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American Environmentalism: The Role of Race, Class and Gender in Shaping Activism  
1820-1995

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*AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM:  
THE ROLE OF RACE, CLASS AND  
GENDER IN SHAPING ACTIVISM  
1820-1995*

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**Abstract:** The history of American environmentalism presented by most authors, is really a history of middle class white male environmental activism. The tendency to view all environmental activism through this lens has deprived us of a deeper understanding of the way in which class, race and gender relations structured environmental experiences and responses over time. The inability of the white middle class environmental supporters of the reform environmental agenda to recognize the limits of that agenda has led working class whites, people of color and some middle class activists, marginalized and/or excluded from the reform environmental discourse, to develop alternative environmental agendas. The environmental movement is a powerful social movement, however, the movement faces enormous challenges in the future. Among the most urgent, is the need to develop a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, broad-based environmental agenda that will appeal to many people and unite many sectors of the movement. To do this the movement has to re-evaluate its relationship with industry and the government, re-appraise its role and mission, and develop strategies to understand and improve race, class and gender relations

**Key words:** environment, people of color, class, race, gender, environmental justice

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**P**eople's relationship to the environment has to be understood in the context of historical and contemporary class, race and gender relations. American environmentalism has been profoundly shaped by a unique set of social, political and economic factors arising from the period of conquest and subsequent industrialization. It can be argued that American environmental activism evolved over the last 175 years, and is characterized by four distinct periods of mobilization: the pre-movement era -- 1820s-1913, the post-Hetch Hetchy era -- 1914-1959, the post-Carson era -- 1960-1979, the post-Love Canal/Three Mile Island era -- 1980-present (Taylor, 1996). See Table 1. As the table also shows, each era has been associated with major ideological developments (environmental paradigms).

The rudimentary elements or the precursors of the environmental movement emerged in the first half of the 1800s -- a period marked by intense resource extraction, exploitation, environmental degradation, and rapid industrial development. The resource extraction and industrialization was accomplished through the process of appropriating land and labor, forcing people onto reservations, slavery, and indentured servitude. The use of the legal system to control immigration, population flows, human rights, and access to land; meet labor demands or to respond to racist/nativist sentiments is also significant. This paper tries to explore how environmental activism is shaped by one's race, class position, gender, societal experiences, ideology, political power, and social networks.

## **The Pre-Movement Era (1820s-1913)**

### **A - White Middle Class Males: Romanticism, Wilderness, Wildlife, & Recreation**

White, middle class, outdoor- and wilderness-oriented, elite males influenced by cultural nationalism or Romanticism and Transcendentalism began espousing pro-environmental ideas and started to publicize the natural wonders of the country during the first half of the 19th century. Writers and poets like William Cullen Bryant, and landscape artists like Thomas Cole, Winslow Homer, Thomas Moran, and Albert Bierstadt were among the leading cultural nationalists. Speaking through their poetry and art, they raised middle class consciousness about the beauty and intrinsic value of unique American landscapes and wilderness. Towards the end of this period, Ralph Waldo Emerson, was influenced by the French scholar Jean Jacques Rousseau, introduced Romanticism and Transcendentalism to the American elite. Lecturing to his Harvard students (like Henry David Thoreau) and the New England middle classes, he influenced many to revere the wilderness, value and care for the environment (Nash, 1982: 1-160).

Table 1. Phases of Environmental Activism and Corresponding Paradigmatic Developments

<i>PHASES OF ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM AND PARADIGMATIC DEVELOPMENTS</i>			
<i>Phases of the Environmental Movement</i>	<b>Pre-Movement</b>	<b>Early Environmental Movement</b>	<b>Modern Environmental Movement</b>
	Pre-Movement Era (1820-1913)	Post-Hetch-Hetchy Era (1914-1959)	Post-Carson Era (1960-1979)
<i>Paradigms</i>	Exploitive Capitalist Paradigm (ECP)	ECP & the Romantic Environmental Paradigm (REP)	New Environmental Paradigm (NEP)
			Post-TMI/ Love Canal Era (1980-Present)
			NEP & the Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP)

\*TMI refers to the Three Mile Island Nuclear facility.

The work of these visionaries influenced successive generations of white middle class men to embrace outdoor pursuits and to undertake actions to preserve the environment. From the 1850's-1913, John James Audubon, George Perkins Marsh, Henry David Thoreau, and John Muir were the leading naturalists, ecologists and advocates of wilderness preservation. These activists sought to overturn the exploitive capitalist paradigm (ECP) -- the dominant social paradigm of the time (Kuhn, 1962; Milbrath, 1984:7-15; Pirages, 1982:6; Dunlap & Van Liere, 1978:10-19) by articulating a Romantic environmental paradigm (REP). The REP became widely accepted throughout the environmental movement and still forms the nucleus of American environmental ideology. The REP, called attention to the destruction and domination of nature, and advocated compassion for other species, the harmonious coexistence of humans and nature, government protection of wild lands, and a return to a simpler lifestyle. These activists were also influential in preserving some of the earliest national parks and forests. By the 1870s environmental groups like The Appalachian Mountain Club, were formed and the transition from the pre-movement era (dominated by individual enthusiasts like Thoreau and Muir and scientific/technical professionals like Marsh and Pinchot) to mass movement began to take shape (Nash, 1982; Fox, 1985).

Because these men were financially secure, they were free to embark on outdoor expeditions at will. They sought out the wilderness as an antidote to the ills of the urban environment. They did not include issues relating to the workplace or the poor in their agenda. They were basically middle class activists procuring and preserving environmental amenities for middle class benefits and consumption.

## **B - Urban Environmentalism Middle & Working Class Concerns**

**1 - Urban Park Building - Middle Class White Males and the Working Class:** What were the conditions of the working class throughout the period the middle class white males were exploring the wilderness and building the foundations of the early reform environmental movement? During the 1800s, the white working class worked in deplorable conditions. They worked long hours for little wages. The long hours and intensive labor practices combined to give the U.S. one of the highest industrial accident rate in the world. From 1880-1900, 35,000 workers died and another 536,000 were injured annually. In Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania alone, 526 workers died on the job in one year (1906-1907). In 1908, 17,000 workers were killed in industrial accidents; by 1913, 25,000 were killed on the job and 700,000 injured. Between 1905 - 1920, at least 2,000 fatal work-related accidents occurred in the coal mines. In the now defunct town of Cherry, Illinois, more than 180 people died in coal mine explosion in 1909. The railroads were no safer. In 1901, one in every 399 railroad men was killed and one out of 26 injured. Among operating trainmen, one of every 137 was killed and one in eleven was

injured. In 1907, industrial accidents accounted for one of every ten deaths among males; 23 percent of the deaths among miners, 72 percent among powder makers, and 49 percent of the deaths among electric linemen. Female workers did not escape injury and death. For example, in 1911, 146 women and girls died in Triangle factory fire in New York City (Dubofsky, 1996:24-25; Kazis and Grossman, 1982: 166-170; McGarity and Shapiro, 1993:3-4).

Housing conditions were abominable. Workers lived in crowded, unsafe, unsanitary, over-priced housing. Unemployed and homeless people lived in parks and undeveloped lots. A case in point, when construction began on site for Central Park (New York), 300 dwellings, located within the boundaries of the park, were demolished by Olmsted's work crew (*Second Annual Report*, 1859: 59-6). Evictions were common. In 1903 alone, 60,463 or 14 percent of the families in Manhattan were evicted. Twenty percent of the population of Boston and New York City were said to be living in distress, and one in ten New Yorkers were buried in paupers graves in Potters Field (Dubofsky, 1996: 27). The little free time workers had was spent in local pubs or in the streets. Because of overcrowding, private personal and family activities (like courtship, sexual encounters, drinking, and socializing) often spilled onto the streets. This rankled the middle class who set out to Americanize and acculturate immigrants and curb what they saw as morally bankrupt, uncivilized behavior. Not surprisingly, interactions between both groups grew increasingly tense (Rosenzweig, 1983; 1987; Peiss, 1986; Beveridge and Schuyler, 1983; Dickason, 1983). Some of these tensions were fought out around the issues of access to and utilization of urban open space.

Not all the middle class white males interested in the environment and open space issues concentrated their efforts on wilderness and wildlife. Some, like Andrew Jackson Downing, explored their recreational interests in the city. Downing sought to bring pastoral bliss to squalid cities like New York by building elaborate, European-inspired, picturesque parks in urban centers. Downing, who designed the Mall in Washington and the White House grounds, inspired a generation of great American urban park builders to bring a touch of the wilderness to the city. Two of his proteges, Calvert Vaux and Frederick Law Olmsted, went on to design the Capitol grounds, Central Park (New York) and several other major urban parks and grounds all across the country. While the afore-mentioned wilderness-oriented activists separated their environmental activism, and recreation from those of urban dwellers and the working class, the urban park builders worked alongside the poor coming face to face with working class concerns. Though the park builders were often insensitive to working class concerns, (Olmsted, for instance, fired his Central Park work crew who struck for better wages and working conditions, and dismissed those who missed work due to illness or injuries sustained on the job), they built parks where the middle and working interacted -- even if on

a limited basis (Beveridge and Schuyler, 1983; Roper, 1973; Gottlieb, 1993; Rosenzweig, 1983; 1987; Olmsted, 1860: November 13). These activities, and the extent to which they believed that one could find solace in urban green space, distinguished them from their wilderness-oriented counterparts.

While the urban park builders constructed parks biased towards middle class use, they believed that the parks served important social and political functions (acculturating and civilizing the masses, improving their health, and making them work more efficiently), and their parks attracted thousands of working class laborers and recreationers (Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983; Peiss, 1986; Rosenzweig, 1983; 1987; *Second Annual Report*, 1859). For instance, Olmsted supervised a crew of 4,000 laborers working on Central Park. By 1860, about 10,000 visitors entered the park on foot while 2,000 carriages drove through the gates on Sunday afternoons and up to 100,000 people visited on holidays and special occasions (Olmsted, 1860: November 13; 1861:768-775). These parks provided free or cheap leisure for the working class and soon became the focal point of environmental and political activism. They were the sites of labor unrest, bread riots and political rallies (Peiss, 1986; Piven and Cloward, 1979:43-44; Beveridge & Schuyler, 1983:15; Olmsted, 1860: December 8; *New York Times*, 1857: 6, 17, 21, 25). In addition, the working class pointing out the environmental inequalities they faced (lack of sanitation, clean water, public open space, overcrowding, ill health and diseases) organized and lobbied for neighborhood parks. The working class also influenced the design of these urban parks by lobbying for open space designed for more active recreation like ball fields (Rosenzweig, 1983; 1987).

### **B - Environmental Health and Safety - White Middle Class Females and the Working Class**

During the 1800s and early 1900s, white middle class females found themselves in a peculiar position. On the one hand, they attended elite colleges; read extensively about Romanticism and Transcendentalism; ecology; botany; and natural history; and attended lectures on the environment; but on the other, they were not expected to act on their impulses to explore the wilderness (Muir, 1924). In short, males were socialized around conquest and Romanticism while women were socialized in home and community building. Adventurous undertakings such as living in the wilds *a la* Thoreau and Muir, mountaineering, hunting, fishing, etc. were praised and encouraged among men but not among women. Consequently, some women lived these experiences vicariously through their husbands, brothers and friends. It is interesting to note that some of the most revered environmentalists of the period -- Thoreau, Olmsted, Muir -- had female friends who played significant roles in directing, mentoring, or shaping their intellectual growth and/or political activism. Other middle class women, focused on local environmental issues

-- a few would venture on arduous trips to the West to see the mountains (Yel-verton, 1872). For the most part, women became amateur natural historians, gardeners, and collectors of plants, animals, feathers, etc.

Nonetheless, some middle class white women broke this mold and were able to combine their interest in ecology, the environment, health, moral upliftment, cultural enlightenment, and civic improvement with political activism and a desire to help the poor. Starting in the 1850s, Ellen (Swallow) Richards, Vassar graduate and the first female to attend Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), worked and wrote during the time of Thoreau, Marsh and Emerson. She was the first American to apply the concept of *oekologie* (ecology) to her work. Using her background in sanitary chemistry and nutrition, Richards focused on the home environment -- sanitation, waste, home economics, and food chemistry. Richards was also concerned with air and water pollution, and wrote extensively about the causes of pollution. Richards' work helped inspire several white, middle-class women's movements -- the consumer nutrition movement, environment education (municipal housekeeping) movement, sanitary reform movement, and the home economics movement (Gottlieb, 1993:216-217; Clarke, 1973).

Other women combined the ideologies underlying the urban park building and the sanitary movements and applied the concepts to their undertakings with the working class. As crowding reached unbearable levels in the cities in the mid-to late 1800s, the streets became the social and recreational space of the working class. Children roamed the streets and were often jailed for playing or loitering in the streets (Rosenzweig, 1983; 1987). During the Progressive Era (1880-1920s), upper-middle class women — the wives of wealthy industrialists — sought to remedy the situation by building small neighborhood playgrounds and “sand gardens.” One prominent group involved in this effort was the Massachusetts Emergency and Hygiene Association (MEHA). Explicating the basic ideology of the male urban park builders, the female park builders and recreation planners believed that recreation would improve the health, moral and cultural outlook of the children. They believed that recreation should be provided in a structured environment, because their efforts to acculturate working class children was the most effective means of improving the lives of the working class. They occupied a niche ignored by the male park builders who focused on grandiose urban parks or park systems designed with a bias towards passive recreation.

Playgrounds and small neighborhood parks, designed for children and active recreation, were sorely needed. While the male park builders touted the health benefits of parks, they did nothing more than build the parks; they did not work to improve sanitation or health conditions among the poor. They assumed that people would soak up the culture, morals, and glean the park-giving health benefits



by simply using the parks. Their female counterparts took steps to ensure that these benefits would accrue to the working class. The women actively sought to improve sanitation, health, and taught the morals and culture they wanted the working class would imbibe. Starting with the first sand garden in a church yard in Boston's North End in 1885, sand gardens and playgrounds were soon appear in cities all over the country. Unlike the grand parks designed by the male park builders, the spartan sand gardens and playgrounds were designed -- and in the early days -- paid for and staffed by middle class women. The women involved in these ventures had significant influence on designing and setting standards for playground equipment. They were also influential in the playground and recreation movements of the late 1800s to the 1930s (Dickason, 1983: 83-98; Rosenzweig, 1983; Kelly, 1996: 154-160).

Yet another group of middle class white women working in the more progressive settlement houses, expanded their activist agenda beyond playgrounds, morals, acculturation, and hygiene. One of the most significant group of female activists was found at Hull House located in one Chicago's toughest slums. There, Jane Addams, Alice Hamilton, Florence Kelley and their colleagues linked their interest in recreation with environmental concerns. Advocating a strong social justice agenda, they examined four important spheres of environmentalism that modern working class and environmental justice activists are concerned with today: home, community, jobs, and recreation.

The female activists worked with laborers as the working class was undergoing major social and political transformations. During the 1870s and 1880s, a period of rapid industrial expansion, skilled workers formed craft unions and were able to use their skills to exact benefits from employers. This was particularly true of workers in the iron, steel, and farm machinery industries who were able to determine the pace of work, the organization of the job and the rate of pay. Semi-skilled and unskilled workers benefitted from the strike actions and wage demands of the skilled, unionized workers. Semi-skilled workers often joined the strikes of the skilled workers. Three economic depressions — 1873-78, 1883-85 and 1893-97 — had devastating effects on workers. Numerous strikes erupted and violent confrontations broke out all over the country. From 1881-1890, 9,668 strikes and lockouts occurred; about 39 percent of the strikes were not initiated by a union. By the end of the century, strike action had become the worker's primary defense against employers (Dubofsky, 1996: 25, 38-40).

Collaborating with the working class, the Hull House activists established health clinics; advocated worker rights (shorter work week, increased pay, reduction of workplace hazards, product substitution to reduce workers' illnesses, unionization, improved working conditions for women and children); helped to improve

sanitation (garbage removal) and establish better more affordable housing; and undertook one of the first studies of worker health and safety. In short, they laid the foundation for modern social work and helped to establish the field of industrial medicine (Gottlieb, 1993:47-80; 218-227). Most significantly, the collaboration of the women of Hull House and the working class gave birth to a working class environmental agenda that still forms the core of the contemporary working class and environmental justice agenda today. The agenda built around social, economic and environmental justice contained the following elements: environmental health; community health; worker health and safety; worker rights; safe and affordable housing; reduction of community and workplace environmental hazards; pollution; access to open (recreation) space. The women of Hull House were strongly concerned about the urban and built environment.

### **The Working Class - Gender Relations and the Environment**

While white middle class women pondered how best to express their environmental interest in an arena of segregated male and female experiences, working class men and women did not have much choice about how they related to the environment. Like men, women worked long hours in factories and other kinds of job situations that exposed them to toxins, and other hazardous operating conditions. Between 1870 and 1920, the number of female factory workers increased from 34,000 to 2,229,000. In 1920, there were more than 8,600,000 women working outside the home (Dubofsky, 1996:114). At home women could not escape the environmental hazards that pervaded the community. Consequently, their interests and experiences were closely linked to those of the men, therefore, their concerns and activism dovetailed more easily. Because women had the responsibility for raising the family, concern about housing and sanitation were paramount.

### **C - People of Color and the Environment**

#### **Native Americans**

People of Color lived in inhumane conditions in the U.S. during the 1800s and the early 1900s. When Jamestown was established in 1607, an estimated 1-18 million Native Americans lived in the U.S, however, by 1890 when the last of the Native American wars ended, there were about 250,000 surviving Native Americans (Stiffarm, 1992:23-28; Wax, 1971:17; McNickle, 1973). Under the 1830 Indian Removal Act, Native Americans were driven from their land and forced onto desolate reservations. They lost their traditional hunting, gathering and fishing grounds, and sacred sites. About 20,000 Indians died on the trek west (Lurie, 1982:131-144; Josephy, 1968; Debo, 1970). Native Americans, forced to live in some of the most inhospitable areas of the country (Lenarcic, 1982:137-139), used some of their traditional knowledge and practices to develop resource management techniques to sustain themselves on the reservations. Indians were in a precarious

position in the 1860s. In California, for example, the federal government signed a series of treaties with Native Americans which clearly outlined reservation boundaries — primarily in places not wanted by whites or too inaccessible to them. But, as the Gold Rush intensified, white miners responded to the federal government's efforts to define and protect Indian territory with violence. Bands of miners held Sunday "shoots" in which scores of Indians were massacred to prevent them from holding land. Because of political pressure, the California Indian treaties were never ratified by the U.S. Senate. Indians had trouble in other states too. Indians in the Pacific Northwest struggled with fish and game agencies to preserve their treaty fishing rights. Washington state systematically broke six treaties signed with Indians between 1854-1855. Through the implementation of the 1887 Dawes (or general allotment) Act, Native Americans lost about two thirds of their land base. In the 1890s, Great Lakes Indians found themselves living on barren reservations doing odd jobs for local whites. Timber companies collaborated with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) to strip the land of trees in an effort to transform Indians into farmers (DeLoria, 1994:5-7; Jaimes, 1992). As DeLoria (1994: 4) argues, from the 1890s to the 1960s Indians were the "Vanishing Americans" because most people thought Native Americans had been exterminated.

#### **African Americans**

By the early 1800s, the northern states began to industrialize, but the southern states remained largely agrarian. Slavery had been in place for about two hundred years and African American labor was used to exploit the resources of the south. Some of the early organizing to improve conditions occurred in the north and west. For example, in 1849 in California, delegates at the 1849 Constitutional Convention declared California a free state, but there was a fugitive slave law (slave owners could bring their slaves to the state and runaway slaves would be returned to their owners), African Americans could not vote or testify against whites in court (the testimony law). Over an 11-year period, beginning in 1852, African Americans organized a series of California Colored Conventions first aimed at repealing the testimony law and later at improving education for African Americans, support for African American newspapers, and oppose pending legislation to prohibit African American migration to the state. The testimony law was not repealed till 1863 (the Civil War), and then not for Chinese or Native Americans. Delegates at the fourth California Colored Convention (1865) shifted their attention to suffrage; this issue was resolved by the fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution (Jiobu, 1988 31).

After the Civil War, there was a brief period of Reconstruction (1865-1880s) during which time African Americans could buy land, open schools and businesses and vote. However, by the 1890s, Jim Crow laws were instituted to ensure the continued exploitation and inequality of African Americans. In 1909 white and black intellectuals (like W. E. B. Dubois from the militant Niagra

Movement) opposed to racism founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) -- an organization devoted to developing a legal strategy to attack Jim Crow laws (Woodward, 1974; Morris, 1984:12-13).

The system of sharecropping further reinforced the inequality of African Americans. By 1910, more than half of all employed African Americans worked in agriculture (Geschwender, 1978:169). African Americans tended horses and dominated as jockeys till they were banned. They also dominated the barbering trade and a few barbers attained a middle class lifestyle (Jobu, 1988: 23). It is worth noting that as the 1800s drew to a close, a populist rural movement of agrarian radicalism aimed at uniting the white working class and African Americans against the white middle and upper class, swept across the South. However, the economic elites used racial fear and hatred to prevent a coalition between poor whites and African Americans from forming (Woodward, 1974). As the first wave African Americans started working in the urban centers of the North, they were recruited as strike breakers and were offered the most dangerous factory jobs. Because of rigid segregation, they lived in the most dilapidated, crowded, unsanitary and unsafe housing. They earned less wages and paid higher rents than whites (Hurley, 1995; Morris, 1984; Tuttle, 1980; Dubofsky, 1996:12).

#### **Latinos/Chicanos**

In the first half the 1800s, territory (which later became Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California) was appropriated from Mexicans living in the southwest. The area had a regional economy based on farming and herding; an elite class of wealthy Mexican landowners dominated the affairs of the region (Cortes, 1980:697-719). Under the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo which resulted from the Mexican-American War of 1846-1848, Mexicans living in the Southwest were considered U.S. citizens. Between 7,500-13,000 Mexicans (Californios) lived in California in 1848. They were the power elite then, but within 50 years, they were a powerless minority (Jobu, 1988: 23-25).

During the Gold Rush, whites (the 49er's) flooded the area along with thousands of Chinese and some Chileans. Whites took control of the gold fields (in the north) arguing that all non-whites were foreigners ineligible to own land or gaining citizenship. The state government taxed foreign miners, and even though Californios were citizens under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, they were also taxed. Still, the major source of Californio's wealth (their vast land holdings in the southern part of the state) remained intact -- but not for long. Soon the state levied heavy taxation against these holdings and forced the Californios to prove the validity of their land titles. Prior to this, Californios were taxed on the basis of what they produced, not on the acreage of the land. The protracted legal battles which ensued bankrupted the Californios and left most of them landless (Jobu, 1988:23-

25).

The construction of the railroads and the expansion of agriculture stimulated demand for low-wage Mexican labor. Mexican workers were employed chiefly in the cultivation, harvesting, and packaging of fruits, vegetables and cotton in California and sugar beet in Colorado and California. At the turn of the century Mexican workers were used in the sugar-beet industry of central California to curb the demands of Japanese workers and in Colorado to help control German and Russian workers. They also worked in New Mexico and Arizona in copper, lead and coal mines (Jiobu, 1988: 21-22; Dubofsky, 1996:3). Until the 1920s, movement across the border between Mexico and the U.S. was informal and largely unrestricted. Throughout the century, Mexican Americans have been offered some of the worst jobs for little wages. They are often paid less to do the same jobs as Anglos. This split labor market has been further divided by gender; Mexican American women are assigned worse jobs than men and received lower wages (Takaki, 1993:318-319; Dubofsky, 1966: 13). Mexican Americans often toiled in "factories in the fields" where about 2,000 men, women and children worked in 100+ degree-heat, had no drinking water, shared 8 outdoor toilets, and slept among the insects and vermin (Dubofsky, 1966:24).

#### **Asians**

From the 1820s onwards, the Chinese and later the Japanese and Filipinos, migrated as laborers to help in the opening and exploitation of the West -- in the Gold Rush, mining, railroad construction, farming, fisheries, sugar plantations, and factories. For example, in 1860, in Butte County, California (gold mining area), there were 2,200 Chinese (Jiobu, 1988:34). The immigration were young men travelling without wives, or other family members. Asians worked long hours under dangerous working conditions. They were subject to severe discrimination and quite often were stripped of some of the basic rights accorded the white working class (Friday, 1994:2-7, 51; Lenarcic, 1982:140; Carlson, 1992:67-84; Anderson and Lueck, 1992: 147-166). Chinese were hired to do menial tasks and as the claims played out, white gold miners sold their old claims to Chinese miners. As the California Gold Rush ran its course, the percentage of Chinese miners steadily increased from one percent of all miners in 1850 to more than 50 percent in 1920 (Jiobu, 1988:34).

In 1862 when Congress authorized the construction of the transcontinental railroad, Central Pacific had labor problems. There was not a large pool of white laborers in the Pacific region who were willing to work on the railroads, so Central Pacific recruited Chinese laborers from the gold fields, farms, cities, and from China. Most were acquired through labor contracting firms. At \$35 per month (minus the cost of food and housing), Chinese laborers were paid two-thirds of

what white laborers earned. With the hiring of Chinese, whites moved up the occupational ladder to hold whites-only jobs such as foremen, supervisors, and skilled craftsmen. The Chinese were left to tunnel through the mountains, dig through dangerously deep snow banks, and dangle in baskets along sheer cliff faces while they planted explosives. Many Chinese lost their lives building the tracks across the sierras (Jiobu, 1988:34-35).

From the 1870s-1930s, a small elite group of Asian labor contractors also recruited and managed Chinese, Japanese and Filipinos as new workers and were able to obtain minimal benefits for them (Friday, 1994:2-7, 51; Lenarcic, 1982:140; Carlson, 1992: 67-84; Anderson and Lueck, 1992:147-166). As large numbers of whites lost jobs during the 1873-78 depression, anti-Chinese sentiment rose among the white working class and unions. To further inflame passions, Asian laborers were often used as strike breakers or to undercut the wages of the white working class. This led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that curtailed Chinese immigration to the U.S. (Tsai, 1986; Kitano and Daniels, 1988:22-23; Lyman, 1974; Dubofsky, 1996:25). Because of intense anti-Chinese sentiment in the country, Chinese were robbed, beaten and driven from small rural communities. They became increasingly urbanized, concentrating in cities where they created Chinatowns (Tsai, 1986:67; Kitano and Daniels, 1988:29; Chan, 1990:44). In 1900, 75 percent of all the employed Chinese women worked in garment industry, sweat shops or in the canneries (Amott and Matthaiei, 1991: 209-211). Thirty-three percent of the people in the truck gardening business, 70-80 percent of those in wool milling, 90 percent in cigar making, and 50 percent of workers in the garment making industry were Chinese (Jiobu, 1988: 36). Large numbers of Chinese men also worked as laundry men, and small merchants (Espiritu, 1997:29; Chan, 1991). The activities, groups and clans in the Chinatowns were coordinated and supervised by the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). In addition, the CCBA tried to combat anti-Chinese discrimination and acted as a liaison between the Chinese community and the larger society (Lai, 1980:223).

Japanese immigration increased shortly after the Chinese Exclusion Act took effect in 1882. Japanese took the railroad and domestic service jobs left vacant by the Chinese. In 1909, 10,000 Japanese worked on the railroads and about 15,000 as domestic servants (Jiobu, 1988:42). At the same time, the Japanese were subject to rising anti-Japanese sentiment. In 1907, Japanese immigration was partly curtailed when Japan agreed to limit the number of "laborers" emigrating. Under this arrangement, the second wave of young men leaving were allowed to marry and bring their wives because women were not considered "laborers" (Kitano, 1980; Kitano and Daniels, 1988:55-56; Duleep, 1988:24; Peterson, 1971; 30-55; Chan, 1990:62).

The Japanese gravitated towards farming. Growing fruits and vegetables successfully on marginal land in California. In 1910, 30,000 Japanese in the U.S. were involved in agriculture; between 30-40 percent of the Japanese in California were in agriculture. Most were field hands worked under the quasi-union, padrone system. Wherein a Japanese labor contractor (Dano-san) organized up to 100 Japanese laborers and contracted with farmers to work the fields. The Dano-san bargained for better wages for the workers (Jiobu, 1988:42-43).

The Japanese made the transition from farm laborers to farm owners/growers. In 1900, there were 39 Japanese farmers but by 1909, there were 13,723 Japanese. In 1910, the Japanese controlled 2 percent of all of California's farmland and by 1919, their crops were valued at \$67 million (Jiobu, 1988:42-43).

Most of these farmers owned small plots, however, their success spurred the passage of the Alien Land Act of 1913. This bill declared aliens ineligible for citizenship and, therefore, ineligible to own land. Japanese farmers forestalled the seizure of their properties by transferring the title of their land to their American-born children (Jiobu, 1988b:357-359).

Another group of Asian immigrants, the Filipinos, started migrating to the U.S. in 1903 after the Spanish American War. Under the pensionado plan, the first wave of Filipinos were college students who studied in the U.S. then returned home to occupy high-level government positions. Soon, thousands of field laborers migrated to Hawaii and California.

Unlike the pensionados, most were poorly educated, young, single men; 20 percent were married but only 12 percent brought their wives. Like the Japanese, Filipinos field laborers were organized in the padrone system. However, Filipino padrones settled for lower wages than their Japanese counterparts in order to win contracts. They also undercut the bids of Mexican laborers who contracted with employers on an individual basis (Jiobu, 1988:49-51).

### **Gender Relations**

Because of the conquest and domination of people of color, at some points men and women of color from the respective racial groups shared common environmental experiences. However, they were separated spatially and occupationally at times, thereby having very different experiences. For instance, Native American men and women were moved onto reservations together and African Americans men and women were enslaved and subjected to the same kind of work conditions. However, in the late 1800s and early 1900s the African American men would migrate to distant cities or rural areas to work in factories and mines, etc. Similarly, Latinos would also migrate long distances for job leaving Latinas behind.

Asian families were also torn apart because of immigration rules -- young men migrated in search of jobs leaving their families behind in Asia (Almquist, 1979:430-450; Kitano, 1980:563; Chan, 1990:66; Duleep, 1988:24). Employers in the West played a role in splitting up families. They preferred to hire single men because it cost less to feed, clothe and house one male worker than whole families. If Asian women were allowed to migrate, they would bear American born. In addition, an all-male workforce was often treated as a migrant workforce; they were shifted to where labor demand was strongest and expelled when not needed (Espiritu, 1997:16-17; Glenn, 1986:194-195; Chan, 1991:104). For decades, Chinese communities in America were predominantly male -- males outnumbered females by a ratio of about 250 to 1 at the end of the 1800s (Lai, 1980:223). The male-female ratio in the Japanese community was better, but still problematic. In 1900, there were about 21 Japanese males for every Japanese female (Ichioka, 1988:164; Chan, 1991:107-108; Espiritu, 1997:20), and the ratio in the Filipino population was 14 males for every female (Jiobu, 1988:49).

Gender relations in people of color households changed dramatically. Because traditional cultural norms were severed abruptly, the new and changing realities sometimes meant women had to work outside the home, become the sole head of the family or that men had to take on domestic chores or traditional women's work." In some cases, the woman's status was enhanced vis-a-vis the males because of the responsibilities she had to assume (Espiritu, 1997:1-41). Not surprisingly, this created difficulty in family relations and in devising a common agenda. Despite these separations, however, men and women of color were united in their struggle to end the racial oppression that forced them into subservient, inhumane work and living conditions, and barred them from having access to most environmental amenities.

## **The Post-Hetch Hetchy Era (1914-1959)**

### **A - The Early Environmental Movement: Male Dominated Agenda**

The Hetch Hetchy controversy was the catalyst that resulted in the formation of the environmental movement. The controversy which was at its most intense from 1910-1913 arose when the city of San Francisco proposed a dam on the Toulumne River (Hetch Hetchy) Valley in Yosemite. According to some, Hetch Hetchy was as spectacular as the Yosemite Valley which was already designated a national park. The opponents of the Hetch Hetchy dam, John Muir and the Sierra Club, claimed the land should be preserved and not used in a utilitarian manner. It should be left untouched for future generations. The proponents of the dam, the City of San Francisco, Gifford Pinchot (the founder of the U.S. Forest Service) and many



Western Congresspersons, argued that Muir and his colleagues were being selfish. They argued that the land should be conserved or used wisely or sustainably. They argued that the good of the many (providing water for a parched city) should prevail over the good of a few (saving land for itself and for future generations). The controversy, therefore, pitted the preservationists against the conservationists (Nash, 1982).

The controversy thrust environmental issues onto the public stage. For the first time, citizens who were not a part of the small elite group of preservationists, conservationists and outdoor enthusiasts got involved in environmental debate by writing letters, newspaper articles and participating in public debates (Bramwell, 1989; Fleming, 1972; Fox, 1985; Nash, 1982; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Paehlke, 1989; Pepper, 1986; Taylor, 1992). White, middle class wilderness-oriented activists, realizing that they needed to organize and coordinate their efforts more effectively, formed numerous environmental groups focused on protecting wilderness, wildlife, outdoor recreation, habitat restoration, and water pollution (as it affected fish, waterfowl and habitats). For the most part, these environmental groups were segregated by race and class.

It is not surprising that a movement sprang out of one of the first major public environmental controversies. A study of 1,053 organizations listed in the 1993 and 1994 *Conservation Directory* and the 1992 *Gale Environmental Sourcebook* (National Wildlife Federation, 1993; Hill and Piccirelli, 1992), shows that by the turn of the century many of the elements of what would become the environmental movement were already in place. A substantial number of the organizations were formed before or during the time of Hetch Hetchy. Seventy-eight national and regional organizations existed by 1913, and in the decade after the Hetch Hetchy decision, 43 new environmental organizations were formed. Overall, 214 organizations were formed in the post Hetch Hetchy period (1914-1959). Prior to Hetch Hetchy these institutions and organizations did not coordinate their activities extensively, but Hetch Hetchy focused attention on one issue and that allowed for the necessary coordination and communication -- so vital to movement building -- to take place.

From the turn of the century onwards, middle class women who were formerly confined to home, urban and/or community activism, began embarking on strenuous outdoor expeditions in greater numbers than ever before. Though women joined and participated actively in organizations like the Sierra Club, males dominated the leadership and the agenda of these organizations. The agenda centered on wilderness and wildlife preservation, hunting, fishing, birdwatching, hiking, and mountaineering. From 1914-1959 men, many of whom were business men or had significant business ties, sought to consolidate this agenda by

establishing and reinforcing contacts with government, influential policy groups and industry. They decided to espouse a brand of environmentalism that sought to make small incremental changes or reforms in the existing system by working with both government and industry. This laid the groundwork for reform environmentalism (McCloskey, 1992:77-82). However, by the 1930s, the newly-formed movement began to stagnate as the political activities and issues being tackled failed to capture the imagination of large sectors of the population. This period of malaise continued through the 1940s (Bramwell, 1989; Fleming, 1972; Fox, 1985; Nash, 1982; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Paehlke, 1989; Pepper, 1986; Taylor, 1992; Gottlieb, 1993).

### **B - White Female Activists and the Urban Environmental Agenda**

During this time period, middle class white women still maintained their interest in natural history, garden clubs, local ecology, but they shifted the focus of other aspects of their activism. Groups like MEHA, placed less emphasis on playground construction and supervision as these tasks were turned over to cities and other government entities with the capital and human resources to fund and operate them more effectively. In addition, with a reduction in immigration, improved living and working conditions, and with many immigrant groups forming their own ethnic organizations and social networks, there was less need for the acculturation, morality and hygiene lessons from the upper class. As the Progressive Era drew to a close, some of the concerns (worker rights) addressed by activists of the era were being tackled by labor unions.

From the 1920s onwards, the urban agenda of park building continued with city and state governments being responsible for building, maintaining and supervising these parks, and setting the standards for the equipment found in them. The concern for health and sanitation evolved into concerns over environmental quality and quality of life issues. Again, city and state governments having taken over the role of providing basic services, citizen's groups adopted the role of monitoring the government's performance and lobbying for improved or expanded services. These issues transcended the urban domain, and became a part of the suburban and rural agenda also.

### **C - The Working Class**

While Hetch Hetchy motivated middle class whites to join reform environmental organizations, Taylorism impelled the working class to unionize. Between 1880 and 1920, employers introduced Taylorism (scientific management or Fordism) to the factories. As a result, assembly lines moved faster, workers lost control over their work, the owners got richer, and the workers saw little material benefits for their increased output. Union rolls swelled: from 1897-1904, union

membership rose from 447,000 to 2,073,000. From 1909-1918, about 3 million workers joined the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). The United Mine Workers, for instance, grew from 14,000 in 1897 to 300,000 in 1917. In addition, 400,000 garment workers unionized between 1909 and 1913 (Dubofsky, 1996: 94-95, 102-103, 118-119). However, as workers pinned their hopes to the unions during the 1900s, some of issues like hazard reduction in the workplace and community, were downplayed at the expense of creating and maintaining jobs (especially during the Depression), securing wage increases and improving benefits. However, from 1914-1959, with or without the support of the union, workers expressed their discontent about poor working conditions by participating in organized and wild cat strikes, protests, and by demanding safety equipment on the job (Hurley, 1995). Again, there was considerable overlap in the interests of working class men and women. Since both groups toiled under dangerous conditions and lived in polluted communities, family and community health and safety concerns were salient.

#### **D - People of Color - Race and Class**

By the early 1900s, unionized people of color began expressing their concerns about deplorable working conditions. They experienced on the job discrimination -- they were stuck in the most dangerous, dirty and hazardous work sites with little or no chance of promotion, and for lower pay than whites. People of color had unskilled jobs which meant they worked longer hours than skilled laborers (whites). In 1920, skilled laborers worked an average of 50.4 hours per week. In comparison, unskilled laborers, worked an average of 53.7 hours per week (Dubofsky, 1996: 24). So, by the early 1930s, people of color began to take strike action. For instance, African Americans in unionized factories and steel mills like Gary Works staged wild cat strikes/work stoppages to improve work conditions (Hurley, 1995).

To understand the position of workers of color and the likelihood that they would adopt pro-environmental positions, one has to understand the role of race and class in structuring their response. During the 1800s and early 1900s, oppression among whites vis-a-vis the work place and access to environmental amenities amounted to white-on-white class and ethnic oppression. That is, American born whites of northern European descent comprised the middle class that discriminated against the immigrant and/or Southern and Eastern Europeans. The latter group comprised a large portion of the working class. However, much harsher forms of (racial) discrimination distinguished whites from people of color. The white-nonwhite relationship, marked by enslavement, forced relocations, appropriation of land, internment and deportations, continued through the twentieth century with rigid occupational, educational and residential segregation.

This meant that while the white working class were able to start advocating a radical working class environmental agenda at the turn of the century, people of color saw their biggest problem in the community and in the workplace as racial oppression. This is not to say that they were unable to perceive other forms of discrimination -- they did -- but they had to overcome the racial oppression in the work place in order to relieve occupational discrimination (Hurley, 1995). When both the employers and the unions reinforced patterns of *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination and segregation, workers of color were left to their own devices or social networks to resolve their problems.

On the job workers of color had to deal with the class oppression of unsafe, hazardous work and the racial and gender oppression of being permanently assigned to such jobs for the lowest wages. People of color were quite aware that these jobs were the least likely to be cleaned up and made safe. The white worker, because of his or her race, knew that with time he or she would be moved to safer jobs. Workers of color knew such opportunities did not exist for them. The interlocking and multiple sources of oppression (racial, class and gender) led workers of color to support occupational safety improvements, but demand racial equality at the same time.

#### Native Americans

During the Great Depression, the BIA was ordered to find lands for homeless California Indians who were living in poverty on the outskirts of cities or in remote mountainous areas of the state. Wealthy, white landowners were having a difficult time so the program was used to assist them instead of the Native Americans. To prevent them from going bankrupt, lands classified as "sub-marginal" by the Department of Agriculture was purchased from these landowners and given to Indians. The Indians who moved to these lands were organized into tribal governments by the BIA under the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act. Throughout World War II Indians moved to the West Coast to work in the war industries, but they lost their jobs to returning white veterans after the war (DeLoria, 1994: 6). Towards the end of the post-Hetch Hetchy era, Native Americans began organizing to end discrimination and bring some basic civil and human rights to their communities. Though Native American protest organizations existed since the 1910s, the modern protest movement began during World War II. In 1944, young Native American intellectuals formed the National Congress of Native American Indians (NCAI) and embarked on an effort to unite Indian nations (pan-tribalism) for the purpose of influencing state and Federal decisions affecting Indians (compensation for territory or resources, termination policy, etc). NCAI also stressed the importance of preserving Native American cultural traditions and institutions. Taking a moderate approach of advocating the needs of Native Americans while participating in the policy debates regarding Indian nations, NCAI

enjoyed moderate success (Lenarcic, 1982: 145-148; Cornell, 1988: 119; Weeks, 1988: 261-262). In the 1950s, the BIA launched a program to remove Indians from the reservations, sell the land and terminate the tribal system. The BIA undertook a massive relocation program that placed thousands of Indians in low-paying jobs in urban areas (DeLoria, 1994: 6). Indians responded to these actions by launching the American Indian Movement (AIM).

### **African Americans**

African Americans continued to build the organizational infrastructure to complement existing networks. In 1916, Marcus Garvey started the first branch of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in New York. By 1919, UNIA had about 2 million followers. The organization denounced racism, segregation, preached black pride, pan-Africanism, back-to-Africa movement, and formed the African Orthodox Church. UNIA's influence faded during the 1920s after the failure of the shipping venture which was to anchor the back-to-Africa movement (Wilmore, 1986:145-152; Cronon, 1974).

There was another call to action in 1941. That year, a group of African Americans in the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters -- led by A. Philip Randolph -- threatened to march on Washington to protest discriminatory treatment. The March on Washington Movement (MOWM) inspired the formation of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE); an organization committed to black non-violent resistance. CORE complemented the legal approach of the NAACP. Randolph, influenced by Gandhi's non-violence and civil disobedience, also called for mass demonstrations against Jim Crow Laws in 1943. At the time, blacks had difficulty gaining employment in the booming defense industry. Seventy five percent of African American men still worked as janitors, porters, cooks, and factory workers. While 70 percent of the employed African American women were domestics, and low-paid service workers. President Roosevelt responded to the threat of mass disruption from MOWM and CORE by banning discrimination in defense-related industries, and creating the Fair Employment Practices Commission (Morris, 1984:x-xi,1; Geschwender, 1978:199-200; Franklin, 1967:578-579).

During the 1950s, African Americans launched the Civil Rights Movement, while aimed at dismantling *de jure* and *de facto* segregation and discrimination; protecting the right to vote; and instituting fairness and equality. Movement strategies included economic boycotts, street marches, and mass meetings. The authorities responded by jailing thousands. Throughout the period African Americans and other people of color continued to link racial oppression with class oppression as a way of improving human, civil and environmental conditions. Some civil rights activities, like the 1953 Baton Rouge and the 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycotts, attacked racial discrimination in urban transportation systems (Morris,

1984:ix). African Americans successfully organized car pools, ride-shares and walked to enforce the boycott. In response, African Americans were jailed for organizing and participating in the bus boycott and the courts ordered activists to stop organizing car pools (Oregon Public Radio, 1997).

By refusing to patronize the busses till they could be guaranteed equal and humane treatment, African Americans showed that their concerns extended beyond those of the urban planners and environmentalists. African Americans demonstrated that it wasn't enough to be concerned only with efficiency, racial discrimination, as condoned by the system, was intolerable. By the mid-1950s, groups such as the United Defense League, the Montgomery Improvement Association, the Inter Civic Council, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (all founded between 1953-1956) were organized to build the infrastructure and coordinate the activities of the civil rights movement (Morris, 1984:21, 40-41; 83).

### **Latinos**

About the same time the Southwest was demanding an increased pool of cheap labor to fuel it's development, World War I and the 1924 National Origins Act drastically reduced the supply of labor from Europe and Asia. Therefore, employers in the Southwest resorted to recruiting African Americans from the South and Mexicans; Mexicans were exempt from the immigration quotas of the National Origins Act (Grebler, Moore and Guzman, 1970:63-65; Acuna, 1988:141-143). As late as 1930, 45 percent of all Mexican-American men worked in agriculture, and another 28 percent of the men worked as unskilled, non-agricultural workers (Cortes, 1980: 708). Because men migrated to find work, women were often left to care for the family. This resulted in Latinas working outside the home. By 1930, 21 percent of Mexican-American women were employed as farm workers, 25 percent in unskilled manufacturing jobs and 37 percent as domestic and other service work (Amott and Matthaei, 1991:76-77; Zinn and Eitzen, 1990:84).

As unemployment soared during the Great Depression (1930s), the government instituted a Mexican repatriation program which resulted in the deportation of 500,000 Mexicans -- accounting for about 40 percent of the Mexican-American population. About 50 percent of those repatriated were American-born (Cortes, 1980:703-711; Grebler, Moore and Guzman, 1970:526; Acuna, 1988:200-206; Jiobu, 1988:22-23). Mexican Americans organized local protests in response to these activities. In 1929, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) was founded in Texas. LULAC promoted Americanization, greater educational opportunities, civil rights and greater equality for Mexican Americans. Like the NAACP, the organization launched a series of legal battles to end discrimination and legal segregation (Moore, 1970:143-145).

In the workplace, Mexican-American workers were pitted against Asians and Eastern European workers and were excluded from some unions. During the 1930s, Mexican-Americans formed their own unions and played significant roles in organizing mining and agricultural workers. In California alone, they established 40 agricultural unions; most were short-lived. The most important of them was the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (Jiobu, 1988:23). In 1930, thousands of Mexican Americans struck at more than 130 plants belonging to the Southern Pecan Shelling Company. Despite violent attacks and mass arrests, the strikers were successful in reversing a wage cut (Amott and Matthaei, 1991:78). Other strikes followed. Mexican-American workers struck at the El Monte strawberry fields in 1933, the Redlands citrus groves in 1934, the Salinas lettuce packing facilities in 1936, the Stockton canneries in 1937, and at the Ventura lemon groves in 1941 (Jiobu, 1988:23).

As the U.S. geared up for World War II, labor shortages led to a new federal policy on Mexican immigration. In 1942, the *bracero* program was launched. Under the agreement between the U.S. and Mexico, laborers were given contracts to work in the U.S. for specific periods of time. The *bracero* program undercut wages and thwarted unionization drives. By 1960, *braceros* supplied 26% of the nation's seasonal farm labor. Growers paid the *braceros* less than American workers, thereby, reaping more profits (Cortes, 1980:703-711; Amott and Matthaei, 1991:79-80; Jiobu, 1988:23). Despite the formal arrangements of the *bracero* program, Mexican-Americans were subjected to successive waves of deportations in the quest to reduce illegal immigration. During periods of heightened deportations, there were "sweeps" and raids of the *barrios*, homes and businesses that violated Mexican Americans' civil, human and legal rights (Grebler, Moore and Guzman, 1970:521; Mirande, 1985:70-90).

Despite pressures, Mexican Americans continued to organize and take strike action against exploitive employers. In 1951, workers at the Silver Zinc Mine in Silver City, New Mexico struck. Women convinced their husbands to link issues of the home and community (sanitation, pure drinking water) with their demands to improve wage and job conditions. When the company obtained a court order to stop the workers from picketing, women convinced their husbands that females should go on the picket lines instead of men in an effort to prevent replacement workers from entering the mines. Again, this strike was met with violence, but the workers prevailed (Amott and Matthaei, 1991:78).

In addition to Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans also migrated to the U.S. as a cheap source of labor. Though Puerto Rico became a U.S. territory in 1898 and Puerto Ricans gained U.S. citizenship in 1917, immigration was slow till the 1940s. Since then, Puerto Ricans have settled in the urban centers of the East Coast

working in the factories and the unskilled service sector (Portes, 1990:160-184).

### **Asians**

In 1917 immigrants from India was excluded by immigration laws, and the National Origins Act effectively stopped immigration from Korea and Japan. Filipinos were excluded in 1934 (Chan, 1991; Espiritu, 1997:18; Sharma, 1984). About 60 percent of the Filipinos were migrant farm workers comprising, for instance, 80 percent of the asparagus labor force (Espiritu, 1997:29; Chan, 1991). Like their Latina counterpart, Asian women were discriminated against even more severely than the men. For example, Japanese female farm workers in Hawaii, earned 55 cents per day compared to the 78 cents earned by Japanese men (Takaki, 1989:135). In addition, Chinese women were barred from entering the U.S. before the general Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) was passed (Espiritu, 1997:18-19).

The Japanese exclusion occurred at a time when they were embarking on successful business ventures and making attempts to integrate themselves more fully into American Society. Clubs such as the Japanese American Citizen's League (JACL) -- founded in the 1920s -- served an integrationist function (Kitano and Daniels, 1988:55). In business, the Japanese were successful in the tuna industry. In 1916, 13 percent of all tuna fishermen were Japanese, and by 1923, so were 50 percent Japanese. The Japanese introduced the poling method of catching tuna -- a method that inflicted minimal damage to the fish (Jiobu, 1988:43).

The Japanese also continued to enter the agricultural business. By the 1940s, the Japanese dominated a small but important segment of California (and West Coast) agriculture. Though they comprised less than two percent of the population of California, they produced 30-40 percent of the fruits and vegetables grown in the state. In 1940, about 40 percent of the Japanese population was directly involved in farming, and many others were involved in related businesses. In addition, urban Japanese dominated the contract gardening industry. The Japanese marketed their produce, bought supplies and hauled produce to market by using Japanese-owned businesses developed through mutual credit associations (Jiobu, 1988:43).

The lives of the Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos and Asian Indians improved during World War II because their governments were allies of the United States (Espiritu, 1997:42-43). However, life for Japanese Americans changed dramatically after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. By the summer of 1942, over 110,000 Japanese Americans -- almost the entire West Coast population -- were interned in fenced and guarded relocation camps. Because they were given little time to prepare for the forced evacuation, many families abandoned their homes, farms, businesses, and belongings; the internment lasted till 1944. The internment devastated the



Japanese community emotionally and psychologically. It eroded the economic position of the Issei (first generation) and weakened their position in the family and community. This was particularly true of the male household heads (Kitano and Daniels, 1988:64, 567; Amott and Matthaei, 1991:225-229; Espiritu, 1997:42-43; Jiobu, 1988:46-47).

Leading up to the Depression, Filipino padrones undercut the wages of white field laborers leading to violent encounters as whites retaliated. In 1929, whites would contract for \$1.50-\$1.70 per ton to pick grapes, while Filipinos received 90 cents per ton. However, during the Depression Filipino wages fell dramatically -- in 1929 Filipino asparagus workers earned \$4.14 per day, but by 1933, they earned \$3.30 daily. As a result, Filipinos began to unionize. In 1934, Filipinos struck the Salinas fields but two rival Filipino unions undermined this attempt (Jiobu, 1988: 50-52). In addition, in the 1930s, Filipino workers in the Pacific Northwest began to unionize (Friday, 1994:3). Filipino farm workers seeking out-of-season jobs, labored in the canneries in Alaska comprising about 15 percent of the work force (Jiobu, 1988:50).

## **The Post-Carson Era (1960-1979)**

### **A - White Middle Class Mobilization: *Silent Spring* and *Earth Day***

During the 1960s and 1970, there was an unprecedented level of mobilization around environmental issues. The mobilization was spurred, in part, by Carson who linked her concern for wildlife and nature with questions about the effects of pesticides on humans and wildlife. She used the injustice frame to question the immorality and danger of widespread spraying of pesticides, and argued that people had a right to a safe environment. She argued that if they were harmed by the deliberate acts of others, the victims had a right to compensation (Carson, 1962). Carson focused on home, community, nature, and the wilds. She linked urban and rural concerns, and publicized an issue that affected everyone in the country.

Carson's work led to an immense public outcry over pollution and chemical contamination that launched the birth of the modern environmental movement. Reform environmental organizations benefitted from the mobilization. Membership skyrocketed in leading organizations like the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society and the Wilderness Society in the 60s. A study of eight of the major environmental organizations found that membership went from about 123,000 in 1960 to about three-quarters of a million members in 1969 (Fox, 1985: 315). The mass mobilization drive resulted in cleaner air, rivers and lakes for many

Americans. Towards the end of the decade many young and radical environmentalists -- students, former civil rights activists and anti-nuclear activists -- joined the movement (Zinger, Dalsemer & Magargle, 1972:381-383). Some of these youthful environmentalists joined the leading environmental organizations while others formed their own organizations. This brought new constituencies into the reform environmental movement. The concerns broadened to include more issues relating to the urban environment, community, home, and humans. More attention was paid to environmental hazards and industry was scrutinized more heavily.

The second surge of mobilization in the post-Carson era came in 1970, before and after Earth Day. Between 1970 and 1979 membership in the eight major environmental organizations mentioned above went from 892,100 to 1.583 million. More environmental groups were formed in the post-Carson era than at any other period in environmental history; 469 or 45 percent of the 1,053 environmental groups studied were formed between 1960-1979. However, the mobilization of the 60s and 70s was largely a white middle class mobilization. Surveys of the membership of leading environmental groups and of environmental activists nationwide in the late 60s and early 70s demonstrate this point. A 1969 national survey of 907 Sierra Club members indicated that the organization had a middle class membership. Seventy-four percent of the members had at least a college degree; 39 percent had advanced degrees. Ninety-five percent of the male respondents were professionals, and five percent occupied clerical and sales positions, were owners of small business or unskilled laborers. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents said their family incomes was over \$12,000; 30 percent reported family incomes over \$18,000 per year (Devall, 1970: 123-126).

A 1971 study of the Puget Sound chapter of the Sierra Club also found a very similar profile. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents had at least a college degree; 46 percent had a masters and 25 percent had doctorates. Eighty-three percent of the members occupied professional jobs and 9 percent were students. Only 3 percent were clerical workers and another 3 percent were unemployed. In this study, two-thirds of the club members were male, half of them were between 30-44 years old, and 42 percent of the respondents claimed to be political independents, one-third were Democrats, and 24 percent identified themselves as Republicans (Faich and Gale, 1971: 270-287).

The above profile was not unique to the Sierra Club. A 1972 study 1,500 environmental volunteers nationwide showed that 98 percent of the members of the environmental organizations were white and 59 percent held a college or graduate degrees. Forty-three percent held professional, scientific-technical, academic or managerial jobs. A half of the respondents had family incomes of more than \$15,000, 26 percent had between \$10,000 to \$15,000 and the remainder earned less

than \$10,000 (Zinger, Dalsemer and Magargle, 1972). In general, studies find that environmentalists are highly educated, older, urban residents who are political independents. In addition, education, and to a lesser extent, income is associated with naturalistic values and environmental concern. (Harry, Gale and Hendee, 1969:246-254; Devall, 1970:123-126; Hendee, Gale and Harry, 1969:212-215; Buttel and Flinn, 1978b:433-450; 1974:57-69; Cotgrove and Duff, 1980:333-351; Dillman and Christensen, 1972:237-256; Faich and Gale, 1971:270-287; Lowe, Pinhey and Grimes, 1980:423-445; Harry, 1971:301-309; Tognacci, et. Al., 1972:73-86; Wright, 1975; Martison and Wilkening, 1975).

### **B - Paradigmatic Shift - The New Environmental Paradigm**

There was also a major ideological shift during the post-Carson era. During the 60s and 70s, the Romantic environmental paradigm gave way to a broader vision of environmentalism -- the new environmental paradigm (NEP). Building on the basic ideological framework of the REP, the NEP expanded on the environmental dialogue and articulated a bold new vision that critiqued the development of high (large, complex, energy-intensive) technology like the nuclear industry, encouraged population control, pollution prevention, risk reduction, energy, recycling, environmental clean-ups and espoused post-materialist values (Inglehart, 1992).

During this era, the environmental movement enjoyed strong public support. Opinion polls show what could be described as a *Carson effect* and an *Earth Day effect*. There was a steady increase in concern over pollution through the latter part of the 1960s and a sharp increase levels of concern in 1970. For instance, in 1965, 17% of the respondents in a Gallup survey said they wanted the government to devote most of its attention to reducing air and water pollution. However, by 1970, 53 percent of the respondents wanted the government to devote most of its time to these issues (Gallup, 1972:1939). Other polls showed that 46 - 60 percent of the respondents indicated they were "very concerned" about reducing water and air pollution, 50-61 percent of the respondents thought too little was being spent on the environment; 58 percent thought we must accept a slower rate of economic growth in order to protect the environment. In addition, most respondents were not willing to relax environmental standards to achieve economic growth, did not think that pollution control requirements had gone too far and did not think we had made enough progress on cleaning up the environment to start limiting the cost of pollution control (SON, 1972-1976; NORC, 1973-1980; ORC, 1977-1978). A distinction should be made between concern and support for the environment and environmental activism. Not all people who are concerned about the environment or support environmental actions become environmental activists (Taylor, 1989).

### **C - Working Class - Occupational Health and Safety**

Though the environmental activities of the sixties and seventies heightened awareness of environmental issues among the working class, and though some joined outdoor recreation organizations like the Izaak Walton League, by and large, the working class did not flock to preservationist environmental organizations. They intensified their efforts to strengthen the traditional working class agenda. Pressuring and working through their unions and newly-formed working class environmental organizations, they sought to improve working conditions, bring the issues of worker health and safety into the national consciousness, pushed for safety equipment, etc. Using the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) guidelines, they reported environmental violations, filed complaints and forced companies to comply with the regulations. In addition, they used collective bargaining strategies to ascertain general environmental improvements and to establish safety committees at the workplace. They negotiated the "right to refuse hazardous work" clauses, hazard pay and safety equipment as part of their union contracts (Hurley, 1995; Robinson, 1991).

The working class was also concerned about health of residents and the environment outside the factory gates. During this period working class environmental groups were formed to reduce pollution in the community. Focus was on air and water pollution, factory emissions and improved sanitation (illegal dumping, garbage removal). Even though the broadened emphasis of the reform environmental movement included a focus on reducing pollution, collaboration between middle and working class activists was still limited and strained. Because the middle and upper classes no longer lived in parts of the cities close to the sights, sounds and smell of the factories, middle class environmental groups did not lend much support to working class environmental struggles. The middle class focused on preventing the degradation of their communities and improving the environmental amenities close by.

The working class, having more free time and income at their disposal, intensified their interests in outdoor recreation pursuits like hunting, fishing, visits to parks, etc. Working class groups pushed for access to fishing and hunting grounds, improved quality of recreation sites, and larger number of parks, etc. Conflicts arose between the working and middle classes when the middle class tried to restrict the use of recreational areas in their communities to prevent overcrowding or use by the working class and people of color. In addition, as middle class communities passed zoning ordinances to restrict development, the middle class perceived these actions as efforts to preserve the environment while the working class and the unions viewed them as saving the environment at the expense of working people's jobs and livelihoods (Hurley, 1995).

However, towards the end of the post-Carson era, two major environmental disasters in lower middle class and working class communities precipitated an unprecedented level of activism and mobilization in these communities. The nuclear accident at Three Mile Island (TMI) and toxic contamination of Love Canal came as a wake-up call to communities nationwide. Though they did not receive the media attention of TMI and Love Canal, many communities of color had similar problems. Prior to Love Canal, what people perceived as a local, isolated case of toxic contamination emerged as a national problem of immense proportions. This resulted in the formation of working class, grassroots environmental groups all over the country. While some of these groups organized to clean up the toxic contamination in their communities (reactive mode), like the middle class environmentalists before them, many of these groups became more proactive. They organized to halt the development of noxious or nuisance facilities or other locally unwanted land uses (LULUs).

#### **D - People of Color - The Environmental and Basic Human Rights**

##### **Native Americans - NCAI, NYIC and AIM**

Native Americans intensified the quest for equality, justice and basic human and civil rights began in the 1940s and 50s. In 1960, the Chicago conference of Native Americans produced a document -- The Declaration of Indian Purpose. The document called for united action among Indian nations, the right of self government, the determination of their economic destiny, tribal nationalism, complete autonomy to protect Native American land rights, and cultural heritage. Young Native Americans attending this meeting, dissatisfied with the pace of Native American progress, launched the National Indian Youth Council (NIYC) in 1961. NIYC aimed to help Indians understand and support tribal nationalism and to chart future course of action to deal with the issues facing Native Americans. In 1964 they helped to challenge Washington state's restriction of Native American fishing rights. NIYC participated in a "fish-in" and mounted legal challenges. The fish-ins were sometimes met with violence. On Labor Day, 1970, Indians from the Nisqually and Payallup tribes set up a fishing camp near Tacoma, Washington. Almost three hundred Tacoma city police, state police (neither of whom had jurisdiction over the place where the camp was constructed) and state game wardens armed with telescopic rifles and tear gas, raided the camp. Men, women and children were severely beaten and arrested illegally (for disorderly conduct). The cars of the Native Americans were impounded and destroyed while in police custody (DeLoria, 1994: 12). Though the battle between Indians and the state of Washington regarding fishing rights was not resolved till 1974 (in favor of the Native Americans), NIYC, buoyed by its success in challenging a state government, undertook a series of initiatives during the 60s and 70s (sometimes in collaboration with NCAI) to attain the goals of the Declaration of Indian Purpose (Lenarcic,

1982:148-155; Nabakov, 1991:362-363).

In 1968, a new movement --the American Indian Movement (AIM) -- arose in the Native American section of Minneapolis. Focused on the issues facing urban Indians, AIM attempted to concentrate on the part of Indian agenda neglected by NCAI and NIYC, both of which focused on reservation Indians. AIM also focused on gaining tribal autonomy and the restoration of tribal lands (Lenarcic, 1982:148-155; Olson and Wilson, 1984:172-175). AIM provided legal and health services, education, and programs to reduce crime, alcoholism and suicides. AIM adopted a more militant posture than NCAI and NIYC. In 1969 AIM participated in the occupation of Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay, in 1972, led a march on Washington, D.C. called the Trail of Broken Treaties, and in 1973 the organization became involved in violent confrontations with federal marshals and FBI agents in the siege of Wounded Knee (South Dakota). Despite a post-Wounded Knee purge of AIM activists by law enforcement officers, AIM gained a large following of Indians that transcended the age and ideological barriers that hampered the NCAI and NIYC (Lenarcic, 1982: 148-155).

Other forms of Indian protests were occurring elsewhere. In 1968, the Canadian government announced that the Mohawks (New York) should pay tolls to use the Cornwall Bridge and pay duties on the goods transported across the bridge. The Mohawks blockaded the bridge in December. They were arrested, tried and acquitted in March, 1969. The incident, widely reported in the *Akwesasne Notes*, a national Indian newspaper, inspired Indians all across the country to protest. In August of that year, there was a major confrontation in Gallup, New Mexico. The NIYC, some of whom had participated in the fish-ins, protested the Gallup Ceremonial festival, charging that the festival was controlled by non-Indians and that Indian participants in the festival got minimal support. Problems occurred in the Pacific Northwest also. The Quinault tribe pleaded with non-Indians to refrain from littering its 29 miles of beaches but to no avail. The tribe wanted to protect its resources, but tourists wandered over the area collecting large quantities of driftwood and destroying Indian fishing nets. The tribe closed the beach to the public in 1969. Whites wrote letters to the governor asking him to take legal action against the tribe. Slade Gorton, then Attorney General and later U.S. Senator, said the tribe did not have the "unchallenged right to exclusive control of the beaches." He wanted to go to court to protect the rights of whites, but the beaches remained closed (DeLoria, 1994:7-9).

In October, 1969, a day after a large convention of urban Indians met in San Francisco, their meeting place, the Indian Center, burned to the ground. The meeting place was the nerve-center of Bay Area Indians; they needed a new gathering place. Across the Bay sat Alcatraz, closed since 1964. A small group of

Indians landed on the island (claiming it under the 1868 Sioux treaty); they were chased off by security guards in a few hours. However, 10 days later, 200 Indians, calling themselves "Indians of all Tribes" landed on Alcatraz. They occupied the island, proclaiming it to be their spiritual center, university and social service center. The occupation continued for a year and a half. Indians in Seattle adopted the Indians of All Tribes and invaded Fort Lawton in the northwest corner of the city, in 1970. The Seattle Indians used an old federal statute that allowed the use of abandoned federal military posts as Indian schools. Through negotiations, the Seattle Indians secured a long-term lease to use the land. They built the Daybreak Star Center which provided an array of social services to Puget Sound Indians (DeLoria, 1994:9-11). Two books -- Vine Deloria's *Custer Died For Your Sins*, published in 1969, and Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, published in 1970 -- had significant effects on Native Americans by heightening the awareness of Indians and spurring them into activism. Other protest actions occurred all over the country as Indians asserted their rights.

#### **African Americans - Civil Rights and the Black Power Movements**

Civil rights activism intensified in the early 1960s with the formation of organizations such as the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee -- SNCC founded in 1960 (Morris, 1984: xiii). Influenced by the non-violent direct action strategies of Mahatma Gandhi and Henry David Thoreau, Martin Luther King, Jr. led a movement that utilized protests, marches, sit-ins, and voter registration drives as organizing tools. In 1963, about 250,000 civil rights supporters marched on Washington and by 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, and the Voting Rights Act was passed in 1965. During the 1960s, the Black Power Movement emerged as another vehicle for African Americans protesting racism and discrimination. Espousing black pride, afro-centrism, and black nationalism, this group sometimes voiced opinions that countered those of the civil rights movement leadership.

Although women were crucial to the operation and success of the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement, both movements were male dominated. Women were viewed as supporters of the male leadership rather than equal partners. In one of the major civil rights groups, SNCC, women questioned their relegation to clerical tasks. The Nation of Islam also emphasizes female subservience. However, African American women, having developed leadership and organizational skills in the church and as school teachers, etc., played pivotal roles in these movements as the roles of Rosa Parks and Fannie Lou Hamer indicate (Andersen, 1993:284; Evans, 1979; 1989:271; Hamer, 1967).

#### **Latinos**

The Chicano Movement emerged in the 1960s to create a positive Chicano self image, to fight against racism and to demand equal rights. Critical of pre-

existing Chicano organizations like LULAC and the Community Service Organization (CSO), and influenced by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, the Chicano Movement espoused a more militant ideology of Chicanismo than LULAC and CSO. Movement leaders organized marches, rallies, voter registration drives (Acuna, 1988:307-358; Grebler, Moore and Guzman, 1970:544; Moore, 1970:149-154). As a part of the movement, Alianza de Mercedes (Alliance of Land Grants) was formed in 1963. This organization focused on reversing the illegal seizure of land from Mexicans during the 1800s. This militant and confrontational, direct-action organization seized and occupied federal lands to make their point; the leadership received long jail terms and the organization faded away during the 1970s. Other organizations were active at this time too. For example, Crusade for Justice, founded in 1965, focused on abuses of Mexican American civil and legal rights, and La Raza Unida (People United) party concentrated on offering alternative candidates to the Democrats and the Republicans (Moquin and Van Doren, 1971:381-382; Acuna, 1988:332-451).

One of the most successful organizations of the period was the United Farm Workers (UFW), organized by Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta and Jessie Lopez. Representing migrant farm workers, the UFW included Latinos, Filipinos, African Americans, and whites. During the 1960s, farm workers had few or no outlets for their grievances; if they spoke out about working conditions, they were fired and quickly replaced. Influenced by Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez employed various non-violent direct-action strategies in his efforts to organize migrant workers. The farm workers launched a grape pickers' strike and, a table grape boycott in 1965. In 1970, after years of violent confrontations and harassment, the growers finally recognized the UFW as the union representing the farm workers. The growers also agreed to improve the working conditions of the farm laborers (Levy, 1975). The UFW also campaigned tirelessly against the use of pesticides and was influential in the decision to ban DDT. Despite the fact that the UFW was co-founded by women, Chicanas faced gender discrimination in the Chicano Movement. While they played crucial roles as activists and organizers, many were denied leadership roles (Amott and Matthaei, 1991:82-86; Mirande and Enriquez, 1979:202-243).

The United Farm Workers organizing campaigns stimulated the formation of cooperatives. Chicanos organized coops in an attempt to make the transition from migrant farm laborers to growers/producers. Using the 1964 Title III Economic Opportunity Act (that originally directed most of its funding to African Americans in the South to relieve rural poverty), Chicanos pushed for and obtained funding to establish co-ops in California. In 1969, Cooperativa Campesina was established in Watsonville. The widespread attention this co-op received from the media and universities, paved the way for the formation of other co-ops. One of the largest and



longest-lived co-op was Cooperativa Central (1971-1985), located on a 220 acre strawberry ranch in Salinas. Using the parcel system (borrowed from the ejido system of cooperative farming of common lands in Mexico) families farmed parcels of 2-5 acres, depending on the productivity of the land. The cooperative was responsible for irrigation, fumigation, marketing, and accounting. The cooperatives offered the migrant farm worker several advantages: they were free from the unpredictable demand for labor and abysmally low wages, co-op members controlled field conditions. Inability to speak English was not a stumbling block, they were familiar with the farming system, co-op operations was built around the family unit, and each family had one vote in the operations of the cooperative. In 1976, Cooperativa Central established Tecnica Incorporada with funds from the California Comprehensive Employment Training Act to provide management and training assistance to aid the establishment of new co-ops. Two years later, Cooperativa Central formed La Confederacion Agricola to provide technical assistance to other co-ops (Rochin, 1986:103-104; Wells, 1981:416-432; 1983a:772-773; 1983b; 1990:150).

During the post-Carson era, a third group of Latinos, Cubans, migrated to the U.S. in large numbers. Unlike Chicanos and Puerto Ricans, Cuban immigrants were from the middle and upper classes. They were the political and economic elites who lost power during the revolution. They controlled many resources and were able to migrate with them. Their migration was geographically concentrated in South Florida. The Cubans also received help from the American government which helped them to establish themselves in the United States (Portes, 1990:169).

## **The Post Three Mile Island/Love Canal Era (1980-Present)**

### **A - The Middle Class and The Reform Environmental Agenda**

#### **Organizational Characteristics**

Throughout the 1980s, white, middle class, reform environmentalism continued to dominate the environmental landscape. Environmental organizations grew increasingly big, bureaucratized, hierarchical, and distant from local concerns and politics. They focused on national and international issues, lobbied Congress and business, and developed close ties with industry (through funding, negotiations and board representation). Grassroots organizing had long given way to direct-mail recruiting, and direct-action political strategies were rarely used. From the 1970s onwards, environmental groups used the courts and the environmental agencies to pursue environmental claims through legal and policy channels (Taylor, 1992). Consequently, they developed extensive oversight and monitoring capacities. They also developed strong research arms designed to produce information independent

of government or industry. Slightly fewer organizations were formed during the 1980s than in the previous decade. However, if the first four years of the 1990s can be used as an indicator, it seems that there will be significant decline in the number of organizations being formed in the 1990s. Between 1980-1994, 292 organizations were formed -- 277 of those originated in the 80s.

### **Leadership and Male Dominance**

Males dominate the top leadership positions in reform environmental organizations. A 1992 nationwide study conducted by the Conservation Leadership Foundation found that of the 248 chief executive officers (CEOs) and top leaders surveyed, 79 percent of the respondents were male. Their mean age was 45 years, and 50 percent had a bachelors degree, 28 percent a masters and 21 percent a doctorate (Snow, 1991:48-49). My own analysis of 1,053 organizations found that 80 percent of the top leaders (president, CEO, chair) were male and so were 64 percent of the general leaders (secretaries, accountants, program managers, etc.). The Conservation Leadership Foundation's national study of environmental volunteers also found that males dominated the voluntary sector of the reform environmental movement. Sixty-one percent of the volunteers were male, 93 percent were over 35 years old, 79 percent had at least a bachelors degree, 35 percent had a masters degree and 18 percent had doctorates. Seventy-one percent were in managerial and/or professional jobs while 3 percent described themselves as skilled laborers (Snow, 1991: 111-112). The profile of the reform sector in the 90s is similar to profile of the membership of the organizations during the late 60s - early 70s.

### **Defining the Agenda**

Early in 1981, the CEOs of ten major environmental organizations (the Group of Ten), met to discuss and outline an environmental agenda for the future. Reagan's presidency represented a threat to the environmental gains of the preceding two decades, so the deliberations of the Group of Ten had an air urgency as they entered into their discussions (Vig & Kraft, 1994; Rosenbaum, 1991). The process culminated in the publication of a 1985 book, *An Environmental Agenda for the Future* (hereinafter *Agenda*). The group identified eleven agenda items for future consideration: nuclear issues, human population, energy strategies, water resources, toxics and pollution control, wild living resources, private lands and agriculture, protected land systems, public lands, urban environment, international responsibilities.

The ten primarily male and their staff wrote:

While our informal group reflects the diversity of today's environmental movement, our agenda is by no means an attempt to speak for the

movement as a whole. Rather, through informal collaboration, it presents a consensus among a representative cross-section of conservation leaders ... the common objective is to protect and enhance the quality of life worldwide (An Environmental Agenda for the Future, 1985:2). My emphasis.

Contrary to the beliefs of the Group of Ten and many others in the environmental movement, the people defining the agenda for the future was in no way reflective of the diversity of the contemporary environmental movement or the conservation leadership nationwide. This is evidenced by the fact that about the same time the *Agenda* was being developed, many sub-movements were either being formed or strengthened in the white, middle class movement. In addition, white working class organizations were being organized; so were numerous people of color environmental justice groups. By the mid 1980s, the greens, deep ecologists, social ecologists, bioregionalists, and ecofeminists emerged as sub-movements within the environmental movement. Each critiqued the reform environmental agenda and offered radical alternatives to it. Though they embraced aspects of the new environmental paradigm, there were significant ideological differences between each sub-movement and reform environmentalism. Some of the common critiques levied at the reform environmentalists by the sub-movements were: the reform environmental movement had developed too many strong ties to industry and were not critical enough of them, they were too inclined to compromise with industry, they were alienated from the grassroots, too bureaucratic, and their agenda was too limited.

As table 2 shows, in 1992, wildlife, wilderness and waterway protection dominated reform organizations' agendas both in terms of the presumed importance of the issue and the percentage of the organization's resources that was spent on the issue. While 46 percent of organizations' budgets were spent on fish, wildlife, land preservation, and wilderness, and 16 percent on water conservation, only 8 percent of the budgets were being spent on toxic waste management and 4 percent on land use planning. This pattern of environmental perception, problem definition and spending was in place at a time when communities all over the country were struggling with environmental health issues, toxic contamination, urban sprawl, pollution, and solid waste disposal issues. There seemed to be a disconnect between the priorities of the reform environmental organizations many local communities.

### **B. White Working Class - Toxics and Occupational Health**

Although the reform environmental agenda continued to dominate environmental politics, it was the emergence of many persistent, radical grassroots organizations that have profoundly changed the nature of the environmental

movement during the 1980s. While scholars who study political participation in the environmental movement did not predict the increased and sustained mobilization of working-class activists, the growth of the grassroots sector have surprised many (Devall, 1970:123-126; Mohai, 1991; 1985; Taylor, 1989:175-205; Harry, Gale, & Hendee, 1969:246-254; Buttel & Flinn, 1974; Hendee, Catton, Marlow, & Brockman, 1968; Faich & Gale, 1971:270-287; Morrison, Hornback, & Warner, 1972:259-279; Lowe, et. al., 1980:423-445). By 1989, Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes claimed they worked with about 2,000 groups now works with over 7,000 grassroots groups (many of them environmental) nationwide (CCHW, 1991: 2; Suro, 1989; Collette, 1987: 44-45).

During the post-TMI/Love Canal era, workers became more vigilant about what went on inside as well as outside the factory gates. Inside the plants, they continued to push for improved working conditions, and negotiated increasing numbers of union contracts that paid attention to health and safety issues (Robinson, 1991). In addition, increasing numbers of occupational safety and health groups were being formed. Workers heightened their awareness of occupational illnesses, and utilized OSHA guidelines to file grievances. All of this occurred against a backdrop of class action suits against companies like Johns Mansville for asbestos-related illnesses, and growing activism among coal miners suffering black lung disease.

Outside the plant gates, a key factor explaining the increased growth and sustained activism of the white working class was the mobilization around toxics. Mazmanian and Morrell (1992:27-28) argue that the toxics issue has not followed the typical issue-attention cycle postulated by Anthony Downs (1972). If the cycle were adhered to, the issue of toxic contamination would have receded in importance in the public's mind since it first gained national attention in 1978. This could have been the scenario if media coverage had waned, if the quick-fix technological solutions offered by bureaucrats had worked, and if other problems had emerged to eclipse the resonance that toxics had in people's mind. However, toxics have remained in the news and have continued to be a mobilizing factor because what people thought was the worst-case scenario when the story first captured national attention in the late 70s turned out to be just the tip of the iceberg. In addition, many huge corporations -- some long-time provider of jobs and supporters of local civic organizations and events -- were found to be the source of the contamination. Many people felt that the trust or social compact between host communities and corporations was broken. People were further dismayed to find that the government, policy makers, scientists and other experts could not offer ready solutions or any solutions at all. In many instances nothing was done while the government, business, scientists remained bogged down in long delays due to legal or technical skirmishes. In some cases people discovered there were no safeguards to protect

**Table 2. Percent of Organizations Considering Each Issue Important, and the Average Percent of Organizational Resources Being Spent on Each Issue**

ORGANIZATIONAL FOCUS	Issue Important Percent	Organizational Resources %
Fish and Wildlife Management and Protection	92%	19%
Protection of waterways	91%	7%
Public Lands Management	90%	12%
Environmental Education	90%	-
Water Quality	87%	6%
Air Quality	87%	3%
Wilderness	86%	4%
Land Use Planning	84%	4%
Toxic Waste Management	79%	8%
Preservation of Private Land	76%	11%
Agriculture	72%	4%
Energy Conservation and Facility Regulation	71%	2%
Mining Law and Regulation	62%	1%
Marine Conservation	45%	3%
Population Control	35%	-
Nuclear Power or Weapons	34%	1%
Zoological or Botanical Gardens	23%	1%
Sustainable Development	-	3%

Source: Compiled from Snow (1992: 55, 110.), *Inside the Environmental Movement*.

the balance of power and to ameliorate the situation (Habermas, 1975; Pusey, 1993:92-110; Ingram, 1987:155-160). Some of these radical groups participate in the environmental justice movement.

### **C - People of Color and The Environmental Justice Movement**

It was the image of a silent spring -- a spring silent of bird song that motivated thousands of middle class whites to become active in the reform environmental movement in the 1960s. In the early 1990s, another image motivated people of color to form the environmental justice movement. They were aroused by the specter of toxic springs -- springs so pervasive and deadly that no children sang. Soon after the publication of Carson's *Silent Spring*, middle class whites relocated to pristine areas, cleaned up and slowed or prevented the degradation of their communities. Long before the phenomenon known as NIMBYism (*Not In My Backyard*) was labeled, middle class residents skillfully used zoning laws, legal challenges and every other means available to them to control and maintain the integrity of the communities they lived in. Their success left developers and industry flustered; but only temporarily.

Because effective community resistance is costly, industry responded to the challenges of middle class white communities by identifying the paths of least resistance (Blumberg and Gottlieb, 1989; Cerrell Associates, 1984; Trimble, 1988). By the 1980s, working class white communities recognized that that path went through their communities also. As working class communities organized to stop the placement of LULUs in their neighborhoods, industry quickly adjusted to the new political reality. The path of least resistance became a expressway leading to the one remaining toxic frontier (in the U.S. that is) -- people of color communities. By the 1990s, people of color communities were characterized by declining air and water quality, increasing toxic contamination, health problems, and declining quality of life. Since the 1970s there have been isolated efforts to mobilize communities of color around environmental issues; such efforts started to pay off during the late 80s (Hurley, 1995). From 1987 through the early 1990s, the book read in people of color communities was *Toxic Waste and Race* (United Church of Christ, 1987). This study did for people of color and the environmental justice movement what *Silent Spring* did for middle class whites in the 60s.

*Toxic Waste and Race*, other books and newspaper articles that began appearing shortly after this study was published, had an immediate impact. These publications made an explicit connection between race, class and the environment. Using the injustice frame, they articulated the issues in terms of civil and human rights, racism and discrimination. They identified the widespread perception that people of color communities were viewed as politically impotent and were either

unwilling or unable to take control of and change the social and environmental conditions in their communities.

This framing was the obvious bridge that transformed the previous attempts of people of color to articulate their environmental concerns in a way that linked their past and present experiences in an effective manner. Environmental justice embodied all these concerns and experiences. The Environmental Justice Movement sought to: (1) recognize the past and present struggles of people of color; (2) find a way to unite in the various struggles; (3) organize campaigns around fairness and justice as themes that can interest a variety of people -- these are also themes that all people of color had built a long history of community organizing around; (4) build a movement that linked occupational, community, economic, environmental, and social justice issues; (5) build broad class and racial coalitions; (6) strive for gender equity; (7) employ a combination of direct action and non-direct-action strategies; and (8) educate, organize and mobilize communities of color. Since many people of color still live, work and play in the same community, the environmental justice agenda made explicit connections between issues related to workplace and community, health, safety, environment, and quality of life.

Through the *Principles of Environmental Justice* adopted at the 1991 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, people of color environmental justice groups articulated an environmental justice paradigm (EJP) that outlines the movement's ideology. They are: (1) *ecological principles* -- gaia/ecocentric principles, stewardship/land ethic, reducing consumption of resources/personal responsibility, access to natural resources, environmental education; (2) *justice* -- inter-generational and intra-generational equity, rights / freedom / respect, international human rights, experimentation / human subjects; (3) *autonomy* -- treaties / sovereignty, self-determination, cultural relations; (4) *corporate relations* -- liability / accountability, compensation, technological risks, environmental hazards, source reduction, occupational health and safety; (5) *policy, politics and economic processes* -- policy making, political and economic strategies; and (6) *social movement building* -- grassroots movement building and activist strategies. The EJP differs from the NEP and other environmental paradigms in its attempt to link environmental principles with historical and contemporary social and economic justice struggles (hence the stress on justice and autonomy), hold corporations accountable and to participate in the policy making process.

People of color environmental activism and the Environmental Justice Movement grew out of an awareness of the increasing environmental risks people of color faced and a dissatisfaction with the reform environmental agenda. The advent of the Environmental Justice Movement marks a radical departure from the

traditional, reformist ways of perceiving, defining, organizing around, fighting, and discussing environmental issues; it challenges some of the most fundamental tenets of environmentalism that have been around since the 1800s. It questions some of the basic postulates, values and themes underlying reform environmentalism. The environmental justice movement also questions the ideological hegemony of reform environmentalism and the tendency to marginalize or dismiss other perceptions. In addition, environmental justice questions the racial and class homogeneity of the environmental movement, male dominance, racism in the movement (as manifested through, publications, hiring practices, the composition and recruitment of the membership and the board), the relationship with industry, strained relationship with people of color communities, and the practice of ignoring the environmental issues that plague people of color communities.

People of color environmental groups serve an assortment of constituents of various racial and social-class backgrounds. For instance, of the 331 people of color environmental groups listed in the 1992 and 1994 *People of Color Groups Directory*, 30 percent indicated they served predominantly Native Peoples (Native Americans, Alaska Natives and Hawaiians) and another 28 percent served African American constituents. Fifteen percent of the groups served predominantly Latinos/Chicanos and one percent served predominantly Asian constituents. Almost one fourth of the people of color environmental groups (24 percent) served a mixture of people of color constituents and the remaining 3 percent of the groups served a mixture of people of color and white constituents.

Though some people of color environmental organizations trace their organizational roots back to 1845, most of these organizations (68%) were formed since 1980. In comparison, only 28 percent of the white environmental organizations have been formed since then (Table 3). The table also shows that during the 1960s, while number of new white environmental being formed skyrocketed from 79 between 1950-1959 to 173 between 1960-1969, the number of people of color organizations (particularly those that started out as environmental organizations) was very low. This is the case because during the 60s and 70s, people of color were involved in various social justice struggles like the Civil Rights Movement, Chicano Movement and the American Indian Movement.

Unlike white environmental organizations, many people of color environmental organizations start off as a non-environmental and later adopt an environmental agenda; overall 61 percent of the people of color groups did not start off as environmental organizations. In general, the later the time period in which the organization is formed, the more likely it is to have started as an environmental organization. Forty-seven percent of those starting in the 1980s and 63 percent of those starting in the 1990s began as environmental organizations.



Table 3. Percentage of White and People of Color Organizations Formed During the Periods 1780-1994.

Year Founded	WHITE ORGANIZATIONS		PEOPLE OF COLOR ORGANIZATIONS		
	Frequency (n=1,053)	Percentage	Frequency (n=330)	Percentage	% Start Environ Organization
1780-1959	292	27.7%	35	10.6%	11.4%
1960-1969	173	16.4%	22	6.7%	4.5%
1970-1979	292	27.7%	49	14.8%	16.3%
1980-1989	277	26.3%	159	48.2%	46.5%
1990-1994	19	1.8%	65	19.7%	63.1%

Gender equality is one of the organizing principles of the people of color groups. Consequently, women of color play significant roles in these organizations as general and top leaders. Fifty percent of the groups list a female as their president, chair or CEO. Building on the infrastructure of civil rights and farm worker organizations, the South and the Southwest have emerged as the two regions with the largest networks of environmental justice groups.

## **Conclusion**

As the above discussion shows, race, class and gender have profound impacts on a person's experiences, which in turn have significant impacts on political development, ideology, and activism. Occupational experiences and immigration policies have been instrumental in shaping environmental encounters and experiences also. This paper attempted to present a more complex view of environmentalism than has been discussed previously. The history of American environmentalism presented by most authors, is really a history of white, middle class male environmental activism. The tendency to view all environmental activism through this lens has deprived us of a deeper understanding of the way in which class, race and gender relations structured environmental experiences and responses over time. In addition, the overly-simplified view also makes it difficult for us to understand the contemporary environmental movement and accurately predict the rise of the grassroots mobilization such as the environmental justice movement.

The inability of the white middle class environmental supporters of the reform environmental agenda to recognize the limits of that agenda has led working class whites, people of color and some middle class activists, marginalized and/or excluded from the reform environmental discourse, to develop alternative environmental agendas. White working class grassroots and environmental groups differ from those of white middle class reform groups in the emphasis the former groups place on workplace and community experiences. So while occupational health and safety and jobs are still minor or non-existent parts of reform environmental organizations' agendas, they are major issues for white grassroots and people of color environmental justice groups. In addition, issues relating to toxics, the urban environment, and environmental risks and burdens are more prominent on the agendas of working class grassroots and environmental justice groups than on reform environmental organizations' agendas. Environmental justice groups differ from white working and middle class groups in their utilization of networks involved in past social justice struggles and religious groups. They use the injustice frame to identify and analyze racial, class and gender disparities, and emphasize improved quality of life, autonomy and self determination, human rights, and fairness.

The environmental movement is a powerful social movement, however, the movement faces enormous challenges in the future. Among the most urgent, is the need to develop a more inclusive, culturally sensitive, broad-based environmental agenda that will appeal to many people and unite many sectors of the movement. To do this the movement has to re-evaluate its relationship with industry and the government, re-appraise its role and mission, and develop strategies to understand and improve race, class and gender relations.

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