

# Climate Justice: Racism and Climate Change are Connected

**“Climate change is a human rights and civil rights issue.”**

**Jacqui Patterson, Director of the NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Program**

## **To stop climate change we must unite against racism**

None of us can achieve the changes we need on our own or remaining siloed in our separate struggles and organizations. We must work in solidarity with communities and causes whose fights require a parallel shift of power and values. (Greed, narrow self-interest, disregard for others, domination and exploitation are the driving forces behind both racism and the despoiling of the planet.) United we will be powerful enough to build the world we want.

## **To achieve racial justice we must unite against climate change**

because climate change, if unchecked, will be the greatest cause of impoverishment, suffering and death of people of color and indigenous people in the remainder of this century

### **Springfield Climate Justice Coalition**

Here in Western Massachusetts, since 2014 the Springfield Climate Justice Coalition has brought together organizations across the City of Springfield to take on the issues of climate change and environmental justice at the local level, “out of a deep concern for the future of our environment and public health”.

Recent major victories include winning agreement to repair over 500 gas leaks in the city and the commitment of the City of Springfield to implement a Climate Action and Resiliency Plan.



**Climate injustice is here now.** In Lawrence, MA, a city with many poor people, immigrants and people of color, the explosions from gas piped by Columbia Gas, forced thousands from their homes in an afternoon of terror, even as Columbia seeks to build new, unnecessary pipelines in Western Massachusetts. In Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria, racist neglect boosted the death toll to 2,975 and it took over 10 months

to restore electric power even on a tenuous basis. In Houston, a year after Hurricane Harvey, 27% of Latinex people who had to leave their homes are still unable to return to them (compared to 11% of whites).

Sponsored by: **Working Group on Racism & Climate Connections** – *Climate Action Now - Western Massachusetts (CAN), Coming Together Anti-Racism Project, Mothers Out Front*

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## Our Group's Proposed Principles for Activists and Supporters:

- We are in this together – people of color, indigenous people, and white people – in the U.S. and around the world.
- We seek fundamental transformation of the oppressive system of power and values that places profit, consumption, and growth over human needs, the environment, and the common good - harming all of us and dividing us from each other.
- We commit to advancing and prioritizing diversity, equity, and inclusion; shifting power to, and backing the leadership of, people of color, indigenous people, and those bearing the greatest burden of climate change.
- We commit ourselves to developing and taking immediate steps as large and radical as necessary to end the damage from climate change, racism, and genocide.
- We seek to ensure our actions against climate change always include redressing the disproportionate burden being borne by people of color and indigenous people and move us toward a more unified, multi-racial movement for climate justice.



See also:

*Climate Justice Principles* from the “Environmental Justice Leadership Forum on Climate Change”

at <https://www.ejnet.org/ej/ejlf.pdf>

Climate Justice Alliance at <https://climatejusticealliance.org/> (first page image from CJA)

350.org at <https://350.org/facing-climate-change-through-justice-and-intersectionality/>

**Facing and Responding to Our History** From the early white settlements, the wealth and prosperity of the United States was built on the genocide and theft of land from the native population, and the labor of enslaved Africans. Because we are organizing in the context of an unjust society with racism, white supremacy, classism and more, in order to make enduring change we must ensure that our actions do not reinforce these injustices, but help to dismantle them.

**In the U.S. and worldwide, people of color and indigenous people are already disproportionately affected by climate change** (despite having done the least to cause it).

Droughts, floods, and changing temperatures are disrupting subsistence agriculture in many parts of the developing world, resulting in increasing hunger and starvation. West Nile virus, Dengue, Ebola, Zika are all spreading in Africa and/or Latin America (and to the US) as a result of changing temperatures and rainfall patterns. Rising sea levels are already making some islands and low-lying areas uninhabitable (including in Louisiana). An average of 26.4 million people per year are now displaced from their homes by catastrophic weather events, mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America.