

### Make Time

The environment may be collapsing at a global scale, however environmental racism and capitalism structures can not be dismissed, opposed to the "Provocation" which argues that "we don't have time to discuss" Environmental Justice concerns. Vulnerable targets, such as people of color, minorities, and low income communities, have been and still are subjected to environmental harm thus, diverting focus from communities facing environmental racism is unethical and dehumanizing. Capitalism is directly linked to global pollution and environmental collapse, so it is contradictory and illogical to ignore such a pressing factor. Global climate change and pollution are linked with environmental racism as well the structure of capitalism so it is necessary to prioritize the Environmental Justice movement on both a local and global scale.

Environmental racism is prevalent worldwide where industries target communities of color and exploit their vulnerability. There is a structural bind where people aren't able to move away from the toxins affecting them and are forced to reside there. In her book, *Toxic Communities*, Dorceta Taylor claims in her introduction, "Environmental Justice Claims", that minority activists have "linked environment with racial and other kinds of social inequalities and framed the issues in terms of rights to safe and healthy environments" (Taylor, 1). Social inequalities are interlaced with global environmental problems where poor communities as well as people of color are the targets of environmental hazards such as toxic waste dumps and pollution. Regardless of the divide between those who can and cannot afford luxuries of the environment, those who cannot should not be subjected to environmental harm. In David Pellow's book, *Resisting Global Toxics*, he writes about how the Global South is victimized by

the Global North with environmental hazards arguing that "given the high level of toxicity of everyday life in the global North, if states and corporations are not planning to reduce toxic inputs into production, then it makes sense to seek outlets for dumping some of the most hazardous substances elsewhere, to reduce exposure to these dangers" (Pellow, 33). The most affluent nations see lesser developed nations as dispensable so they think their land is available at any expense. The "Provocation" is highly concerned with the future of the environment rather focusing on the cause and actors behind its destruction. The Environmental Justice movement focuses on existing environmental issues and who is being affected rather than neglecting those and focusing solely on the environment, all the while being able to mitigate some environmental issues. Caroline Finney's book, *Black Faces, White Spaces* argues, "the lack or difficulty of access, economic concerns, and a complicated history" are the result of "the role of representation in informing the participation of people of color in all things environmental" (Finney 79). Race has been historically excluded from environmentalism and many white people do not want to acknowledge that they live in a racist society. People of color are uninformed of the existing environmental issues surrounding them because it is not a topic of interest for many white environmentalists and they do not want to acknowledge that they live in a racist society. "Additional studies have explored the role of race and class in American environmentalism, highlighting how mainstream environmental agendas marginalize and exclude people of color" (Finney, 7), case in point the "Provocation" which did not account for the hazards communities of color already face and disregard their lives. Not only did it discount environmental racism, it rejected the idea that both local and global capitalism are the root cause of global climate change and pollution.

It is ignorantly stated in the "Provocation" that "we don't have time to discuss race, never mind making utopian 'structural' adjustments to capitalism", when in actuality, capitalism plays such a large role in environmental degradation both locally and globally. Pellow's Treadmill of Production theory states that "when resources are limited, the treadmill searches for alternative sources rather than conserving and restructuring production" (Pellow, 20). Capitalists are drawn to the methods that will bring the most profit in the shortest amount of time rather than taking the time to try to find sustainable resources. Most of the world revolves around a capitalist system which is not only an economic system but is also a social system. Fred Magdoff and John Bellamy Foster in *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism*, state that "the multifaceted, complex, and rapidly accelerating character of the planetary environmental crisis is traceable to a single systemic cause: the economic and social order in which we live" (Magdoff and Foster, 25). In an economic sense, capitalists reinvest their profits to gain more profit, an endless cycle, therefore there is no such thing as satisfaction and will always aim for the most profitable option. With the social aspect intertwined with the economic aspect, capitalists will always do what costs them the least which is most likely an unsustainable option. If the system is not changed, capitalism will presumably rid Earth of all its natural resources. Capitalism is linked to environmental racism and "poor, segregated, people of color, whether on a reservation, el campo, or in the inner city, experience a distinct brutal reality that is key to the accumulation of power and profits for elites" (Pulido, 8). The Flint water crisis Pulido observes, alludes to the devaluation of black lives because they are perceived to not contribute to accumulation thus leading to environmental harm.

One of Pellow's pillars of Environmental Justice studies in "Toward a Critical Environmental Justice Studies: Black Lives as an Environmental Justice Challenge", the

multi-scalar approach addresses the importance of focusing not only on particular local case studies but also their correspondence with regional, national, and trans-national issues. "If one only pays attention to the global scale, it appears that the worst effects of climate change are not upon us. But if one examines what is occurring in neighborhoods, *barrios*, indigenous peoples' lands, and much of the global South, the picture is quite different because the impacts are extensive and ongoing" (Pellow, 8). In *Resisting Global Toxics*, Pellow notes that "such improvements in the North may largely be due to the actions of corporations that shift many of the most toxic industrial hazards southward, producing environmental inequalities" (Pellow, 34). Environmental injustice is linked to both global capitalism and global environmental racism where capitalists target lower-income countries and exploit them for profit and growth. "The world's richest nations are depleting natural resources at an unprecedented rate" (Pellow, 32) which is a global issue because once the rich nations are wiped off sources, they will start to rely on other countries for resources. Environmental racism is prevalent globally where privileged white people, for example, see communities of color as indispensable. Julie Sze, while studying asthma cases in New York City, observes that a chain reaction where living in a run down apartment leads to asthma, to an unpaid medical bill, and a few other events which eventually leads to the person being confined to poor housing. Sze's local case study in New York City applies internationally where low-income communities and nations are subjected to a chain of events where they face inevitable consequences from environmental hazards.

The "Provocation" argues that global climate change is a crucial issue and should be the focus of discussion because the environment is at risk of collapsing and essentially leading to the death of everyone. Currently, there are people susceptible to death or dying due to environmental racism and the structure of the capitalistic society. "Global pollution is a technical problem

requiring innovative solutions to pollution, and not structural changes to capitalism or other unfortunate problems in our societies" ("Provocation) according to those who focus on global climate change. However, most of the pollution is occurring near vulnerable communities and is the result of capitalism's structure, therefore it concerns and interlaces it with the Environmental Justice movement.

## Works Cited

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