

Barriers to fruitful collaboration

There are immense challenges to collaboration between environmental justice activists and the environmentalists who lead the climate change movement. They come from different worlds, have different agendas, set different priorities, and use different processes. Race, class, and power dynamics are significant barriers to productive collaboration.

These barriers—embedded in the culture and histories of the environmental justice movement and the environmental field—will remain, elephants in an empty room, until it is clear that partnership is critical to the viability and success of each movement. If both movements are thriving, easily achieving their goals independently, there is no need for change. While few indicators point to such success, resistance to change currently prevails.

Strategies for building a movement for everyone

Environmental justice is evolving as a framework for social change in the early 21st century. Within that evolution lie significant opportunities for integrating climate change. Environmental justice activists and funders identified six areas for building the capacity and leadership of the environmental justice movement on climate:

- Strategy 1:** Increase community groups' capacity and access to scientific data, communications expertise, and economic analysis
- Strategy 2:** Deepen climate policy expertise and implement political strategies based on environmental justice values
- Strategy 3:** Expand creation and distribution of climate justice materials
- Strategy 4:** Support networking and information sharing through adoption of new technologies
- Strategy 5:** Acknowledge issues of scale while building expertise at multiple levels
- Strategy 6:** Build development capacity and better integrate environmental justice into existing funding streams

Currently, climate change is not everybody's movement in the United States. New thinking and action will be necessary for these two movements to work together. Everyone will have to take risks or suffer a shared fate of failure.

If we fail to take risks, to overcome fears of engaging across difference, to acknowledge the history and address the barriers that have stood in the way of more effective collaboration across movements, history will hold us accountable for the legacy we leave behind in the climate our children and future generations will inherit.

With relatively few resources, the environmental justice movement has built a foundation of local and neighborhood credibility and community empowerment. It has created sophisticated political education and leadership development programs that speak to and engage the people who have the most to gain from a truly just and sustainable future and the most to lose from the existing fossil fuel economy. This political force and these authentic voices have yet to be fully tapped.