

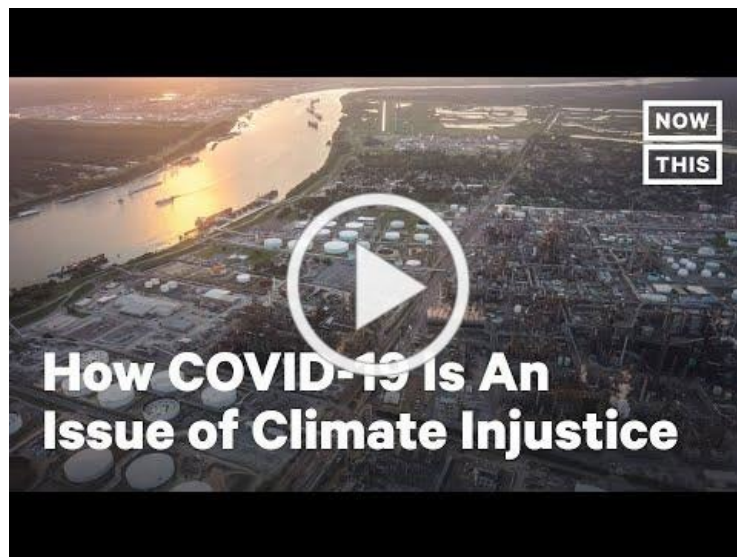


August 15, 2020

**Environmental
Justice, COVID-19 &
Climate Change**



In our first issue of "Making Every Day Earth Day" we explored the connections between climate change and COVID-19. Here we focus on how environmental justice comes into the picture, particularly how individuals and organizations address these three interconnected issues. We highlight the work of various organizations, followed by a feature on an Iowa-based group.



"[COVID-19] has been said to be an equalizer among humankind, but that cannot be further from the truth...Black and brown people are more likely to contract COVID-19 than any other group of people because of the lack of clean air in our communities...It would be a shame to return to the same level of air pollution, pre-pandemic, when we are needing to stop our climate from changing." [Danielle Sydnor, President of NAACP Cleveland](#)

The NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice (ECJ) Program

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) ECJ Program addresses environmental injustices, including climate change, which disproportionately impact communities of color and low income communities. The program provides resources and support for community leaders to advocate for these [objectives](#): reduce harmful emissions, particularly greenhouse gases; advance energy efficiency and clean energy; and strengthen community resilience and livability.

Among this program's [resources](#) are toolkits, publications, webinars and videos. There are various ECJ campaigns, including the following: [Power to the People: Fueling the Revolution for Energy Justice](#), which involves NAACP local units, branches, and state conferences fighting for clean renewable energy and green jobs.

NAACP's Youth and College Leadership initiative supports young people working in their neighborhoods and schools/colleges to end environmental and climate injustices. Their [Youth and College Organizing Toolkit](#) for ECJ has ideas and guidance for activities such as hosting a Twitter Town Hall on ECJ issues, and creating an art installation that portrays how ECJ issues impact the Black community.

[NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Survey](#) – share the concerns of your community.

[Support PSR Iowa](#)

"Indigenous Peoples, as members of their Indigenous sovereign nations, Asian and Pacific Islander[s], Black, Brown and poor white marginalized communities must be heard, prioritized, and invested in if we are to successfully build a thriving democracy and society in the face of intersecting climate, environmental, economic, social, and health crises."

Excerpt from "[A People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy](#)".

United Frontline Table

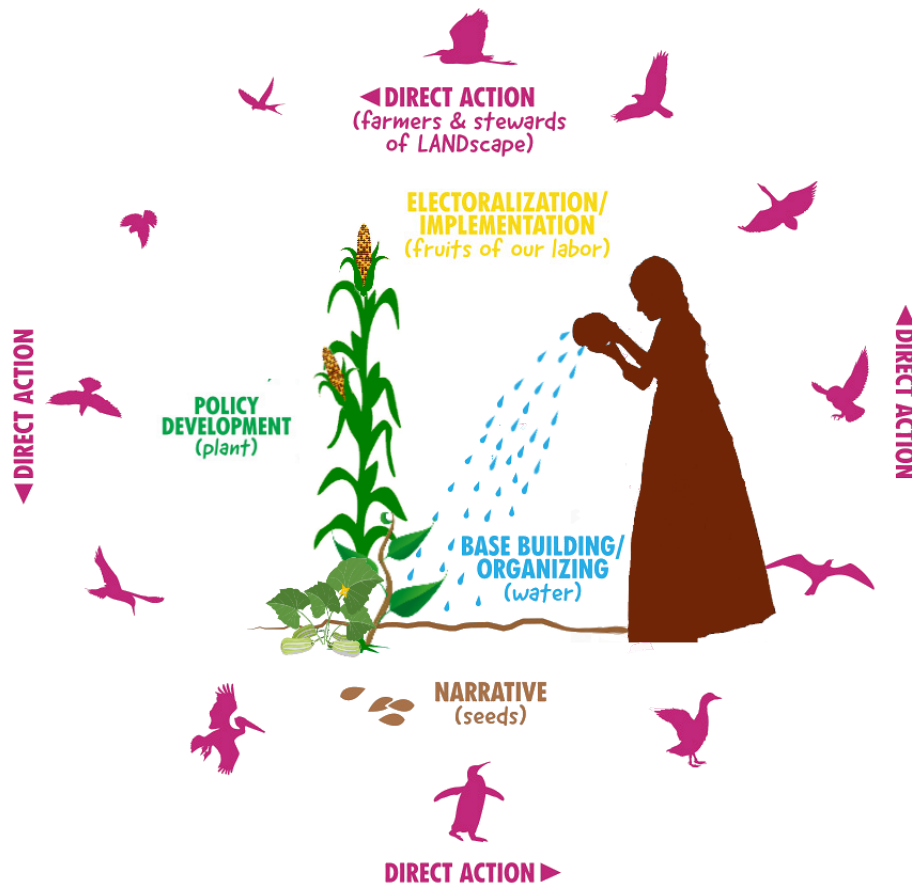
Over the years, frontline organizations and indigenous communities have been building relationships across the US and Puerto Rico, working to advance a just transition with equitable solutions to the interlinked crises of economy, climate, and democracy. The emergent movement for a Green New Deal has created an opportunity to deepen this work.

Last summer, leaders from 64 frontline and allied organizations attended the Frontline Green New Deal + Climate and Regenerative Economy Summit in Detroit. The participants workshopped a toolkit that was re-adapted during the COVID-19 Pandemic into the publication: "[A People's Orientation to a Regenerative Economy](#)." It was published by the United Frontline Table (UFT), a subsector of groups that were present at the Detroit summit, in partnership with the Just Community Energy Transition Project.

This toolkit is for developing policy and organizing to protect, repair, invest, and transform our communities and the economy. It contains over 80 policy ideas and solutions that are presented in relation to 14 planks for a regenerative economy, which are grouped into four overarching stances: protect, repair, invest, and transform.

To achieve the solutions described in this toolkit, five critical points of intervention by community-led frontline organizations, advocates, and policymakers are identified. They are

accompanied by a metaphorical illustration: narrative (seeds), base building and organizing (water), policy development (plants), electoralization and implementation (the flora we glean), and direct action (the stewards who bring our visions to life).



“We have not legislated to lessen the impacts of structural racism but instead, have placed a higher burden and lower value on the lives of black and brown people through racist policies like the 100 rollbacks of EPA. Systems that are meant to protect the health of the most vulnerable among us are being cast aside for profit, and coronavirus has revealed just how deadly inaction can be.” [Heather McTeer Toney, Moms Clean Air Force](#)

Moms Clean Air Force

Moms Clean Air Force (a.k.a. Moms) is a nationwide organization of over one million parents united against air pollution and climate change to protect children’s health. Moms work across the US on a range of local policy issues. For its summer 2020 campaign, Moms Clean Air Force has adopted the slogan, “Stay in & speak out for climate action in every breath.”

The Moms Clean Air Force website contains a wealth of information for education and action. One of its urgent national campaigns, [Tell Congress: Stop the EPA's Racist Agenda](#), highlights how communities of color systematically suffer from disproportionate impacts of pollution, which has led to their higher susceptibility to COVID-19.

Heather McTeer Toney, National Field Director, Moms Clean Air Force testified at the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee virtual hearing: “Sweltering in Place:

COVID-19, Extreme Heat, and Environmental Justice” on July 14, 2020. Her written testimony is available [here](#).

[Ecomadres](#) is a network of state-based field teams and allies that bring Latina moms together to address issues of clean air, climate, and toxins that affect their families' health. It is currently active in Arizona, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas and Iowa.

Iowa Chapter of Moms Clean Air Force

Karin Stein is the field organizer for Moms Clean Air Force in Iowa and co-leads the Ecomadres program. She is Latin American, and currently resides in Jasper County. We asked Karin some questions about their work with environmental justice and COVID-19.



Many Latinos are living in parts of Iowa where heavy traffic and industrial pollution lead to chronic health problems, such as asthma, making them more susceptible to COVID-19. Moms Clean Air Force and Ecomadres are working with Latino communities to educate them about these and other issues, as well as equipping them to positively affect change.

They are currently campaigning for Latinos to participate in the 2020 US Census, highlighting how that information is used to create and finance public health policy. Karin emphasizes that it is important for the government to know where Latinos are living, and that census data is not used for immigration purposes.

They are also getting the word out to Latinos in Iowa to register to vote, and to vote for candidates who will work to protect and improve environmental regulations.

Visit the Moms Clean Air Force Iowa [website](#) for more information, including other state campaigns, and how you can help.

[DONATE](#)

Physicians for Social Responsibility - Iowa Chapter



20 E Market St
Iowa City, IA 52245
info@psriowa.org
<https://psriowa.org>
