



## On becoming a Green Sanctuary: Why is this the most important action to take at this time?

Because going green doesn't just mean we recycle. Going green means that we buck the illusion we've been living under, that the point of human life is to see how much we can get away with or how much we can consume. Going green means Environmental Justice. When we contemplate environmental justice, we'll see that it goes much deeper than a few environmental campaigns or strategies. It hits right to the heart of the question of how resources are distributed and what the core principles are, on which we base our lives and societies.

Currently, the earth we share is divided up largely based on who has the power, who owned it first, or who knows someone influential. But more and more there is a call for science, equality, and compassion in how we share the precious planet we live on. Not only is there no "Earth 2" for us to migrate to, even if we happen to sustain this one to live on a bit longer, we humans still currently prioritize the desires of the few over the needs of the many.

We can see this in the flagrant disregard of the precautionary principle, which says that if we can suspect something of causing grievous harm, then the burden of proof to assure its safety is on those who want to promote it. Our subsidization of fossil fuels, their pipelines and extraction is just one example of where this principle is thrown to the wind. Whether it is the Dakota Access Pipeline, re-routed along racial lines to poison the Lakota people's water but not their white neighbors, or whether it's the health concerns related to fracking wastes in California, Colorado, Texas and more, we see the intersection of environmental concerns and much wider issues of equality, justice, and health.

Climate change disproportionately affects minorities and those of lower social classes, who are forced to live in more dangerous areas in cities like New Orleans, and who are subject to slower response times and long-term environmental after-effects than the upper class citizens in places like Florida. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-barbara-lee/a-katrina-retrospective-s\\_b\\_702911.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rep-barbara-lee/a-katrina-retrospective-s_b_702911.html)

Climate change is also correlated with an increase in terrorism in the globe. Why? Because the stress and lack of resources brought about by the new cycles of drought and natural disasters can adversely impact a person's nervous system. In the hardest hit areas, like the Middle East, this

type of stress and environmental collapse can make it seem as if "radicalization" is the only option. It is not enough to continue to funnel our tax dollars into the war machine, which has failed again and again to address only symptoms. If we want answers to problems like this, we must look to the cause, and begin creating a better world for all of us to share.

Environmental justice intersects with almost every social justice issue in the world, whether it is overpopulation, lack of affordable housing, racism, classism, sexism, you name it. And why? Because all of this happens here on planet earth. It happens among straight and gay people alike. It happens to majorities and minorities. It happens to women, men, cisgendered, and transgendered people.

So why pick environmental justice as a major thing to focus on? There just isn't enough time or mental bandwidth to conquer everything. We have to think of something on which we can place our attention. If we begin by thinking inside the box of environmental justice, we may find creative ways to address many of our world's greatest issues at once. Most importantly, it gives us that crucial first step to take. The first step is necessary because we never accomplish anything without first empowering ourselves - but once we have empowered ourselves, there is nothing that we cannot accomplish together.

Isn't it time that we flex our collective muscles to work for what we believe in? Isn't it time that we set an example of how we can better share the Earth we inhabit? Isn't it past time that we take extreme regenerative actions to address the climate crisis, which will affect the poorest and most oppressed among us first and worst?

Let us work together to truly become Green. It means more than a water-wise garden, it means more than washing plates instead of using paper and plastic. It means knowing why we are doing these things. We conserve because we may set an example, and we may take the surplus and give it to those in need. We conserve as a statement of conscience, and so that we may be among those few pioneers who set forth a vision of living regeneratively - not just sustainably - so that all may follow, and we may create a world of abundance and justice for all.

— Rev. Fa Jun, UUFLG Minister

For details on the Green Sanctuary Program:  
<http://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary>

