Rooted in Resistance: Black Feminist Ecologies and the Struggle for Environmental Justice in North Carolina



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Introduction

What is environmental justice?

The study and practice of addressing and correcting ecological harm that disproportionately impact minority and low-income communities, ensuring healthy living conditions for all.

What is environmental racism?

The systemic placement of toxic burdens and harmful infrastructure in communities of color, resulting in unequal access to clean resources and services through discriminatory policies and practices of governments and corporations.

Contributions

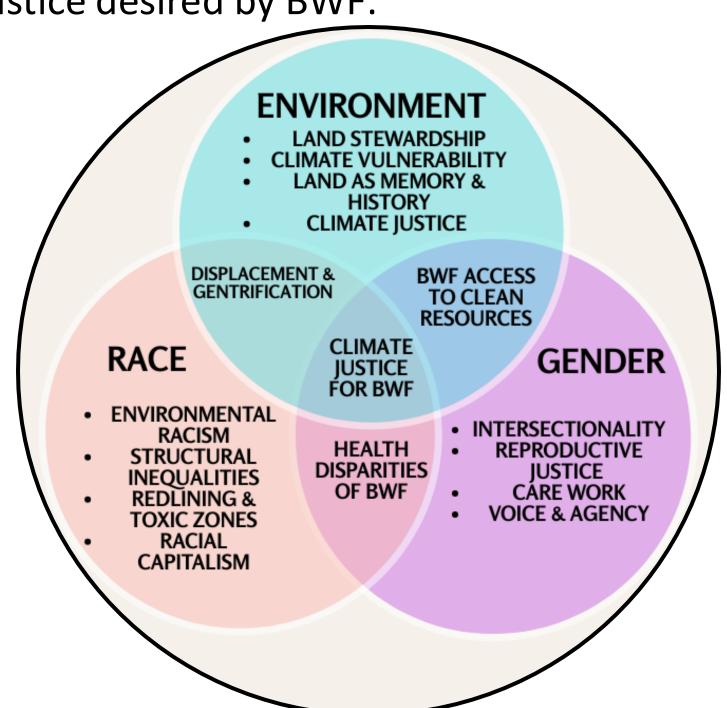
There are important and unique contributions being made when it comes to addressing environmental harms, changes, and shifts under climate change. These shifts are driven by ongoing racial capitalism that devalues and degrades alike humans and ecologies.

Objective

- Project Focus: To document Black Feminist Ecology as practiced by Black women and femmes (BWF) in North Carolina.
- Intersectional Analysis: explores how racism, sexism, and classism shape their environmental struggles.
- We highlight the everyday acts of resistance and self-care that BWF engate with to create homeplaces - safe, nurturing spaces to support ecological resistance and community well being.
- BWF are building a Black feminist ecological praxis that connects personal experiences to collective environmental movements.

The BFE Framework

- The **Black Feminist Ecology framework** offers a theoretical understanding for the unique connections, observations, and relationships to the Earth created by BWF.
- Below is a breakdown of how these interconnected themes contribute to climate justice desired by BWF:



Methods

- Literature Review & Annotated
 Bibliography
 - o <u>Identified themes number of sources</u>
 - EJ foundations and frameworks 5
 - BFE thought and intersectionality 7
 - Environmental Racism experienced with beauty and personal products 2
 - Resistance, Community Power, Environmental Activism 6
 - Gender, Violence, and Women Environmental Defenders 2
- 17 BWF interviewed (July 2024-Present)
 - This project focuses on interview responses from 2 participants
- Qualitative analysis & thematic coding of interview transcripts

Preliminary Results

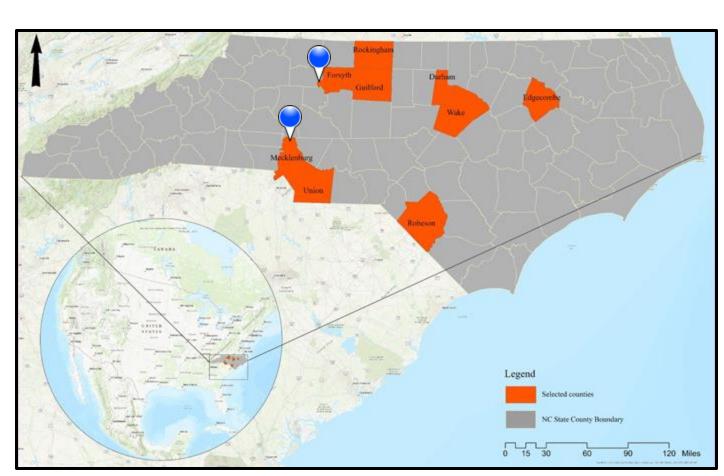


Figure 1 (Left). North Carolina counties represented in interviews thus far. Image courtesy Azad Segahi.

Figure 2 (right). Word cloud of challenges identified by BWF, including liberation



already though &	
Subject	Quotes of Interview Participants
Invisible Burdens of Inequality Gender specific violence, unrecognized unpaid labor, token representation, invisibility and dismissal of women's knowledge and activism	 "I've become more hyper aware of when I'm only, or you know one of few black women in the spaces that I am in[I'm] very much like used to being one of, you know, one of the only, the only you know person in the space, and I can't say that it's a comfortable feelingand so it does intimidate me sometimes, like I, you know I have to be honest." (Participant 2) "A lot of the environmental issues are affecting Black people, um Black and Brown people in a way that, you know they're not always recognized, or they're not always acknowledged" (Participant 2) "I don't think I could sit in those corporate rooms, you know, where decisions are made, you know, before you see the color of my skin and the decisions already made." (Participant 1)
Ecological Resistance & Self- Care Forms of caretaking practices that move towards a social,	 "Like when it's warmer, I'll find any reason to go outside. So, um you know, to go outside and do work. Sometimes in the morning I'll take my coffee and just sit there. Um I've been trying to get a little bit, get myself back into kind of grounding myself, so I'll go outside and walk around, you know, barefoot and those kinds of things." (Participant 2) "I just have this open-mindedness about my body, is my body. And my mind, how I identify, and my mind is that I can have my complete mind. Nothing can get in the way of it. So I just appreciate my journey, to be able

Community Power & Environmental Activism

racial, economic, and

environmentally just future

Collective, place-based action to fight environmental harm, reclaim agency, and build a sustainable future

Piedmont Environmental Alliance (PA), North Carolina Black Leadership and Organizing Collective, Crosby Scholars, She Speaks, Lesbian Elders of African Descent, Black Land and Power Initiative, Green Faith

to take from things that happened to me in the past, and relate to it now, and to be able to move forward,

envision things for the future as well, based on that." (Participant 1)

- "Providing a space for that to have dialogue and to learn. Since nobody's going to come to us, we can go to them, to act, to empower us, to engage, um, to advocate for ourselves, for our health. And for housing, for for our health...because what's in our environment affects us in so many ways, we don't even realize. It's all encompassing." (Participant 1)
- \succ "I made a decision that I'm gonna suit up and show up what my passion, and bring that to the room and be ready to open my mouth and take a stand on things that I'm passionate about." (Participant 1)
- That's my like hope is to kind of bring more people into the work that PA is doing because generally it is a very white space, very white, male dominated space. And so, finding that opportunity and so I think that's part of why I am excited to be on the board and happy to be on the board, because I know that there are a lot of opportunities to kind of bring the work that that PA is doing to a greater audience." (Participant 2)

Future Implications

- Work in progress: Research on BFE praxis is ongoing and evolving.
- **Next steps:** Five scheduled interviews with BWF, qualitative analysis and thematic coding of interviews, further literature review, opportunities for collaboration with local organizations.
- Environmental Justice Rooted in Resistance: It's not just about equality, but about inclusion, respect, community voice, and equity.

References



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