

The Challenges & Opportunities of Diversity in the Environmental Community



Leave No Child Inside

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by RICHARD LOUV



Photograph by Kate Anderson, used with permission

Nature Deficit Disorder

Students examine critters under a magnifierThe term “nature-deficit disorder” was coined by author Richard Louv in his book “Last Child in the Woods” to describe what happens to young people who become disconnected from their natural world. Louv links this lack of nature to some of the most disturbing childhood trends, such as the rises in obesity, attention disorders, and depression.

Our Children Are Paying the Cost of Being Left Inside

Not Learning The Value of Nature





The Challenges & Opportunities of Diversity in the Environmental Community Panel

Vincent Leggett – Blacks of the Chesapeake: Historical Perspective

Bob Keddell – Motivation Education: Higher Education & Political Perspective

Carmera Thomas – Minority Insider's Perspective

Fred Banks – MD Department of Natural Resources: Government Perspective

Karl V. Binns – University of MD Eastern Shore: Partners & Sponsors Perspective

Report Examines Why Decades of Promises to Diversify are Falling Short in the Mainstream Environmental Movement

The Green Insiders' Club

The report, "The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies," is the most comprehensive report on diversity in the environmental movement. It surveyed 191 environmental non-profits, 74 government environmental agencies, and 28 leading environmental grant making foundations to investigate their gender and racial diversity composition, the majority of which state diversification as a "value." The study included confidential interviews of 21 environmental leaders from diverse backgrounds and experience.

Report Findings:

1. The Green Ceiling

Despite increasing racial diversity in the United States, the racial composition in environmental organizations and agencies has not broken the 12% to 16% "green ceiling" that has been in place for decades.

2. Unconscious Bias, Discrimination, and Insular Recruiting

Confidential interviews with environmental professionals and survey data highlight alienation and "unconscious bias" as factors hampering recruitment and retention of talented people of color.

3. Lackluster Effort and Disinterest in Addressing Diversity

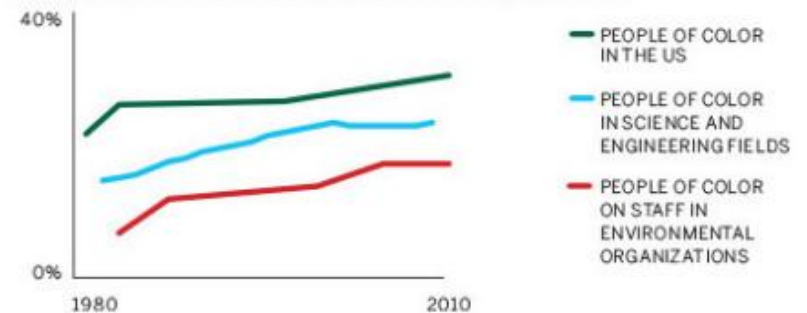
Efforts to attract and retain talented people of color have been lackluster across the environmental movement.

The Result: An overwhelmingly white "Green Insiders' Club."

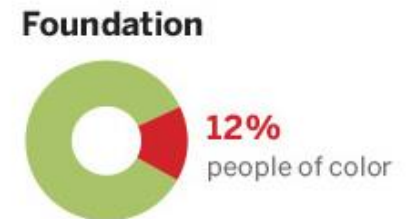
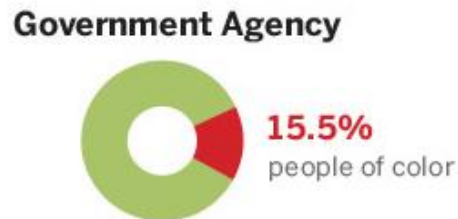
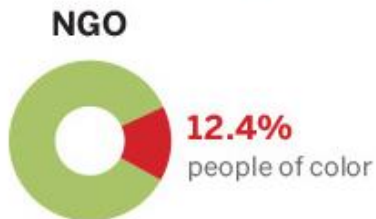
The Green Ceiling

• People of color are 36% of the U.S. population, and comprise 29% of the science and engineering workforce but they do not exceed 16% of the staff in any of the organizations surveyed. • For decades, environmental organizations have stressed the value of diversity however the diversity composition has not broken the 16% green ceiling. • People of color support environmental protection at a higher rate than whites. However, environmental organizations are not adequately reaching out to organizations representing people of color communities.

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT TRENDS OF PEOPLE OF COLOR



Staff Diversity in Environmental Organizations



Unconscious Bias, Discrimination, and Insular Recruiting

The failure of environmental organizations and agencies to increase recruitment and retention of people of color comes despite the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on communities of color and the fact that people of color poll higher than whites in support for environmental issues. Environmental organizations fail to use the existing internship pipeline effectively. As a result, diversity decreases as responsibility increases. None of the largest budget organizations had a president, vice president, or assistant/associate director who was a person of color.

External: Talent Delivery Initiatives

 "SHOULD BE DONE"
  "LIKELY OR VERY LIKELY TO SUPPORT"

"Develop a pipeline for greater inclusion of minority and low income residents in the activities, workforce or boards organizations like yours?"



"Create a web portal for identifying ethnic minority environmental professionals for jobs, consultancies, speakers, expert testimonies, etc?"



"Develop training program for low income and ethnic minority residents interested in working/ participating in activities in orgs like yours?"



Internal: Cultural Change Initiatives

 "SHOULD BE DONE"
  "LIKELY OR VERY LIKELY TO SUPPORT"

"Hold diversity training and staff meetings?"



"Organize a workshop on diversity?"



"Include more issues of interest to low-income communities and ethnic minorities on the agenda of organizations like yours?"



Lackluster Effort and Disinterest in Addressing Diversity

Despite making some gains, significant and intentional work remains to make the mainstream environmental movement welcoming to people of color, according to confidential interviews with 21 environmental leaders. Unfortunately, mainstream NGO, foundation and government agency survey respondents show an unwillingness to participate in needed initiatives to change the status quo.



Respondents express strong interest in external, talent delivery initiatives, however when asked if their organization is "likely or very likely to support" there is a stark 20-30% drop across all three sectors. When asked about internal efforts to improve organizational culture and address unconscious bias, there is weak interest and support drops even more when asked if their organization is "likely or very likely to support."

Interns

Hired Staff in past 3 years

Leadership

Board Slots

NGOs



22.5% are people of color



12.8% are people of color



12% are people of color



4.6% are people of color

Government
Agencies



22.5% are people of color



11.7% are people of color



19% are people of color



6.9% are people of color

Foundations



36.4% are people of color



17.1% are people of color



12.4% are people of color



13.3% are people of color

Recommendations for Diverse Leadership and Inclusive Workplaces

The decade ahead will mirror the last without aggressive efforts in three critical areas: In order to accelerate the representation of people of color in environmental organizations the board and executive leadership require priority attention.

Tracking and Transparency

- Diversity statements without a plan and rigorous data collection are just words on paper. Organizations and associations should institute annual diversity and inclusion assessments.
- Disclosure should facilitate sharing of strategies for addressing unconscious bias and overhauling recruiting beyond the green insiders' club.

Accountability

- Foundations, NGOs, and government agencies should integrate diversity goals into performance evaluations and grant making criteria.
- The environmental field's associations should use their convening role to showcase leaders and laggards on increased diversity.

Resources

- Increased resources must be allocated for diversity initiatives to work.
- Provide sustainable funding for networking to reduce isolation and support existing leaders of color.

