

# Introduction to Climate Justice

## *Putting Equity Into Action*

This is an introduction to climate justice, and what each of us can do to support progress. Climate change impacts us all, but certain communities are impacted first and worst.

- 1 Climate justice acknowledges that climate change harms Black, indigenous, people of color, low-income and rural communities, women, children, people with disabilities, and marginalized communities first and worst.** This causes higher rates of illness, mental health complications, housing insecurity, financial distress, and death than in other people. Yet these same populations often contribute least to its causes.
- 2 Climate justice recognizes that many kinds of justice intersect — including health, environmental, economic, housing, racial, disability, gender, and education justice.** Generations of government-sanctioned redlining, segregation, and racism; along with classism, sexism, and ableism multiply the impacts of climate change, resulting in inadequate and unhealthy community infrastructure, education, and social programs for millions of people, and reduced resilience and recovery capacity in the midst of more frequent and dangerous climate impacts.
- 3 Marginalized communities have less protection from excessive heat, air pollution, and severe weather.** Because these communities receive proportionally less in federal assistance and post-disaster insurance, they lack fair access to disaster recovery services and resources, leaving them more vulnerable.
- 4 Rising temperatures cause worsening air quality, and unsafe heat exposure, and longer allergy seasons.** Marginalized communities lack access to the healthcare needed for the higher rates of illness, mental health complications, and life-threatening impacts that follow.
- 5 Climate solutions can be equity solutions** when the implementation involves and cares for those who are most vulnerable. Advancing climate justice can be advanced through supporting climate solutions that ensure justice and resilience for all communities.
- 6 People from all backgrounds can help to advance climate justice.**

### Examples

- **Severe weather:** More than 74% of evacuees (nationwide) with mobility challenges reported experiencing a lack of food one month after the disaster they experienced. 59% of deaf evacuees (nationwide) reported that they never went back home. In a 2018 study of counties with \$10B disaster damage, Black survivors' wealth decreased by an average \$27,000 while White survivors' average wealth increased by \$126,000.
- **Heat:** African Americans are 40% more likely to live in areas with the highest projected increases in extreme temperature-related deaths. Hispanic and Latino individuals are 43% more likely to live in areas with the highest projected reductions in labor hours due to extreme temperatures.
- **Air quality:** People of color represent 72% of residents living in counties with the worst air pollution. Black children are four times as likely to die from asthma as white children. 1 in 4 black adults and 1 in 5 Latino adults cannot afford their asthma medications. 1 in 2 Latinos in the US live in counties that frequently violate air quality standards due to the combustion of fossil fuels. Hispanic children are twice as likely to die from asthma as compared to non-Hispanic Whites.

To help advance climate justice, it is important to take the first step now. Here are just a few of the many ways you can participate.

- 1 Acquire a deeper understanding of climate justice.** Connect with, listen to, and support impacted communities. Listen to the experiences and guidance of the people and communities often hit first and worst by climate impacts.
- 2 Raise awareness about climate justice issues and build resilience within your community and social circles.** Help others understand their role in becoming part of the solution. Engage via social media and events to amplify awareness about the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations.
- 3 Support and amplify marginalized voices in climate justice initiatives.** Prioritize leadership by individuals most affected by climate change including Black, indigenous, and people of color, those from low-income communities, and people living with disabilities.
- 4 Advocate for climate solutions that prioritize equity.** Support worker retraining and job opportunities, building new, green infrastructure, and equitably sharing benefits with the people and communities impacted the most by climate change.
- 5 Engage in impactful civic actions.** Vote for elected officials who understand and will work meaningfully toward climate justice. Encourage policies that promote equitable access to renewable energy and energy efficiency.
- 6 Join or support movements and organizations** working toward equitable climate solutions. Support or advocate local efforts for a just transition to clean energy and removal of polluting facilities in marginalized communities.
- 7 Stay current on climate change impacts** and solutions in order to have informed discussions and call more effectively for climate justice.

### Thank you to our contributors

- Dr. Betty Whitted Holley, Academic Dean Payne Theological Seminary, Presiding Elder African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Ben Money, Senior Vice President, National Association of Community Health Centers
- Katie Huffling, Executive Director, Alliance of Nurses for a Healthy Environment

### Want to learn more about climate justice?

1. [What is 'climate justice'?](#), Yale Climate Connections
2. [Environmental & climate justice](#), NAACP
3. [The six pillars of climate justice](#), University of California
4. [A quarter of Americans live with polluted air, with people of color and those in Western states disproportionately affected, report says](#), CNN
5. [What is Climate Justice? And what can we do achieve it?](#), UNICEF
6. [Climate justice](#), Wikipedia
7. [Environmental & climate justice issues](#), The Solutions Project
8. [Climate justice](#), We Act for Environmental Justice
9. [Feminist climate justice: A framework for action](#), UN Women