

NORTHWEST JUSTICE SUMMIT: NAVIGATING INTERSECTIONALITY

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BREAKOUT SESSION

The large group representing UU congregations, Earth Ministry, and UU Ministry for Earth, first recognized the opportunities to work together as faith organizations, and with secular organizations with shared concerns, like climate change. Deb Cruz shared a four-page table with these headings: Focal Point, Specific Issue, Impacts, and Impacted Community. She emphasized the need for deeper analysis to restore connections among culturally separated communities. To work with an impacted community, we need to understand the trauma it is experiencing. We all have traumas, so we need to be aware that we need to work through all traumas in the room, to build partnerships.

The group discussions focused on several major environmental issues: major causes of CO₂ emissions: transportation in Washington State; Snake River dams as a threat to salmon sustainability; and military energy use, particularly nightly helicopters in South Sound, training flights from Whidbey Island, and naval sonar training. The film, *Dammed to Extinction* was recommended for understanding that river barges on the Snake could be replaced with trains if the federal subsidy of barges were removed. All letters to state and federal legislators are valuable, as the number of letters are used to measure constituent concern. Handwritten letters that are sent to UUSJ.org are hand delivered to Congressional offices for prompter delivery than general US mail.

Leslie Romer

Facilitator Comments:

The table provided was a draft to be used as a guide for people understanding the intersections of environmental justice and provided any number of environmental challenges being faced in the Pacific Northwest and the various communities being impacted. There were two levels of intersection that were being discussed.

The first level of intersection was the general intersection of the issues themselves such as the intersection of climate change and economic justice (impacts on the poor) or racial justice (impacts on communities of color).

The second level of intersection, much more complex, was of environmental impacts on affected communities and the communities' response to those impacts. An example used was the impact of environmental factors (climate change, pollution, etc.) on commercial and tribal fishing. The loss of the ability to fish is reflected in the loss of culture (intergenerational), treaty rights, subsistence and economic opportunity. These losses then result in trauma that is reflected in social conditions such as increased domestic violence, poverty, mental health issues, substance abuse, etc.

As Leslie alluded to, the final message to the group was to understand, in whatever environmental justice issue they choose to work on, not only the intersection of the issues but that the individual and community responses that reflect the trauma experienced and that recognizing and understanding that trauma is critical to developing equitable solutions to environmental justice issues.