Climate Justice acknowledges that climate change is a social justice issue; the causes and effects of climate change impact marginalized communities disproportionately. It centers communities on the “frontlines” of climate disaster while resisting exploitative institutions, systems, and power structures that perpetuate inequity amidst the climate crisis. We cannot address climate change without understanding that the causes of climate change and its detrimental impacts are a product of the same systems of oppression and power structures that are at the heart of other social inequities and societal oppressions. Climate justice is also the belief that climate solutions will come from the grassroots level, that is, they are directly based on the needs and leadership of most impacted communities.
Communities Impacted by Extraction

Climate Justice recognizes that low income communities and communities of color are the communities most impacted by both the causes and effects of climate change. Communities that have been systemically oppressed socially, are also the communities that are most impacted by climate change.

Some of the largest causes of climate change are the extraction of resources and the burning of fossil fuels. Extraction sites and fossil fuel burning sites are most often in communities of color or low-income communities. These extraction industries become central in community economies. Often, the only work available in extraction communities is physically dangerous, has long term health impacts, or actively contributes to the degradation of the land in the community itself. In other words, employment comes at a cost.

Climate Change disproportionately impacts systemically oppressed peoples. The effects of climate change include rising sea levels, pollution, increasing aridity, changes in ecosystems, increasing natural disasters, etc...Island and coastal communities are the first being impacted by rising sea levels. For Impoverished nations, especially those that rely on pastoral and agricultural lifeways, climate change is already creating problems of food insecurity. Often, the peoples most directly impacted by climate change (whether entire nations, or smaller communities within larger nations) contribute the least to the sources of climate change.
Indigenous Rights in Climate Justice

Indigenous Lands are destroyed for the sake of resource development and economic gain. The legacy of Colonialism informs the oppression of Indigenous Peoples and the exploitation of Indigenous lands through the energy industry.

Ex) “In 2015, nearly “30% of America’s coal west of the Mississippi and up to 50% of its uranium [lay] within Native American tribal lands. Tribal lands [held] 20% of America’s non-renewable resources and could potentially supply 10% of domestic fossil fuel needs” (Dudley).

Climate Change does not adhere to borders, and neither does Climate Justice. Migrant Justice and Refugee Justice are Climate Justice issues. As climate chaos increases, so do natural disasters. Regions of the world are becoming more and more inhabitable. Hurricanes are flooding coastlines and wildfires burning forests.

The movement of peoples, now more than ever, may be determined by the changing climate.

Ex) “Hurricane Maria led to an estimated 4,645 deaths and left hundreds of thousands more in Puerto Rico without power or access to necessary health services, forcing over 179,000 to leave the island for the mainland US” (Yoshimoto).

Meanwhile, in 2018 The Trump Administration is admitting the lowest number of refugees into the United states in three decades.
Just transition, simply put, is the just transition from extractive economies to regenerative economies. Just as in JUSTice.

While the resource transition (from extractive to renewable) is a conversation in mainstream environmentalism, justice is not usually considered.

Just transition considers communities’ economic needs, laborers rights, and the rights of development.

How will laborers in extractive economies continue to be employed in just ways after extraction stops?

How can communities become economically self-sufficient in the absence of national energy dominance?

How can the transition away from fossil fuels in communities also be a transition away from corporate/industrial dominance over communities?
Food Justice

Industrial Agriculture is a major contributor to climate change because of factory emissions, deforestation, and monocropping to name a few. The industrial food system, in dominating global markets, has put small scale farmers out of business both economically, and in contributing to climate chaos that changes growing conditions. Communities worldwide, have become dependent on the industrial food system. This leads to food insecurity in rural and urban places, the inaccessibility of healthy foods, and the loss of traditional food systems.

Housing Justice

In a world of corporate-industrial dominance and climate chaos, access to ecologically and culturally appropriate housing is limited. After natural disasters, people are not only displaced by the elements, but by gentrification.

Ex) After hurricane Katrina:

“Following Hurricane Katrina, many public housing authorities gained access to funding that would enable existing low-income projects to be converted into mixed-income developments.”

“In practice, the conversion permanently displaces low-income tenants unable to locate private market landlords willing to accept housing vouchers” (Morse).
CLIMATE (IN)JUSTICE IN UTAH

Tar Sands
Tar Sand and Oil Strip Mining in Eastern Utah

White Mesa Uranium Mill
The only operating conventional Uranium Mill in the United States, the White Mesa Mill is only three miles from the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe’s White Mesa community. Uranium here is hauled across the Colorado Plateau, originating at the Canyon Mine near the Grand Canyon. Hauling happens across tribal nations and communities. Visit haulno.org to learn more.

San Juan County Redistricting
Voting Districts were redrawn in Conservative-dominated Southeastern Utah to “reverse political domination of whites over American Indians” (Tanner). There is still great voter accessibility in that region for voters on the Navajo Nation.

CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE GREATER SLC AREA

“In Salt Lake City, there is a visible divide between east and west side communities just by infrastructure alone. On the east side, a predominantly white population, there are newly constructed schools, adequately preserved buildings, organic grocery stores and clean parks. As you move to the communities west of I-15, which are predominantly communities of color, there is a lack of access to fresh food and produce, exposure to noise pollution and poor air quality due to nearby refineries” (“Environmental”).

West Side Environmental Project
“The goal of the West Side EJ Project was to identify and minimize environmental concerns and public health issues in the Rose Park neighborhood of West Salt Lake.”

Stericycle
A commercial and medical waste incinerator in North Salt Lake may move to the more rural area in Tooele County.
WHAT YOU CAN DO

There are many topics relevant to Climate Justice, so many that there are entire courses on this subject. We did not even begin to cover everything in this 'zine. We encourage you to take what you learned here, learn more, and get involved. Be a part of creating a more just and liveable future! Here are some steps to take and resources:

Learn more about Climate Justice movements and teach your peers
https://www.mrfcj.org/principles-of-climate-justice/
https://globaljusticeecology.org/climate-justice/
https://climatejusticealliance.org/just-transition/
https://haasinsthibe.berkeley.edu/immigration-justice-climate-justice

Acknowledge your privilege
Acknowledge that we live on occupied Indigenous Lands
https://native-land.ca is a resource to acknowledge the land that you’re on

RESOURCES

Learn about, support, and donate to Indigenous Lead and immigrant/refugee support organizations and social justice organizations
http://www.pandos.org
http://utahdinebikeyah.org
http://www.inearth.org
http://www.blackmesawatercoalition.org
https://puebroadoptionalliance.org
http://hopitutskwa.org
www.utahpacifichealth.org
https://aau-slc.org
https://www.raicestexas.org
https://www.cuutah.org
https://mutualaiddisasterrelief.org

Support or Volunteer with Local Organizations
https://www.raciallyjustutah.org
https://www.cuutah.org
http://utahdinebikeyah.org
http://www.pandos.org
https://aau-slc.org
Utah Sierra Club Equity and Justice Task Force
On Campus
Environmental Center
Diversity and Inclusion Center
Center for Civic Engagement

Citations
Morse, Reilly. Environmental Justice Through the Eyes of Hurricane Katrina. Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies Health Policy Institute.
WHY SUNFLOWERS?

Sunflowers are the national symbol for the Climate Justice Movement. They are hyper-accumulators which means they have the ability to absorb high concentrations of toxins in their tissues; they can suck up cesium from soil contaminated by nuclear waste, healing the land. They symbolize resilience and justice. They are the beauty and the hope that continue to shine in chaos.

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