

INTERSECTIONS



OF CLIMATE
JUSTICE

OVERVIEW

climate justice: a framework for organizing that centers the idea that climate change is a social justice issue because the causes, consequences, and solutions to climate change are social and unequal.

Scientists around the world are warning us about a climate emergency. Despite ongoing mobilization and increasing public awareness, the climate crisis remains a polarized issue when the truth is, climate affects us all.

Intersectionality: the idea that our social identities intersect to inform our lived experience of privilege and oppression.

A Just Transition: "a vision-led, unifying and place-based set of principles, processes, and practices that build economic and political power to shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative economy... The transition itself must be just and equitable; redressing past harms and creating new relationships of power for the future through reparations... Just Transition describes both where we are going and how we get there."¹

An intersectional climate movement and climate policy is necessary to ensure a just future. A transition toward an equitable future will require reparations to and community organizing by those communities that disproportionately bear the burden and are negatively impacted by extractive economies.

This packet covers current information on climate justice issues in Minnesota including:

- Latinx immigration
- Public health
- Black Lives Matter
- Native rights
- LGBTQIA+ community
- Somali livelihoods
- Just transition

We hope to help realize how we are connected to the climate crisis, identify action items for individuals, and build an understanding of how the crisis may affect our neighbors with different experiences. We believe that exchanging knowledge and raising awareness of local issues are essential to build a lasting and welcoming movement to secure healthy and happy livelihoods for all.

Resources:

1. *Climate Justice Alliance: A Just Transition*

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxqkHpilFq_eWk9QR1JwNFRDSndzZEVvRmtWZkZFcxZWWTBn/view

An Anti-Colonial, Intersectional Feminist Climate Justice Movement

<https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/we-need-anti-colonial-intersectional-feminist-climate-justice-movement>

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

This resource was created to aid volunteers of the climate justice organization, Minnesota 350 (MN350), in learning about and communicating the intersectionality of climate crisis. Its creators hope it will be of use to any organization working toward climate justice.

Learn more about MN350 here:
<https://mn350.org/>.

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EACH SECTION CONTAINS:

key terms

social media primers

one page factsheet overview

further reading and resources

local organizations addressing this topic

detailed description of the intersection of climate and each topic



LATINX IMMIGRATION + CLIMATE JUSTICE



The climate crisis, a threat multiplier, makes the conditions that cause people to migrate even worse. It threatens crops, worsens poverty, and incites conflicts, forcing many to leave home



WHAT CAN BE DONE?

- Stop fomenting violence in Central America
- Promote democracy
- Strengthen U.S. humanitarian and asylum protections
- Protect women and other vulnerable populations
- Support meaningful economic opportunities in Central America
- Change foreign policy so Central America can become a place from which fewer people are forced to flee



art: Ricardo Levins Morales

MINNESOTA

Minnesota hosts over 100,000 Latin American immigrants

KEY TERMS

• Latinx • forced migration • internally displaced people • Global South •

CLIMATE AND CARAVANS

"A third of all employment in Central America is linked to agriculture, so any disruption to farming practices can have devastating consequences"²

- Droughts and floods increase in frequency and severity
- The growing season becomes more unpredictable for farmers
- Latinx farmers and families are forced to leave home

LOCAL ORGANIZING

COPAL - Communities Organizing Latinx Power and Action - recently led a delegation to Honduras to investigate the intersection of climate change, human rights, environmental justice, and political issues



photo: NBC news

² Oliver Milman, Emily Holden, and David Agren, "The Unseen Driver Behind the Migrant Caravan: Climate Change." *The Guardian*. 2018.



Latinx* Immigration is a Climate Justice Issue

Key Terms

*Latinx: a gender-neutral, nonbinary alternative to Latina/Latino, used to describe someone of Latin American origin or descent.

*Forced migration/forcibly displaced people: the involuntary or coerced movement of a person or people away from their home region, resulting from a variety of external causes including natural disasters, violence, and persecution.

*Internally displaced people: people who have been displaced but have not crossed international borders.

*Global South: term used to describe disadvantaged nation-states that are impacted by contemporary capitalist globalization upheld by the wealthier and exploiting Global North countries.

The narrative about “climate (or environmental) refugees” is largely centered around concerns regarding the impact of increasing population on communities and their economies. In a time of mass displacement, it is important to change the narrative on immigration to include the complexities of the climate crisis and conflict that leads to forced migration. Minnesota hosts over 100,000 Latin American immigrants.¹ Since migration is multi-causal, it is difficult to put a number to the proportion of people who are or will be displaced by climate crisis. What we do know is that Latin American immigrants are present in Minnesota with unique visions and perspectives of history that need to be included in any movement for climate justice.

Thousands of migrant caravans leave Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador – countries that face systemic corruption, violence, and poverty. However, the focus on violence within these countries overlooks problems that have become amplified by climate change. People are facing food insecurity as extreme droughts and floods threaten sources of food and income. “A third of all employment in Central America is linked to agriculture, so any disruption to farming practices can have devastating consequences.”² Smallholder farmers are pressured to move to the city to seek jobs that will provide sustenance for their families. These jobs are largely low in quality and pay. Those who migrate to the U.S. tend to live in neighborhoods where there may be hazardous toxins, poor air quality, or other environmental harms which obstruct their right to a healthy life.

Women disproportionately bear the burden of the impacts of climate changes. Women in the Global South are generally reliant on natural resources – food, water, and fuel – for livelihoods, and have less access to political and financial resources and adaptive strategies.³ Social, political,

¹ MN Compass, "Immigration: Groups at a Glance," <https://www.mncompass.org/immigration/groups-at-a-glance-mexican>.

² Oliver Milman, Emily Holden, and David Agren, "The Unseen Driver Behind the Migrant Caravan: Climate Change," *The Guardian* 2018.

³ UN Women, "Gender on the Move: Climate Change, Gender and Migration," (2016).

and economic inequalities render women more vulnerable during disasters, as they experience declines in health and loss of security, increased care responsibilities for families in crisis, increased time spent on securing basic needs, and fewer migration options and labor markets.⁴ With the increasing urgency of the migration and climate crises, it is critical to address the needs of women and girls experiencing social injustice and the adverse impacts of climate change.

Current immigration policies fail to address the root causes of the conditions generating migration. A fact-finding mission to Central America in August 2019 yields five recommendations to help Americans navigate and resolve the migrant crisis: “1) Stop fomenting violence in Central America, 2) promote democracy and the rule of Law in Central America, 3) strengthen U.S. humanitarian and asylum protections, 4) protect women and other vulnerable populations; and 5) support meaningful economic opportunities in Central America.”⁵ Strengthening Latin American leadership in the US and understanding what is happening in Central America is “vital to advocate for changes in US humanitarian protections and reshaping our foreign policy so that it supports new initiatives that over time allow Central American countries to become places from which fewer people are forced to flee.”⁶

Minnesota can take critical steps in unpacking the intersections of climate and immigration by involving immigrants in processes and planning for transitions to sustainable energy economies, affordable and healthy housing, and community revitalization. Additionally, it is critical to reframe the narrative on immigration by expanding the visions for them to be participants and beneficiaries in all communities. It is essential we break barriers by engaging in dialogue for change, resist the toxic narratives that fuel devaluation of immigrants, and provide meaningful opportunities for immigrants to build resilient lives.

Organizing can help reshape this narrative; Communities Organizing for Latinx Action and Power (COPAL) is one organization working at the intersection of climate and immigration. COPAL recently sent a delegation to Honduras to investigate the intersection of climate change, political issues, environmental justice, and human rights.

Resources for Further Learning

- For recent reports regarding the migrant crisis, visit [Alianza Americas](#)
- To get involved with building “racial, gender, social and economic justice” for Latinx communities, check out [COPAL-MN](#)
- For authentic news reporting for and about immigrants and refugees in Minnesota, see [Sahan Journal](#)
- To learn more about Gender and Climate Migration, visit [UN Women](#)

Local Organizations

- Communities Organizing for Latinx Action and Power ([COPAL-MN](#))

Social Media

⁴ "Gender on the Move: Climate Change, Gender and Migration," (2016).

⁵ Alianza Americas, Centro Presente, and Lawyers for Civil Rights, "Fleeing, Not Migrating: Toward a Solution to the Human Rights Crisis Affecting Migrants and Asylum Seekers," (2018).

⁶ Yari Aquino, "Report Calls on Policymakers to Cease Funding Militarization in Central America," 2019.

Sample Facebook Post

- “We must change the narrative around migration. As climate change worsens poverty and incites conflicts, more and more migrants will be forced to leave their homes behind. Climate justice centers the leadership of migrants. You are welcome here!”

Sample Tweets

- “Change the narrative on migrants! All are welcome here. #climatejustice #migrantrights”
- “Climate change will worsen crop failure, poverty, and conflict, forcing people to leave their homes. #climateinjustice”
- “Welcome all migrants! ‘No one leaves home unless home is like the mouth of a shark’ - Warsan Shire”

HEALTH CARE + CLIMATE JUSTICE



Climate change is one of the gravest public health crises of our time. Most vulnerable communities include: the elderly, communities living in poverty, those without access to health care, children, and those with preexisting health conditions. Climate crisis also triggers mental health issues.

CLIMATE GRIEF

There is growing recognition for grief associated with the enormous transformations of climate change.

Climate grief often includes feelings of anxiety, helplessness, fear, anger, sadness and paralysis.

KEY TERMS

• threat multiplier • at-risk communities • public health

NORTH MINNEAPOLIS

Residents face some of the highest rates of asthma in the state; climate change will only exacerbate air pollution, worsening asthma

HOW WILL CLIMATE IMPACT HEALTH?

AIR POLLUTION

Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, allergies and asthma



VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES

West Nile virus, Lyme disease, harmful algal blooms

EXTREME HEAT

Direct: mortality, heat stress, health-related illnesses
Indirect: infrastructure failures, strain on services & networks



FLOODS AND DROUGHT

Direct: drowning and injuries, waterborne disease
Indirect: food insecurity, respiratory ailments, fiscal strain

³ MN Department of Health



canva stock photo

Health Care is a Climate Justice* Issue

Key Terms

*Threat Multiplier: An agent that negatively contributes to another situation, making an existing problem worse.

*Vulnerable Communities / At-Risk Communities: Communities that contribute the least to the climate crisis but are most likely to be impacted by its effects. At-risk communities often lack the support (financial, political, legal) necessary to deal with the impacts of climate change.

*Public Health: Unlike other medical fields which address the symptoms of illness, this field works to *prevent* the illness from occurring altogether.

According to the American Public Health Association, the climate crisis is one of the public health sector's greatest challenges; as climate pressures increase, so do exposure to diseases and health problems. The climate crisis is a "threat multiplier,"* compounding injustices faced by vulnerable communities.* Factors that increase someone's vulnerability to climate change include lack of access to health care, pre-existing health conditions, age, and poverty. Health care is a climate justice issue because climate change will increase the vulnerability of those already predisposed to health problems.

The Center for Disease Control recognizes the impacts of climate change on health: it exacerbates air pollution, allergens, vector-borne diseases, food and waterborne diseases, food insecurity, mental health problems, floods, temperature extremes, and wildfires.⁷ Climate change increases air pollution, particularly ozone and particulate matter, and models predict from 1,000 to 4,300 premature deaths per year in the U.S. attributed to climate-exacerbated air pollution alone.⁸ You may have noticed worsening allergies over the years; as climate change lengthens the growing season in Minnesota, more allergens in the air will exacerbate asthma and other respiratory illnesses.

Climate change's air quality impacts will affect communities already experiencing pollution first and worst. An increase in air pollution disproportionately affects those with poor respiratory health, a preexisting condition especially among residents in North Minneapolis. North Minneapolis residents face some of the highest rates of asthma in the state due to the number of industry operations, and major roadways. Vulnerability to and severity of asthma and other respiratory issues will be intensified by environmental changes; extreme heat and cold drastically increases the likelihood of an asthma attack, as does increased air pollution.

Heat waves, disease, and food insecurity induced by climate change target certain communities first and worst. Extreme heat events lead to increased deaths from heat stroke and other diseases, especially within elderly populations. During heat waves, access to air conditioning and housing in general could be a determining factor between life and death. As the range of certain insects

⁷ Center for Disease Control, "Climate Effects on Health," <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm>.

⁸ "Climate and Health: Air Pollution," https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/air_pollution.htm.

shifts, Minnesota will see more ticks carrying Lyme's disease and mosquitos carrying West Nile.⁹ The immunocompromised and those with limited access to health care are especially vulnerable. Children and the elderly are vulnerable to food- and waterborne-diarrheal disease, which thrives with higher temperatures and extreme changes in precipitation. Finally, as food security is jeopardized, populations which already experience limited access to food will be in danger of starvation. Certain diets, such as those of Native communities, will be threatened. Additionally, farmers may use more herbicides and pesticides; exposure to which can be toxic.

Mental health problems linked to climate change have been gaining increasing recognition. Disasters incite spikes in mental illness, especially in those with a history of mental illness. Suicide rates tend to rise with rising temperatures, medications for severe cases of mental illness can interfere with temperature regulation, and dementia is a risk factor for hospitalization and death during heat waves.¹⁰ Finally, general concern about the future and the state of the climate crisis can trigger anxiety and depression. This is officially recognized by the American Psychological Association and is especially prevalent among youth.

Communities threatened by climate change often do not have the means to relocate or properly prepare for environmental impacts. Health thus becomes a climate justice concern; communities such as residents in North Minneapolis are at a higher risk for intensified health related issues from the onset of climate change. Similarly, communities of color, low-income communities, immigrants, the LGBTQ community, youth, and the elderly are at-risk groups for health concerns and are more likely to experience health issues as the climate crisis intensifies. As a state, it is essential to evaluate the links between environmental health and human health to properly mitigate the impact of climate change on at-risk communities.

Resources for Further Learning

- Check out the World Health Organization's key facts about climate change and health [here](#)
- For Minnesota specific health effects, the Minnesota Department of Health has developed a series of articles [here](#)
- For definitions and examples of climate grief visit [Climate and Mind](#)
- Read about how are therapists and artists address climate grief in [this article](#)

Local Organizations

- [Health Professionals for a Healthy Climate](#)
- [MN Department of Health](#)

Social Media

Tips

- Provide resources to local clinics and health care provider centers

⁹ Cody Nelson, "From Disease to Habitat Loss, Researchers Lay out Minnesota's Bleak Climate Reality," *MPRnews* 2019.

¹⁰ Center for Disease Control, "Climate and Health: Mental Health Disorders," https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/mental_health_disorders.htm.

- Use images that best reflect the population you are looking to engage with on social media
- Use concrete examples of health issues (ex. Asthma rates in North Minneapolis)
- Consider using a quote as a caption for your post

Sample Facebook Post

- “Health care is a climate justice issue as the climate crisis will exacerbate the health challenges that Minnesotan communities will face, increasing air pollution, extreme heat, floods, and droughts. An increase in air pollution contributes to poor respiratory health, a pre-existing health concern especially among residents in North Minneapolis. North Minneapolis residents face some of the highest rates of asthma in the state due to factors such as the number of industry operations, proximity to major roadways, and overall home air quality. Asthma and other respiratory issues will be intensified by climate change. For example, extreme heat and cold weather drastically increases the likelihood of an asthma attack. Therefore, the climate crisis is a social justice issue and must be addressed to limit negative health impacts on Minnesotans.”

Sample Tweet

- “Climate change threatens human physical and mental health by increasing exposure and exacerbating current health issues. An increase in heat will negatively impact common health conditions such as asthma. #Healthcare #Climatejustice”

BLACK LIVES MATTER + CLIMATE JUSTICE

The BlackLivesMatter and climate justice movements intersect in their mission to achieve justice and freedom for people of color across the globe.



INTERSECTIONALITY

Communities of color experience climate crisis first and worst. Disasters expose the inequalities embedded in our society.



photo: gmanetwork.com

"Injustice is a threat to justice everywhere."

- Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

HEALTH IMPACTS

- Decrease in air quality
- Increase of asthma in youth
- Low-birth weights
- High blood pressure
- Higher rates of severe lung conditions, heart attacks, and premature deaths
- Decrease in water quality

KEY TERMS

• environmental justice • environmental racism • frontline communities •

MINNESOTA

- In 2015, the Minnesota Department of Health deemed elevated levels of airborne particulates and heavy metals **extremely concerning**
- Minnesota Pollution Control Agency recorded North Minneapolis as one of the **most vulnerable communities** to climate change in Minnesota
- High rates of homelessness, poverty, and instability in **communities of color** all across Minnesota mean they are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change



canva stock photo

Black Lives Matter is a Climate Justice Issue

Key Terms

*Environmental justice: “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” – [US EPA](#)

*Environmental racism: a type of discrimination where people of color are targeted to live in close proximity to environmentally hazardous or degraded environments, such as toxic waste, pollution, fossil fuel infrastructure, and urban decay.

*Frontline communities: those that face the impacts of climate crisis first and worst. Frontline communities have often historically experienced systemic injustices and despite the fact that they are not responsible for causing the climate problem in the first place, also face the worst of climate chaos. Due to their experience, these communities have the best knowledge regarding solutions.

The mission of the BlackLivesMatter movement is to bring “justice, healing, and freedom to Black people across the globe.”¹¹ Movements for black rights are inextricably tied to questions of the environment. Communities of color bear the disproportionate burden of toxic waste and pollution in their neighborhoods and face the impacts of climate change first and worst. Building a climate just world entails following the leadership of these communities and securing social justice.

The environmental justice movement emerged in the 1980s when one of the poorest communities in the U.S. with a population of predominantly black people, organized against the government’s decision to site a toxic landfill right by their neighborhoods of Warren County, North Carolina. A type of discrimination, called environmental racism,* occurs when low-income and minority communities are purposely targeted to live close to environmental hazards or degraded environments. A 2018 report from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finds that people of color are much more likely to live near pollution and breathe polluted air linked with cancer, asthma, low birth weights, premature deaths, heart attacks, and high blood pressure.¹² Similarly, water contamination disproportionately “plagues low-income areas and communities of color across the nation;”¹³ the inadequate response to the lead contamination of water in Flint, Michigan is attributed to the fact that 63 percent of Flint residents are people of color and 41 percent live below the federal poverty line.¹⁴

In Minnesota, climate and environmental injustice* exist in North Minneapolis. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency recognizes communities of color in North Minneapolis as some of the

¹¹ "Black Lives Matter," <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>.

¹² Vann R. Newkirk II, "Trump's Epa Concludes Environmental Racism Is Real," *The Atlantic* 2018.

¹³ Jasmine Bell, "5 Things to Know About Communities of Color and Environmental Justice," *Center for American Progress* 2016.

¹⁴ Andrew Buncombe, "Flint Water Crisis: Race 'Was Factor' In Authorities' Slow and Misleading Response, Says City's Black Mayor," *Independent* 2018.

most vulnerable communities to climate change in all of Minnesota. High pollution rates in these communities have led to disproportionate cases of allergies, asthma, developmental delays, and behavioral disorders. Air pollution monitoring beginning in 2015 cited elevated levels of airborne particulates and heavy metals at several sites in North Minneapolis, that, when compared with other sites in the Twin Cities, were deemed extremely concerning by the Minnesota Department of Health.¹⁵ Since climate change will worsen air pollution, the implications for human health in areas already plagued by poor air quality are alarming.

People of color are on the front lines of the climate crisis. For example, as we examine the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, there is great disparity in which parts of New Orleans have rebuilt and recovered. While the Mayor of New Orleans declared that the city was no longer recovering, parts of the city inhabited by residents of color, were neglected, most only halfway rebuilt a decade after Katrina hit. One in three black residents who once called the city home has not returned.¹⁶ Disasters expose the dirty underbelly of our society, revealing inequalities.

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has noticed the links between climate change and injustice for black bodies. On September 23, 2019, Black Lives Matter called its members to stand in solidarity with the youth climate strike movement in the #ShutdownDC event protesting for climate justice.¹⁷ Co-founder of BLM Patrisse Cullors began her activism in environmental work and notes that BLM; she also sees that mass incarceration, a main target of BLM activism, takes a toll on the environment.¹⁸ Youth Khristen Hamilton of Zero Hour argues that the BLM and climate justice movement align in that they fight common enemies: colonialism, capitalism, racism, and the patriarchy.¹⁹

At its core, the Black Lives Matter movement rebels against state-sanctioned violence against black bodies. It began when black teen Trayvon Martin was shot to death by white George Zimmerman who was later acquitted, one of countless instances of police and vigilante violence against black people that failed to achieve justice. Scholar David Pellow suggests that the environmental movement has much to learn from the BLM's focus on intersectionality, the agency of frontline communities,* and structural inequality.²⁰ After all, the causes of climate change (a capitalist system focused on profits above all else) are closely linked with the causes of the oppression of black people and other people with marginalized identities. Those best equipped to address environmental and climate injustices are those who have direct experience with their impacts.

Resources for Further Learning

¹⁵ Jennifer Hyvonen, "Environmental Justice in North Minneapolis," *Minnesota Women's Press* 2017.

¹⁶ Gary Rivlin, "White New Orleans Recovered from Hurricane Katrina. Black New Orleans Has Not.," *Talk Poverty* 2016.

¹⁷ The Action Network, "Black Lives Matter #Shutdowndc for Climate Justice," <https://actionnetwork.org/events/black-lives-matter-shutdowndc-for-climate-justice/>.

¹⁸ Kym Allen, Khristen Hamilton, and Patrisse Cullors, "Blackness, Feminism, and the Climate Emergency" (paper presented at the Earth Day Livestream, Virtual, 2020); Linda Poon, "How Mass Incarceration Takes a Toll on the Environment," *CityLab* (2015), <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2015/07/how-mass-incarceration-takes-a-toll-on-the-environment/399950/>.

¹⁹ Allen, Hamilton, and Cullors, "Blackness, Feminism, and the Climate Emergency".

²⁰ David N. Pellow, *What Is Critical Environmental Justice?* (Cambridge, UK :: Polity Press, 2018).

- The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People conducts several projects for environmental and climate justice that can be viewed [here](#) and details the meaning of environmental and climate injustices [here](#)
- To get to know climate activists of color check out this [article](#)
- Read one of the first [reports](#) about environmental justice about to understand the beginnings of this movement; key findings include that 3 of every 5 black and Latinx Americans lived in communities with toxic waste sites
- Check out these articles to learn about the BLM [protest](#) at the Minnesota State Fair or the Philando Castile [protest](#) still alive in Minnesota memory
- To begin the work of becoming an ally, watch an [interview](#) with Robin DiAngelo about white fragility, watch a [TEDx](#) Talk with Debby Irving about waking up white, view Dr. Nell Irvin Painter's [lecture](#) reading and discussion of her book History of White People

Local Organizations

- [Black Visions Collective](#)

Social Media

Notes to consider

- Try to use people-first language, where you place the person first and other descriptive social identities after like “people experiencing homelessness” instead of “homeless people.” This way the focus is shifted away from the condition, to the person. If you’re wondering what terms to use, check out DC Fiscal Policy Institute’s [style guide for inclusive language](#)

Sample Facebook Post

- “Climate justice looks like a world where black lives matter. People of color are much more likely to live by toxic projects, breath polluted air, and drink contaminated water. Disasters hit people of color first and worst; neighborhoods of people of color hit by Hurricane Katrina have still not been rebuilt. It is time to center the voices of those living in bodies that are black, brown, queer, young, disabled, poor. #climatejustice #followthefrontlines”

Sample Tweets

- “Climate change doesn’t discriminate; it affects all people *insert emojis with different genders and colors of skin*”
- “We must unite for a just, equitable, and sustainable future #climatejusticeforall”
- “Black lives matter #climatejustice”
- “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” -MLK Jr.” #climatejustice #environmentaljustice
- “Oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. The yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself.” -MLK Jr.” #climatejusticeforall
- “Dear government, step up or step aside.”

NATIVE RIGHTS + CLIMATE JUSTICE



canva stock photo

The land we now call Minnesota is the original homeland of Anishinaabe and Dakota peoples.
Climate crisis will directly impact the cultural practices and livelihoods of Native peoples

INTERSECTIONALITY

- Indigenous peoples worldwide make up less than **5%** of the world's population yet protect **80%** of global biodiversity
- The IPCC states that Indigenous peoples will be **impacted disproportionately** by the climate crisis
- Having faced an apocalypse on their lands for centuries, Indigenous peoples have **adapted survival and resilience** practices applicable to climate crisis

"Organizing around Native land rights holds the key to successfully transitioning from a fossil-fuel energy infrastructure to one based on sustainable energy."
- Dina Gilio Whitaker

DEFINITIONS

Settler Colonialism: "the goal is the removal and erasure of Indigenous peoples in order to take the land for use by settlers in perpetuity."⁴

Decolonization: A process of reversing settler colonialism driven by revitalizing Native knowledge, recognizing the strength in Native practices, and returning land to Native peoples

THE SEVENTH FIRE

"Anishinaabe people will have a choice between two paths. One is well worn, but it is scorched. The other path is not well worn, but it is green. The time to choose our path is now." - Winona LaDuke

MINNESOTA

- **Manoomin** (wild rice), **sugar maple**, and **paper birch**, species which hold significance to Native peoples, are threatened by climate change
- The Line 3 tar sands pipeline would violate treaty rights to hunt, fish, and gather on ceded territory
- Line 3 would worsen the **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women** crisis



photo: MN350

4 Amanda Morris "What is Settler-Colonialism," Teaching Tolerance (2019).
<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/what-is-settlercolonialism>

Native Rights are a Climate Justice Issue

Key Terms

UN Definition of Genocide: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

*Cultural genocide: Deliberate destruction of cultural heritage of a people or nation.

*Settler colonialism: “refers to complex social processes in which at least one society seeks to move permanently onto the terrestrial, aquatic, and aerial places lived in by one or more other societies who already derive economic vitality, cultural flourishing, and political self-determination from the relationships they have established with the plants, animals, physical entities, and ecosystems of those places... Settler colonialism, then, is a type of injustice driven by settlers’ desire, conscious and tacit, to erase Indigenous peoples.”²¹ It is an ongoing process that continues today.

*Sovereignty: The ability to self-govern; Minnesota’s Native nations are sovereign, meaning the relationship of the U.S. government to the governments of Native nations is akin to the relationship of the U.S. government to Canada’s government or Guatemala’s government. Unfortunately, this sovereignty is not widely recognized by external cultures and institutions and is thus limited.

*Decolonization: A process of reversing settler colonialism driven by revitalizing Native knowledge, recognizing the strength in Native practices, and Native people reoccupying traditional territories. It ultimately brings about “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” and is not a metaphor “for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools”²²

The land we now call Minnesota is the original homeland of Anishinaabe (Chippewa, Ojibwe) and Dakota (Sioux) peoples. Climate crisis directly impacts the cultural practices and livelihoods of Native peoples. For example, in Minnesota, manoomin (wild rice) is threatened by increased precipitation and rising temperatures. Wild rice is a staple food in Native diets and holds significant cultural value. Tree species that are important to the Native peoples of Minnesota, such as the sugar maple (most well known for making maple syrup) and the paper birch, could disappear due to range shifts caused by climate change. In this way, climate change directly impacts Native peoples’ ability to maintain spiritual, cultural, and subsistence practices.

Native vulnerability to climate change is a direct result of hundreds of years of settler colonization.* Colonialism has facilitated the displacement of Native peoples from their land and

²¹ Kyle Powys Whyte, "The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism," *Red Ink: An International Journal of Indigenous Literature, Arts & Humanities* 19.1 (2017).

²² Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012).

attempted erasure of their culture. Forced migration, exploitation, and cultural genocide* of Native peoples barely begins to describe the history of trauma. Justice for Native peoples requires acknowledging the trauma of settler colonialism and the unlawful occupation of Native lands. Acknowledging the terrors of settler colonialism is the first step in the process of decolonization,* whose ultimate goal is to return lands to their original inhabitants. Acknowledging historical injustices also contributes to addressing environmental injustice and cultivates a framework for the development of just solutions.

The process of settler colonialism continues today in many ways. One example related to the climate crisis is the Line 3 tar sands pipeline, which would produce the equivalent carbon emissions of 50 coal-fired power plants throughout its lifetime. This pipeline would carry tar sands oil, from Alberta, Canada, to Superior Wisconsin, cutting across 192 bodies of water, sacred sites and wild rice beds, as well as 1855 treaty territory, where Native peoples retain the right to hunt, fish, and gather. Line 3 would jeopardize Native peoples' ability to exercise their treaty rights, which are supposed to be the "supreme law of the land," according to the U.S. constitution. In this way, Line 3 continues the legacy of injustice against Native peoples, expropriating their land for the sake of profit of settler colonists. The camps of workers which accompany large construction projects such as Line 3, called "man camps," are known to be linked to increased sexual violence, murder and disappearances of Indigenous women. This makes pipelines an intersectional issue, harming Indigenous peoples more than other groups (ethnic violence) and harming Indigenous women even more (gendered violence).

As stated by Dina Gilio Whitaker, a native activist, "in the face of an intensifying climate change crisis, relentless land development, and ongoing consolidation of power in the fossil fuel industry, it may well be that organizing around Native land rights holds the key to successfully transitioning from a fossil-fuel energy infrastructure to one based on sustainable energy."²³ Justice for Native people is rooted in Native sovereignty*, the power and self-agency associated with self-government. This involves respecting Native treaties, keeping fossil fuels in the ground, and supporting decolonization efforts. Having faced an apocalypse on their lands for centuries perpetrated by settler colonialism, Native and Indigenous peoples have adapted survival and resilience practices applicable to climate crisis. While Indigenous peoples compose less than 5 percent of the world's population, they protect 80 percent of global biodiversity.²⁴ These factors make it essential to follow the leadership of Indigenous peoples in addressing climate change.

The Anishinaabe Prophecy of the Seventh Fire describes a time that will come when we will be forced to choose between two paths: one well-worn and scorched, the other green and lush. Environmental activist Winona LaDuke describes this as a choice between continuing to rely on dirty fossil fuel infrastructure polluting our planet, or transitioning to a climate just world, with clean energy and dignity for all communities. At 8th Fire Solar, LaDuke is employing Native peoples to build solar thermal panels, a local energy initiative which works toward choosing the

²³ Adam Boffa, "'We Are Nations': What Environmental Justice Looks Like for Indigenous People," *Earther* (2019), <https://earther.gizmodo.com/we-are-nations-what-environmental-justice-looks-like-f-1839028507>.

²⁴ Gleb Raygorodetsy, "Indigenous Peoples Defend Earth's Biodiversity, but They're in Danger," *National Geographic* (2018), <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2018/11/can-indigenous-land-stewardship-protect-biodiversity/>.

green path. The Navajo nation has also been spearheading the shift away from coal, supplying jobs for Native residents with solar.²⁵

To address the climate crisis, we must simultaneously reduce carbon emissions while combatting the structural inequities created by hundreds of years of oppression of Native peoples. These two actions will be directed at a common enemy: a system which values profits over people. Climate justice entails a reclamation of Native rights and lands, following the leadership of those on the frontlines of climate crisis.

Resources for Further Learning

- Check out [Indian Country Today](#) for local and national news centered around Indigenous peoples
- For info on how to get involved in the fight against Line 3 visit: [MN350 Pipeline Resistance Team](#) or http://www.honorearth.org/welcome_water_protectors
- Watch a [video](#) about 8th fire solar and learn more on their [website](#)
- Learn why the Native pipeline resistance in North Dakota is about climate justice through this [article](#)
- For more info on decolonization, check out Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*
- To learn more about settler colonialism, read Kyle Powys Whyte's "The Dakota Access Pipeline, Environmental Injustice, and U.S. Colonialism." *Red Ink: An International Journal of Indigenous Literature, Arts, & Humanities*
- To stand in solidarity with those working for decolonization, read this [article](#)

Local Organizations

- [Honor the Earth](#) uses "indigenous wisdom, music, art, and the media to raise awareness and support for Indigenous Environmental Issues" and is currently fighting against the Line 3 tar sands pipeline and focused on the issue of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women
- Indigenous Environmental Network ([IEN](#)) aims to protect the "sacredness of Earth Mother from contamination and exploitation by strengthening, maintaining, and respecting Indigenous teachings and natural laws"
- Idle No More ([INM](#)) calls on "all people to join in a peaceful revolution to honor Indigenous sovereignty and to protect the land and water" and is present in [Minnesota](#)

Social Media

Tips

- Acknowledge Native lands when possible in a post
 - Example of a Land Acknowledgement from MN350 Pipeline Resistance team "The land we gather on today is the original homeland of the Dakhóta and

²⁵ Indigenous Peoples' Major Group for Sustainable Development, "Navajo Nation's First Solar Project Now Producing Enough Electricity for 13,000 Homes," *Indigenous Peoples' Major Group for Sustainable Development*, (2020), <https://indigenouspeoples-sdg.org/index.php/english/all-national-and-regional-news/458-navajo-nations-first-solar-project-now-producing-enough-electricity-for-about-13-000-homes>.

Anishinaabe peoples. We honor and respect the Indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed from, and who are still connected to this territory. There are well over 35,000 Indigenous people living in the Twin Cities metro area, including a diversity of nations. Centuries of genocide and forced assimilation have created a range of challenges for Indigenous peoples.

We open up this space to discuss ways in which we can support Indigenous people in our area and enact a reparations framework.”

- “Native” tends to refer to Indigenous peoples living in what is now called the United States while “Indigenous” is global
- Identify and promote Native actions for climate justice
- Promote contemporary Native artists on social media (always ask permission first and provide proper credit)

Sample Facebook post

- “Native rights are a climate justice issue because of the historical trauma of colonization and its impacts of exposing Native peoples to environmental injustices. Native peoples actively resist exploitation from land developers and fossil fuel corporations threatening their land, bodies and cultures. The Line 3 tar sands pipeline would increase the number of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, pollute water, and threaten manoomin (wild rice) vital to Native peoples. Stand alongside water protectors to #StopLine3.”

Sample Tweets

- “Native rights are a climate justice issue as the fossil fuel industry threatens Native health and ways of living. #keepfossilfuelsintheground #stopline3”
- “‘In the face of an intensifying climate change crisis, relentless land development, and ongoing consolidation of power in the fossil fuel industry... organizing around Native land rights holds the key to successfully transitioning from a fossil-fuel energy infrastructure to one based on sustainable energy.’ - Dina Gilio Whitaker”

THE LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITY + CLIMATE JUSTICE

KEY TERMS

- LGBTQIA+ • transgender • cisgender
- ecofeminism • eco-queer movement(s)
- queer theory • queer ecology •

The LGBTQIA+ community and climate justice movement intersect by including all genders, sexualities, identities and backgrounds in the conversation of climate justice.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The LGBTQIA+ community is an oppressed group, misrepresented by and underrepresented in positions of power. A lack of social acceptance combined with systemic violence makes this community especially vulnerable to climate change.

HEALTH IMPACTS

- Homelessness
- Lack of financial support and economic instability
- Inability to secure health care
- Unemployment
- Violence
- Displacement

"Climate change compounds the struggles of trans and queer people worldwide. Because of this, we believe that queer liberation must be lifted up as a key principle in climate justice organizing."

- P. Brown, queer and environmental activist

MINNESOTA

- National Institute of Health named the LGBTQ+ community a **"health disparity population"**
- **Forty percent** of Minnesota homeless youth are LGBTQ+
- The state of MN **invests five cents** of every \$100 of state budget to LGBTQIA+ support
- The **Green New Deal** leaves out the LGBTQIA+ community as a community vulnerable to climate change



canva stock photo

LGBTQIA+* Rights are a Climate Justice Issue

Key Terms

***LGBTQIA+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual and related communities; other acronyms also include another Q for questioning, 2 for two-spirit, C for curious, U for unsure, P for polyamorous, and H for HIV-affected. While adding another A for allies has sparked controversy; the terms pansexual, nonbinary, omnisexual, fluid, and queer-identified are regarded to fall under the umbrella as well. Another acronym, QUILTBAG, includes queer and questioning, unsure, intersex, lesbian, transgender and two-spirit, bisexual, asexual and aromantic, and gay and genderqueer.

***Transgender:** “An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth.”²⁶

***Cisgender:** someone whose gender identity corresponds to the sex they were assigned at birth.

***Ecofeminism:** an activist and academic movement that sees connections between the domination of nature and the exploitation of women.

***Eco-queer movement(s):** people of the LGBTQIA+ challenging binary notions of ecology and sexuality, while simultaneously transforming material and symbolic space(s) into more just, independent, and sustainable forms. A movement that acknowledges the interconnectedness between ecology and human sexuality.

***Queer theory:** an analysis of heteronormativity (the prevailing belief that heterosexuality is the norm or default sexuality) suggesting that fluidity and diversity of gender and sexuality be holistically ingrained into our society, becoming conventional and normal. Focuses both on individual identity and a dynamic collectivity of possible identities.

***Queer ecology:** interdisciplinary practices that aim to, in different ways, disrupt heterosexist discussions and institutional definitions of sexuality and nature, and also to reimagine evolutionary processes, ecological interactions, and environmental politics in light of queer theory.

The LGBTQIA+ community is disproportionately affected by climate change.²⁷ The LGBTQIA+ community, because of climate change, has experienced lack of resources, homelessness, lack of financial support, violence, and displacement caused by extreme weather events.²⁸ In order to achieve climate and environmental justice, LGBTQIA+ voices, and their liberating movements, must be included.

²⁶ Human Rights Campaign, "Glossary of Terms," HCR.

²⁷ Anna Johnson, "Climate Change: It's an LGBTQ+ Issue, Too," *Fresh Energy* (2019), <https://fresh-energy.org/climate-change-its-an-lgbtq-issue-too/>.

²⁸ Noah Goodwin, "There Is No Planet B: Why Climate Change Is an LGBTQ Issue," *GLAAD* (2019), <https://www.glaad.org/amp/no-planet-b-why-climate-change-is-an-lgbtq-issue>.

Historical events play a key role in how the LGBTQIA+ community is viewed today and how the community is affected by climate change. Over the course of history, the LGBTQIA+ community has been excluded from and misrepresented in society. In 1969, police raided the Stonewall Inn in New York City because of its association with the LGBTQIA+ community, sparking outrage and galvanizing the LGBTQIA+ movement. The work of the LGBTQIA+ rights movement has made several advances. Until 2003, “homosexual” behavior was considered criminal and not a human right.²⁹ Until 2015, same-sex marriage was banned in many states. Unfortunately, today, people who identify with the LGBTQIA+ community can still be fired on the basis of their gender or sexual identity and face other forms of systemic injustice such as housing discrimination.

The more general movement for LGBTQIA+ rights has evolved to include movements liberating LGBTQIA+ people from climate change and environmental issues. These movements include the ecofeminist* and eco-queer* movements. Forming the foundation of these movements, concepts like queer theory* and queer ecology* focus on including all identities and backgrounds in the conversation of climate justice.³⁰

Climate change acts disproportionately upon those already experiencing injustices. LGBTQIA+ people are more likely to be relegated to housing in places that have a higher chance of being impacted by climate hazards like flooding.³¹ For example, after hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, LGBTQ+ homelessness and poverty spiked. Before the catastrophic event, people of the LGBTQIA+ community were already experiencing unique discrimination and a lack of societal unacceptance, making the community more susceptible to catastrophic displacement events.³² For another example, in Fiji, religious groups have propagated the myth that hurricanes and other extreme weather events are incited by the wrath of God against the queer community. During hurricanes, the LGBTQIA+ community often feels so afraid of the anger from their neighbors who blame them for the crisis that they will remain in their homes instead of relocating to a storm shelters, exposing themselves to significant danger. Storm shelters themselves are often unaccommodating to queer bodies; bathrooms and sleeping arrangements are designed based on a gender binary, made for either men or women.

Policy and cultural norms have excluded the queer community in the past. The Green New Deal, while championing social reforms that would liberate vulnerable communities, leaves out LGBTQIA+ folks as a community impacted by climate change.³³ Therefore, there is social and climate injustice toward the LGBTQIA+ community even within a policy vision that is considered progressive and inclusive. It is essential that climate policy include this community; their contributions are vital creating an equitable world.

²⁹ GLSEN, "LGBTQ History Timeline Reference."

³⁰ Joshua Sbicca, "Eco-Queer Movement(S): Challenging Heteronormative Space through (Re)Imagining Nature and Food," *European Journal of Ecopsychology* 3 (2012).

³¹ Greta Gaard, "Out of the Closets and into the Climate," in *Climate Futures: Reimagining Global Climate Justice*, ed. Debashish Munshi, et al. (London: Zed, 2019).

³² Bonnie Elizabeth Haskell, "Sexuality and Natural Disaster: Challenges of Lgbt Communities Facing Hurricane Katrina," *SSRN Electronic Journal* (2014).

³³ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, *The Green New Deal*, ed. 14: 116th Congress: 1st session House of Representatives (2019).

In Minnesota, there are several LGBTQIA+ issues related to climate change. The National Institutes of Health named the LGBTQIA+ community a “health disparity population,” which means LGBTQ+ identities are more predisposed to disease, chemical dependency, and mental health issues. An estimated 4,700 Minnesota youth face homelessness on any given night, 40% of whom are LGBTQIA+. Finally, Minnesota invests only five cents of every one-hundred dollars of the federal state budget to LGBTQIA+ support. When disaster hits, these systemic problems are worsened. For example, a lack of stable housing could make the queer community exceptionally vulnerable to increasing severe weather events. The LGBTQIA+ community in Minnesota will be significantly impacted by climate change.³⁴ The unique wisdom of the queer community, challenging binary ideas, and championing fluidity, can contribute to a movement for climate justice.

Resources for Further Learning

- Answer your questions with the Transgender [FAQ](#) from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation
- Explore the web page of the largest national lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer civil rights organization, the [Human Rights Campaign](#)
- To learn what the queer community brings to the fight for climate justice, check out this [article](#)
- P. Brown details his experience of a black, queer, climate justice advocate at the UN Climate Negotiations in this [article](#)
- Use this [resource](#) to increase your understanding of gender pronouns

Local Organizations

- [Outfront](#) Minnesota focuses on “leading Minnesota toward LGBTQ Equality” with focal areas in community organizing and coalition building, public policy, anti-violence, law, education and training, as well as youth and schools gender sexuality alliance network
- [Out for Sustainability](#) mobilizes the LGBTQ+ community “in pursuit of a fabulous planet” (not local, but a great organization)

Social Media

Tips

- In general, the terms represented by the acronym LGBTQIA+ should be used as adjectives rather than nouns. Rather than saying “someone is a transgender”, say “someone is a transgender person.”
- Pronouns: many people do not identify with binary pronouns of he/him/his and she/her/hers that correspond to binary gender identities. Other pronouns include them/they and ze. It is best to ask all people what pronouns they prefer and to ask all people to share their preferred gender pronouns if a group is doing a round of introductions. Include pronouns on name tags as well.

Sample Facebook Post

³⁴ Sam Blackwell, 2017, <https://www.unitedway.org/blog/6-reasons-minnesotas-still-behind-in-LGBTQ-equality>.

- “There are more fluid ways of looking at the world which liberate both the queer community and address climate change. We must follow the leadership of the LGBTQIA+ community with regard to climate change. The queer community is disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis! For example, after hurricane Katrina struck in New Orleans, LGBTQIA+ homelessness and poverty spiked. Thousands of LGBTQIA+ youth face homelessness in Minnesota, making them more vulnerable to extreme weather events of the climate crisis.”

Sample Tweets

- “Climate change affects all *insert rainbow emoji*”
- “Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, two-spirit, asexual, demisexual, non-binary, queer, pansexual, ally, questioning, intersexual. What do they all have in common? All affected by climate change.”
- “Acknowledge your privilege as someone who identifies as straight. You experience the effects of climate change but the LGBTQ+ community experiences these effects in a way that is compounded by social injustice on the basis of sexuality and gender-identity.”
- “Climate change doesn’t discriminate, it affects everyone.”

THE SOMALI COMMUNITY + CLIMATE JUSTICE



Drought and conflict in Somalia have displaced millions; climate change is inextricably linked with the increasing severity and length of droughts which threaten crops and livestock.

HOME

*no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.*

*you only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well.*

*your neighbors running faster
than you, the boy you went to
school with
who kissed you dizzy behind
the old tin factory is
holding a gun bigger than his
body,
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay.*

...
*you have to understand,
no one puts their children in a
boat, unless the water is safer
than the land*

...
*no one leaves home until home
is a damp voice in your ear
saying leave, run now, i don't
know what i've become.*

- Warsan Shire, British-Somali
poet, Home



photo: Arthur Nazaryan

MINNESOTA

In 2018, there were approximately 33,500*
Somali-born immigrants in Minnesota *does not
include U.S. born children and is an
underestimate due to trust and language issues

KEY TERMS

• Gu • Deyr •
• Youth Climate Strike •



DROUGHT & CONFLICT

Somalia has been rife with
conflict that seems never
ending. 2016-2017 saw one of
the worst droughts in all of
history.

CLIMATE JUSTICE ICONS

Irsa Hirsi (17) - co-founder of U.S
Youth Climate Strikes

(pictured below)

Ilhan Omar - First Somali-
American in Congress, Green
New Deal proponent

Juwaria Jama (15) - Minneapolis
youth climate justice activist



photo: the Minnesota Sun

Somali Rights are a Climate Justice

Key Terms

*Gu and Deyr: The Somali two rainy seasons. Gu, the main rainy season, extends from April to June while deyr occurs from October to December. Climate change has made these rainy seasons unpredictable; sometimes they do not occur at all. The increasing duration, frequency, and severity of droughts has led to displacement of many Somalis.

*Youth Strikes for Climate: Youth Climate Strikes began in 2018 when then 15-year-old Greta Thunberg began skipping school to protest inaction on climate. In 2019, more than a million people in over 100 countries joined the first global climate strike on March 15; in September of 2019, 7.6 million people in 185 countries engaged in climate strikes. Initial surveys report that a majority of strikers identified as woman or a person of color.

Home

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark.

you only run for the border
when you see the whole city
running as well.

your neighbors running faster
than you, the boy you went to school with
who kissed you dizzy behind
the old tin factory is
holding a gun bigger than his body,
you only leave home
when home won't let you stay...

- Warsan Shire, Somali-British poet, "Home"

There are between 35,760 - 150,000 Somali people living in Minnesota, with 80 percent living in Minneapolis, likely the highest concentration of Somalis in the U.S.³⁵ One of the prevailing reasons Somali people migrate can be linked with climate change: droughts increasing in frequency and severity have wreaked havoc on crops and livestock. This, coupled with displacement due to war, has forced many members of the Somali community from their home country. Contributing a vibrant and unique outlook to the Minnesota culture, some Somali residents are leading on climate activism and policy.

Climate change is severely impacting agriculture in Somalia, upon which nearly 2/3 of the population depends.³⁶ The increasing duration and severity of the dry spells between Somalia's

³⁵ International Institute of Minnesota, "Somalis," <https://iimn.org/publication/finding-common-ground/minnesotas-refugees/africa/somalis/>.

³⁶ Mustapha Tahir, "In Somalia, the Climate Emergency Is Already Here. The World Cannot Ignore It.," *The Guardian* (2019), . <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/08/somalia-climate-emergency-world-drought-somalis>.

two rainy seasons, deyr and gu,* has made it more difficult for Somali farmers to maintain livestock and crops.³⁷ Between 2016 and 2017, one of the most severe droughts led to livestock death and crop failure, with over half of the population in “desperate need of assistance.”³⁸ This drought was preceded by the drought *Mahanaw* in the 1980s and the *Mahadiid* drought in the 1990s. The current drought, *Sima*, which has ebbed and flowed since 2011, is said to be the worst of the three. Farmers depend on the relief of the rainy seasons, which have become increasingly inconsistent, sometimes failing to come at all.

Alongside this agricultural devastation, Somalia is also enduring hardships of war and conflict. This crisis has been described as “never-ending war,” a conflict which has mutated from a 1980s civil war, to “state collapse, clan factionalism and warlordism in the 1990s, to a globalized ideological conflict” in the 2000s.³⁹ Conflict* coupled with drought led to forced displacement, both internally and externally. As of 2017, estimates suggest over 2 million Somalis are currently displaced, with 1.5 million displaced internally, 900,000 displaced to the nearby regions, and more globally.⁴⁰ Some spend months or years in refugee camps.⁴¹ Carrying their stories to Minnesota, the Somali population brings direct experience of climate-related crisis.

Why has Minnesota, in particular, become host to such a large population of Somalis? A combination of jobs and a generally welcoming population first drew Somalis to Minnesota, who reported back to their relatives (see [Rao](#) 2019).⁴² Unfortunately, the narrative about the Somali community is often not welcoming, painting them as terrorists. Joining many others in confronting this stigma, Arthur Nazaryan has been taking pictures of the day-to-day lives of young Somalis in Minnesota (see [Almond](#) 2017).⁴³

Like any community, the Somali community is composed of much diversity; some individuals are prominent leaders on climate. The first Somali-American in Congress, Ilhan Omar strives for a transition to 100 percent renewable energy, a green economy, and an end to fossil fuel subsidies, centering communities of color, Indigenous peoples, and workers in her vision for the future.⁴⁴ Her daughter, Isra Hirsi, co-founded the U.S. Youth Strikes for Climate,* corresponding with the global movement started by Greta Thunberg. She has coordinated hundreds of student strikes. Jurwaria Jama, a 15-year-old climate justice activist who is also involved with climate strikes, details the origins of her activism:

“I live in North Minneapolis which is predominantly an African American community; we have a lot of factories situated next to us so we get a lot of pollution from fossil fuels.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ International Committee of the Red Cross, “A Drought So Severe It Has Names,” *ICRC* (2019), <https://www.icrc.org/en/document/somalia-conflict-drought-so-severe-it-has-names>.

³⁹ Sally Healy and Mark Bradbury, “Endless War: A Brief History of the Somali Conflict,” (Conciliation Resources, 2010).

⁴⁰ UNHCR, “Somalia Situation 2017,” (UNHCR: The UN Refugee Agency, 2017).

⁴¹ Mohamed Gulleid, “Why Somali Migrants Are Fleeing the Horn of Africa,” *TRT World* (2019), <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/why-somali-migrants-are-fleeing-the-horn-of-africa-24950>.

⁴² Maya Rao, “How Did the Twin Cities Become a Hub for Somali Immigrants,” *StarTribune* (2019), <https://www.startribune.com/how-did-the-twin-cities-become-a-hub-for-somali-immigrants/510139341/>.

⁴³ Kyle Almond, “Somalis Finding Their Place in Minnesota,” *CNN*, <https://www.cnn.com/interactive/2017/02/us/somali-minnesota-photos/>.

⁴⁴ LVC, “Ilhan Omar: Minnesota District 05,” <https://www.lcv.org/newmemberguide/ilhan-omar/>.

Climate change has affected my parents' home in Somalia because of droughts and food shortages there; this work I'm doing relates to them as well.”⁴⁵

Resources for further learning

- Check out Arthur Nazaryn's [photography](#) which depicts Somali daily life to challenge dominant narratives about terrorism
- Learn more about the Somali experience in Minnesota [here](#)
- Read about Isra Hirsi, cofounder of U.S. Youth Climate Strikes [here](#) or [here](#)
- Find more detail on climate change in Somalia in this [article](#)
- If you're interested in learning more about Somalia's history read more [here](#)

Local Organizations

- [Minnesota Youth Climate Strikes](#)
- Confederation of Somali Community in Minnesota ([CSCM](#)) mission is to “strengthen the capacity of Somalis in Minnesota to become contributing members of society, while keeping their culture”
- [Ka Joog](#) is a nonprofit geared toward Somali youth which enriches their lives with “education, mentoring, employment and the arts”

Social Media

Sample Facebook Posts

- “Climate crisis is wreaking havoc on crops and livestock through drought. Millions dependent on agriculture for their livelihoods have been displaced. It is time to open our borders and offer safe places to live for these migrants. #ClimateJustice”
- “Climate crisis is happening now in Somalia! We need #ClimateJustice now!
[<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/jul/08/somalia-climate-emergency-world-drought-somalis>]

Sample Tweets

- “Due to the climate crisis, increasing frequency and severity of droughts in Somalia has led to forced displacement #ClimateJustice”
- “Change the narrative! Somalis contribute to Minnesota's vibrant community. [insert picture from Arthur Nazaryan]”
- “Join School Strike for Climate, co-founded by Isra Hirsi of Minnesota #SchoolStrike4Climate #ClimateJusticeNow!”

⁴⁵ Maia Wikler and Thanu Yakupitiyage, "11 Young Climate Justice Activists You Need to Pay Attention To," *Vice* (2019), https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/8xwvq3/11-young-climate-justice-activists-you-need-to-pay-attention-to-beyond-greta-thunberg.



A JUST TRANSITION + CLIMATE JUSTICE

As we transition away from fossil fuels, it is imperative that no one gets left behind. Not fossil fuel workers or farmers, not black or brown or Indigenous or queer folks, not womyn or immigrants and not the poor. A just transition moves away from dirty industries harming human and ecosystem health and abandons false solutions. It moves toward a future with *buen vivir*, meaningful work with dignified wages, localized energy and food production, and basic human rights.

FALSE SOLUTIONS

- Use the same logic that caused climate change to attempt to address it
- Do not include justice for frontline communities



art: Ricardo Levins Morales

Buen Vivir: "living well" rooted in community, ecology, culture, and the land. Originate among Indigenous peoples of the Andes

KEY TERMS

- meaningful work • false solutions • Buen Vivir •



BECKER, MINNESOTA

The Sherco coal-fired power plant is closing in Becker, MN. Much of the economy depends on this plant, but Google has proposed to build a new data center in Becker, powered by renewable energy to offer new jobs.

"We can be whatever we have the courage to see."

- Local food & energy
- Education & health care
- Dignified living wages
- Low-carbon work: teachers, nurses, social workers

8TH FIRE SOLAR

Close to the White Earth Reservation, 8th Fire Solar is employing Native folks to build solar thermal panels; some panels have been installed in low income communities on the reservation

5 Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, "A Message from the Future with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez," *The Intercept*, (2019) *<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9uTH0iprVQ>

A Just Transition is a Climate Justice Issue

Key terms:

***Meaningful work:** an authentic connection between an individual's work and a broader life purpose, rather than doing work for the sake of purely making money; an individual can directly see how they are contributing to serving their community and a greater good; "where your greatest joy meets the world's greatest need." – Frederick Buechner

***False Solutions:** solutions which aim to address climate change under the assumption that we can "solve" climate change through market solutions, Western science, and technology, continuing with endless economic growth.

***Buen Vivir:** most closely translating to "living well," an Indigenous Latin American concept that describes alternatives to development rooted in community, ecology, culture, and a spiritual connection to the land. In opposition to capitalist notions of the good life being defined by material possessions and money.

We live in a world with a broken economic system, one that values profits over people and the earth. Transitioning to an economy with clean energy means we have the chance to rebuild our economic system to value workers over corporations, contentment over consumption, creating over extracting. Unfortunately, transitioning to clean energy does not necessarily entail justice for communities. In fact, there are many 'false solutions' that claim to be green yet continue to exploit workers and the earth for the sake of profit. It is important to ensure that in our transition, no one -- not fossil fuel workers, not farmers, not black or brown or womyn or immigrants or poor or Indigenous or queer folks-- gets left behind.

It's easy to see that our economic system is not working for most people, as the vast majority of wealth goes to a small handful of elite while the rest – the 99% – get left behind. Often, even for those who work hard, it seems like the system is stacked against them. Meanwhile, consumerism is driving endless extraction, poisoning our air and our water, while workers are paid low wages to work in toxic environments. It might seem difficult to see how these social and environmental crises are connected, since, in Naomi Klein's words, "most of us have been trained to avoid a systemic and historical analysis of capitalism and to divide pretty much every crisis our system produces — from economic inequality to violence against women to white supremacy to unending wars to ecological unraveling — in walled-off silos."⁴⁶ However, the dual social and environmental crises we are experiencing are inextricably linked; it is a drive for endless profits which leads to wanton destruction of the natural world, and the disregard for workers' wellbeing. This system is at the root of the climate crisis.

Unfortunately, some of the solutions proposed to address the climate crisis perpetuate the same problems that caused climate change in the first place. False solutions depend on the unregulated markets, unchecked economic growth, and technology to "solve" climate change.⁴⁷ Indigenous

⁴⁶ Naomi Klein, "The Battle Lines Have Been Drawn on the Green New Deal.," *The Intercept* 2019.

⁴⁷ Rising Tide North America and Carbon Trade Watch, "Hoodwinked in the Hothouse: False Solutions to Climate Change," (2014).

peoples are some of the most vocal opponents to market-based solutions, since they find these solutions “linked to energy markets that remain inextricably intertwined with brutal extraction, exploitation, colonialism, racism, sexism, and ecological destruction.”⁴⁸ Policies which fit this description in their eyes include cap and trade and the United Nations’ REDD+ program. Cap and trade is a carbon trading mechanism during which polluters are granted a limited permit to pollute, and are incentivized to cut their emissions and profit from the sale of excess credits. Some Indigenous peoples find this to be a “fraudulent” way of mitigating carbon which helps corporations and governments keep extracting and burning fossil fuels.⁴⁹ REDD+ is an international framework for offsetting carbon emissions through forest protection that has received vocal opposition from Indigenous communities because it provides “polluters with permits to pollute,” and puts Indigenous peoples’ forests “up for grabs.”⁵⁰

A just transition moves away from dirty industries harming human and ecosystem health, abandons false solutions, and provides workers with meaningful work* and dignified wages. Labor unions and low-income communities of color are proponents of these strategies because they center workers. Ultimately, this facilitates a transition to a world with *Buen Vivir*,* a concept originating from Latin American social movements and Indigenous worldviews which roughly translates to “living well,” a way of doing things that is “community-centric, ecologically balanced, and culturally sensitive.”⁵¹ A just transition moves toward localized energy and food production. It places value on low-carbon workers that keep our society healthy like nurses, teachers, and social workers; peace and basic fundamental rights; access to universal education, housing, and healthcare; dignified living wages; respect for diverse cultures, traditions, and religion; and democratic forms of governance free from corporate interests. To create this transition, we must have the creativity to envision a better world. “We can be whatever we have the courage to see.”⁵²

Indigenous environmental activist Winona LaDuke advocates for a “green economy,” one that is local, durable, and has a relationship with the land.⁵³ Right now, she is working on creating this economy on the White Earth Reservation, installing solar and wind, while growing more local food. 8th Fire Solar, a solar thermal panel manufacturing plant, employs local Native folks to build the infrastructure for a climate just world.⁵⁴ Some of these panels have been installed on houses on the reservation, providing sustainable heating at a low cost. The just transition begins there, in a community that has experienced a long legacy of injustice. A just transition is also beginning in Becker, Minnesota. This community hosts a coal-fired power plant, Sherburne County Generating Station, that is set to close by 2030 according to Xcel

⁴⁸ Indigenous Environmental Network, “Talking Points on the AOC-Markety Green New Deal (Gnd) Resolution,” (2019).

⁴⁹ Tamra Gilbertson, “Carbon Pricing a Critical Perspective for Community Resistance,” (Climate Justice Alliance and Indigenous Environmental Network, 2017).

⁵⁰ Indigenous Environmental Network, “Indigenous Peoples Say No to Redd+ and the Durban Climate Agreement,” (2018), <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/indigenous-peoples-say-no-redd-and-durban-climate-agreement>.

⁵¹ The Intercept and Naomi Klein, “A Message from the Future with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,” (The Intercept 2019).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Matthew Rothschild, “Winona Laduke Asks Us to Reimagine the Economy,” *The Progressive* (2011), <https://progressive.org/dispatches/winona-laduke-asks-us-re-imagine-economy/>.

⁵⁴ “8th Fire Solar: About Us,” 8th Fire Solar, <https://8thfiresolar.org/about-us>.

energy's plan to become carbon free by 2050.⁵⁵ As of 2019, Sherco contributed 77 percent of the city's taxes and employed 300 people, making it integral to the local economy.⁵⁶ However, Google has proposed building a new data center in Becker. The data center would bring new jobs to Becker and run on renewable energy. Other businesses might follow Google to Becker. This is another example of a just transition that prioritizes working people.

Resources for further learning

- Listen to this [podcast](#) to learn about frameworks and strategies for a just transition with Gopal Dayaneni and Michelle Mascarenhas-Swan
- Navigate Climate Justice Alliance's [explanation](#) of a just transition to learn more
- Read more about the just transition in Becker Minnesota in this [article](#)
- Watch a [video](#) about 8th fire solar and learn more on their [website](#)

Local organizations

- [BlueGreen Alliance](#) "unites America's largest labor unions and its most influential environmental organizations to solve today's environmental challenges in ways that create and maintain quality jobs and build a stronger, fairer economy."
- The Sierra Club's [Beyond Coal Campaign](#)

Social Media

Sample Facebook Posts

- "As we change our infrastructure to support a green economy, we must have a just transition for all people: fossil fuel workers, farmers, black and brown and Indigenous and queer folks, womyn and immigrants, the poor. Check out what's going on in Becker, Minnesota as Google looks to source a new data center for jobs where a coal-fired power plant is being phased out. [<https://www.mprnews.org/story/2019/02/25/wind-energy-tax-breaks-sought-to-bring-google-to-becker-minnesota>]"
- "Localizing energy and providing jobs to those who most need them is an essential part of the transition to a climate just world. 8th Fire Solar builds solar thermal panels and employs Native folks living on the White Earth Reservation: [<https://8thfiresolar.org/about-us>]"
- "'Economic justice is a climate justice issue because those enduring economic inequality have been people who have been victims of colonization, environmental racism, destruction and development and economic impoverishment in the name of progress.' - Gopal Dayaneni"

Sample Tweets

- "We can't solve our problems with the same logic we used to create them.
#nofalsesolutions #justtransition #climatejusticeNOW"

⁵⁵ Xcel Energy, "Carbon Free 2050: Your Clean Energy Future," https://www.xcelenergy.com/carbon_free_2050.

⁵⁶ Bob Boogren, "Sherco Is the Heart of Becker Economy," Opinion, *St. Cloud Times* (2015), <https://www.sctimes.com/story/opinion/2015/09/19/sherco-serves-heart-becker-areas-economy/72469614/>.

- “A just transition includes green jobs for those who need it most: fossil fuel workers, farmers, Indigenous peoples, black and brown and queer and immigrant folks. #justtransition #climatejustice”
- “Some of the most important work for sustaining a healthy society is also low carbon work. We must place value on teachers, nurses, and social workers. #justtransition #climatejustice”

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