

Sustainability Education Collective

Conference and Workshop Series

June 22, 2023

Environmental Justice in the United States: Sustainability Education and Social Movements in the U.S.

Agenda

8:00 Registration, Bagels & Coffee

Room 4035, Campus Instructional Facility, 1405 W. Springfield Ave., Urbana

8:30 Welcome

Dr. Robert J. Jones, Chancellor of the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Dr. Chrystalla Mouza, Dean of the College of Education

9:00 Coalition Building Across and Through Social Movements

Panelists:

Dr. Fikile Nxumalo

Dr. Fikile Nxumalo is an assistant professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching & Learning at the University of Toronto where she is also affiliated faculty in the School of the Environment and the School of Cities. Her work seeks to make conceptual, methodological, curricular, and pedagogical contributions in disrupting colonial erasures, anti-Blackness and human-centeredness in environmental education with and for young children.

Dr. Asif Wilson

Asif Wilson, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Social Studies Education in the Department of Curriculum & Instruction at University of Illinois Urbana Champaign. Wilson's research broadly focuses on justice-centered pedagogies in P-20 educational contexts. His work invites educators in and outside of P-20 educational settings to imagine and actualize more justice-centered pedagogical praxes and embodies the communal, loving, and transformative vision he has for P-20 education.

Dr. Jennifer Johnson

Jennifer Johnson is a citizen of the Seminole Nation and a descendant of the Sac & Fox Nation. She is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Education Policy, Organization & Leadership department in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. In 2010, she was honored by the Seminole Nation for her efforts in language revitalization as the first recipient of the Heritage Award. Her research interests include the history of education in Indigenous communities, Indigenous language revitalization and Indigenous knowledge systems. She was a 2020 National Academy of Education/Spencer Foundation Dissertation Fellow.

Ms. Kimberly Wasserman

Kimberly Wasserman is the Executive Director of the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO), where she has worked since 1998. Wasserman and LVEJO have helped organize community leaders to successfully build new playgrounds, community gardens, remodel a local school park, and forced a local polluter to upgrade their facilities to meet current laws. Her work as Executive Director has overseen the successful reinstatement of a job access bus line, a 23-acre park development in Little Village on the largest brownfield conversion to a park in the US. Wasserman has led a 10-year campaign that won the closure of the two local coal power plants that are being redeveloped into a diesel intensive Target Warehouse. Ms. Wasserman is Chair of the Illinois EJ Commission. In 2013, and was the recipient of the Goldman Prize for North America.

10:20 Break

10:30 Workshop: Justice-Centered Education: Mapping the Intersections of Climate, Race, and Justice

Panelists:

Dr. Fernando Sánchez

Dr. Fernando Sanchez is the Director of the Elouise Cobell Land and Culture Institute and an assistant professor in the departments of Native American Studies and Environmental Studies at The University of Montana. A multidisciplinary scholar with an academic background in both the STEM and the social sciences, Fernando's methodological approach is diverse but essentially founded on data science, geospatial technology, and systems analysis, which he leverages to understand the human dimensions of the environment and to support cross-cultural approaches to climate change adaptation, with special attention to the Indigenous world.

Ms. Nicole DelMastro-Jeffery

Nicole M. DelMastro-Jeffery is an Education Policy Organization and Leadership doctoral student in the College of Education at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research resides at the cross-section of environmental justice and education equity for marginalized collegites into thru and out of higher education. In her most recent role, she visited Washington DC to assist the White House Council on Environmental Quality with advancing environmental justice metrics across the federal government. Nicole enjoys spending time with loved ones, gardening, and volunteering at the local CU community clean-up days in Champaign.

Ms. Wendy Dorman

Wendy Dorman is an alum of Eastern Michigan and Winthrop University and is currently a PhD Candidate in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences at UIUC. She is an interdisciplinary researcher focusing on spatial relationships, conservation, the impacts of climate change, and education. Wendy wants to empower students to act as scientists, providing them with the tools to reveal patterns and critically analyze the underpinnings of their assumptions and beliefs about the world around them.

Ms. Kira Dolley

Kira Dolley is an Eastern Michigan University and Johns Hopkins University alum, one who became a teacher with a passion for teaching Social Studies, Language Arts, and Science. She blends these core subjects together to engage students through being actively aware of current and historic systemic injustices and prejudices (especially those related to civil and human rights). She has taught Kindergarten to College age Freshman for more than 17 years. Working primarily with General Education and the Gifted and Talented population, she has honed her skills for curriculum development within the classroom. Teaching in a number of school districts including Prince George County Public Schools, Detroit Public Schools, and now Columbus City Schools, has given her the opportunity to see the need for a more sustainably focused education within the American school system.

10:30 EEAI Workshop: Communication Toolkit Development for Inclusive EE in Illinois Room 3038

Ms. Brekke Bounds

Brekke Bounds is an experienced hands-on educator, gardener, nature-lover and the Executive Director of the Environmental Education Association for Illinois. She is passionate about making the environmental education space accessible and welcoming to all. With special interests in forest and garden education, Brekke has enjoyed working with various nature centers, cultural institutions, and non-profits over the years. She also loves helping people connect with nature and each other through food, which she currently does while volunteering with Slow Food Chicago and pursuing board certification in Holistic Nutrition. Brekke has a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies, a Master's degree in Sustainable Food Systems, and is certified in Permaculture Design.

11:45 Break



12:00 Lunch & Keynote

Dr. Carolyn Finney

*Carolyn Finney, PhD is a storyteller, author and a cultural geographer who is deeply interested in issues related to identity, difference, creativity, and resilience. The aim of her work is to develop greater cultural competency within environmental organizations and institutions, challenge media outlets on their representation of difference, and increase awareness of how privilege shapes who gets to speak to environmental issues and determine policy and action. Carolyn is grounded in both artistic and intellectual ways of knowing – she pursued an acting career for eleven years, but five years of backpacking trips through Africa and Asia, and living in Nepal changed the course of her life. Motivated by these experiences, Carolyn returned to school after a 15-year absence to complete a B.A., M.A. (both of these degrees focused on gender and environmental issues in Kenya and Nepal, respectively) and Ph.D. (which focused on African Americans and environmental issues in the U.S.). She has been a Fulbright Scholar, a Canon National Parks Science Scholar and received a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Environmental Studies. Carolyn has worked with the media in various capacities including the Tavis Smiley Show, MSNBC, & Vice News Tonight; wrote Op-Eds for Outside Magazine & Newsweek; was a guest editor & contributor for a special section on Race & the National Parks in Orion Magazine; interviewed with various media outlets including NPR, Sierra Club, Boston Globe & National Geographic; and even filmed a commercial for Toyota that highlighted the importance of African Americans getting out into Nature. Along with public speaking, writing, consulting and teaching (she has held positions at Wellesley College, the University of California, Berkeley & University of Kentucky), she served on the U.S. National Parks Advisory Board for eight years which assists the National Park Service in engaging in relations of reciprocity with diverse communities. Her first book, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* was released in 2014 (UNC Press).*

Recent publications include “The Space Between the Words” (Harvard Design Journal, Spring 2018), “A Thousand Oceans” (Geographical Research, Wiley Pub., Fall 2019), “The Moment” (River Rail: Occupy Colby Fall 2019), Self-Evident: Reflections on the Invisibility of Black Bodies in Environmental Histories (BESIDE Magazine, Montreal, Spring 2020), “The Perils of Being Black in Public: We are all Christian Cooper and George Floyd” (The Guardian, June 3, 2020) and “Who Gets Left Out of the Great Outdoors Story?” (The NY Times, November 4, 2021). She is currently working on a performance piece entitled “The N Word: Nature Revisited as part of a Mellon residency at the New York Botanical Gardens.” Along with being the new columnist at the Earth Island Journal, she was recently awarded the Alexander and Isle Melamid Medal from the American Geographical Society and is the artist-in-residence and the Environmental Studies Professor of Practice in the Franklin Environmental Center at Middlebury College.

1:30 Field Trip: The Pollinatarium

The Pollinatarium is the first free-standing science center in the United States devoted to flowering plants and their pollinators. Because most terrestrial life depends upon pollination for survival, the University of Illinois’s Pollinatarium is dedicated to educating the community by increasing awareness and appreciation of pollination as a remarkable ecological partnership and as an essential ecosystem service.

Upcoming Conference Dates

Thursday, August 17, 2023

Sustainability Education, the Global South, and Social Justice

Keynote: Her Excellency Ms. Thilmeeza Hussain, Permanent Ambassador of the Maldives to the United Nations

Field Trip: Red Oak Rain Garden

Friday, September 15, 2023

Resisting Climate Change and Injustice with Sustainability Education in Colleges of Education

Keynote: Dr. Oren Pizmony-Levy, Teachers College, Columbia University

Field Trip: Solar Farm 2.0

Register:

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