

## Climate Change, the Issues it Perpetuates, and Environmental Justice Work

Climate change describes the notable shift we have seen in our world's ecosystem. Our global average temperature is rising, adverse weather conditions are more frequent and severe, and our air quality has been steadily declining, among other things. When the Environmental Justice Movement addresses an environmental issue, chances are that the issue is connected to climate change and the actions that have led to it. Irresponsible corporate and individual activities such as fossil fuel use and insufficient safety practices, among other things, have had a prolonged negative impact on our communities and our environment. This has led to the declining environmental conditions that define climate change. These conditions are proven to be results of climate change and represent a good portion of the primary environmental issues we face today. Our continued careless habits perpetuate climate change and are an act of injustice due to the harm they cause.

Climate change is an issue of recognitional injustice in situations where corporations do not recognize the lasting damage they cause in nearby communities and do nothing to mitigate their damage. Distributional injustice occurs when they choose to place harmful facilities that are responsible for climate change closer to low-income communities and communities with little political influence. Due to proximity, communities with these demographics tend to suffer more from the pollution and chemical leaks of these facilities. For example, A study examining over 32 million births in the United States found that “pregnant women exposed to high temperatures or air pollution are more likely to have children who are premature, underweight or stillborn” (Flavelle 1). Pollution from these facilities contribute to another climate-change-related issue—an ecosystem imbalance that strains the supply chain. This hinders equal resource distribution, which is another form of distributional injustice. Low-income people struggle to fulfill their needs as prices rise for many materials when the supply chain struggles. In terms of procedural injustice related to climate change, corporations rarely limit their pollution or take adequate precautions to prevent chemical leaks. They have limited focus on their external impact in favor of profit and growth. When their excessive pollution or chemical leaks cause harm, they must be held accountable because they rarely take responsibility.

The impact of climate change can also prevent progress in terms of current work against injustice. The consequences of climate change consistently counteract work toward economic equality, for instance. Resource depletion due to climate change creates greater economic inequality as prices increase and fewer people can afford the supplies they need. One aspect of this economic inequality is increased food insecurity. “For hungry and undernourished people, climate change is a threat multiplier. Since the early 1990s, the number of extreme weather-related disasters has doubled. This has reduced the yields of major crops and contributed to an increase in food prices and a decrease in income” (Concern 1). People are also working for procedural justice in terms of equal representation in the workplace, but the transition to clean

energy provides unique challenges for this movement. Many organizations and corporations are working to transition the world to clean energy. While it is an important solution to climate change, clean energy industries must provide job opportunities accessible to everyone in place of their jobs lost in fossil fuel industries. Barriers such as income, race, or availability within a location can prevent opportunities from being accessible to everyone. “Despite the notable growth in employment opportunities in the clean energy economy, energy jobs are infrequently held by women and people of color, as is also traditionally the case with fossil fuel industries” (Carley and Konisky 4).

The Environmental Justice movement focuses on a wide range of environmental issues. Climate change is a major issue because we are responsible, and it has been linked to many issues that cause widespread ecological and community damage. These climate-change-related issues create many injustices as described above and sets us back in terms of current work to address injustices. It exacerbates systemic inequalities along demographics such as income level and political representation. For these reasons, the Environmental Justice Movement has identified climate change as an issue that needs to be addressed. The movement pushes society to change its behaviors through new policy, greater transparency between corporations and customers, and corporate and individual responsibility. We must recognize these efforts and contribute as individuals, as our participation is necessary to prevent further damage and slow the progression of climate change.

## Works Cited

“How Climate Change Threatens Food Security (and Why We're All at Risk).” *Concern Worldwide*, [www.concernusa.org/story/climate-change-food-security/](http://www.concernusa.org/story/climate-change-food-security/).