

Reflection 3

GNDR 230 A01

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Prior to entering my second year at UVIC I had not yet declared a major. I was struggling to decide what direction I wanted to take in my studies. I came to the conclusion that I was very interested in both gender studies and environmental studies. I decided that I would study both but hardly considered how these two areas of study could connect to one another. This course was absolutely perfect as it tied these areas together! Throughout this course I have gained insight into the inextricable links between environmental issues and gender, race, disability, sexuality, settler colonialism, housing, etc. justice – and how all of these areas intersect with and are parts of environmental justice. This course has helped in guiding how I navigate my gender and environmental studies courses, but it has also helped to guide my approach to my degree and goals as a whole – by putting environmental justice at the forefront of my studies. I have found so much value in learning about which perspectives/who I can work to center in my studies in working to attaining environmental justice. By thinking about who is most affected by climate related issues and who is not included in climate initiatives, I could begin to think about how we could make environmental justice possible – the final helping me to apply and critically engage with what I had learned.

It can often feel hard to imagine a world like the one illustrated in “The Story of How we Won” to be possible. I have hopes and aspirations that a world like this is possible, but getting there feels so daunting – it’s hard for me to imagine where to start. Discussing the formation of this world where ‘we have won’ in a space filled with people who share the intentions to create a

world like it made such a world feel a little more attainable – perhaps because we were imagining this world and how we could achieve it as a collective. This exercise really brought together the concepts we had learned in this course and made us truly think about what it would require for such a world to be possible.

The “Don’t call me resilient podcast” episode hosted by Vinita Srivastava “Why Pollution is as Much About Colonialism as Chemicals,” Murphy’s (2021) concept of alter life has been a guiding source for not only the final, but this course in general, and my other courses as well. Murphy’s concept of alter life is a way in which humans and the earth face climate related change. This, paired with Whyte’s (2018) concept of interdependence makes clear the relationship of responsibility we have with the earth and one another, and reminds me of the importance of healing and acceptance in the fight for environmental justice. These concepts also remind me of the strengths we all have and the roles each of us play in these interdependent relationships. Identifying my own strengths is not something I often find myself doing – I find it far easier to pinpoint the skills of others. Discussing my struggle to identify with my strengths with my group gave me confidence to recognize and own my strengths. My group members helped me to see the significance in my skills and the value my strengths hold in supporting others. It was wonderful to see the people around me taking recognition of their own skills, as well as pointing out strengths that we have begun to recognize in each other through working together. This exercise helped me to situate myself in the communities I am a part of – as well as discovering what my roles and strengths are in contributing to a community. Working with my group this semester has helped me to recognize parts of myself that I didn’t recognize as strengths useful to social change – and in recognizing this strength I have come to realize that my

strengths in providing joy for others (whether that's through making them laugh or holding space for conversation, or sharing art and music,) are what truly gives me joy.

Environmental justice is social justice, it is political justice, it is economic justice.

Environmental justice is rooted in decolonialism. Accessibility is foundational to environmental justice. Environmental justice is reevaluating how we live our lives. Achieving environmental justice will require the addressing and dismantling of our current social, economic, political, and environmental systems. Environmental justice is anti-capitalist and involves safe and accessible housing. It is welcoming and built on respect and interdependence. There is respect and care for people of colour, queer people, disabled folks, immigrants, refugees – everyone is involved and cared for in an environmentally just world. Care work is distributed among us all, as we all have roles to play in caring for our community. Environmental justice involves not only the survival, but the thriving of the earth and all the species residing on it.

References

- Srivastava, V. Host, Liboiron, M. Guest, & Murphy, M. Guest (2023, September 27). *Why pollution is as much about colonialism as chemicals - don't call me resilient EP 11*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/why-pollution-is-as-much-about-colonialism-as-chemicals-dont-call-me-resilient-ep-11-170696>
- Whyte, K. (2018). Settler Colonialism, Ecology, and Environmental Injustice. *Environment and Society*, 9(1), 125–144. <https://doi.org/10.3167/ares.2018.090109>