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Sins of the Same Vine
Codi Norred

"People who fight against white racism but fail to connect it to the degradation of the earth are anti-ecological -- whether they know it or not. People who struggle against environmental degradation but do not incorporate in it a disciplined and sustained fight against white supremacy are racists -- whether they acknowledge it or not. The fight for justice cannot be segregated but must be integrated with the fight for life in all its forms."

--James Cone, "Whose Earth is it Anyway?"

Our relationship to Creation is inherently bound up with our relationship to each other.

We cannot love God's Creation without also loving our neighbors. The way that we treat our environment and produce energy has always had implications on the health and livelihood of our neighbors. This is why GIPL is dedicated to the cause of environmental justice.

In particular, we know that Communities of Color and Black Communities disproportionately suffer ill effects from environmental injustices like polluted air and tainted water supplies. As such, it is the call of faith leaders and people of faith to dismantle the systems that perpetuate environmental injustices, desecrate God's Creation, and endanger the health and lives of our neighbors.

To this end, we must recognize that the same systems that perpetuate environmental injustices, injustices that disproportionately affect Black communities, are the very same systems that perpetuate the killing of Black people at the hands of police brutality.

It might be tempting to think that these issues are separate, especially for those of us immersed primarily in work around climate change and environmental justice, but that temptation is false. Make no mistake about it, the sinful ideologies that justify the raping and pillaging of God's creation merely for profit grows from the same sinful vine as white supremacy, the systemic commodification of Black bodies, and the structures that perpetuate the unjust murdering of Black people at the hands of police.

The same systems that allow a white police officer to push his knee into the neck of George Floyd, suffocating him, is the very same systems that continuously rely on devaluing Black communities and Communities of Color in order to push oil and gas pipelines through their neighborhoods, to locate Superfund sites in their backyards, and ensure Black communities cannot breathe because they are disproportionality exposed to polluting power production facilities, truck idling zones, and industrial manufacturing plants.

The same system that allows Black people to be killed in the streets by police is the same system that justified the desecration of the holy ground at Standing Rock and the violence police officers used on the Indigenous protestors there. It is the same system that poisons Indigenous communities through the legacy of Uranium mining, pays no attention to burning illegal landfills so long as they are not in white communities, and attempts to silence anyone who would point

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out that the love of money and environmental racism is poisoning the water, the air, the land, and our neighbors.

Coal and Natural Gas energy production, corporate and utility scale pollution, offshore drilling, fracking, mineral mining, mountaintop removal – the list goes on - are all designed and reliant on forcing Communities of Color, Black Communities, and Indigenous Communities all over the United States and all over Georgia to unwillingly sacrifice their health and their lives for the profit of shareholders and societal convenience.

If you say you love God's Creation, you must love your neighbor. If you are dedicated to fighting for environmental justice, you must also be dedicated to fighting for racial justice. Police brutality and environmental injustices are sins that devalue Black Communities and Communities of Color. To love God's Creation, is to love Black Bodies.

As faith leaders and people of faith dedicated to the cause of protecting God's Creation and fighting for environmental justice, we must also be active participants in tearing down the systems of injustice that perpetuate the killing of innocent Black people by police officers and the systems that kill innocent Black people through pollution and environmental poisoning.

These systems are fruits of the same sinful vine. They rely on the worship of the idols of white supremacy, the pride of anthropomorphism, the love of money, and the lie of patriarchy. We must be about the work of tearing down these systems, for they are not of the Kingdom of God. God intends for us to love Creation, each other, and to tend the Garden. But we cannot continue to simply tend the Garden that is being soaked with the innocent blood of our Black neighbors.

Codi Norred
Program Director

The GIPL team is available to help create safe space for faithful dialogue around justice, race, and inclusion and/or connect you with anti-racism leaders and workshops in Georgia. The issues of racial justice and a legacy of white supremacy in America are NOT separate from the discussion and actions taken around environmental justice. If you have questions or need clarity on something in the blog above, please do not hesitate to reach out to our team at info@gipl.org. *Remember: The only bad question is a question unasked.*

Additionally, we encourage you to take some time this summer to explore those issues that make you uncomfortable. If you are a White person in America, you have experienced the benefits of systemic racism. This is not to say that White people do not face struggles, but instead, a system all people were born into, inherited from our various ancestors, gives non-Persons of Color a significant advantage in life from birth. Learn more at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YrHIQIO_bdQ.

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