

# Defining Environmental Justice

An Introduction

Created by Kazia Mermel & Madeline Oliver

# What is environmental justice?

“Environmental justice embraces the principle that all people and communities have a right to equal protection and equal enforcement of environmental laws and regulations.”

- *Robert Bullard,*  
*“Father of Environmental Justice”*

“The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.” - *US EPA*

“Environmental injustice can be seen as an affront to peoples’ capacities to experience themselves in the world as having responsibilities for the upkeep, or continuance, of their societies.”

- *Kyle Powys Whyte, Potawatomi scholar*

# Why do definitions matter, and why are there so many?

Language has power:

- How a problem is framed changes **priorities**
- Definitions determine what the **policy options** are (1)
- Policy language influences legal landscape

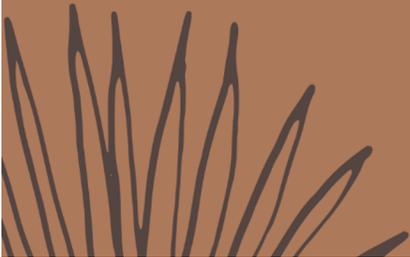
...and social movements are often expansive enough to hold many definitions of justice concurrently (2)

(1) Schattschneider, E.E. (1975). *The Semisovereign People: A Realist's View of Democracy in America*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

(2) Schlosberg, D. (2007). *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*. Oxford University Press.

**What does  
environmental justice  
mean to you?**

**Where have you  
encountered definitions  
of environmental  
justice before?**



The background is a solid brown color with several decorative elements. In the top right corner, there is a white, circular, sunburst-like pattern made of small, teardrop-shaped segments. In the bottom left corner, there is a dark brown, curved shape containing a white, stylized plant or leaf pattern. In the bottom right corner, there is a dark brown, curved shape that looks like a stylized hill or wave.

# Defining EJ in Practice