Working Towards Environmental Justice in the Inland Empire

Lindsey Burkart-Lima, Shannon Julius, Melanie Paty, Alana Pokorny & Annemieke Ruina
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Table of Contents

3… Introduction
   Annemieke Ruina

4… Environmental Justice as a Social Movement: Part of a Larger Picture
   According to Gene Boutilier,
   Faith-based Activist, Community Organizer, and Executive
   Lindsey Burkart-Lima

7… Thomas McHenry
   Environmental Litigator with Gibson, Dunn, & Crutcher and Professor of Environmental
   Law at Claremont McKenna College
   Melanie Paty

12… Nancy Mintie
   Founder of Uncommon Good
   Annemieke Ruina

17… Roberto Cabrales
   Environmental Justice Worker with Communities for a Better Environment, Los Angeles
   Alana Pokorny

21… Geordie Schuurman
   Founder of the Pomona College Organic Farm and Natural Earth Eco-Friendly Landscaping
   Shannon Julius

27… Artists’ Statement
   Lindsey Burkart-Lima

31… References
Introduction

After a semester of reading, speaking, and thinking about the environmental injustices, we were ready to engage with solutions. In exploring ways that to do this, we wanted to know about who is acting to create environmental justice. We then decided to explore the heroes of environmental justice. We particularly wanted to get to know the heroes in our own Claremont community, and those that may be on the “fringes” of environmental justice. Who creates change, what do they do, and in which ways—directly or indirectly—do they affect environmental justice?

With these questions in mind, we reached out to people in the campus and Claremont community—people we knew from classes, people our professors recommended we contact, and friends of friends. We wanted to speak to and learn from a variety of people who were creating change in distinctive ways. We conducted seven interviews and chose to compile five of them in a book of about local heroes. The interviews not only illustrate the heroes’ personal stories, but the stories of the work they have done or continue to do that connects them to the greater cause of environmental justice.

We spoke with Gene Boutilier, a resident of Pilgrim Place, to hear from a knowledgeable member of a generation that has been through many developments of the environmental justice movement. We sought out Tom McHenry, a professor at Claremont McKenna College and environmental litigator, to further explore how environmental justice can be achieved from the legal side as opposed to the more commonly expressed grassroots side. Nancy Mintie, the founder of Uncommon Good, was included for her valuable perspective as a prominent woman leader with strong connections to justice in the Claremont and Inland Empire communities. We spoke with Roberto Cabrales, a student at Pitzer College, about his work with communities in Los Angeles, and we involved him for the viewpoint of someone working as part of an important regional movement. To connect our stories to the Claremont Colleges community, we spoke with Geordie Schuurman, the founder of the Pomona College Organic Farm, to hear the intriguing story of its founding and his philosophy of environmental justice as an alumnus of Pomona College.

The major themes drawn from our interviews were interpreted in large pieces of art that will spur further thought into what environmental justice is, why it is important, and how it is created.

We hope that our book will serve as a source of inspiration for aspiring actors of environmental justice. In the classroom setting, we are bombarded with injustices, and this book is meant to serve on the opposite side by provoking thought for how best to use our skills, interests, resources, and communities to create the change that we believe in.
What is Environmental Justice?

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, “Environmental Justice is 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.” (EPA, 2014). Furthermore, the movement advocates for fair treatment and equitable distribution of both burdens and benefits. However, the movement is unique in that it does not perceive humans as separate from their environment but rather an integral part of it. In this, the environment is where people “live, work, and play.”

Environmental justice’s critical lens captures the intersection between humans and the environment making it highly relevant across a broad range of issues. However, the symptomatic nature of environmental justice issues is a major strength of the movement (symptomatic in that: pollution is a symptom of industry, must be released somewhere, and is caused by a larger chain of influences). The more spheres and actors involved, the greater the opportunities for the environmental justice movement to build alliances with other advocacy organizations fighting similar battles and unite with them in solidarity.

Environmental Justice as a Social Movement

If this is so, how do we make the environmental justice movement better known, widespread, and successful? According to Gene Boutilier, the unification of various social movements is critical to their success. Throughout his life, Gene has been actively involved in social justice through his active involvement as a reverend in the United Church of Christ on the Migrant Ministry, experience in leading advocacy on public policy issues ranging from poverty, homelessness and affordable housing, food policy and hunger, union building, collective bargaining, disaster recovery, and farmworkers’ rights. Gene has worked extensively with the United Farmworkers and Cesar Chavez as a lobbyist in Washington, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and lastly as a bureaucrat in charge of homelessness services in Los Angeles County. Although originally involved in the labor movement, Gene found environmental concerns intimately tied to his work. Growing up, Gene regularly attended Sunday school and summer camps, which inspired his involvement with civil rights, his pacifism, and his work later in his life with the labor movement. In fact, being aware of peace and justice has been part of his religious traditions since his youth.
In Gene’s opinion, the Environmental Justice Movement is an extension of greater social movements in the United States during the 1960s, including the Civil Rights Movement and the Environmental Movement, whose missions are inspired by the core values of fairness, equality, justice, and freedom; similar to those of environmental justice. Yet to achieve success, Gene believes that the Environmental Justice Movement must deeply involve itself in the labor movement and be accompanied by a widespread religious revolution. For too long, “labor has sided with the employer against the environmentalist and that framing has hurt environmentalists big time. Much work in the last 30 to 40 years has been to help broker an understanding that we are all in this together.” In Gene’s opinion, the working class has received environmentalists as “Cadillac liberals, too elite, urban, and professional; they don’t understand what it’s like to worry about feeding your children.” But how do we change this? The political framing around the environment has always been jobs versus the environment. However, Gene explains that “as long as it’s framed that way, the environment is going to lose.” Telling someone that the climate will change because of environmental degradation is not a motivator if I can’t feed my children now and therefore won’t have grandchildren to protect. The short term has beat out the long term.

Gene says that there must be “a resurgence in the labor movement to defend the hollowing out of the middle class and the constant pressure to get very rich. It will come in your lifetime but not mine. And it will in fact draw on the history of organized labor and anti-colonialism.” Each of these movements discusses family values, an abundance life for people, and justice. He predicts that things will become so bad that there will be a revolution.

Gene predicts that religious values will soon return to their intended places. Organized religions will become more accepting of others and will not be as narrow and judgmental as they have been in recent centuries. In fact, he sees religion playing a huge role in forming the consciousness of the world.
Gene’s Advice for Future Activists

“Fortunately because I belonged to a lot of losing campaigns trying to get justice, peace, and freedom, I learned that you don’t need to be successful, you need to be faithful. It’s nice to be successful, but that’s not the criteria. And you learn this from people like Ghandi, King, and others - Cesar Chavez. I don’t need to count my successes. I worked very hard at the policy level with homelessness in LA and I’d like to report to you that we didn’t win. On the other hand, all of these things require sustained difference. The work doesn’t get done once and for all...it has to continue! Worker justice, peace, freedom, equality, these are never-ending. Success, who knows! Martin King used to talk about the arc of history bends slowly towards justice. If you are looking to see justice tomorrow morning and peace and freedom everywhere, the enemy is too strong.”

What is Environmental Justice?

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Thomas McHenry has spent the majority of his professional career working as an environmental lawyer. In his law practice, McHenry’s efforts have gone towards ensuring that companies comply with relevant environmental regulations. Due to the size and capacity of his firm, Gibson and Dunn, he has had the opportunity to engage considerably with Pro Bono work, or legal work donated for the public good, in addition to his normal practice. Additionally, he has taught an Environmental Law course at Claremont McKenna College for over 20 years, an outlet he values as an opportunity to pass his passion and skills on to subsequent generations. He has also served on the boards of government committees that advise environmental regulations as well as conservation boards. This compilation of contributions to the environmental field has allowed McHenry to indirectly perpetuate environmental justice throughout the Los Angeles area.

Motivation

Tom McHenry did not always envision a career in the environmental field; in his words, “My generation grew up in the 1960s and early 1970s and was affected by the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Women’s Rights Movement, Gay Rights Movement; a variety of social protests of the time.” These movements inspired McHenry and his contemporaries to pursue work in social justice. After graduating with a Bachelors’ degree from Yale, McHenry spent a year working at a school for juvenile delinquents in Boston. Although it was rewarding, McHenry decided that he wasn’t going to get a career out of it, and he migrated to the environmental field because he felt that he could be more productive. He pursued graduate degrees at both the Yale School of Forestry and New York University Law School, which gave him an ideal toolset for environmental law. Now as a partner at Gibson and Dunn, McHenry indirectly promotes values of environmental justice in his practice.
Gibson, Dunn, & Crutcher

As an environmental lawyer at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, McHenry advises large corporations on their environmental obligations. When choosing which clients to work with, McHenry considers the environmental hazard they procure: “If a potential client has facilities located in poor neighborhoods of color where there might be some concern that it will affect the health of the community, it could lead to a lawsuit or an organization trying to kick you out of the community.” If a client does have potentially harmful facilities, Gibson and Dunn is not likely to work with them. In this way, McHenry is promoting environmental justice by only offering litigation services to companies that do not bring environmental hazards to communities. This policy of Gibson and Dunn is significant because they are one of the most prestigious and successful law firms in the United States. According to McHenry, environmental law indirectly promotes environmental justice through compliance, enforcement, and trial. Compliance addresses new entities and ensures that they are following relevant environmental laws. Enforcement addresses and corrects non-compliance. Litigation occurs when a non-compliance case actually goes to trial, which McHenry notes is rare. By monitoring compliance and enforcement, McHenry and other environmental lawyers are protecting society from environmental hazards that companies would cause if they were not pressured to follow environmental regulations properly. Furthermore, McHenry, along with other Gibson and Dunn attorneys, engage in a variety of Pro Bono work. Two examples of their Pro Bono initiatives are partnering with an Urban Justice center to provide benefits to disabled workers and reforming LA county jails (Gibson and Dunn).

“*If a potential client has facilities located in poor neighborhoods of color where there might be some concern that it will affect the health of the community, it could lead to a lawsuit or an organization trying to kick you out of the community.*”

According to McHenry, environmental law indirectly promotes environmental justice through compliance, enforcement, and trial.
Other Environmental Contributions

McHenry has taught Environmental Law at Claremont McKenna College for over 20 years, giving undergraduates the basic tools and understanding necessary to consider environmental law as a potential career path. By sparking interest in a younger generation to pursue environmental law, McHenry is promoting sustained values of environmental justice. Additionally, McHenry has served on a number of California governmental advisory bodies including the California EPA Blue Ribbon Commission for a Unified Environmental Statute, the DTSC CEQA Guidance Advisory Committee and the DTSC Regulatory Structure Update, among many others. All of the committees McHenry served on work to enforce compliance of environmental regulations, and thus protect Californians from environmental hazards. He has also served on the boards of several conservancies including the Tejon Ranch Conservancy, which was formed out of one of the most famous land negotiations in conservation history. The deal preserved 240,000 acres of land at the juncture of four ecosystems in California. Though the concept of preserved land is contested by principles of environmental justice, in the case of Tejon Ranch the land would have been developed into a high-end mountain resort community, likely resulting in more environmentally unjust consequences than conservation.

By sparking interest in the younger generation to pursue environmental law, McHenry is promoting sustained values of environmental justice.
Environmental Justice

McHenry defines environmental justice as assuring fairness and fairness of treatment in environmental exposure. He believes that the confluence of many social factors has unintentionally led to people of color being exposed to more environmental hazard than affluent communities and this injustice should be remedied. However, he is skeptical about the current method of addressing environmental justice issues. His past work in education influences his re-envisioning of improved environmental prevention. He wonders if the money used to “regulate toxic consumer products was put it into preschool education, or job training, would that be a better use of money from a societal standpoint?” In his opinion, the best way to pursue environmental justice is with improved “housing, education, and job opportunities for low-income people”. In the near future, McHenry expects to retire from his law practice and pursue work in government or with a non-profit. Perhaps with these endeavors he will begin implementing his vision of improved environmental justice through preventative measures.

McHenry believes that the best way to pursue environmental justice is with improved “housing, education, and job opportunities for low-income people.”
NANCY MINTIE  
Founder of Uncommon Good

Nancy Mintie is a Southern California native with a background in law. She began her career as a lawyer for low-income Los Angeles residents and went on to found Uncommon Good in 2000 to address the issues of poverty in the Inland Empire. Uncommon Good serves as a base for several programs in education, mentorship, urban agriculture, and sustainable community organization.

Personal and Professional Background

As a child, Nancy Mintie took the ideals of being a Christian in America literally. She took at face value that there should be liberty and justice for all, and Jesus’s teachings of helping the poor. She had deep connection with nature as a child, and a true desire from the beginning to help poor people. She would tell adults that she wanted to be teacher for poor children in Yosemite. This made sense to her since the female role models in her community were teachers. After finishing her education at UCLA law school, however, Nancy ended up on a different path. She founded the Inner City Law Center for the homeless and those suffering in dangerous slum housing in Skid Row in Los Angeles.

Nancy realized that what she was doing wasn’t enough to ensure a permanent solution for her clients, as many would spend the lawsuit winnings and end up in slums again. She realized that help needed to begin earlier because her clients did not have the education to get jobs that would could them above the poverty line. To address this issue, she started a program to set aside part of the lawsuit winnings for college funds. Still, she felt like she needed to do more, since by the time the children were college-aged, they were oftentimes already on the wrong track.

“I would sue and win them millions of dollars, and they would come back a few years later and say, ‘Can you help us, Nancy? We’re in another slum.’”

“The kids started showing up at 18 for their college money, and they’d have 2 babies, a boyfriend in jail, and they’d dropped out of high school, and I thought ‘Oops...We’ve got to start them younger, ... as kids.’”
Uncommon Good

Nancy founded Uncommon Good in Claremont after 20 years with the Inner City Law Center. Uncommon Good addressed the lack of infrastructure to serve the poor in the Inland Empire. While the poor are becoming more concentrated east of Los Angeles, many of the social services remain in downtown Los Angeles. Mintie sought help from her local pastor in founding the organization, since she'd given all of her lawsuit winnings away and had no base on which to begin. He offered up a space in an old convent in Claremont as the first site of Uncommon Good.

Uncommon Good’s mission is to “break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and to work for the restoration of our planet.” Through her own personal reading of literature and news, Nancy realized that her devotion to helping the poor could not be separated from the environment.

Uncommon Good has multiple programs to address the intergenerational cycle of poverty and the care of the earth. The educational program allows children take part in classes, mentoring, tutoring, and a Teen Green environmental group in order to continue their education and break the cycle of intergenerational poverty; the Medical Education Debt (MED) Relief program supports young medical professionals who chose to work in low-income communities; the Urban Agriculture program was founded during the 2008 recession, when families weren’t interested in community gardens, often considered “a rich person’s hobby,” but were interested in farming to support their own families. The program is still growing, and Nancy sees it as a way to prepare our communities for challenging times to come. The pride of the organization is the Whole Earth Building (WEB), which was inspired by a little girl in the program who suggested building a new site using the earth from the land beneath it. The WEB was built by hand using the clay from its land and engagement of many local families and organizations. It is earthquake and fire resistant, completely solar-powered, naturally stays cool, has a garden on its roof, and was blessed by the Tongva before being built. People from around the world come to see the Whole Earth Building.

“You can’t really solve the problems of poverty if you don’t address the ecocide we’re going through. You can’t address the problems of the environment if you’re not paying attention to people’s needs, because if people are desperate they’re going to do anything they need to do to the environment.”
Nancy believes that there needs to be a revolutionary leap in consciousness in order for our communities to be prepared for the challenging times to come. People need to realize their connections with each other and change their mindsets. In addition to doing the type of work that Nancy does, in what she calls the “outer world,” Nancy wants to continue working on her set path to address the question of how to build sustainable communities.
Nancy firmly believes that everyone can have an impact from where they stand. To aspiring activists in environmental justice, she recommends transforming fear into love, and using love as a guiding philosophy. Nancy Mintie has been personally guided by her own drive to spread love through her life, and has touched many lives and strengthened the sustainability of her communities. All of us can use her guiding principles to contribute to environmental justice in whichever way our skills and interests allow.

“To me, the meta-law, the meta-principle, is love. If you take whoever you are, and what your talents are, and you bring it down through that filter, and say ‘how can I manifest love into my reality?’ Then that is going to answer all of those questions… What should we do about the environment? Well, what is the loving thing to do about the environment, from where I stand? What should we do about environmental justice? Well, what is the loving thing to do, and what can I do—am I a farmer, am I scientist, am I teacher… am I a mother? How can I bring my consciousness down and express, through love, what needs to be done in the world? That answer will be different for everybody, depending on who you are, what you love to do, and what you do well.”

❖ Mieke Ruina
Roberto Cabrales has been working with Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) since his junior year of high school. Beginning as a volunteer, he has worked his way up to a full time position while simultaneously attending Pitzer College. He began his work with CBE as a promoter to get young people out and motivated to change their environment and fight the injustices into which they were born. He now works with parents and grandparents whenever they have time and 30 members who come to meetings every single week to discuss issues in the community and propose and execute plans to rectify them. He and his fellow community members have made their community a better place to live by shutting down power plants and talking to legislators. His enthusiasm for work and dedication to his beliefs is an incredible fortune for those in his community, and his work throughout the years has impacted many lives.

Motivation: The Driver for Change

When Roberto met members of CBE his junior year of high school, he realized that the conditions in which he, his family, peers and neighbors were living in were unjust. He noticed how often kids were not at school because they had to go to see a doctor for asthma or other sicknesses caused by the inescapable local pollution. He only realized these things, however, after CBE laid out the issues to him. Once he learned that he could join a group that fights back and makes a difference in the community, Roberto was sold. He was passionate about change. He was excited to rally. The possibilities for a better community became clear to him. Mothers could stop missing a day of work to take their child to the hospital; kids could play in a nice park after school instead of sitting indoors so their lungs don’t hurt; a new grocery store with healthy food could replace yet another liquor store, or better yet a fast food chain. The ratio of parks (few) to fast food chains (many) in his community was something that really struck Roberto, and changing this is one of his long-term goals. He sees the importance of getting the kids in his community outside to play, grow to be healthy adults, and continue on to fight the oppression that occurs within low-income areas.

Kids could play in a nice park after school instead of sitting indoors so their lungs don’t hurt; a new grocery store with healthy food could replace yet another liquor store, or better yet a fast food chain.
Communities for a Better Environment

After joining CBE, Roberto began to participate in rallies and collect voter petitions, immersing himself in the bettering of his community. There were many different environmental groups that may have seemed to have the same goal, however Roberto knew that he wanted to join CBE because of their mission to empower low-income groups, specifically, to fight for the treatment they deserve and contest the neglect and mistreatment they have incurred.

“The mission of CBE is to build people’s power in California’s communities of color and low-income communities to achieve environmental health and justice by preventing and reducing pollution and building green health and sustainable communities and environments.”

Environmental Justice

Roberto believes that Environmental Justice is the right for everyone to live in an environment free of toxins. No matter what you look like, how much money you make, what you speak or your background. While his words are powerful and encouraging, his actions lend far more heavily to this belief. In 2009 Roberto along with his fellow CBE members led a massive community mobilization and litigation campaign to shut down a proposed power plant in the city of Vernon, an industrial city south of downtown Los Angeles. The planned power plant, supported by elected officials, would have generated 1.7 million pounds of chemical emissions and fine soot particles (linked to cases of cancer, heart disease and other illnesses) along with 2.5 million pounds of greenhouse gases. This victory, one of many that CBE has achieved since its initiation, demonstrated to Roberto how much success can result from banding together as a community and being passionate about what you believe in. The use of “we” is incredibly important to Roberto while describing his work with CBE. Nothing could get done on this large a scale if he was by himself, he reflects. He attributes all success to his co-members, calling himself “just a motivator.”
Roberto believes that by being proactive, rather than reactive, and fighting for transformation together, not as individuals, Environmental Justice will be achieved much more diligently with a sense of community pride and hope.

“Pollution knows no bounds. No one will [fight] this for us, we have to do this.”

¬ Alana Pokorny

Young CBE members organizing to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions
While Geordie Schuurman and his friends were attending Pomona College, they founded the Pomona College Organic Farm with little more than hand tools and a willingness to work and grow together. “The Farm” began as a food growing experiment in 1998 and expanded to be one of the most impactful community gardens in the Inland Empire, currently used or experienced by thousands of people every year. According to Geordie, the Farm contributes to local environmental justice by making healthy, sustainably-grown food available for free. After college, Geordie became disturbed by inappropriate land uses in Claremont—namely, grass lawns—and started a permacultural landscaping company called Natural Earth Eco-Friendly Landscaping. His story shows us the positive changes that can happen when you follow your values, when you are dedicated and daring, and when you act without waiting for permission.

The Pomona Organic Farm

The Farm covers 2.5 acres in the southeast corner of Pomona College property in Claremont. The western portion is the original farm, and it contains a community garden, an adobe dome structure, and a chicken coop; the eastern portion hosts community work days, educational outreach events, and higher volume fruit and vegetable production. The Farm is open and welcoming to the community. Frequent outreach events draw local organizations, including nonprofits such as Uncommon Good, and local school groups. A number of Environmental Analysis classes at the Claremont Colleges utilize the Farm, and students can reserve beds to grow their own flowers or food. The Farm has developed an annual budget that allows it to employ one full time farm director and a staff of college students to care for the farm and organize events. The sustainable nature of the space makes it a draw for the Colleges and for the Environmental Analysis program. It is a place where college students and community members can gather, learn, and work with the earth. And, of course, eat!
The stones of the planter beds were dug from the ground during the initial stages of the Farm’s creation.

The Pomona website does not attribute the initiation of the Farm to any students in particular, only noting that “four Pomona College students” had been responsible. But the story lives on by word-of-mouth, passed down by a decade and a half of students. It turns out that one of the Farm’s founders, Geordie Schuurman, still lives in Claremont and is still occasionally involved with the Farm. Geordie is currently self-employed as a landscaper in Claremont; his company specializes in native plants, edibles, water conservation, and permacultural design.

Motivation

Geordie noted being inspired by two particular experiences before he started working on the Farm. First, he took a class with professor Joe Parker at Pitzer entitled “Resistance to Monoculture,” which motivated students to get involved in protests on campus and in the nearby area. Secondly, he took a year off college after his sophomore year and went abroad to South Africa. He didn’t explain the specifics of his year abroad, but his takeaway was to learn that “it is possible to succeed in the world doing what you want to do, not doing what other people want you to do.”

Creating the Farm

When Geordie returned to Pomona College for his junior year, the land that is now the Farm was being used as a dump for construction and landscaping debris. Geordie attributes the original idea of the farm to his friend Adrien, who graduated and left before any big changes had been made. The eventual implementation of the farm was carried through by Geordie and three of his close friends. When explaining how the farm began, Geordie said, “essentially it was just a really good group of friends.” Another source of help was Bret Jenson, a farmer at the Claremont Farmer’s Market, who gave him the seeds and the knowledge to begin planting at the Farm. Their first step was to ask the college groundskeepers if some students could plant tomatoes in the area, and it grew from there. It was a low-trafficked area of campus, and as Geordie and his friends began to change the landscape 1998, neither administration nor the bulk of students knew of or saw the changes. Philosophies of natural farming and permaculture inspired their management strategies, including using boulders that were already present in the soil in the Farm’s design and planting without tilling. These strategies utilize the natural rhythms and cycles of nature, not forced patterns of monoculture or unnatural methods of pest or weed control.
Before long, students began planting trees and expanding their planted area more and more. “I realized at that time that we were like pioneers,” Geordie said about the initial phase of the farm, “every day we would take over some more ground, push a little bit further, and plant a few more trees.” The work would connect those involved to each other and to nature. Groups of students would gather together to eat or meditate every day. “It was so wonderful to be able to share in the real necessity of work and...to really appreciate the responsibility that comes with trying to share the land and make it better.” The atmosphere was very giving, and help would appear whenever something would need to get done. The space was particularly beneficial for young college and community members who did not have a sense of direction but could find a place on the farm.

“This was so wonderful to be able to share in the real necessity of work and...to really appreciate the responsibility that comes with trying to share the land and make it better.”

This grassroots development of the farm went unnoticed by college administration for a long time. Geordie recalls a day when the team of farmworkers was planning to expand once again by planting a grove’s worth of donated trees on the unused land across from the shot put field—now the East Farm. The college administration, however, had other ideas to “improve” that piece of land. On the same day Geordie and his friends began this planting, members of the College’s administrative staff were bidding the site to contractors to design and build a putting green—a very resource-intensive and exclusive use of land. Neither group, the students with their shovels or the men in suits, stopped their business to interact with each other, but someone from the school came to talk to Geordie and his friends a few days later. This encounter, according to Geordie, “was what started the beginning of the end of that initial era of literally this was an open place, there were no rules. We’d spend the night here.”
Sometime between the college’s awareness of the farm and its acceptance of it, students began a project to build an earth dome structure in the center of the West Farm. The dome was primarily an attempt to create a place where friends could spend time sheltered from the elements, but also to give a sense of permanence to the place that they had worked so hard to create, a place that could have easily been reinstituted for official college purposes. A couple teachers informally approved the dome project, but students didn’t try to get it cleared by any official avenues. Students spent an entire summer working on the dome, which was self-funded with some help from a donor in Claremont, Ronald Flemming. The College did not recognize these efforts, and saw the dome as a building that was unchecked and impossible to control. In response, administrators ordered the dome to be fenced off and demolished on the day before the fall semester began.

A full-blown protest seemed eminent, but negotiations between the school, the students with the farm, and Ronald Flemming ended with a $10,000 donation to build the next dome and administrative acceptance of the project. Geordie, as the leader of the project, decided to incorporate the dome into college curriculum. Getting approval for a course to build the dome took about a year, and preparation of the Dome’s structure took even longer, but once the preparations were done, it took just less than three weeks for a class of 19 students working with Professor Rick Hazlett to complete the super adobe structure. The Earth Dome is now a center of the farm and gathering place, it is a library and seed bank, and it represents the Farm’s first steps towards permanence.

“The other [reason we built the dome] was to give people a sense of what this place was...the context of a human place. When we think of a farm, we think of a faraway food production place – but this could be your house and this could be your backyard and this could be a lifestyle.”
Environmental Justice

Geordie sees access to free, healthy, sustainably-grown food as a major element of environmental justice. Thus the farm is a place that promotes environmental justice by making this sort of food available through community development programs. A special feature of the Farm is that it increases both the natural and social productivity of the land. What was a “wash” before—an undeveloped piece of land that allows rain and runoff to sink back into the aquifer—is now a food-producing, beautiful, and sustainable piece of land which still allows rain water to return to the aquifer. And what was an unknown and unnoticed space is now “a place where people come together on the community level.” Though the most “environmental justice” function of the place is to produce food, currently it operates more as an educational facility. Environmental education is also linked to environmental justice, he says, and he is proud the Farm is a place where college students and local families can learn about sustainability and find a connection to the land. One of the most rewarding things about this process is when college students or young people are inspired to get involved in the field of environmental studies or in other real-world environmental education projects.

After spending time on the farm every day for six or seven years, Geordie started looking for a way to expand the project. “I loved what was happening here; I developed a great relationship with it. And it was amazing to witness in other people that sense of sharing and finding a place where you can be yourself…but I didn’t know how to take this further.” Then he realized that there was a need for permacultural work even here in Claremont, where grass lawns abound. He said, “Driving around town I got disgusted by the use of land. After knowing what it can be. It’s just a shame that people try to blanket it up.” So he started his own company, Natural Earth Eco-Friendly Landscaping, which specializes in natives, edibles, artistic hardscapes, and water conservation. This company promotes environmental justice not only by returning local land to a sustainable state, but by creating a way for him and his employees to earn a lifestyle while promoting the values they hold. Environmental justice, he says, implies more than just healthy, accessible food, though the food is certainly a big part of the battle. “The solution to our problems in the world, in our world capitalistically is environmental entrepreneurship…solving those problems and making money at the same time.” This maximizes both natural capital, the resources of the land, and human capital, which abounds when people are able to work in a way that engages their minds as well as their hearts.

“\textbf{The solution to our problems in the world, in our world capitalistically is environmental entrepreneurship...solving those problems and making money at the same time.}”

\textit{Shannon Julius}
ARTISTS’ STATEMENT

Alana and I chose to portray the most prominent themes that emerged from each interview by producing two large pieces of artistic expression. We utilized the availability of any art materials we could scavenge including poster paper, paint, spray paint, construction paper, and crayons. More specifically, we melted various colors of crayons onto the two canvases used in Fear into Love and manipulated the drip effects to create a dark-dove that transforms into a colorful landscape. After many layers of wax, spray paint was applied in layers as well. Although each piece is unique, they explore different subject areas of each theme, unearthing the complexities of environmental justice and the factors that both fight for it and produce it.

All together, the art took about nine hours of labor.

❖ Lindsey Burkart-Lima
“Pollution Knows No Bounds”

Many environmental justice issues concern the racist, targeted, or unequal placement of burdens. However, it is often forgotten that a burden in one community affects another; in the end we all suffer. Hence, environmental ills do not discriminate. This idea of shared burden, represented by the ‘blood’ splatter, is contrasted with the faceless heads placed across the piece representing empowerment. Although physical barriers such as highways, neighborhoods, or socioeconomic may unintentionally divide us, we are all in this together.
‘There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love’ (1 John 4:18)”

We created this piece with the themes of hope, transformation, and faith in mind. Most specifically, how these themes are expressed through Nancy Mintie’s phrase of “turning fear into love”. This piece was made in two parts to represent this transition. The darker piece is gloomy and sullen. However the central wax oval resembles a dove—symbolizing hope, faith, and opportunities for the future. Following the black drips from the dove to the next panel, one’s eyes notice the sudden change in colors. The city is brought to life and is sitting on top of the wax landscape. In contrast, the dove (representing current environmental ills) is poised above the city as if blocking the sun rays and placing the city in shadows. As stated earlier by Gene, “You don’t need to be successful, you need to be faithful… Worker justice, peace, freedom, equality, these are never-ending.” In this, transformation is a continuous process.
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About the Authors

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