs alongside private partners like the Atlanta Black Nurses Association demonstrates a truly impressive model for how other environmental justice advocates can use coalition building to move their agenda forward (Bellows 2015).

As the environmental justice movement in Atlanta has expanded the movement has not kept itself isolated from traditional environmental organizations. The conglomeration of traditional groups and environmental justice groups can be seen in many projects around the city. One such partnership the one that exists between the national group Greening Forward and the recent founding of the Atlanta Center for Diversity and the Environment and the launch of the Environmental Professionals of Color. This is a professional pipeline project specifically geared to bring diversity to the field of environmentalism. EPOC's main goal is to recruit young professionals around the Atlanta area interested in combating environmental issues and provides a space for further education, discussion, planning, and training (Center for Diversity and the Environment 2015). Specifically, EPOC works to build a coalition network between professionals of color to address the "diversity crisis at the heart of the environmental movement" (Environmental Professionals of Color – Atlanta, 2017).

The Atlanta chapter of EPOC held their first major event in 2014. The event was brought together groups such as Green Law, Georgia State University, The Sierra Club, and the Greening Youth Foundation for a conference on how individuals and groups can bring inclusivity and diversity to the environmental movement (Environmental

Professionals of Color - Atlanta 2014). Programs like these not only bring recognition of the need to a diversified environmental movement, but also work to provide the environmental justice movement with young leaders of color who are mentored by experienced social justice advocates. These are especially important for women of color who often do not see their own perspective represented in mainstream environmentalism. Mentorships, networking, and coalition building provide these women with additional knowledge and skills to be able to organize more effectively and efficiently to achieve the goals of the environmental movement.

Chapter 5: Analysis

A comparison of the environmental justice progress that has occurred in Los Angeles and Atlanta allows for an investigation in how women of color are shaping environmental policy. The types of action, organization, and representation taken on by women of color in the environmental justice movement demonstrate the importance of diversity and recognition in making policy. The recognition needed to combat a systemically engrained tool of discrimination requires the inclusion of individuals and communities from all different backgrounds. That is why it is centrally important this investigation to recognize and document the role of women of color in this movement who represent a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

The Role of Grassroots Organization

In both Atlanta and Los Angeles, grassroots have been utilized as a means to raise awareness and inspire action correlated to environmental issues. The means by which this organizing was done varied depending on the community and the issue or issues being targeted, but there are patterns of organizing that remained similar despite other differences. The success of the efforts, while varied, seems to show the capacity for organization and resistance that are not always closely associated with disadvantaged communities and marginalized individuals. This can be seen beyond the case of the Correll Memo in Los Angeles that specifically identified these communities as the least likely to be able to oppose an undesirable project. Similar cases of environmental racism and discrimination can be found across that nation. A quick look at the number of environmental justice hotspots in Atlanta and Los Angeles demonstrates that government and private interests are still acting in the spirit of the Correll Memo, even if it is more

implicitly engrained. It is partly because of this continued cycle of degradation that these communities have begun to empower themselves through organizing.

One of the common threads that were reflected in many of the women's narratives in this investigation was that their motivation for running for office or for leading a grassroots campaign was rooted in their frustration with the lack of tools available for them to resist. In the case of the Mothers of East Los Angeles, many of the women remarked that they had seen the same type of environmental discrimination throughout their communities' histories. Interstate and roadway projects had already carved up their neighborhoods, displacing thousands of residents, and in the process, contributed to the levels of air pollution in their neighborhood. They had seen the repercussions of projects that were met with no opposition from the neighborhood and because of this they were motivated to prevent further degradation of their neighborhoods. In the interviews conducted of Black women in Atlanta, there were similar echoes of dissatisfaction. Many of the women believed that since the city hand constructed facilities and landfills near their neighborhoods, the health of the community had declined. For these women, the establishment of similar projects was not conceivable because they had already witnessed the effects of undesirable projects and knew the threat that they posed to the community. This dissatisfaction with existing means of resistance led women in these communities to organize themselves so that they could break the historic pattern of environmental injustice in their neighborhoods.

Many of these women also cited their concern for the quality of life of specific populations in their communities as well. Interviews with members of MELA showed that many women were motivated by their concern for their children. One of the main

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reasons for opposition to the prison was that there had been no environmental impact study, despite being close residential neighborhoods, and the prison was located within two miles of over 30 schools. The founding members of the CCSCLA first began organizing because they were concerned that the toxic waste facility proposed for their neighborhood would be a risk for children, pregnant mothers, and the elderly. This was especially important in the community of South Central L.A. at the time of their founding when over 45% of the community was under the age of eighteen, a significantly higher percentage than the rest of the city. In Atlanta, Councilwoman Archibong and Commissioner Garner, both who have helped develop Beltline project, cite their desire for the project to bring greater access to transportation and greenspace for children and families. Many of these projects thus seem to have had motivations rooted in protecting the most vulnerable populations.

While these patterns of motivation are not necessarily unique to this movement, they provide insight into how an organization orients itself to the environmental justice movement. Women of color arguably endure the most consequence from instances of environmental injustice due to their position at the intersections of race and gender that are traditionally means of systematic oppression. While these women are certainly trying to improve their own quality of life, it is worth noting that they are outwardly focused on more vulnerable populations. The programs enacted by MELA, CCSCLA, WAWA, and EPOC, while founded and operated by women, are not meant to serve only women. These organizations are serving other populations such as youth, the elderly, and expecting mothers who have also historically not had the means to organize for themselves. It could be the case that in their position as a population that has historically

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and systematically been disadvantaged, they are more able to empathize with other vulnerable groups.

Once these motivations were realized, many of women started their organizing process using their regular means of communication. In the case of CCSCLA, founder Robin Cannon contacted her sister first, then a few friends in the neighborhood to meet at a local library. In the case of MELA, Juana Gutièrrez began by calling other mothers, and eventually meeting in the local church that many of the women in her area attended. In Atlanta, a Florist Club turned into an advocacy groups and a Neighborhood Watch turned into the Concerned Citizens for Chosewood Park. These meetings underline the importance of accessibility to public meeting places. Typically it is assumed most politics occurs in government buildings, City Council meetings, or the like, but for many of these groups, they depended on public buildings such as libraries, or they met at already established meeting places like church, and many like CCSCLA would eventually began meeting in houses around the neighborhood.

These women were thus able to use their existing social positions and networks as a foundation for an effective, efficient organizing campaign. These existing networks played an essential part for many of these groups who lacked experienced political leadership. The nature of most grassroots organizing depends on the authenticity and connectedness to the community, something that these groups strived to emulate in their construction. Many of the women who started these grassroots efforts did not have a background in politics or policy, but did have some organizing experience. This experience was limited to things like the PTA and Parent Clubs at schools or leaders within their church, but individuals were able to capitalize on this experience. Members

of MELA recounted their conversations with other mothers at school transitioning from talking about troublesome teachers to raising awareness of local projects that put students at risk. Instead of only delivering flowers in Atlanta, the Newton Florist Group used its network to disseminate information on environmental impact projects in their neighborhood.

For these groups, these existing networks are possibly more important than they would be for more experienced or more privileged groups. Many of the women that launched or became involved in these groups, while not only existing in the intersections of race and gender, were also living in communities with high poverty rates. This is a unique position because other groups that are predominantly White or wealthy or male have historically greater access to politics and greater resources. This translates into groups that are bolstered by social privilege and perhaps political background because they do not face the limitations that groups that are more female, more diverse, and more burdened by poverty. The solution for the women in these case studies was the capitalization on existing resources. The founded of CCSCLA perhaps stated it best when she noted that some groups had money and power, and her group knew they didn't have the money, so they used their organizing to garner the power. This same sentiment can be seen other groups as well. While resources and experience may have been lacking, the groups found power in their numbers and in their connectedness with the issue.

Perhaps the most important finding in this analysis is the diversity of perspectives represented in the growth of the environmental justice movement. As was stated at the beginning of this work, the point of this study is not to place all women of color in one single category. While all the individuals and groups analyzed in these case studies are

women of color, they represent a variety of backgrounds that make each of their perspectives unique and constructive. The women mentioned in these cases represent different races, ethnicities, ages, social classes, languages, countries of origin, neighborhoods, sexualities, and backgrounds, some are even mothers, others are not mothers. So it is essential that when discussing "how" women of color are impacting environmental policy, that a single perspective is not prescribed to a population that is so diverse. This is a trait that is at the center of the grassroots organizing documented in the case studies. By introducing grassroots organization to their communities, these women were bringing in and recognizing a diversity of experiences, perspectives, and knowledge. This representation of diversity is likely partially responsible for the success of the groups. Because of their inclusivity, these groups were able to not only grow and prosper, but were better equipped to realize real concerns and to be the advocates their community needed.

The Role of Representation

The most surprising finding in analyzing the political representation in Atlanta and Los Angeles was how few women of color held elected office in Los Angeles as compared to L.A. Los Angeles' position as one of the most liberal cities in one of the most liberal states places the expectation that local politics might reflect a more inclusive, progressive agenda. This could not be further from the truth. With only Nury Martinez on the City Council and Hilda Solis on the Board of Supervisors, the number of women of color holding an elected representative office is dismal. The situation in Atlanta is quite different. Though it is in a much more conservative, Southern state, women are represented on a much larger scale, with roughly a fourth of the City Council comprised

of women of color, and a third of the County Commissioners. Since the purpose of this work is to document and analyze "how" women of color are changing environmental policy, this work will not delve into why this might be the case. However, a brief discussion on the role of political representation in Atlanta and Los Angeles may be beneficial in explaining why this lack of representation is important.

Juana Gutièrrez, a founder of MELA, first heard about the construction of a prison in her neighborhood from her State Assembly Representative, Gloria Molina. Molina's call to her constituents was the spark that initiated action. While it is likely that her constituents would have learned of the project eventually, Molina's call accomplished two things. First, it shows that accountable, connected representation is important. Molina knew this issue would be important to her constituents, that it warranted a call, and that her constituents deserved the information as quickly as possible. Second, Molina identified herself as supporter and ally for her constituents, specifically for the soon-to-be established MELA. As a supporter, Assemblywoman Molina was helping to empower a community that she knew had historically been disadvantaged. Molina was the first Latina elected to the Assembly and was at that time herself an outsider. It does not take much to imagine how more women of color in representative positions of power could be a boon to disadvantaged communities. If more representatives were more tuned in to the problems of their communities and were more open to identifying with and supporting their community's actions, then the systematic degradation of certain communities would likely be much more of a priority.

In Atlanta, this same sort of support is given by many of the women of color who sit on the City Council and Board of Commissioners. Districts that have the highest

saturation of environmental justice hotspots seem to have a tendency to vote for women of color to represent them. The reason for this outcome is likely not singular or wholly-knowable but a factor could be the ability of these women to better relate to the problems their community is facing, more than a male or White colleague. Archibong and Garner are clear cases of this because of their appointment to the Atlanta BeltLine Project. These two officials both have records of sponsoring development projects that address the needs of low-income communities, particularly women. As leaders on the project, they have found a means to channel their desire to expand accessibility to transportation so that women have more opportunities for employment and childcare. The project also aims to cleanup brownfields and other industrial areas in order to establish more greenspace and more commerce in areas that have high unemployment. Councilmembers Felicia Moore and Cleta Winslow are accomplishing similar feats with their community clean-up days and the expansion of parks in their regions. These projects show an understanding that disadvantaged communities are not just disadvantaged because of a single factor, and that solutions take into consideration a myriad of factors. And these factors are not isolated from one another, but are complex, overlapping factors such as race, education, gender, and poverty, and as such, a women of color, who has more experience in considering race and gender, might be better equipped to solve those problems.

Lastly, the elected officials in both these cities were instrumental to actual policy decisions that progressed environmental justice initiatives. Many environmentally undesirable projects are approved either explicitly or implicitly by local government through zoning laws, tax breaks, bonding agreements, and financial partnerships. While the community members oppose a project can go to project planning meetings and City

Council meetings that are open to the public, these are not necessarily the most effective ways of stopping projects. A representative actually sitting on the Council or Board is far more likely to influence policy than typical community organizers. This is perhaps why the L.A. Board of Supervisors is known as the "Five Kings". It is likely the same reason Hilda Solis stepped away from Secretary of Labor within the Obama Administration to the L.A. Board of Supervisors. For MELA, Assemblywomen Molina was instrumental in flying some of the members to Sacramento multiple times to give testimony opposing the prison project. In Atlanta, the leadership of Emma Darnell led to the Fulton County Environmental Justice Initiative, which helped being programming and funding mechanisms for projects in Atlanta. Grassroots organization can certainly be a way to persuade officials or certain parties from enacting policies. But these actions by elected representatives are an example of how institutionally ingrained means of oppression on a community can best be opposed through the appointment of representatives.

The Role of Coalition Building

Grassroots organizations in both Atlanta and Los Angeles demonstrated the multiplicity of ways that communities can organize. The type of organization structure varied depending on a number of factors including the community, the purpose, and the leadership. Some of the organizations had very strict principles that disallowed them from building coalitions with other groups and other groups grew so large that they had to revolutionize the way they organized. Within all these groups, the founders and current leaders of the groups have had practice rigidity in principle while often being flexible when it came to organizing and the changing issues that their communities faced.

Very earlier on, leaders of MELA realized they had a branding issue. If only "mothers" were allowed to be members of the Mothers of East Los Angeles, than their numbers were going to be severely limited. The solution to this branding obstacle for MELA is revealed when Erlinda Robles recounts in her interview saying, "you don't have to have children to be a "mother"". MELA became an inclusive grassroots organization that many of the women's husbands and children joined, as well as non-mother residents of the community. By rebranding themselves as "protectors" instead of the traditional definition of "mother", MELA expanded their numbers and had more opportunity of growth.

Similar instances of growth occurred in Atlanta with the founding of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA). While the original goal of WAWA was to address environmental issues such as groundwater contamination, lead in drinking water, and storm water drainage, their purpose soon expanded. WAWA expanded their purpose from just the protection and advocacy aspects of environmentalism, to education and raising awareness. WAWA partnered with the public entity, the Atlanta Bureau of Parks, and private entities like the Atlanta Black Nurses Association, to provide expanded service outside their original scope. Now, WAWA runs a numerous environmental education programs for students, while still protecting hundreds of acres of land in their region. Their partnership with the Atlanta Black Nurses Association is also an example of how coalition building can utilize expertise to provide expanded services. Partnering with an organization with a different expertise but overlapping interest allows both groups the opportunity to expand their efforts while at the same time upholding their environmental principles.

Conclusion

      During this investigation into how women of color influence environmental policy, there was really only one conclusion that seems certain, and that is that more research should be done in this area. It is an outdated perspective that conjures up the figure of a White man as the champion of environmentalism. Though documentation and scholarly research into how women of color are changing the dialogue of the environmental movement, it is more than clear that intersectionality should become a larger part of the environmental discussion. As the recent progress of environmental justice in the United States is disrupted by a conservative contraction, the efforts of these women and their narratives will become more important in remembering and understanding why diversity and inclusivity is an essential part of the solution.

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