



Society of Environmental Journalists

# Guide to Diversity in Environmental Reporting



The Society of Environmental Journalists is a lively educational community of approximately 1,350 professional journalists, educators and students throughout the US, Canada and 27 other countries. Founded in 1990 by a small group of award-winning reporters, editors and producers, SEJ is the world's oldest and largest organization of professional environmental journalists. The group began as a self-help grassroots organization powered by volunteer reporters, editors and producers from key news organizations in the U.S.

*The mission of the Society of Environmental Journalists is to strengthen the quality, reach and viability of journalism across all media to advance public understanding of environmental issues.*

SEJ leaders of succeeding years have maintained that identity and focus. The Society of Environmental Journalists is independent and nonpartisan.

For more information please visit SEJ's Web site at [www.sej.org](http://www.sej.org).

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# *INTRODUCTION*

The climate for environmental journalism is changing in more ways than one. Even as we work to tell the story of a natural and technological world in constant flux, we must also respond to a society that is seeing demographic shifts whose impacts we can never fully anticipate.

Already by 2011, so-called minorities constituted the majority in 22 of the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas. By 2012, the group classified as “white” by the U.S. Census Bureau accounted for fewer than half of newborns in the United States. Issues related to gender and sexuality are pervasive in entertainment media and openly examined in the courts of law. An aging population is triggering responses in various sectors preparing for an era where the needs of older and disabled persons must become priority. At the same time, income inequality is becoming more acute, urbanization more rapid, and the journalism business more uncertain.

Yet since long before this period of demographic churning began to signal change, the demand for addressing diversity and practicing more inclusive journalism has been glaring, to those who have investigated the issue. Environmental journalism has been no different.

The need is longstanding for greater participation by and coverage of the perspectives of women, racial and ethnic groups, age groups, and people of various orientations, abilities and geographies.

Representation means perspectives, stories, sources, journalists, editors, publishers.

There is a lot of work to do, and this guide aims to be a resource for environmental journalists who want to better understand the landscape in which we report, and how to actively participate in making sure journalism measures up. To that end, we have drawn upon numerous sources that together will hopefully help any journalist to move in that direction. The focus is mainly journalistic practice in the United States and North America. Those who seek to address diversity in their work will find multiple entry points here. Others who already make it a part of their philosophy should find ways to deepen their engagement and expand their reporting. The guidebook begins with a look at environmental justice, which is necessarily an important field of understanding for environmental journalists on the path toward more inclusive reporting. Technical tools that help us tell the full story are presented, as are sources for a better qualitative understanding. Then there is the necessary work of revisiting journalism’s very basics. Who are we talking to and about? What viewpoints are missing? Where are the impacts and the information? When did we begin to tell certain stories, and why do we continue? How can we do better? Some Q&A portions have been included to ground the guide in the experiences of people carrying out the legwork making fostering greater diversity.

This is but one step in toward environmental journalism that reflects and serves society in the best way it can. Reporters can only do so much, and the entire field must respond. Leadership and readership are also hugely important factors. This brief guide aims to help further the discussion in the long term while helping those who report on the environment take meaningful actions right now, making this time of change a time of growth.

THE HISTORY,

CENTRAL IDEAS, AND

SCOPE OF A

PRESSING DIVERSITY ISSUE

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Stories where social, economic or geographic disparities are a factor; stories with an international scope; those where biological differences between genders are central – these are all touched to some degree by environmental justice, which has its own history complexities.

THE DEFINITION OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IS EVOLVING.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, sex, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies."

However, it's not all that simple.

"Environmental justice has been defined in many different ways depending on the context," University of Colorado Prof. Amy Braun notes in her essay "Governance Challenges in Promoting Environmental Justice." The document, produced at an unprecedented grassroots summit in Washington, D.C., contains 17 descriptions of the term.

These and other explanations fall into three main categories, according to the foundation-supported Berkeley Workshop for Environmental Politics, established in 1996. Adherents to the *distributive principle* hold that environmental justice is served when the burden of environmental damage falls evenly on demographic sectors, be they economic, social, biological, historical, or geographical. According to the *procedural principle*, environmental justice is determined by community engagement and self-determination in the decision making for any given situation. Under the *principle of entitlement*, environmental justice consists of the guarantee of human rights of well-being as evidenced by access to minimum levels of resources, health, goods, and services.

Environmental justice also refers to the field of study about the way inequalities arise from social, political and environmental actions and policies. That is, the study of the mechanisms that lead to class, gender and racial disparities, according to Prof. Bunyan Bryant Jr., director of

the Environmental Justice Initiative at University of Michigan. Its definition of environmental justice comprises “the right to a safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environment for all, where ‘environment’ is considered in its totality to include the ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments.”

According to the Berkeley workshop, environmental justice also entails observing the U.N. precautionary principle, a policymaking directive to rank prevention above redress of adverse impacts.

The Center for International Environmental Law claims environmental justice is achieved when all “have access to effective remedies for violations of environmental rights, and laws should be enforced irrespective of the political or economic power of wrongdoers.”

A historical perspective may be annexed to that view, especially when it comes to the usurpation of tribal treaty rights. “To address environmental justice also requires us to address sovereignty issues of indigenous people,” who, Bryant Jr. notes, “control only a fraction of the land and resources they did at the time of the first contact with Europeans.”

One way to understand environmental justice is by viewing its corollary of environmental discrimination, also sometimes called environmental racism.

“Environmental racism refers to the placement of health-threatening structures such as landfills and factories near or in areas where the poor and ethnic minorities frequently live,” says Hope College Communications Prof Teresa L. Heinz, Ph.D.

Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans are more likely to be affected because their often poor neighborhoods lack access to political power, she notes. Yet she warns that it is erroneous to suggest that environmental hazards affect only minorities, because such hazards are also distributed by income and class. In addition, they may disproportionately affect other people of minority status, such as women or children, in a given circumstance.

While these definitions focus on threats to the human community, “A growing discourse on ecological justice

considers human beings as one set of stakeholders within a larger ecosystem approach and considers nonhuman nature as a subject of justice,” Braun notes.

Anishinabe First Nations member Deborah MacGregor affirms that “Environmental justice from an aboriginal perspective ... is about justice for all beings of creation.” It is part of what indigenous scholars and activists like Winona LaDuke, refer to as “natural law.”

#### **EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

As in Africa and Pacific island nations, the origins of environmental injustice in the Americas are traceable to the arrival of colonists, with the subsequent disruption of the prevailing indigenous adherence to so-called natural law.

“Environmental justice proponents focus upon what is termed ‘the four interlocking C’s’, which have led to the exploitation of particular groups of people,” writes Eddy F. Carder in his essay *The American Environmental Justice Movement*. “These C’s are conquest, colonization, commerce, and Christian implantation.”

Zoltan Grossman, author of *Asserting Native Resilience: Pacific Rim Indigenous Nations Face the Climate Crisis*, contends “the most workable date for the founding of the Native [American] EJ movement ... is 1492.”

The issue was borne onto the national stage in the United States by the civil rights activists of the 1980s. They nurtured it through the late 1990s until its coming of age at the turn of the 21st Century. Among early grassroots activities that inspired the movement for environmental justice were African American protests against a proposed toxic waste dump in Warren County, North Carolina and the United Farm Workers’ union mobilization against hazardous agrochemical exposure in Latino communities of Southern California.

The working class neighborhood organization against industrial waste leaking in a low-income housing development and schoolyard at Love Canal; creation of a Native American inter-tribal alliance that blocked the construction of a nuclear waste deposit on a sacred site in the Mojave Desert’s Ward Valley; and Asian electronics workers’ struggles against dangerous chemicals in

## FIND MORE

### **EPA Environmental Justice**

[www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice](http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice)

### **1991 Declaration of Principles of Environmental Justice**

[www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html](http://www.ejnet.org/ej/principles.html)

### **Berkeley Workshop for Environmental Politics**

<http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/bwep>

### **The Beyond Intractability Project, University of Colorado, 580 UCB, University of**

[www.beyondintractability.org](http://www.beyondintractability.org)

### **The Conflict Information Consortium**

<http://conflict.colorado.edu>

### **Center for International Environmental Law**

[www.ciel.org](http://www.ciel.org)

### **Honor the Earth**

[www.honorearth.org](http://www.honorearth.org)

### **Environmental Health News**

[www.environmentalhealthnews.org](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org)

### **Center for Health, Environment & Justice**

[www.chej.org](http://www.chej.org)

### **Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice**

[www.sneej.org](http://www.sneej.org)

### **Asian Pacific Environmental Network**

[www.apen4ej.org](http://www.apen4ej.org)

Silicon Valley factories and water supplies were also significant.

Poverty and oppression must be addressed in tandem with environmental impacts in order to achieve environmental justice, according to the standard bearers of the movement. “We can’t separate the problem; therefore, we can’t separate the solution,” says Eileen McGurty, associate chair for Environmental Sciences and Policy at Johns Hopkins University.

The extent of racial, ethnic and class-related disparities in environmental quality varies nationwide, but the overall impact is largely the same, says Manuel Pastor, director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California.

Among hundreds of U.S. interest groups prodding for environmental justice are: the Indigenous Environmental Network, Honor the Earth, Greenaction, Deep Green Resistance, the Center for Health Environment and Justice, E-Law, Earth Justice, Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, Southwest Organizing Project, United Farm Workers, United Auto Workers, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, the Coalition Against Environmental Racism, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, and faith-based groups.

At the advent of the economic justice movement, the line separating academics and activists all but dissolved. The faculty at the University

of Michigan organized the United States’ premiere environmental justice conference to examine the links between race, class and environmental hazards in 1990. After the conference, “Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse,” the university became the first of the now several major degree-granting institutions in the country to offer environmental justice curricula.

That same year, a World Council of Churches Global Meeting on Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation held in Seoul laid much of the groundwork to bring activists and academics together for the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Facilitated by the United Church of Christ, the 1991 summit produced the Declaration of Principles of Environmental Justice, a major contemporary challenge to U.S. governance in the field.

The combined efforts of activists, academia and ecumenical communities provided more than a little motivation for government policy making, and in 1992 the EPA established the Office of Environmental Justice. In February 1994 President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, directing all federal agencies to design and implement programs to address environmental justice issues. The order requires each federal agency’s mission to include the goal of environmental justice. In September 2011, the EPA released Plan EJ

2014, “a road map for integrating environmental justice into programs and policies.” The agency went on to establish an environmental justice website.

European governments have gone a step further to fund action-oriented projects that promote environmental justice at home and worldwide.

The U.N. Economic Commission for Europe adopted the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in June 1998 in Aarhus, Denmark. In effect since 2001, the so-called Aarhus Convention has emerged as a trendsetting environmental justice accord. It assures the right of everyone to receive environmental information that is held by public authorities, to take part in environmental decisions and sanctions on governments that fail to protect those rights. It is the first international accord to provide guidelines for non-governmental organizations’ involvement in decisions on multilateral agreements.

Another significant collaborative effort emerged more recently. For the period from March 2011 to March 2015, 23 civic organizations and universities from 20 countries in Europe, Africa, Latin-America, and Asia have committed to collect case studies, collaborate, and create a global map of environmental justice hot spots. The project

dubbed EJOLT (Environmental Justice Organizations, Liabilities and Trade) is funded by the European Commission’s Science in Society office.

Climate change has also proved a rallying point for environmental justice efforts. In the wake of flooding evidence that the negative effects of greenhouse gas proliferation fall disproportionately on the developing world, organizations in different countries and trans-boundary groups have pooled their assorted environmental justice battles in one big front for climate justice.

“Climate change is a crucial issue facing our world today. Sadly, like most serious problems facing this world, it has a disparate impact on racial and ethnic minorities and low-income Americans,” said NAACP Senior Vice President for Policy and Advocacy Hilary Shelton, director of the NAACP Washington Bureau.

Addressing the Environment and Energy Study Institute’s 2013 Climate Change Conference on Challenges and Opportunities for Communities of Color and Tribal Nations, she stated: “We must call on our elected officials to base all of their policies, whether they are related to energy, the environment, housing, foreign affairs, or any other subject, on the very real effects of climate change.”

## Who covers environmental justice?

- In the United States, urban print media in African American hands were among the first to emphasize justice in environmental coverage in the 1970s, about a decade before mainstream media. They tend to highlight the coalescence of community groups proactive in the face of health risks.
- The Spanish-language media boom in the early part of the 21st Century was handicapped by the fact that most background materials for reporting on environmental threats to their audiences was in English.
- Media outlets invested in health coverage have tended to explore the inescapable disparities of environmental impact on underserved population areas, often taking care to provide foreign language translations.
- Among wildlife-focused outlets, some not only address the establishment of justice through restoration of healthy biotic systems, but also exhibit interest in stories about earth-friendly economic alternatives available to people who want to avoid environmentally destructive livelihood.
- Publications linked to civil rights or activist organizations and non-profit causes are a mainstay of the journalist’s market for selling environmental justice stories.

# FIELDNOTES

## *EDUCATION*

### **STUDYING AND TEACHING DIVERSITY**

JoAnn Valenti has spent the past 30 decades educating journalists. She says there's still a long way to go, and that journey starts with education.

**H**ow would you describe the state of diversity in environmental reporting 20 years ago?

Overwhelmingly white (over 90%), 30% females, 3% African-American/Hispanic/Asian/ Native American. Closely mirrored findings of U.S. journalists overall. Dismal.

**And today? Where have we made gains and where are we still lacking?**

Early on I had thought this beat would be more gender balanced, but alas, just as in journalism overall, women continue to represent only a third of U.S. reporters.

Now a big *however*. Given the dramatic changes in media and how the public accesses information (or doesn't), fewer environment or science journalists are full-time employees in traditional media outlets. Many are landing in PR, the world of bloggers, and the public information officer or freelance communities. These communication specialties have typically been more female friendly, perhaps due in part to potentially less irregular work hours.

I do not see much change yet in the absence (typically reported at less than 10%) of minorities. New media technology risks segmenting news by languages or cultural identity and that seems the

wrong direction to me. So much for that it-never-melted pot in spite of globalization.

**What do you feel is the next frontier in ensuring inclusive environmental reporting? Which populations or geographic regions need to be reconsidered?**

I studied the different media frames in the reporting of Hantavirus in the 1990s between mainstream media and publications like The Navajo Times. I was surprised to find that the data and interviews indicated journalistic training could sometimes override cultural sensitivity.

Understanding cultural differences and rejecting racist stereotyping are critical in many environment stories.

Much lip service was given to "environmental justice" over the last decade, but now with the absence of seasoned journalists on a designated environment beat, I worry how sensitive coverage will be to pollution/fracking/superfund site cleanups/waste issues and nearby underserved communities. Look how long it took for news of the "Dilbit Disaster" [where and when was this?] to reach a wide public when a white rural community suffered. Yet there's also an example of "new" media, outstanding reporting and a persistent female journalist, who jumped to a Pulitzer Prize-winning book to tell the story. And it's an e-book. My hope is somewhat restored.

**Right now, major political and social discussions are happening around gender and sexuality. So, what do journalists need to be thinking about right now?**

Sexual harassment/discrimination and anti-gay prejudice unfortunately surfaced at every university where I've worked on journalism & communication faculties. (That's five in a 30-year career; I'd get tenure and figure it was time to move on, or I had accepted only visiting or temporary chair status.) Campus is a great place to learn appropriate, professional, ethical behavior.

I'm not sure how much or what lessons students take away from these instances given the closed door policy in most of academe. The good news for me is that I have not heard complaints among colleagues at SEJ. Maybe I've just been spared the disappointment. Hopefully, EJs are busy reporting the discrimination they discover while covering a story.

**You planned environmental reporting fellowships at the National Tropical Botanical Garden in Hawaii that journalists to indigenous cultures. How did you hope culture would impact their reporting?**

My primary goal with the National Tropical Botanical Garden (NTBG) "in situ" program was to give environment reporters an opportunity to get into the field with excellent research botanists. Ethnobotany was a key component. During the twelve years I facilitated this program, invited fellows worked under the supervision of a gifted science educator who happened to be a Samoan Chief. Other NTBG staff and guest instructors represented other island cultures. Learning potential seemed evident and transferable to issues on their home beats. Exposure to new histories, different questions and ideas deepen journalism training in ways hard to include in a standard class syllabus.

**How does that kind of cultural engagement impact journalists reporting on the natural world?**

Learning not only your beat – the locale, the players, the issues – but knowing your audience and their concerns is essential to all good reporting. Unfortunately, mainstream media have often neglected inner-city communities, minority concerns, and

emerging immigrant issues.

Tampa, for example, still publishes a weekly trilingual newspaper to serve the historically unique make-up of Spanish, Italian/Sicilian, Cuban residents. The local African-American community also continues to publish a bi-weekly paper. That suggests not everyone gets the news they need or want from the two major dailies.

I fear that includes mounting environmental challenges. Smaller community papers rarely if ever have an environment reporter. Those at larger dailies either have yet to develop sources/credibility or struggle to get editors interested in covering stories until there's an uprising, lawsuits or toe tags.

Crisis reporting suffers when there's no baseline experience to draw from. I wish organizations like SEJ could find the funding to support "in situ" experiences to get some of those 90% white guys into the migrant workers' compounds or similar culturally foreign territories.

SEJ is already making an effort to bring the handful of minority reporters to annual conferences. The exposure is needed in both directions.

Change really needs to begin at the K-12 then college levels to alter cultural/racist bias/ignorance. The door to more diversity in the population is already open. Climate change along with economic upheaval will only push harder. An informed public requires diversity not only among journalists but in journalism training.

"Environment Reporters in the 21st Century" (2010), by Sachsman, Simon & Valenti, Transaction Pub.: New Brunswick, NJ/London, UK.

"Women Transforming Communications" (1996).

"Environmental Communication: A female-friendly process". Sage Pub.: Thousand Oaks, CA.

"Cultural Diversity and the U.S. Media" (1998) State Univ. of N.Y. Press.; Media Ethics Third Ed. "Rodent wars and cultural battles: Reporting hantavirus," McGraw-Hill.

*SOURCES FOR  
TOOLS THAT REVEAL  
AND ENHANCE  
DIVERSITY REPORTING*

# *REPORTER'S TOOLKIT*

Diversity reporting means encompassing economic, social, ethnic, geographic and other perspectives often excluded, or whose roles are not fully explored. Nothing beats old-fashioned legwork to capture the stories, but facts and figures underpin them. What kind of pollution is affecting a community, exactly where it comes from or where it goes, and just how much is there? Here are some tools for finding those answers.

## **Pollutant Release Transfer Registers**

The granddaddy of unabridged information about industrial toxic waste in a community is its PRTR, or pollutant release and transfer register.

Now found in countries and regions around the world, PRTRs call for mandatory public, periodic reporting by individual industrial facilities. This in turn allows journalists not only to find out all about the contaminants in communities of interest, but also how they compare to poisons in other communities.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has encouraged nations to join the movement to establish PRTRs. The United Nations Institute for Training and Research, (UNITAR,) works with OECD to help countries design national PRTRs through multi-stakeholder processes.

Through the North American Free Trade Agreement's (NAFTA) environmental side accord, the North American Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (RTR) provides annually updated toxic waste figures from all three countries in the trade pact, Canada, the United States and Mexico.

The NAFTA countries are moving, albeit slowly, toward maintaining a data base with comparable categories of chemicals and equivalent measures of industry toxics that must be reported on a location-by- location basis. As PRTRs of the neighbor nations become more alike, they reveal more and more environmental inequities across international borders.

Resource people are available at EPA and libraries to help navigate the morass of digital channels. Many environmental organizations also have experts on staff who do the data analysis . These experts are vital in countries where information is not readily available in centralized, public, digitized form.

## Toxics Release Inventory

Each year the EPA publishes print and online documents that analyze and interpret the most recent TRI data, including national and local trends of toxic chemical releases. Geo-specific analyses include Indian Country and Alaskan Native Villages, large aquatic ecosystems, urban communities, and state factsheets. Many national documents are available in Spanish.

After an ongoing campaign by journalists and public interest groups, the EPA was convinced to attach a number of digital internet features to its annual TRI information release, which make the facts more accessible and are of paramount interest to environmental justice reporting.

TRI covers an important subset of about 600 toxic chemicals managed at U.S. facilities, but not all chemicals or all facilities. Several EPA tools help a journalist match TRI data with other agency data bases in order to get a better picture of how a community may be affected.

- **TRI Explorer** ([http://iaspub.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri\\_release.chemical](http://iaspub.epa.gov/triexplorer/tri_release.chemical)) - basic, creates reports on waste streams for comparing facilities, chemicals, locations, industries or reporting years.
- **TRI.NET** (<http://www.epa.gov/tri/tridotnet/index.html>) - basic downloadable app that facilitates customized TRI data queries.

- **MyRTK** (<http://www.epa.gov/tri/myrtk/>) - EPA's first mobile app for accessing TRI data, now available in Spanish.
- **The TRI Comparative Analysis Tool** (<http://www.epa-echo.gov/echo/tricomparative/>) - compare TRI facility records with those collected under EPA air, water and waste programs.
- **TRI-CHIP (TRI Chemical Hazard Information Profiles)** (<http://www.epa.gov/tri/tri-chip/index.html>) - downloadable Microsoft Access database lets users analyze toxicity info from multiple data sources for chemicals included in the TRI list.
- **Enviromapper** (<http://www.epa.gov/emefdata/em4ef.home>) - web-based interactive mapping tool for matching TRI area features such as schools, streets, and water bodies.
- **RSEI (Risk-Screening Environmental Indicators)** (<http://www.epa.gov/oppt/rsei/index.html>) - downloadable, helps relate TRI data to risk factors, analyze toxic chemicals releases by region, state, county, industry, facility, chemical, or release pathway.
- **The DMR (Discharge Monitoring Report) Pollutant Loading Tool** (<http://cfpub.epa.gov/dmr/>) - water pollutant data from TRI and other sources to determine what is discharged, where, how much, and by whom.

## Toxicology Information

You can discern how chemicals affect health and environment, by cross-checking the discharges with toxicology information. For example TOXMAP® (<http://toxmap.nlm.nih.gov>) is a Geographic Information System (GIS) from the National Library of Medicine (NLM) that uses maps of the United States to help users visually explore data from the TRI and Superfund programs (<http://www.epa.gov/superfund/>).

TOXMAP allows you to see overlays of map data about diversity, such as U.S. Census information, income figures from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, and health data from the National Cancer Institute (<http://www.cancer.gov/>) and the National Center for Health Statistics (<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/>).

NLM has an extensive collection of toxicology and environmental health references at TOXLINE®, as well as a rich trove of data on hazardous chemicals at HSDB® in the TOXNET® databases. These resources are easily linked to or from the TOXMAP search results.

## Corporate Filings and Communications

A surprising amount of quite telling information about environmental justice and impacts on diverse communities can come directly from the polluters' own websites. These often reveal their concerns via their corporate responsibility statements, and even more is available in reports to shareholders. At company websites, look for links and terms such as: "investor relations, investor documents and filings", "quarterly reports", "annual report", "social responsibility report", "diversity and inclusion", "sustainability certifications and initiatives."

Do not underestimate the power of the information environmental justice and diversity information you will find available by looking into the Securities Exchange Commission's mandatory reports for publicly traded companies. If you do not find these filings on the corporate websites, look for them at RR Donnelley's Edgar Online, which is a popular producer of news releases that accompany filings. Popular search engines also have finance pages where some filings are available. Try Yahoo Finance ([www.finance.yahoo.com](http://www.finance.yahoo.com)) and Google Finance ([google.com/finance](http://google.com/finance)), where links to files and press releases are available for specific companies under "news." Once in possession of a filing, skim through it to find the name of the specific project of interest.

You can find a list of securities exchange commissions worldwide at <http://www.world-stock-exchanges.net/regulators.html>.

## Environmental Justice

The EPA has a webpage dedicated to environmental justice <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/>. From there, the media can follow leads to environmental justice stories, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, Plan EJ 2014, and additional other digital online tools.

One such tool, **EJView** (<http://epamap14.epa.gov/ejmap/entry.html>), is a device that allows journalists to create maps and generate detailed reports based on choice of geographic areas and data sets. EJView

proffers data on factors that may affect human and environmental health within a community or region, including demographic, health, environmental and facility-level statistics.

Enforcement and Compliance History Online (ECHO) (<http://www.epa-echo.gov/echo/index.html>) is another Web-based tool that provides public access to compliance and enforcement information for approximately 800,000 EPA-regulated facilities.

ECHO allows journalists to find permits, inspections,

## FOIA

A journalist's ultimate recourse in revealing the cause of an injustice or sleight to a community of diversity: the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request and its sister systems in other countries.

These systems provide access to information from federal agencies. In the United States, a recently unveiled web portal called "FOIAonline" allows journalists to submit requests, track their status, search for requests submitted by others, and receive results of requests. Led by EPA, 10 other federal agencies have followed suit to provide responses to FOIA requests using this high-tech open-records instrument.

### Taking Stock Online ([www.cec.org/takingstock](http://www.cec.org/takingstock))

The North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation's (CEC) searchable database of register updates, including more than 500 pollutants and almost 100 industrial sectors in North America. Make charts and maps, explore international data, track yearly changes, generate reports, and add cross-reference geospatial information with this tool. The database a collection of PRTs of three countries. Mexico's (<http://app1.semarnat.gob.mx/retc/index.html>) is the newest of the continent's PRTs, having established standards for mandatory reporting by polluters as of 2013. Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory ([www.ec.gc.ca/inrp-npri](http://www.ec.gc.ca/inrp-npri)) dates back to 1993. The U.S. EPA's Toxics Release Inventory, TRI (<http://www.epa.gov/tri/index.htm>), was the first in the world; it holds data that dates back to 1987.

violations, enforcement actions, and penalty information covering the past three years. The site includes facilities regulated as Clean Air Act stationary sources, Clean Water Act direct dischargers, and Resource Conservation and Recovery Act hazardous waste generators or handlers. The data in ECHO are updated monthly.

The Environmental Justice Bibliography Database EJBib online (<http://cfpub.epa.gov/ejbib/>) is a fully-indexed list of published materials relating to environmental justice, as well as such related topics as risk assessment and social justice. The bibliography

contains more than 3,000 references and is growing. Materials come from various Internet databases of legal, medical, engineering, urban planning, and science periodical articles and books, as well as materials in non-print formats, such as documentary videos, interactive programs on CD-ROM, and other electronic media.

Outside the purview of the EPA, other essentials for the environmental justice reporter's toolkit are universities sources, which can usually be counted on to include scientists with valuable and credible things to say about the struggles in their communities.

*REEVALUATING*

*METHODS, PERCEPTIONS,*

*AND MOVING BEYOND*

*THE FAMILIAR*

# COMFORT ZONES

Focusing on diversity and inclusion in environmental reporting means checking and re-checking the contexts in which we work and the methods we use. At the center is an awareness of our own predilections, and of the resources available for fostering change.

AS A REPORTER OR EDITOR, WORKING TOWARD MORE INCLUSIVE environmental reporting may oftentimes mean working outside of a well-established comfort zone. These can be different for each person and publication, but at its most basic level it means reporting on communities with which we are unfamiliar or unconnected. Such zones can overlap. They can include class, race, religion, ethnicity, geography, ability and age. They can exist between and within groups of people at all levels.

As individuals, reporters are as complex as the communities about which we report. It is likely that we have several characteristics personally, and there might be several zones at play in the issues we report.

These include the following, and others that may yet be identified in the future:

- Geography – rural, urban, suburban, proximity to natural resources, proximity to polluting, commercial activity, proximity to green-space, transportation and accessibility
- Ability – mental and physical disabilities, accessibility of green space, accessibility of information
- Age – disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards, underrepresented voices
- Gender – disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards
- Race/ethnicity/culture – stereotypical language and portrayals, overlooked sources of information, information accessibility, language barriers, disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards, disproportionate risks from environmental hazards, resource allocation

The newsroom itself can be a powerful comfort zone. News media outlets remain dominated by white male staff and leadership, even as efforts to diversify increase and continue. The 2013 newsroom census by the American Society of News Editors showed that diversity in newsrooms has remained stagnant at about 12 to 13 percent for more than a decade, even as the country's racial makeup changes significantly. At the same time, niche publications also tend to narrow focus along ideological, cultural, political or racial lines.

There is also evidence that minority journalists in mainstream media outlets feel pressure to avoid anything that may seem like advocacy.

Journalists, too, should consider that social and cultural differences might call for different reporting tactics and thinking more broadly about where to find appropriate sources and data.

While it's not always comfortable to change ways of thinking and doing, there are numerous entry points for journalists who want to begin or continue the process of venturing into new territory in order to do better journalism that serves more audiences.

### SCANNING MEDIA

Keeping up with ethnic, subculture, foreign language, and other niche news media as part of the mix of tracking a beat is one way to keep abreast of perspectives that are not represented in the mainstream, or not represented in sufficient depth.

Studies have shown that ethnic media covered environmental issues differently than mainstream media in the same community. At the same time, the tendency toward centralized corporate ownership of such media has also been shown to have a homogenizing effect that that journalists researching reading for the purpose of strengthening their pallet should be aware of. A strong tendency to tailor content to the upper classes is prevalent, and skews coverage.

The ever-widening world of social media can also be an excellent resource if used thoughtfully. That includes popular social communities in which numerous groups participate, and also those that cater to very specific au-

diences.

Sarah Milstein, author with Tim O'Reilly, of *The Twitter Book*, suggests using Twitter to better overcome hidden biases about various groups. She recommends that white Twitter users "follow and read a significant number of people of color who sometimes talk about race and link to relevant media" to discover how "many people of color care about important stories and angles that white people are largely unaware of."

She also suggests that it makes real-world connections easier, making her less afraid to say the wrong thing, a sometimes crippling barrier to stepping outside of a comfort zone.

(<http://www.dogsandshoes.com/2013/02/can-twitter-make-white-people-less-racist.html>)

Following her lead, environmental reporters could better aware of the role race, gender, ability, and other factors play in environmental issues that are topics of discussion.

### LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Different areas of engagement w/ environment

To find sources with intimate knowledge of environmental issues, it may be necessary to look beyond the usual environmental organizations.

According to Dorceta Taylor, a researcher at the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and environment, has shown that minority environmental activism often looks fundamentally different from that of mainstream, conventional, or more well-established groups. Journalists who are aware of this can avoid having significant news, opportunities or sources escape their recognition.

For instance, black environmental activists may be more likely to consider their work as relating to social issues, and so do not label it as "environmental."\*\* . Activist groups tend to be smaller, less formal or hierarchical, and marked by highly symbolic campaigns grounded in moral and/or political arguments .\* Catering to this different style of engagement and considering cultural differences has been an important factor in the federal Environmental Protection Agency's efforts to

address local toxics pollutions in local communities .\*\*\*

Journalists, too, should consider that social and cultural differences might call for different reporting tactics and thinking more broadly about where to find appropriate sources and data.

### ACADEMIC RESOURCES

Journalists are used to looking to academia for story sources, but it should also be considered for reporters looking to situate themselves well ahead of an assignment.

Lauren Heberle, environmental sociologist at the University of Louisville, says researchers in her field can be a good resource for getting up to speed on how environmental issues have been present in specific communities. In particular, the Environment and Technology Section of the American Sociological Association has many helpful experts (<http://www.envirosoc.org/>).

Environmental sociologists can help answer questions and explore issue such as

- What cultural ties have people in a particular community had to the their environment
- The history of a community or one with similar characteristics
- Social constructions of nature or resources, and some impacts of those constructions
- Political dynamics of groups organizing around contentious environmental issues
- Social constructions of contentious environmental issues in a particular community

Environmental sociologists can also help to identify more general issues about which journalists may need to be aware when it comes to disproportionate environmental impacts. Race and ethnicity might be more salient in on place, class in another. What's more, environmental sociologists can help journalist be more precise. For example, Heberle says, they could help to assess whether harmful exposures are workplace related, or if they are coming from a source that effects the larger community.

Environmental historians and their research can also help to contextualize stories. Physical landscapes and communities change over time, and checking with environmental history can help to correct or even reveal journalists' assumptions about what they see and hear.

Research in environmental history, sociology, geography, gender, ethnic, and American studies has challenged a narrative that has framed "environment" as a domain of white male actors. Much of the research has been generated by people from underrepresented groups, potentially giving them valuable and credible things to say about environmental realities within their communities.

\*Taylor, Dorceta E. (1992) The Environmental Justice Movement. EPA Journal.18.1, 23-25

\*\*Smith-Cavros, Eileen (2006). Black Churchgoers, Environmental Activism and the Preservation of Nature in Miami, Florida. Journal of Ecological Anthropology. 10, 33-43

\*\*\*Lewis, Harry (2007). Pollution Prevention and Community Environmental Health: Opening Doors Through Cooperation and Partnerships. Journal of Environmental Health. 70.5, 45-46

## FIND MORE

Association of Newspaper Editors Minority Leadership Institute ([www.asne.org](http://www.asne.org))

Society of Professional Journalists Rainbow Sourcebook and Diversity Toolbox (<http://www.spj.org/divsourcebook.asp>)

Maynard Institute for Journalism (<http://www.maynardije.org/diversityguide>)

Center for Integration and Improvement of Journalism, San Francisco State University (<http://www.ciji.org/resources>)

# FIELDNOTES

## *SEJ TASKFORCE*

***A COMMUNITY FOR ALL TO ENGAGE***

Ayana Meade is a freelance writer covering environment and sustainability and chair of the Society of Environmental Journalists' Diversity Taskforce.

When environmental journalists discuss “diversity” we are usually referring to biodiversity, and not the degree to which cultural/ethnic variation exists amongst our colleagues. Yet both types of diversity share an important commonality, in that they are a measure of the health and vitality of a system or organization.

While attending my first SEJ conference, I was concerned by the lack of diversity in the organization and its potential influence on the variety of voices and perspectives in environmental coverage. It turned out I wasn't alone. In response to what we saw as a need for the environmental journalism community to better reflect the country's changing demography, my colleagues and I launched SEJ's Diversity Task Force in 2010.

The task force was founded under the premise that it is vitally important that environmental journalists reflect the broad range of communities affected by environmental issues. We also feel it is important that journalists of all backgrounds have access to information helps ensure fair and accurate coverage of issues affecting minority and other underrepresented groups.

To that end, the task force has worked to advance discussions surrounding “environmental justice” issues by establishing SEJ's first open-membership discussion

listserv, outreach initiatives to minority journalism groups (e.g., National Association of Black Journalists, National Association of Hispanic Journalists, etc.), coordinating topical panels at yearly conferences, and spearheading this, SEJ's first diversity resource guidebook. Future and ongoing initiatives involve providing mentorship and conference scholarship opportunities to young and emerging journalists of color.

Journalists wishing to be active members of the task force must be SEJ members, but access to the listserv and conference call meetings are unrestricted and open to all journalists with an interest in diversity/EJ issues. This open forum structure (the first group of it's kind for SEJ) is key to creating an atmosphere where all viewpoints are welcome, which encourages an open exchange of ideas from diverse perspectives.

The diversity task force is represented by journalists from all ethnicities and backgrounds and we welcome new perspectives to join our discussions and volunteer initiatives. To join the SEJ-DIVERSITY discussion listserv or to find out more about volunteer opportunities, please contact me, (DTF Co-chair) with your name, email, and a brief description of your journalistic affiliation, coverage area and/or interest.

# FIELDNOTES

## REPORTING

**NEWSROOMS AND HISTORY MATTER**

Brentin Mock has worked in mainstream and niche pubs, and says history and newsroom culture must and do inform inclusive reporting.

**W**hat is state of diversity in environmental journalism today?

It's really a microcosm of the lack of diversity in journalism in general.

There is this kind of double impact. I think journalism in general lacks the kind of diversity the public deserves to have, and so does the environmental community. You put two segregated entities together and the problem is just magnified.

There's also this issue of trying the same thing over and over. That is, we're defining diversity as fellowshipping or interning a few people of color into a white landscape, and I firmly believe we need to define it as leaving that landscape and moving the other way. I mean attending black journalism organization conferences, going into those different spaces.

Minority media cover community at a granular level probably better than dailies because they depend so much on wires, but those media have been drained of their resources as white-run papers began hiring minorities. Minority media lost a lot of their best and brightest. Why not have the best and brightest Asians or Latinos or whoever working at a black newspaper for a year? Not only would that help with coverage, but then the reporters would learn something as well.

What do you feel is the next frontier in ensuring inclusive environmental reporting?

I think environmental reporters in the mainstream are using the same myopic lens as mainstream, which is a very top-down, wonky, policy-jargon kind of way. There's not enough penetration of communities and what's happening at the ground level and giving it the same level of as what would come from a scientist or government official.

The frontier for me is really digging into environmental history in America. It seems to me that a lot of reporters enter or access environmental reporting strictly from the data, environmental reports. But if we're talking about dynamic stories and giving readers what they need, there's a real need to look at the history why people do what they do and focus where they do. We need to understand that there have been competing views within environmentalism, a lot of which just got cut from the story.

When I talk to reporters lately, they don't know the history of what they're covering because there's so much in the present and so much about what we'll do in the future. There's no analysis of the history and why we're even talking about it the way we are today. But if reporters would look at the history, I think their minds would be opened up because the history is diverse. It's about race. It's about

economics. It's about gender.

For instance, when you look at the history of environmentalism, there's no way you can do that without looking at eugenics movement and ideas about race. There's no way that you can avoid looking at discussions women were having about their bodies, about kids. Somehow that discussion got separated in the 70s or 80s. Maybe it's because there wasn't a language for discussing these things that wouldn't be divisive or unappealing to consumers. The scholarship is all there now; it's just a matter of reconciling environmentalism back to what it's been divorced from.

### **How do you see gender and sexuality being represented in environmental journalism?**

I think there's not enough of it. When you look at environmental impacts and pollutant impacts, the people at risk are often pregnant women. It often dovetails with reproductive issues. That's definitely the case in the Gulf Coast and Cancer Alley. You look at environmental justice from the EPA's definition; the main indicators have to do with mainly issues that affect women. I don't know that that is pronounced enough, at least not in mainstream reporting. You have to go to niche publications to get that.

It's interesting that the history of environmental activism in the 20th century has got these two strains. Men largely led the conservationist, focused on preserving land for hunting and recreation and things like that. Women mostly lead the more progressive strain, from Rachel Carson all the way to Majora Carter. If our environmental porters are a reflection of that arc of history, then there's some really valuable reporting lost when men are dominating it. That's not to say that male reporters are not progressive, or that journalists necessarily have to be progressive. It's just to say that in a male dominated industry we're missing out when we don't have a lot of women in there. Men and women just have different lenses.

### **What's an element of this discussion that is really important not to be missed?**

For me it's hard to separate diversity of coverage from diversity in the newsroom. What happens in the field is definitely important, but what happens in the newsroom itself is very important. As that story goes through its process, there's things like headlines, stories or even in leads or photos, there might be something offensive in there that's racially or culturally insensitive. But if you have more women, Latinos or other groups in the newsroom, they can catch some of that. It's having people in the newsroom who can catch those things, and who are also in constant communication with other staff.

### **Where do you see opportunities for more inclusive and diverse environmental coverage?**

Ben Adler did a piece for Grist on the value of park space in cities. He did a video mixtape of his 10 favorite hip-hop songs that mention parks. I thought it was brilliant. It is a perfect example of someone who has a diverse pallet of music and news and issues in his own mind. People who gravitate toward parks could only be tickled by that. But then there are people who are into hip-hop who might not really think about parks who would gravitate toward it as well. He took a potentially boring topic and made it interesting. Everyone walks away with something. But to do that, you have to kind of be the reporter who already has a diverse array of cultural subjects and influences at your disposal.

I think that one area that probably environmental journalists of all races could get a wealth of environmental information from is religious centers: churches, mosques, temples. Issues of being a good steward of the earth and things like that are discussed intimately in those places. Because of that science-religion divide, we journalists miss many opportunities by not acknowledging them. But it's just a fertile area for environmental journalists to get more ideas.

REPORTING

ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

FOR DIVERSE ANGLES

THAT HIT HOME

# GOING INTERNATIONAL

North America provides a microcosm of the world's ethnic and economic diversity. Reporting here offers opportunities to explore specific interests and do reporting in overlooked niches.

CROSSING THE GEOPOLITICAL LINE TO GET THE STORY CAN BE EASY IF you avail yourself of any of the plethora of educational institutes, agencies, and organizations that are dedicated to cross-border concerns. This is true in the case of officially recognized boundaries as well as those not shown on the map in what seems to be an ever-richer mix of diverse communities.

What's more, being attuned to diversity angles on stories and open to environmental justice signals can lead you to an infinite storehouse of career advancement prospects. From a pitch to the editor that puts your product in the headlines to a travel grant or an educational internship, reporting with an eye to diverse perspectives has beaucoup benefits.

## LEARNING THE LANGUAGE

If you are just starting out in environmental journalism, formal university courses that spotlight diversity can point you in the right direction and language courses can arm you with skills that linguists insist unlock appreciation of different viewpoints. Language learning is also a good starting if you are further along in your career and want to reconnoiter in the field outside your own diversity category. English is the dominant standard in North America, but Spanish is becoming ever more important. French ranks a close third due to wide use in Canada.

Mexico's Spanish language schools are located in some of the loveliest mid-size colonial cities of the country. The pursuit of French language studies in Canada also will lead you to some of the most attractive colonial cities on the continent. In either instance, you can get a feel for the environmental issues that interest people while you're brushing up on your speaking and writing skills.

For less expensive options, adult education classes and informal conversation groups in many communities cover almost every language, including indigenous ones and those from overseas where they are prevalent. Translation programs online or on mobile devices can go a long way toward helping navigate a foreign language on the fly. Though imperfect, they can help clarify large blocks of text or oral dictation in many, many languages.

Total absorption in a foreign language location is always an option to break into diversity reporting. Let's say you are an English-language environmental journalist. If you are courageous, you can learn another language and the ropes of journalism in a different country by dropping into a major foreign-language speaking city and applying for a job at an English-language newspaper. Many U.S. and Canadian reporters have gotten their first jobs at a daily in one of the biggest cities in the world simply by applying to an English-language newspaper in Mexico, Distrito Federal, as Mexico City is known to locals.

### SUPPORTED EXPLORATION

For those who prefer a more measured approach, an outstanding source of professionalization in diversity reporting is the International Center for Journalists ([www.icfj.org](http://www.icfj.org)). You can find out about its current offerings by subscribing to its free, digital newsletter. Thanks to private foundation and government donations from numerous big contributors, ICFJ programs include training for journalists who seek advancement in either their own diversity group or in another.

For example, ICFJ's courses in Public Service Journalism for Arabic-Speaking Journalists and the Building a Digital Gateway to Better Lives program helped a journalist from Iraq win an award for her multi-media project "Polluted Water in the North of Iraq."

ICFJ has offered U.S. reporters of color internships to work as foreign correspondents in major media through its International Reporting Fellowship for Minority Journalists. That program was succeeded by the Social Justice Reporting for a Global America

program, which also provides U.S.-based journalists the opportunity to report the environmental problems abroad to their hometown audience.

Together with the Knight Foundation, ICFJ has funded several fellowships in environmental journalism in far-flung settings, including a recent one for using mobile technology to transmit news to and from isolated tribal communities in India – with striking results for improved community food and water access.

Programs like these put you in close contact with other journalists who share your interests and can be some of your best allies in improving your reporting of diversity issues.

### BRINGING NEW PERSPECTIVES

With an inclusive mindset and a probing attitude, you have the potential to give as much as you receive from crossing international borders. As a foreigner, you might take an interest in how CO<sub>2</sub> emissions affect the health of street vendors that are just part of the scenery for other locals. Your curiosity and fresh perspective can yield valuable journalism when matched with good reporting and sincere engagement with your new locale.

Your stories can have an impact on the communities into which you venture, and they can also have value back home. Traveling and working across borders can give you new ways of addressing and framing issues in your own community or coverage area. It can help you better understand the ties that bind one region to another, a notion that is already an important part of environmental journalism.

The climate for environmental journalism is changing in more ways than one. Even as we work to tell the story of a natural and technological world in constant flux, we must also respond to a society that is seeing significant demographic shifts.

Yet even long before this period of demographic churning, the demand for addressing diversity and practicing more inclusive journalism has been glaring, to those who have investigated the issue. Environmental journalism has been no different.

*SEJ's Guide to Diversity in Environmental Reporting* is a resource for environmental journalists who want to better understand the landscape in which we report, and how to actively participate in making sure journalism measures up.

#### *About the Authors*

**Talli Nauman** is the Diversity Associate for the Society of Environmental Journalists. She is co-founder and co-director of the Aguascalientes, Mexico-based bilingual independent media project *Periodismo para Elevar la Conciencia Ecológica, PECE* (Journalism to Raise Environmental Awareness), initiated with a MacArthur grant in 1994. Her investigative photojournalism on proactive endeavors for environment and gender equity in indigenous and rural communities throughout the Americas characterizes Nauman's multi-media coverage as an ongoing effort to open media spaces for the voices of underserved populations. Her experience covers 40 years in major media outlets in the Americas, including the Los Angeles Times Syndicate, Reuters, UPI, and The Associated Press in Los Angeles and Mexico City. She has a master's degree in International Journalism from the University of Southern California and a bachelor's in Visual and Environmental Studies from Harvard-Radcliffe.

**Jennifer Oladipo**, managing editor, is Senior Business Writer with Community Journals in Greenville, South Carolina. She covers business, energy, and sustainability. She has written on issues of diversity and environment that appeared in *Grist*, *Orion Magazine*, *Utne Reader* and the anthology *The Colors of Nature: Culture, Identity, and the Natural World*. She created the *Introduction to Environmental Justice* for the Anne Braden Institute for Social Justice Research, a community-oriented text. She organized the Bluegrass Diversity Roundtable on diversity and environment in Kentucky. She studied in the graduate program at the University of Missouri School of Journalism and has a master's degree in Pan-African Studies and Graduate Certificate in Public History from the University of Louisville, where she researched historical and contemporary issues of minorities and environment.