Assessing Climate Change by Understanding Race, Power & Privilege

Colette Pichon Battle, Esq.
@CPichonbattle

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About GCCLP:
The Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy is a non-profit, public-interest law firm and justice center promoting structural shifts toward **climate justice** and **ecological equity** for communities of color on the frontline of climate change.

GCCLP serves the Gulf South: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida.

Theory of Change:
- (Stabilize) Climate Disaster Legal Services
- (Support) Local Leadership Development
- (Build) Community Programming
- (Engage) Human Rights Advocacy
10 terms that can change your life

• God’s Green Earth
• Race
• The South
• Privilege
• Extractive Economies
• Climate Change
• Power
• Faith
• Movement
• Green New Deal
The Right to Remain, Return & Recover
Race. What is race?

8. Is Person 1 of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
- No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin
- Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano
- Yes, Puerto Rican
- Yes, Cuban
- Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin — Print origin, for example, Argentinean, Colombian, Dominican, Nicaraguan, Salvadoran, Spaniard, and so on.

9. What is Person 1’s race? Mark one or more boxes.
- White
- Black, African Am., or Negro
- American Indian or Alaska Native — Print name of enrolled or principal tribe.
- Asian Indian
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Other Asian — Print race, for example, Hmong, Laotian, Thai, Pakistani, Cambodian, and so on.
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Native Hawaiian
- Guamanian or Chamorro
- Samoan
- Other Pacific Islander — Print race, for example, Fijian, Tongan, and so on.
- Some other race — Print race.

Color, Ethnicity, Heritage, Citizenship/Nationality, Language, Religion, Culture
Race is...

- Not real. Race is a social construct created by humans with no biological basis.
- Race can shift over time.
- Race categories are generally determined by the dominant group.
- Race has real consequences.
What are some Race Consequences?
Race Consequence: Structural Racism

- A system in which public policies (laws), institutional practices, cultural representations, and other (social) norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity.
- Subtle racialized patterns in policies and practices permeate the political, economic, and sociocultural structures of America.
- Generate differences in well-being between people of color and whites.
- Maintain the existing racial hierarchy even as they adapt with the times or accommodate new racial/ethnic groups.
- This contemporary manifestation of racism in America can be called “structural racism.”

Credit: Aspen Institute 2004, Structural Racism and Community Building
Race Consequence: Land & Peoples

TRIBES OF THE INDIAN NATION
Race Consequence: Land & Peoples

American Indian Reservations

MAP KEY
- Federal American Indian Reservations
- State American Indian Reservations
Race Consequence: Place & Planning
Race Consequence: Poverty

Highest percentages of people living below the poverty level in US - U.S. Census Bureau - 2010

1. Mississippi - 17.9%
2. Arkansas - 14.8
3. Kentucky - 14.4
4. West Virginia - 13.9
5. New Mexico - 13.6
6. Alabama & Texas - 13.4
7. Louisiana - 13.3
8. Tennessee - 13.1
9. South Carolina - 12.9
10. Georgia - 12.7
Race Consequence: Racial Wealth Divide

August 2016 CFED & Institute for Policy Studies

See methodology for more details on these calculations.
Race Consequence: Environmental Racism

- The disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color or low socio-economic status.
- Refers to the unequal protection against toxic waste exposure.
- Refers to the exclusion of these communities from environmental decisions affecting their communities.

A poison to the environment is a poison to the people.
Defining Climate Change
Global Warming
Defining Climate Change:
Human activity is adding greenhouse gases to our atmosphere and accelerating critical changes in our climate.

- Carbon dioxide (CO2) and Methane, are main drivers of the greenhouse effect.
- When fossil fuels - coal, oil and natural gas - are extracted and/or burnt they release greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- Because the layer of greenhouse gas around the Earth is getting thicker, the Earth is getting warmer - global warming.
Countries by carbon dioxide emissions in thousands of tons per annum, via the burning of fossil fuels (blue the highest).
Breakdown by country (Mtoe) World - 2018

Source: Enerdata
Privilege: Who’s Life, Labor and Land is Sacrificed?
Race Consequence: Exploited Prison Labor
(BP Oil Drilling Disaster – Louisiana)
Race Consequence: Exploited Farm Labor
Race Consequence: Slave Labor
Extractive Economies:
Extractive Industries

- The US economic system incentivizes unlimited use and unlimited growth to produce unlimited profits.
- Extractive industries yield the world’s highest profits AND release mega-tons of greenhouse gases to produce small amounts of fossil fuel-based energy.
- Greenhouse emissions are trapped and create a “greenhouse effect” that alter the earth’s atmosphere and oceans which produces climate-based disasters.
Connecting the Dots

- Industries at the heart of environmental racism challenges are the same as those at the heart of the climate crisis.
- Before being refined, the extraction of natural resources from the beneath the earth’s surface requires the release of Greenhouse gases. (e.g. Carbon Dioxide (CO2); Methane; Nitrous Oxide; Fluorinated Gases)
- Excessive amounts of Greenhouse Gases in the air causes a changes in the earth’s atmosphere.
- Changes to earth’s fragile atmosphere = shifts in climate defined by extreme weather events.
Root Cause Analysis: Power & Privilege

- Extractive Economies
- Mass Production
- Mass Consumption
- White Supremacy
- Racism
- Patriarchy
- Oppression
Gulf South for A Green New Deal
If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.

- Desmond Tutu
Thank You
Questions & Answers

Contact Us:
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
www.gcclp.org

info@gcclp.org