

# **Afro-Ecology Movement:**

**An environmental movement for the Pan-African communities of Portland**

**A partnership project between Portland  
African American Leadership Forum and  
Africa House**

**March 30, 2018**



# Acknowledgements

*A special thank you to the Coalition of Communities of Color for their funding partnership, and the PAALF Environmental Justice Committee, Nana Kwaku Mensah, the many African leaders and the participants in the Fertile Black Soil Dialogue series who informed this report.*

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*This project was generously funded by Meyer Memorial Trust.*

# I. BACKGROUND

In winter of 2017, the Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF) and Africa House were awarded a planning grant from Meyer Memorial Trust to develop a Climate Justice/Environmental Justice agenda. The project was intended to explore, understand, and develop an environmental justice agenda that is relevant to both African American and African immigrant and refugee communities and foster relationship across communities. The environmental justice agenda would seek to ensure that environmental impacts are eliminated and benefits, including economic opportunity and investment, are equitably distributed for the African American and African immigrant and refugee communities. In March, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability volunteered to provide technical and facilitation support to the project. This report outlines the approach and outcomes of this planning process, what both communities learned, and the path they have identified to move forward.

## A. Organizational Context

### **Portland African American Leadership Forum Environmental Justice Committee**

The Portland African American Leadership Forum (PAALF) is an advocacy organization that supports the Black population in the Portland Metropolitan area. PAALF was first established in 2009, a part of a national movement of African American leaders and stewards across six metropolitan areas – the Twin Cities, Portland, Seattle, Des Moines, Philadelphia, and Tacoma – that is committed to the revitalization and sustainability of a vibrant African American community. PAALF’s mission is to “help our Black community imagine the alternatives we deserve and build our political participation and leadership to achieve those alternatives.”

The PAALF Environmental Justice Committee (PAALF EJ Committee) was established in 2016 as part of collective community organizing led by the Coalition of Communities of Color ReDefine Environmental Justice project. That year multiple Coalition member organizations received funds to build their capacity to address environmental justice and climate justice issues. The PAALF EJ Committee created a place for many African Americans who identify with environmentalism in some form to meet and learn about local initiatives and issues. The group helped to craft the Environment and Just Sustainability Chapter of the People’s Plan and provided support for PAALF to give feedback on climate legislation in 2016 as part of Coalition organizing efforts.

### **Africa House Climate Justice Program**

Africa House is a direct service agency that supports African immigrant and refugee populations in the Portland Area. It was established in 2006 and has served more than 5,000 community members from 22 ethnic and cultural groups. Staff are highly diverse, coming from 17 different countries and speaking over 10 different languages.

Programs serve the many needs of newly arrived community members in navigating the institutions, systems and culture of Portland. These include education support, gang prevention, elder citizenship and support services, health enrollment and navigation, computer literacy and ESL classes, poverty reduction, and housing and energy assistance.

Another component of their programming includes civic engagement and leadership development. Through their leadership program, youth advisory committee, and through various policy organizing

initiatives, Africa House has a strong reputation and ability to organize the diverse communities it serves through issue education, training and mobilization.

In 2016, Africa House established its Climate Justice program. Also a member of the ReDefine collective, it sought the support to build the capacity of African immigrant and refugee community members to take leadership positions in local policy creation on environment and climate issues.

### Organizational Partnership

In 2016, Africa House and PAALF partnered to pursue a joint planning opportunity on their environmental work. From the beginning it was clear this project posed a unique opportunity to build relationship and understanding across the African American and African immigrant and refugee communities – something both organizations had been interested in doing since their inception but had no organizational capacity or strategic method to do so. The plan would seek to identify opportunities for collaboration in addition to actions that made sense for each organization to take separately. The groups partnered again with the ReDefine project of the Coalition of Communities of Color, which served as a project sponsor, and the recipient of the grant funds.

## B. Project Structure

The project was led by a coordinating team that includes the two co-chairs of the PAALF Environmental Justice Committee, Sam Baraso and Nakisha Nathan, and two staff members of Africa House, Thomas Aquinas Debpuur, Environment and Climate Justice Coordinator, and Isatou Jallow, Leadership Academy Program Director. PAALF Executive Director, Joy Alise Davis, and Africa House Executive Director, Djimet Dogo, participated in organizational advisory and executive roles.

The City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) agreed to provide the technical assistance, research, and support for the project in order to produce this report for the organizations. This project helps BPS advance its own equity goals within Portland’s Climate Action Plan by serving in a support role to community led climate work. This also allowed funds that were designated for consulting



fees to be used to hire a project coordinator. The BPS project team included climate policy, outreach, communications and sustainability programming staff, and was led by their Equity Program Manager, Desiree Williams-Rajee. Five of the six team members identify as African American. The team was later expanded to include a staff member from the Office of Equity and Human Rights who is also a Togo community leader.

The coordinating team provided overarching guidance on the direction of the project. The PAALF

EJ Committee served as a project advisory group. A corollary group did not exist for strategy and feedback meetings within Africa House, so staff served as representative leadership at the PAALF EJ meetings. Desiree left the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability in September of 2017 and stayed on as project manager and lead facilitator for the remainder of the Afro-Ecology Project.

### C. From Planning an Agenda to Planning a Movement

Initially, PAALF and Africa House had identified the desired outcomes to be a set of policy agenda options for the organizations to prioritize and select. Both parties had agreed that BPS would provide the options and supporting research, but not be involved in the selection process, given that some of the options may entail direct advocacy toward local government and create a conflict of interest.

The first step in this process was to clarify concepts and language. From June to August of 2017, the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) consultant team led focus groups at the PAALF EJ Committee and Africa House to get an understanding of their relationship to environmental work and the language and concepts that the groups were utilizing to advance environmental and climate justice.

In the first meeting with the PAALF EJ Committee it was immediately identified that terms like “sustainability,” “climate change” and “environmentalism” were uncomfortable for the participants. These terms were associated with whiteness and racism in the City of Portland. Even terms like “environmental justice,” which have traditionally been movements led by communities of color nationally, and exist in the name of the group, brought up questions and skepticism due to co-optation from white communities locally. Generally, feedback from the group was that current language is inadequate to describe the way they experience and see the environment.

Africa House convened a group of African community leaders to have a similar conversation. For this group, climate change was immediately identified as a political, social, and environmental issue that had very personal impacts. However, all stories shared were related to home countries, and localized issues in Africa with few connections made to their

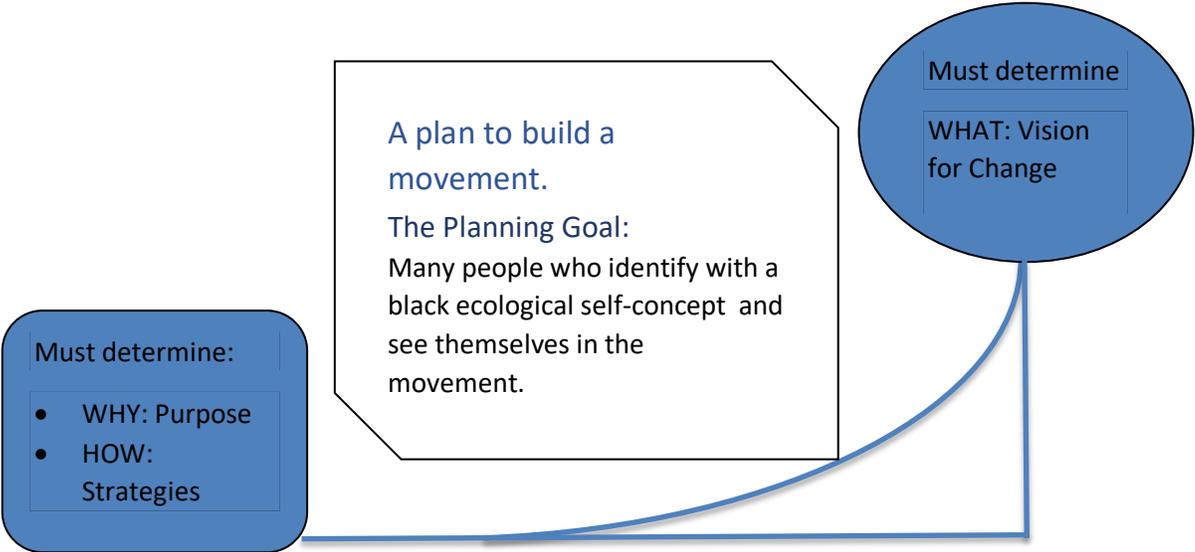


experience in the United States. When the conversation transitioned to environment, there was an immediate disconnect. One participant acknowledged needing to recycle more. And when asked if environment and sustainability were terms that they associated with white people, they universally agreed.

This posed an immediate challenge for the project in that the very language within the work felt culturally exclusive. Without common ground for language and concepts, the project coordination and facilitation team realized that the work to develop a climate justice agenda was premature.

The BPS team proposed an alternative solution, to focus this project on movement building. The outcomes were then redefined as being able to answer the following questions:

- WHY?: What value will culturally centered environmental movement bring or what purpose will it serve in the community?
- WHAT?: What is the vision for change the groups wish to create?
- HOW?: What strategies will be used to engage the respective and collective communities in the change?



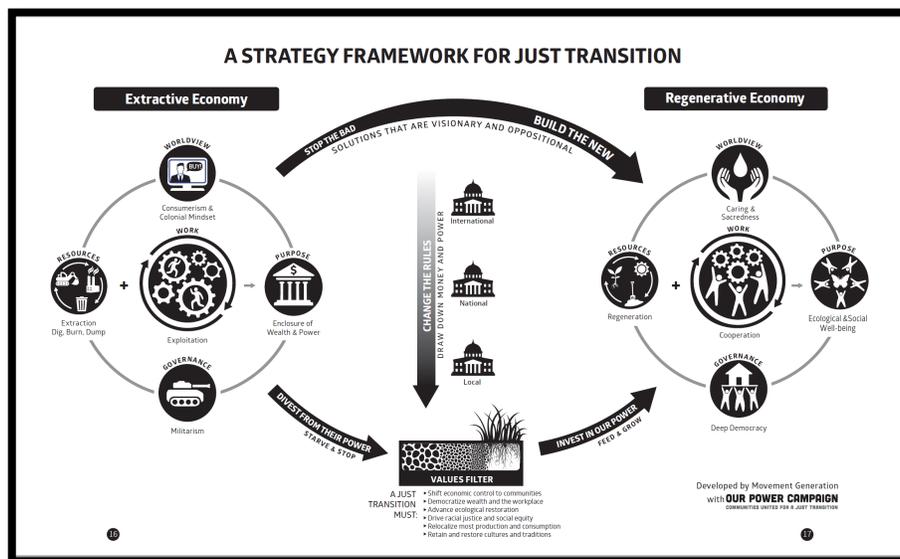
Once these questions were answered, the policy advocacy work within environmental and climate justice and climate change would have a much stronger cultural foundation to build from.

## II. DEVELOPING SHARED LANGUAGE

Before a purpose statement could be developed, it was essential to uncover what language could be used to describe the work that would be done together. A common framework had to be developed that resonated across the communities.

## A. Language: Exploitative vs Regenerative Economy

During both focus groups, participants were also introduced to Movement Generation’s Just Transition Framework. <sup>1</sup>



This framework is not climate change specific but does outline shifts in the economic systems to move from exploitation to regeneration. One outcome of the exploitative economy is climate change. This framework presents a systems analysis to “stop the bad” which are environmental and social exploitation for the benefit of wealth generation for a select few, and to transition to “build the new”, which are economic actions focused on community building and shared wealth. The framework helps to understand how an economy can operate to produce the specific outcomes it is designed for. It also outlines potential ways to disrupt the system to facilitate the transition.

Both groups found this framework compelling. Within the African Leaders group, the point was made that the notion of a “regenerative economy” is not new.

*“This thing that you are talking about. I know this already, but it’s not new. We have been doing this for a long time. People in my village are still living this way.”- Participant in African Leaders Focus Group*

Based on this comment a third circle was added to the Just Transition diagram, to reflect the history of African people. And it was acknowledged that by naming this history, it makes the regenerative economy even more tangible because there is an ancestral memory of it. The regenerative future can thus be inspired by lessons from the past and not just rely on imagination and ingenuity.

### Language: Black vs African

Over the years, PAALF has been intentional about updating their language to use the word Black to be inclusive of all people of African descent living in Portland metropolitan area. “We believe that Portland can be experienced and approached differently by Black folks based on one’s culture, gender, sexual

<sup>1</sup> From Movement Generation’s Just Transition Zine. <https://movementgeneration.org/justtransition/> An enlarged version of the framework is available in Appendix 5, on page 48.

identity, and socioeconomic status or even how long one has lived here. We understand that these differences matter. There are as many ways of being Black as there are Black people, but the experience of being Black unites us.” *PAALF Theory of Change*

The African Leaders were asked their opinion about using the term “Black” to self-identify. Responses were very mixed.

*“I did not use this word to describe myself before I came here. Why would I? Where I come from everyone is Black, so we do not need a word for it.”*

*“I love my Blackness. Black is beautiful. I am Black. But do I go out and say I am Black? No.”*

*“I didn’t know I was Black until I came here. Then I was told that I am Black, so now I guess I am Black.”*

*“My children identify as Black or African-American, I knew this would be the case, so I do identify with both Black and African so I could prepare them.”*



Because of this language difference, it was determined that Black could not be used as an all-encompassing term for the communities in the project<sup>2</sup>. To respond to these experiences, it was determined that a new concept would need to be established that both groups could identify with, thus the term Afro-Ecology was born.

### **Cultural Difference**

This discussion brought out additional conversation about how African immigrant and

refugee communities see themselves as culturally different than African-Americans. Using the term Black oversimplifies the experience that they have as newcomers trying to create home. They mentioned discrimination based on accent to be a common experience. Cultural practices as well as health issues such as diseases contracted in refugee camps were also mentioned as distinct differences. It was discussed that children may feel differently, and more closely identify with their African American counterparts. The experience of American racism was new for the immigrant and refugee population, and many are still trying to figure out what it all means.

One community member stated how that difference is an asset. “We want to learn from the African American communities about their fights for justice. We are shy because we have just come here and

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<sup>2</sup> However, “Black” would be used in the title of the dialogue series specifically for its metaphoric connection to the color of soil and black skin. This was tested by both groups and approved.

we do not know the systems. We admire African Americans for their fight for civil rights and we want to learn to do that here too.”

For the African American community, the BPS team observed that the African Immigrant and Refugee community had much to offer in their connection to the memory of traditional practices and cultural relationships with land. Such sharing could help African Americans connection to their cultural past.

### Language: AFRO-ECOLOGY

The term Afro-Ecology has two parts:

- 1) The first, **Afro** represents the diasporic cultures that stem from the continent of Africa and are currently living in the United States.
- 2) The second, **Ecology** – is the study, or the process of knowing “eco” or **home**.

The idea to use the term ecology was also inspired by the Just Transition Framework<sup>3</sup>.

### The evolution of a term

Despite not being fond of the term “environment”, the PAALF EJ Committee did have a strong resonance with the concept of a connection to land. Given that the Portland African American communities have been subject to the forces of gentrification for the past thirty years, the concept of land connection is a strong theme in current conversation and movement building. Many at the table are also doing direct work with nature, in both urban and natural settings.

With the African community leaders, in addition to connection to land, the concept of connection to people was very strong. For both, when we then defined “home” as the connection between **land + people**, and that these interrelationships result in **community**, it was highly resonant and reflected the more complex systems approach that people of African descent have in their understanding of their relationship to environment.

Land in this context is a much broader concept than what is below our feet. It is interchangeable with the word “nature” because one’s relationship to land determines one’s access to air and water, and one’s relationship to plant and animal life. It is also inclusive of both urban and rural experiences.

“I grew up in North Portland; my mom still has house in Mississippi. She plans on staying but she get letters, people knocking on the door asking if she wants to sell. Keeping the home was very important when she was growing up. There’s pride in ownership.”  
Fertile Black Soil Dialogue  
Participant

## III. Project Framework Development

### A. Why: Remembering Purpose

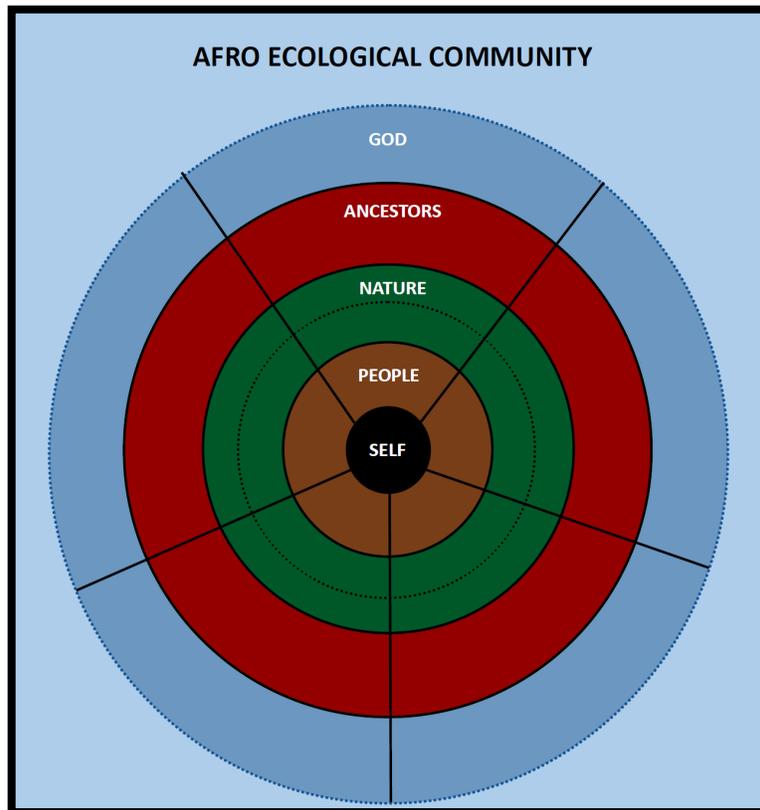
The relationship to nature for both groups had deeper manifestations. Words like “sanctuary,” “church,” “communication” came up for African Americans. The African immigrant and refugee community would use words like “spiritual,” and “responsibility”.

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<sup>3</sup> [www.movementgeneration.org](http://www.movementgeneration.org)

Thus, Afro-Ecology had to be a systems term that is inclusive of more than the physical or material world, but also the spiritual as well<sup>4</sup>. In African diasporic belief systems one common theme is the oneness with the natural world, and that this relationship reflects one's spiritual connection to the manifestation of *god*<sup>5</sup>.

“It emerges clearly that for African peoples, this is a [spiritual] universe. Nature in the broadest sense of the word is not an empty impersonal object or phenomena; it is filled with [spiritual] significance. [Hu]mans give life even where natural objects and phenomena have no biological life. God is seen in and behind these objects and phenomena: they are the presence of [god]. The invisible world is symbolized or manifested by these visible and concrete phenomena and objects of nature. The invisible world presses hard upon the visible: one speaks of the other, and African peoples “see” the universe when they look at, hear or feel the visible and tangible world. This is one of the most fundamental religious heritages of African peoples...The physical and spiritual are but two dimensions of one and the same universe.”<sup>67</sup>



Another important concept in this system is reverence for ancestors. This is seen across African diasporic cultures in their relationship to their elders, and those who have passed on. It is believed that ancestors

<sup>4</sup> Myers, L. (1988); Karenga, M. Introduction to Black Studies. (1982).

<sup>5</sup> The word god is not capitalized here because it refers to a generalized spiritual concept of a greater divine and not the Western version of God.

<sup>6</sup> Mbiti, J. (1970). African Religions and Philosophy. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books. Pg 74.

<sup>7</sup> Edits provided by Koffi Dessou to update language for gender inclusion and currently accepted terminology.

“Trees do not live for themselves, they live for others, we as humans need to do the same.” Fertile Black Soil Dialogue Participant

do not fully leave after they have transitioned and continue to provide guidance. The diagram above shows this full Community, the dotted line represents the delineation between visible and invisible or spirit level components of this Community.<sup>8</sup>

Africa is the birthplace of humanity, and the indigenous worldview. This ecological community concept is present in indigenous belief systems globally from Asia to the Americas.

The link to the root of these spiritual concepts has been broken for many. And in the African worldview, it is this disconnection that has caused the mental and physical health issues of African diasporic cultures; it is a spirit or soul loss. This is because purpose is defined by one’s relationship to this Community.

Therefore, the purpose of the Afro-Ecology Movement is to be a healing movement that brings harmony within the systems of **land + people + spirituality** for people of African descent.

## B. The What:

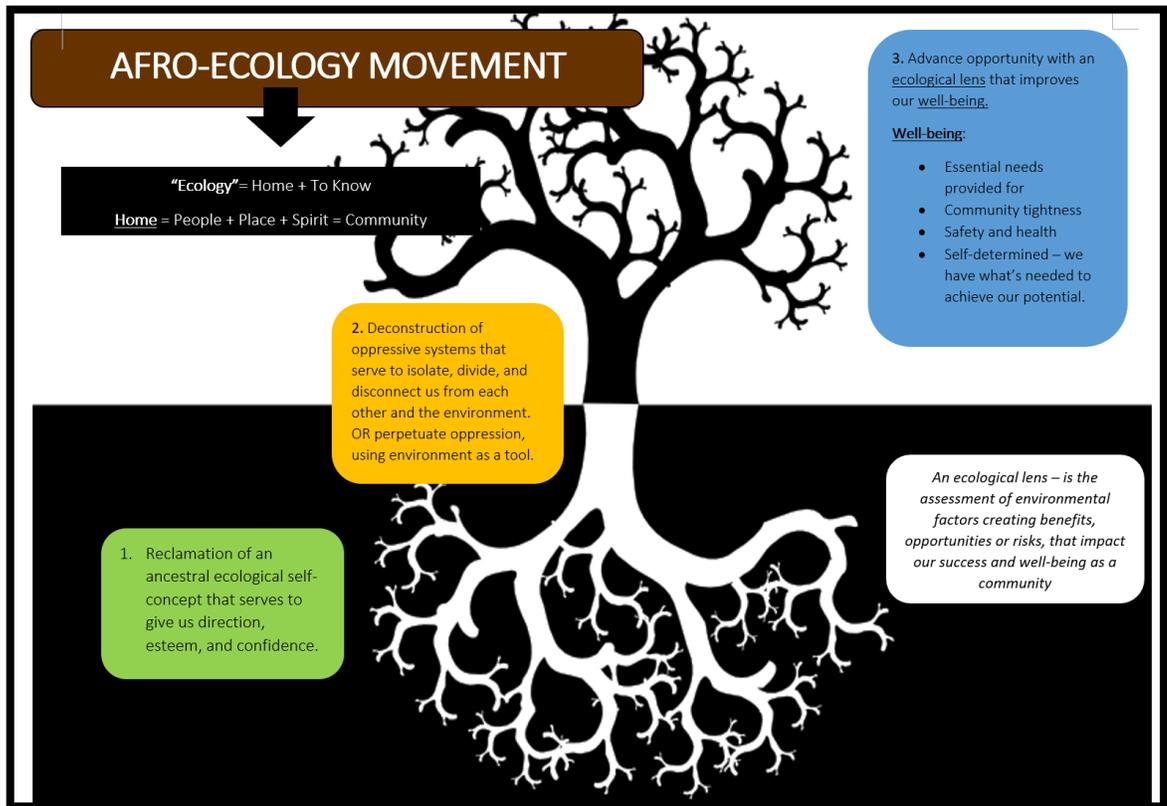
### Envisioning the change

Using feedback from both groups, and the Just Transition framework, three movement objectives were identified representing the past, present, and future. The tree was a symbol used to represent this, with the roots being the past, the trunk being the layers of experience that both communities have weathered, and the canopy being the future opportunity to be created.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>8</sup> Community with a capital “C” is used to refer to Afro-Ecological Community. Community with a lower-case “c” will refer to common use of the term community.

<sup>9</sup> Enlarged version is in Appendix 4 on page 47



**1) RECLAMATION OF AN AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ECOLOGICAL SELF-CONCEPT THAT SERVES TO GIVE DIRECTION, ESTEEM, AND CONFIDENCE.**

This concept represents the idea that in order to move forward one must look to the past. It is the recognition that the future that is sought can be inspired by the past. This is far easier said than done. For African-Americans who are descendants of slaves, this history is no longer a mental memory that can be tapped into. For African immigrants and refugees who lived under colonial rule, indigenous spiritual practices have long been at risk of being lost due to the introduction of Western value systems. This has come by force, coercion, and attraction to economic systems that entail assimilation. So how then can this ancestral ecological concept be regained? It is in the reconnection of the disconnected Afro-Ecological Community.

The connections described below create the context and foundation for the two other movement objectives. This objective was identified as missing component in the Just Transition framework:

**Connection to spirit:** To do so elders must be sought out for their wisdom and to serve as an intermediary with ancestors. Elders who have kept their traditions from the African community would have greater ability to recall, or call upon, their cultural beliefs and spiritual systems and would be able to provide guidance and clarity on the practice of self within the Afro-Ecological Community. It was also acknowledged that there are African American elders who could also play this role. While they may not be directly connected to the root source, they have been able to tap

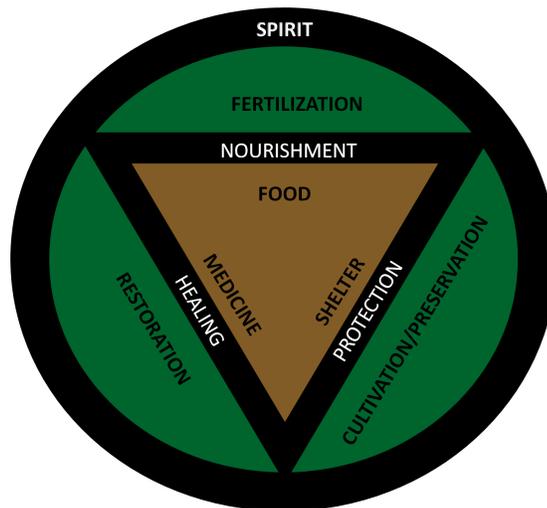
into a soul memory of this worldview and are in active practice of the concepts that keep the community together.

“In Africa we are used to taking care of each other. it creates a bond.” Fertile Black Soil Dialogue Participant.

**Connection to people:** Relationship of mutual respect must be built across the African-American and African immigrant and refugee communities. Creating space for the communities to come together and build relationship will serve to increase

understanding and trust, despite the different histories. Internalized racism and dominant cultural values will create an oppositional pressure within the communities to judge one another which can prevent community building. Creating spaces for mutual learning, celebration and enjoyment can override this effect.

**Connection to land:** Within the Afro-Ecology Community, the relationships are reciprocal. This means that humans have a symbiotic relationship. Engaging in this mutual relationship activates the self-concept.



The three interactions are:

- A. Nourishment – Food is found within the natural environment in plants and animals. Humans nourish the environment through waste and fertilization.
- B. Healing – Land provides medicine and therapeutic modalities. Humans have the ability to restore natural systems that have been broken or disrupted.
- C. Protection – Land provides shelter and protection from elements and threats. Humans can create systems to protect land and support its natural ecological functioning.

It is a relationship of gratitude, trust, respect, and ongoing communication. The goal is balance and harmony. This mutuality is so interdependent, when people are left vulnerable, hurting, or malnourished, or when land is used in excess or neglected, that balance is lost. The degree of people’s resiliency is determined by their ability to, and the speed by which this relationship is reclaimed back with land.

**2) DECONSTRUCTION OF OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS THAT SERVE TO ISOLATE, DIVIDE, AND DISCONNECT FROM EACH OTHER AND THE ENVIRONMENT. OR PERPETUATE OPPRESSION, USING ENVIRONMENT AS A TOOL.**

Colonization and the slave trade served to disrupt the system described above. In its place it created a relationship of domination and extraction with land and people. The outcome was traumatic for both. From this, one can make the direct connection to the challenges of social injustice, public health crises and climate change experienced today; they have the same root cause. Some of these tools of this system are described below in terms of the present-day manifestations.

**Scarcity**

Throughout the continent of Africa, foreign investment has resulted in foreign control of natural resources without the accountability relationship that is necessary for the Afro-Ecology Community to thrive. From oil spills in the Niger delta, near-extinction events of animals from poaching, to depletion of water sources, to fuel industrial production and growing urban populations, there is large scale interruption of natural ecosystems. The results of these ecological disasters create scarcity and fuels political and social conflict. Many of the refugee crises can be traced back to environmental issues and result in further stress upon land. Another outcome of scarcity is increased dependency on government structures to provide for basic needs previously provided for by land.

“Why did we leave our lands? Why did we move? Who are we following? These are the questions to ask.”  
Fertile Black Soil Dialogue Participant

In the United States, resource scarcity has always been a reality for African Americans,<sup>10</sup> and was even legislated in Oregon in land covenants<sup>11</sup>. The dependency relationship on white institutions was created through slavery and continued into sharecropping, where freed slaves paid rent and a portion of their harvest to use the land. Land is

regarded as an opportunity for wealth creation, and biased lending practices along with structural racism have always made this a more difficult system for African Americans to benefit from. From redlining practices, to blighted neighborhoods, African Americans have been structurally discriminated against having equal housing opportunity, which affects access to green space, safety, healthy food, and access to good jobs.

Scarcity is also used as the justification for not redistributing resources to improve the conditions of African American populations. This creates an environment of competition for these resources, which can contribute to social isolation.

**Isolation**

The experience of slavery and colonialization has created distance and isolation of people of African descent globally. White dominant power systems are based on the pursuit of status, wealth, and power, and the value of individualism over collective benefit. The experience of cultural isolation

<sup>10</sup> Insert data: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brianthompson1/2018/02/18/the-racial-wealth-gap-addressing-americas-most-pressing-epidemic/#df7c4747a48a>

<sup>11</sup> State Bill HB4134 was proposed in 2018 to remove these racist covenants.

can exist within and between communities of African descent. Physical isolation occurs in the experience of gentrification and displacement, but also in the immigrant arrival experience and in the relocation and resettlement of refugees. Isolated people are less resilient in times of disaster.

### **Erasure**

Another tactic used in this system is erasure. This is the removal of, or invalidation of, history and record that documents the experiences, accomplishments and culture of people of African descent. It occurs in media, education, and in policy making. Stories are a critical component of African diasporic history telling, and education for the Afro-Ecological self-concept. Without them, many traditions related to land have been lost. Stories are also a critical component in advocating for one's rights and for justice.

“The prioritization of sustainability is not a new concept, the white man might have “created” this term but we have been doing this since the beginning. We have to make sure to decolonize the mind when working in the environment.”  
Fertile Black Soil Dialogue  
Participant

By hiding the story of slavery and oppression, erasure serves to perpetuate the myth of equality. It is this erasure outcome that African immigrants and refugees experience upon their arrival. They then have to figure out how to navigate a new home in a racialized society without context.

These tactics, amongst others, support the systems of structural oppression within the United States that allocates the burdens of environmental harms disproportionately toward people of African descent and other people of color. The reason these tactics are so effective is that they not only impact the

physical resources and access that people have, they also impact the spirit. The resiliency of people of African descent co-exists with deep trauma.

Afro-Ecology movement work in this environmental justice arena must reverse the impact of these tactics and focus on those systems where they manifest: housing, land use, economic development, green space, food policy, and transportation. The Just Transition framework calls this set of strategies “stopping the bad”.

#### **Honoring Native American People, the indigenous populations of the land we live in**

It is important to mention that African Americans and African immigrant refugee experiences with land in the United States are also the product of a colonial relationship to land. This was devastating for the country's indigenous people. Ownership and entitlements to land are a colonial culture concept that must also be understood in order to be changed. Advancing the frame of Afro-Ecology means identifying alternative solutions to these models.

The experiences of Native Americans in the United States are deeply rooted to environmental injustice. Out of respect for Native people, and to honor their spiritual relationship to the land, by principle, the work of Afro-Ecology should ally and be complementary to their endeavors.

**3) ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY WITH AN AFRO-ECOLOGICAL LENS THAT IMPROVES OUR SELF-DETERMINATION AND WELL-BEING.**

Understanding the tactics of the oppressive system is helpful to understand what must be created to counter it. The third aspect of the movement aligns with the Just Transition frame of “build the new”. This concept focuses on the (re)creation of a regenerative economy and communities.

“Taking care of yourself in turn is taking care of nature. If you care about what you put in your body then you have to care about how you treat the environment and the relationship you have with it.” Fertile Black Soil Dialogue Participant

The Afro-Ecological lens applies the Afro-Ecological self-concept to assess *environmental factors, opportunities and threats that impact our success and well-being as a self-determined community*<sup>12</sup>. This analysis can then enable the communities to organize actions that increase ecological benefits and reduce risk or harm to communities. It is the intersection of people and nature, and the assessment of how to advance deeper, more interdependent, healthy, nourishing and protective mutual relationships.

Afro-Ecological Lens			
		Self-determined well-being	
		Opportunities	Threats
Visible	Nourishment	Growing your own food Community gardening Cultural food establishments Cultural grocery stores Art, music, and cultural celebration Intergenerational environments	Food dependency Soil Pollution Unhealthy, cheap food Chemicals
	Health	Fitness Herbalism Stress management and self-care Preventative Health Access to clean air and water Access to nature Community health practitioners	Pollution Siting of facilities or structures that cause poor health outcomes Work environments and stress Lack of connection to nature Cost of health insurance
	Protection	Safe housing Well-paying jobs Skills to navigate government systems Entrepreneurship Survival skills (professional, life)	Neighborhood blight Gentrification

<sup>12</sup> See Afro-Ecology Framework on page XX.

Invisible	Spirit	Community building Connection to culture Spiritual practice Honoring ancestors Honoring nature spirit (unseen)	Isolation Erasure Scarcity
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The spirit level of this work counteracts the psycho-emotional threats caused by land oppression and is the thread that brings the Afro-Ecological Community together. Western society only acknowledges the visible as valid and true. It will be imperative that Afro-Ecology efforts maintain the spirit level of activity for the movement to maintain its integrity and power. It is this notion that differentiates it from other ecological frameworks or environmental paradigms.

### C. The How: Building blocks for a movement

The coordinating team engaged in a three-part process of external and internal facing dialogue after the frame was initially developed to vet the relevance of the framework and the capacity of the organizations to work in partnership with one another. The underlying philosophy of this stage was that dialogue builds collective intelligence. The following section outlines each step:

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*“Dialogue Builds Our Collective Intelligence”*

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#### **Step 1: Engage with the community to test the concept: Fertile Black Soil Dialogue Series**

After creating the initial frame, the coordinating team decided to engage both organizations’ broader communities to test the ideas and concepts that the groups had been discussing. The team chose to engage in dialogues instead of focus groups so that there could be more interaction and engagement across participants and communities.

The design of the series was in part inspired by an African/African American dialogue series that was held in 2008. The purpose of that series was to breakdown differences and build understanding across the different cultures.

This series was structured to match the different components of the Afro-Ecology Frame: past, present, and future; and to focus on deep cultural roots and story sharing, which would facilitate relationship building between the communities, and facilitate healing from the trauma caused by dislocation, disruption and disconnection from community and nature. The series was also an opportunity to practice the Afro-Ecology framework concepts. The program agendas are included in Appendix 2, on page 34.

#### **Program Design**

The series was held in the Fall of 2017. Two were held on Saturdays, one was held on a Wednesday. Two were held in the evening, one was held mid-day. The days and times varied in order to be able to reach

people in different ways and to enable people to attend at least one session. The goal was for at least 12 people to attend all three, which was achieved. Over 60 people registered, and over 40 people attended throughout the three sessions. All three dialogues were held at Unite Oregon due to its somewhat central location.

### Creating Intentional Space

At the first dialogue, the series was opened with a libation and ancestral blessing ceremony led by Ghanaian elder, Nana Kwaku Mensah. Each series had entertainment alternating between African and African American performers. The first and last of the series ended in a drum and dance circle. Activities included games, storytelling, and discussion. Food was purchased from African and African American vendors. All participants received a gift of their choosing



from a local African Vendor at each series, and a raffle was drawn for a larger prize at the end of all three to encourage consistent participation. Childcare was provided, but children were encouraged to participate with their parents. Each session also began with the practice of *Hashima*, which means respect, and is an interactive exercise to develop group agreements. Team members participated as volunteer facilitators throughout the series.

### DIALOGUE 1: OUR SHARED

#### HISTORY (THE ROOTS): WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

This dialogue focused on connecting people to their shared ancestral relationship with land. The team felt the Afro-Ecology concept was too new to be used on its own, and instead designed the facilitation questions to back into its meaning by exploring relationship to land, it's role in people's lives, and how

that has impacted who they are and how they see the world. This dialogue circles back to the first objective of the Afro-Ecology framework: To reclaim the ancestral ecological self-concept.

Goals:

- To see ourselves in one another and our shared culture
- Define “ecological self-concept” without using the term
- Build a connection to traditional African belief systems

Discussion questions:

- Tell us the story of your people...What spiritual and cultural connection does your family have with nature?
- How did this ancestral relationship with nature and land support us in collective communities?
- How did the ancestral relationship with land influence community values?



**DIALOGUE 2: THE STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE**

**(THE TRUNK): WHO HAVE WE BECOME?**

In this dialogue, the impact of colonization, slavery, and oppression and their impact on people and the relationship to land was explored. This dialogue used a caucus model to facilitate cross-group communication about these impacts and to build understanding of the different and common experiences. After each break out, the groups would share with one another. This section circles back to the second objective in the Afro-Ecology frame: to deconstruct environmental oppression. The dialogue also aimed to have participants name the various ways the system operates to maintain oppression and ways that African and African Americans resist.

Goals:

- Explore similarities and differences regarding the impact of colonization/slavery
- Identify common stories related to exploitation - and name how exploitation has occurred (same rules apply)
- Explore how resistance has occurred
- Engage in the “Stop the bad” conversation, emphasize that exploitation is not the origin story and not the end



Discussion Questions:

Part 1 (Separate Groups by identity group: African American, African, 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation African)

- What would you like Africa/A-A to know about us? (respond to other group)
- What has helped shape your identity in America?
- How have we been impacted by efforts to assimilate to whiteness?

Part 2 (Mixed Groups)

- (A) Relationship to the land
  - What experiences have disrupted our relationship to land/nature?
  - What ways have we preserved our relationship to land/nature?
- (B) Community Relationships
  - What experiences have disrupted our family relationships?
  - What experiences have helped to preserve our culture and family relationships?



**DIALOGUE 3: THE VISION (THE CANOPY, LEAVES AND BRANCHES): WHO WILL WE BECOME?**

The third dialogue brought participants to the final experience of envisioning the future. This portion of the Afro-Ecology Framework was least clear, and the coordinating team was interested in their feedback on what the future could and should look like if we are able to activate the Afro-Ecology self-concept and lens.

### Goals:

- Build upon lessons from Dialogue 2
- Engage in the “Build the New” (with what we have now) conversation
- Identify shared values, goals, opportunities

### Discussion questions:

- What do we need to have a healing relationship with land and nature?
- How do we reclaim our relationship with nature?
- What does our ideal future look like?

### **What was learned**

Participants overwhelmingly confirmed the value and relevance of the framework and were enthusiastic and motivated to continue the dialogue. It was requested multiple times that this work continue and grows, and people are ready to participate. Their quotes are included throughout the framework portion of the document and summarized below:

- People within all the communities would like to connect more and build relationship.
- There is a traumatic relationship with land, and an empowering one. These coexist and helps shape who we are. Each generation has a different relationship with land.
- Community bonds are what give us strength.
- There is concern about judgment between groups, and there is a great appreciation between groups.
- Decolonization is a critical component of the work.
- The relationship with land is healing and nurturing, but sometimes it is scary too.
- It is about spiritual connection.

The final exercise of the series was to create a collective tree. Each person was asked to fill out a leaf with their vision statement of the future. These statements are included verbatim below.





<p>I would like to see a future whereby African Americans get a chance to be an African citizen, a place of their choice, in Africa. How can I play that role, to take them to see the black soil of their ancestors.</p>	<p>To feel safe and welcomed outside of the home. To have a home that provides comfort. Have the ability to express ourselves authentically.</p>	<p>We are eating foods that nourish our bodies and souls. We have space, time and knowledge to grow our own food to share in our community. We proudly bring our ancestral knowledge to any space.</p>
<p>A place to truly be free, achieving full potential births joy continuously</p>	<p>Peaceful home. Happy communities.</p>	<p>Sharing future with many opportunities.</p>
<p>Generational wealth. Home/land ownership. Establishing a sense of place in greater Portland that is vibrant.</p>	<p>Our children are proud of their blackness and are surrounded by supportive committees and institutions.</p>	<p>Wakanda--Black Panther. In my mind, this fictional place is a perfect blend of black culture, technology, futurism, while also being intimately tied into nature.</p>

<p>Own land/multi-family house and vegetable, herbal and medicinal garden.</p>	<p>Collective wealth and prosperity for all Afro Portlanders. Our communities living healthy, vibrant, full lives without controlled chaos and strife. Legacies of love, family, tradition, unbroken.</p>	<p>My ideal home would be by the beach with planted coconut trees where I can live on seafood and vegetables from nature and enjoy music, food and dance with neighbors.</p>
<p>Education for our communities about our historic/cultural connection to the environment so we can feel that climate change and environmental protection isn't a "white thing". -- Tools to guide our learning around health foods and cultural farming practices as a way to reconnect us to our environment. The re-creation of central gatherings that remind us of home.</p>	<p>Ta nefer anra= world of beautiful living. Where everyone and everything is living optimally. Where we work together, build together, and prosper together. Where we treat ourselves, other creations and this planet with respect and care. Living more harmoniously and United.</p>	<p>A home where black folks can access nature of healing and well being. A home where we are not separated from each other. Where black people can come together without being afraid of what other might think. A place that has air that is breathable and food that is healthy as well as close to where we live. A place where we are recognized as people, not as trend.</p>
<p>A future where I frequently break bread with people of my community using food we grew together. During this time, I would like to learn about and share mine and other people's experiences.</p>	<p>Access to explore the world safely and to take pride and ownership of our history and future.</p>	<p>Land collectively cared for and cultivated. Space to listen to each other and learn from one another. Shared meals as a community with storytelling. No fear. Freedom to be ourselves and the courage to support others in being their full selves even if it's different from our norms. Honor. Deep love.</p>
<p>The future I envision would entail safe and free passage for black people. This means that in place or in travel, we would be able to seek, locate, and move through any and all sites and say with truth and with confidence that we are home.</p>	<p>Running happy . Sharing harvest. Rooted, building community continuously. Connected to the earth. Living well in community but never at the expense of others.</p>	<p>Life-- presence, free, survival, education, space, cultivation, sustenance, preservation of life as a collective, physical/spiritual, and a culture of life, history and the engagement in fruitful tradition.</p>
<p>It is so empowering and invigorating when we learn of the ties between Africa and Black Americans that survived the diaspora. Let us strengthen and regrow those through food,</p>	<p>A life full of love, creativity, communal nourishing, authenticity, joyful transformation, safety and health.</p>	<p>A harmonious life cultivated by diverse and thriving ecosystems. Freedom to move throughout the land in harmony with seasons and species. A clean environment free of toxins. Sovereign communities</p>

outdoor experiences, travel, gardening -- from both African and African American leader in Oregon, the US, Caribbean and Africa.		free of oppression. Always learning from the land and the people who came from it.
Peaceful. Clean. Sustainable. Healthy. Happy.		Joyful. Honor the ancestral spirit. Aligned with nature. Peaceful.

**Step 2: Assess organizational capacity: Organizational Assessment of Needs, Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses and Threats.**

After the Fertile Black Soil dialogue series was completed, the next step was to understand the unique interests and capacity of each organization to carry out the work of movement building. Each organization met separately to identify organizational strengths and challenges. A summary of the discussions is in the table below:

	<b>PAALF</b> Community Leadership and Policy Advocacy for the Black community	<b>Africa House</b> Direct Service provider for African Immigrants and Refugees
<b>Structure to support project</b>	Environmental Justice Committee	Climate Justice Program
<b>Roles/Responsibility</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold a community space for Black environmentalists to connect and support one another</li> <li>• Promote the Afro-Ecology framework</li> <li>• Build capacity of community to develop environmental and sustainability agendas</li> <li>• Develop a policy lens</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver a climate justice curriculum</li> <li>• Build the capacity of African immigrant and refugee community members to effectively participate and lead in climate and environmental advocacy</li> </ul>
<b>Collaboration Goals</b>	EJ Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build broader inclusive movement</li> <li>• Strengthen policy advocacy analysis and coalition building</li> </ul> PAALF <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transition into policy advocacy/organizing body</li> <li>• Partner with Africa House to build/remember spiritual culture connection and integrate into work</li> <li>• Show up for one another</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen its capacity to effectively organize</li> <li>• Continue to develop programming that meets community needs</li> <li>• Partner with EJ workgroup and PAALF to learn systems and advance change</li> </ul>
<b>Assets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People’s Plan (PAALF)</li> <li>• Knowledgeable members from a variety of environmental fields and backgrounds</li> <li>• Strong leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership Program</li> <li>• Dedicated Climate Justice organizer</li> <li>• Existing base</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A regular place and time to meet and connect</li> <li>• A listserv, connection to many different organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong leadership reputation within multiple African communities</li> <li>• Strong networks</li> </ul>
Base	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African American Community Organizations and Individuals</li> <li>• Black Environmentalists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• African Immigrant and Refugee community members broadly</li> </ul>
Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear structure and workplan to organize the committee</li> <li>• Funding to support activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical Assistance and Expertise</li> <li>• Connectors</li> </ul>

The two organizations met together to discuss the alignment between their needs and offerings, identifying opportunities for collaboration. The table below outlines what both organizations saw being able to come from the partnership.

	<b>Collaboration</b>
	Leverage strengths of organizations to advance the Afro-Ecology movement.
Roles/ Responsibility	Share mutual responsibility for the continuation of the Afro-Ecology project. Leverage staff time and organizational infrastructure to support fundraising and collaboration.
Collaboration Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformative space – models building the new</li> <li>• Relationship building across communities</li> <li>• Language ownership and narrative reframing to center African American and African Immigrants and Refugees</li> <li>• Increase sophistication to advocate for ourselves in white spaces and cultivate self-determined opportunity because of connection to holistic perspective and worldview orientation</li> <li>• Show up for one another and coordinate activations of base</li> <li>• Grow knowledge, engagement and voice</li> <li>• Shared policy agenda that integrates an Afro-Ecology Frame</li> <li>• That our sum is greater than our determined, individual parts</li> </ul>

The groups developed a charter to frame the shared goals, values, and roles of the organizations. The full charter can be found in Appendix 1, on page 31, the vision and mission are included below:

**Vision statement: A Pan-African led environmental movement rooted in self-determination, justice, and our spiritual connection to the earth.**

Mission statement: The Afro-Ecology movement aims to cultivate well-being and resilience of Pan-African people by applying the Afro-Ecology self-concept to community building, policy and capacity building.

### Pan-African

From here forward, the communities will be inclusively referred to as Pan-African. Pan-African is defined as: of the African diaspora, African, African American or Black<sup>13</sup>. This choice was made to be inclusive of all African diasporic and mixed descent communities including Afro-Latino, Afro-Asian, and Afro-Native communities. Pan-African reflects the shared African ancestry, while recognizing the differences in experience and perspective that each person brings. It is the intent that the Afro-Ecology movement be inclusive of all groups, with PAALF and Africa House serving as founding sponsors of the work.

### **Step 3: Develop Implementation Strategies**

Based on the feedback provided during the dialogues on the Afro-Ecology framework and the organizational capacity discussions, the following three strategies were identified as strategic ways to build awareness and momentum for the framework, develop cross-cultural community building with Pan-African communities, and to apply the framework to policy work.

#### **Strategy 1: Promote Afro-Ecology through Community Building and Networking – Continue to bring communities together for relationship building and healing**

##### Objectives implemented

**#1: RECLAMATION OF AN AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ECOLOGICAL SELF-CONCEPT THAT SERVES TO GIVE DIRECTION, ESTEEM, AND CONFIDENCE**

Impact Goals: Build trust, momentum for and recognition of the Afro-Ecology Movement.

Value: This strategy continues to cultivate the development of the Afro-Ecology Community within Portland by giving the organizations and their extended communities tangible places to connect with one another, learn about African ancestral worldviews, and be in community with nature and each other in both urban and natural environments.

##### Actions:

- Develop an Elders Council to guide the implementation of the Afro-Ecology work that includes members of the Pan-African community
- Hold more dialogues and other community building focused events for cross pollination and learning
- Leverage organizational relationships and resources to engage people in experiences that bring people, land, and spirit together, such as gardening, hiking, restoration projects, etc.
- Engage with local Native American communities for mutual support and allyship related to land trauma
- Develop a communication platform to share events, ideas, and news
- Cross participation on boards and leadership committees
- Partnership introductions

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<sup>13</sup> From Danielle Jones, current Portland State university graduate student studying how Pan-African people connect to earth.

**Strategy 2: Develop a policy lens to address systems that produce environmental harms and environmental oppression and to build the capacity of Pan-African organizations to advance sustainability focused goals and initiatives.**

Objectives Implemented:

**#2: DECONSTRUCTION OF OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS THAT SERVE TO ISOLATE, DIVIDE, AND DISCONNECT FROM EACH OTHER AND THE ENVIRONMENT. OR PERPETUATE OPPRESSION, USING ENVIRONMENT AS A TOOL.**

**#3: ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY WITH AN AFRO-ECOLOGICAL LENS THAT IMPROVES OUR WELL-BEING.**

Impact Goals: Apply the Afro-Ecology self-concept and frame to advancing justice goals for Pan-African communities.

Value: This strategy directly addresses environmental injustice that has harmed communities, while also focusing energy on building the new. Will build capacity for the communities to participate in critical environmental decision-making and move forward a shared, culturally relevant agenda.

Actions:

- Develop a policy lens using the Afro-Ecology frame
- Promote the use of the policy lens with local organizations engaged in advocacy
- Continue to hold space for people to learn about policy initiatives and share work related to advancing the well-being of Pan-African people.
- Partner with local organizations led by communities of color advancing environmental and climate justice

**Strategy 3: Conduct training to build capacity and awareness of climate justice, environmental justice, and sustainability issues and opportunities through the Afro-Ecology Frame.**

Objectives Implemented:

**#1: RECLAMATION OF AN AFRICAN ANCESTRAL ECOLOGICAL SELF-CONCEPT THAT SERVES TO GIVE DIRECTION, ESTEEM, AND CONFIDENCE.**

**#3: ADVANCE OPPORTUNITY WITH AN AFRO-ECOLOGICAL LENS THAT IMPROVES OUR WELL-BEING.**

Impact Goals: increased ownership and cultural association with sustainability and environmental language through the use of the Afro-Ecology Frame.

Value: This strategy addresses the knowledge deficit and the community expertise on environmental and sustainability issues. By increasing the skills of community members to have both high-level awareness, and specific skills to advance Afro-Ecology actions, in fun and relevant ways, the movement will grow more rapidly.

Actions:

- Conduct Afro-Ecology training curriculum<sup>14</sup> within cultural relevant leadership academies, local organizations, businesses and interested Pan-African community members.
- Identify talent and expertise within communities to train on topics that support self-determination and advancement of well-being within the Afro-Ecology frame and self-concept.
  - Nourishment: cultural cooking, gardening, nutritional practices
  - Healing: herbalism, self-care, indigenous spirit practice and ritual, language classes, navigating health care
  - Protection: property ownership/land acquisition, land trusts, outdoor survival training, sustainable investments and money management
- Conduct training on environment/climate policy advocacy using an Afro-Ecology frame

#### **Step 4: Create structure to carry forward the work**

This process engaged both organizations in a process to ask critical questions on how the work could be sustained, accountable, and effective. Each organization brings its own infrastructure that creates opportunities and challenges. As fiscally sponsored organizations, there are more hoops to go through to do the work.

The Afro-Ecology movement goals do not fall squarely within the mission of either organization, but rather various parts and pieces. To resolve this gap, a coordinating committee will continue to play a role in strategically advising the implementation of the framework. They will serve as an advisory council to the two organizations. The current composition of this group will continue, and new members will be recruited.

An EJ policy table will be housed within PAALF, while Africa House will take the lead in convening the Elders Council and community building events. Both organizations have committed to leadership exchanges reserving a space on their leadership boards for a member of the other organization.

The below diagram illustrates the organizational relationships.

## **AFRO-ECOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION**

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<sup>14</sup> Appendix 3, on page 36



A notable change for PAALF in this structure is the reorientation of the PAALF EJ group towards policy work and the Afro-Ecological lens. The chart below shows how it will organize its work moving forward.

### PAALF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE



## IV. Recommendations

### A. Further Considerations for Movement Building

While much strategic work was able to be accomplished during the project duration, additional work to refine the new organizational structure will be needed. These include:

1. An MOU between PAALF and Africa House to define roles and commitments to support the Afro-Ecology Project
2. A governance document for the Coordination Committee to address membership and decision-making practice
3. The recruitment and creation of an Elders Council
4. Continued engagement with the community to not lose momentum
5. Engagement with African Community Council of Oregon
6. Broadening to include Afro-Latino, Afro-Asian, and Afro-Native communities
7. Intentional inclusion across gender and class
8. Continued commitment to build an understanding of cultural differences and similarities, and the honoring of both
9. Consider how to engage new leadership to sustain efforts over time
10. Develop an annual workplan

## B. Areas for Funding and Investment to Support the Afro-Ecology Movement

Based on the strategies and organizational structure and resources available to support those strategies, the following are recommended areas for funding and investment support.

1. Staffing Capacity:
  - a. Funds for a full-time coordinator who will support continuous communication between organizations and augment the volunteer contributions for members of the coordinating committee and Elders Council.
  - b. Funds for community organizers to lead outreach and engagement efforts and to support policy advocacy work.
2. Community Events: Funding for Afro-Ecology events to build trust and rapport between and within communities will expand the network of individuals that can be tapped to engage in the work. Community events also enable effective promotion of the Afro-Ecology framework in a fun and family friendly way.
3. Community education: Funding for trainer fees and stipends for participants to attend trainings will increase the depth of skill and knowledge related to environmental policy issues and the roles which community members can activate.
4. Elders Council: Honorariums and food for the Elders Council would support the practices of the Afro-Ecology framework in honoring elders and providing nourishment for their guidance in connecting to ancestral African wisdom.
5. Technical Assistance:
  - a. Policy research and analysis using the Afro-Ecology Lens to advance the interests and needs within local institutions and the legislative context.
  - b. Organizational capacity funds to support the ongoing organizational development needs and infrastructure of the movement.

# Appendix

# Afro-Ecology Collaborative Draft Charter

## Vision:

**The Afro-Ecology Movement is a Pan-African led environmental movement rooted in self-determination, justice, and our spiritual connection to the earth and one another.**

## Mission statement:

**The Afro-Ecology movement aims to cultivate well-being and resilience of pan-African people by applying the Afro-Ecology self-concept to community building, policy and capacity building.**

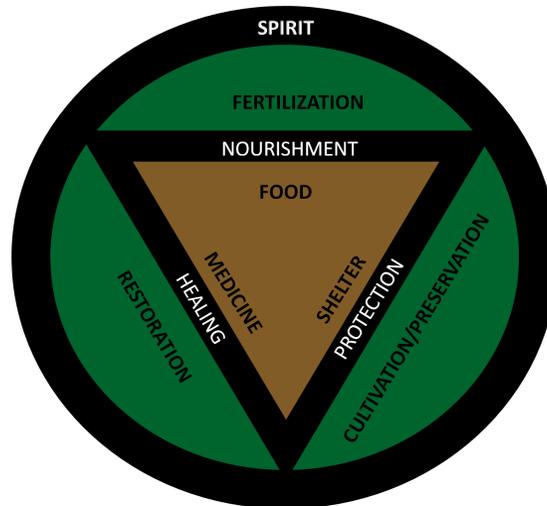
People of African descent share a common ancestral ecological concept rooted in the indigenous connection with nature, community and god. This bond provides for our physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Colonization and slavery disrupted this connection to earth and one another and has had a deeply traumatic effect on the psyche of people of African descent throughout the global diaspora. To heal from this trauma, we must reclaim our ancestral ecological self-concept, and in doing so, we will build the strength, resilience and ingenuity to create self-determined, sustainable, and prosperous solutions for our communities.

## Afro-Ecology Self Concept Principles

**Connection to spirit:** This movement is rooted in our common cultural links of community, spirit and remembering and honoring ancestral, interconnected relationship to nature. Spirit is the divine connection between humans, nature, and all that is unseen. To be in connection with spirit one must be able to deeply listen; to hear what is not being said, see what can't be visualized, and feel what can't be touched. Ancestors and elders provide the guidance to connect to the past, which is a roadmap to the future. Our reverence for them is in their wisdom and experience that cannot be attained but through time.

**Connection to people:** We must foster belonging across our diversity: We are intersectional. We acknowledge the diversity of our people from gender, class, religion, to the experience of being African American, or an African immigrant or refugee. Our differences do not divide us but make us stronger and draw us together. We will find cooperative solutions that collectively build our well-being. We will be compassionate with one another, acknowledging the traumatic impacts of racism, while also advancing and celebrating collective resiliency through our connection to our environment.

**Connection to land:** We will be responsible architects of our futures to ensure they meet the needs of our people and operate in harmony with the environment. We will defend our communities from the environmental and social harm caused by racism and oppression directed towards us. The relationships between people and land are reciprocal. This means that humans have a symbiotic relationship. Engaging in this mutual relationship activates the self-concept.



The three interactions are:

- D. Nourishment – Food is found within the natural environment in plants and animals. Humans nourish the environment through waste and fertilization.
- E. Healing – Land provides medicine and therapeutic modalities. Humans have the ability to restore natural systems that have been broken or disrupted.
- F. Protection – Land provides shelter and protection from elements and threats. Humans can create systems to protect land and support its natural ecological functioning.

### **Relational Values**

*The following values are borrowed from PAALF and based on the 7 Principles of Ma’at, the Kemetic laws of righteousness. Kemet (Kmt) was the name given to ancient Egypt by its people; it means “The Black Land”— a description of the fertile soil and the color of the skin of those who lived there. Ma’at are the values that guided ancient Kemetic governance and laws, a system that is thousands of years old. This maintained Kemet as a peaceful, productive and orderly civilization. Ma’at means the “way of righteousness”. They have been adopted by PAALF and as a leadership practice for the Afro-Ecology movement, and embody relational values to build partnership within the collaborative.*

**Truth:** Truth is honesty, sincerity, and authenticity in our words. When we speak truth, we are bonded to its wisdom and morality. Truth of who we are as Black people, our ancestry, our traditions, has been stolen from us, yet the truth of our bond persists. We will both reclaim and speak our truths as a people, and uphold our integrity by seeking the truth in ourselves and one another.

**Justice:** Justice occurs when one’s humanity has been restored, enabling equal pursuit of opportunity to fulfill one’s potential. To be just is to see the humanity in others, to honor it and to fight for it as if it were your own.

**Propriety:** To act with propriety is to act with humility and accountability towards those we serve and honor. First, we must honor and serve our ancestors and elders who have sacrificed and paved the way for us. We must honor and serve our children and unborn generations, and our responsibility to create for them a future that is better than our present. We must honor and serve our community, particularly

those whose voices are least heard and hurting most. We must honor and serve the organization as a means by which to accomplish the changes we need.

**Harmony:** Harmony is achieved when the diversity of our community effectively works together towards common goals. We practice inclusion; everyone is valued for their unique contributions. Our strength is in our ability to come together across our differences.

**Balance:** The practice of balance is not binary; it is multi-disciplinary. It is the effective management of the range of diverse characteristics, interests, and issues that we face. It is the ability to be nimble and adaptive. It is the ability to simultaneously see the forest from the trees and the trees from the forest, the short-term obstacle and the long-term goal.

**Reciprocity:** To do unto others as you would have them do unto you requires empathy and compassion. This is the glue that bonds our connections as a community. To be reciprocal is also to model the highest standards thereby influencing others to achieve the same.

**Order:** Consistency, transparency, clarity of expectations, and operations rooted in the highest moral standards create the structure by which order can be attained. Order is preserved through personal and group accountability. Good order is the outcome of effective organizing and power building.

# Afro-Ecology Fertile Black Soil Series

## Dialogue 1 Agenda: “Our Shared History”

Time	Activity
12:00-12:30	<p>Networking/community building time: Participants will arrive and have a chance to settle in, get food, and begin getting to know one another.</p> <p>This will be a time for looking at vendor items</p>
12:30-12:50	<p>Formal welcome –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ritual to ground participants in the space, and our connection to the earth and the elements.</li> <li>● Context setting – why have we come together today?</li> </ul>
12:50-1:05	<p>Hashima (“respect” in Swahili) –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Develop community agreements</li> <li>● Description: Participants respond to the question: How do we respect one another in this space?</li> </ul>
1:05-1:50	<p>Connections –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Warm-up, allow people to get to know one another from different community groups and begin to see cultural questions.</li> <li>● Description: Everyone will be given a different food item and a sheet of paper that says, “How do you use this item?”. Each participant will need to try to find at least three different uses for the item that they have from the other members in the group. (black eyed peas, collard greens, pumpkin/calabash, yams, okra, turmeric, kola nut, cowrie shells, corosol/soursop, mango, orange, moringa, palm tree/oil)</li> <li>● Large Group Debrief: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How were these items used to cultivate community?</li> <li>○ What do these items tell us about who we are?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Items can be put on display as a bounty offering.</p>
1:50-2:00	<p>Break – Transition room for next activity</p>
2:00-3:00	<p>Our stories –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Elicit deep-rooted ancestral memories that connect us to our emotional, cultural, and spiritual relationship to nature.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Description: (Part 1) Large group story telling. 4 people will be seeded to begin, and will be staged at the front of the room to respond to the story prompt. Individuals can tap-in/tap-out to share their story in relation to the prompt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Tell us the story of your people...What spiritual and cultural connection does your family have with nature?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Description: (Part 2) Small group breakouts. Groups of 8-10 pp will be formed and respond to the prompt: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How did you connect with stories shared?</li> <li>○ Additional prompts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How did this relationship with nature and land support us in collective communities?</li> <li>▪ How did the relationship with land influence community values?</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
3:00-3:30	<p>Closing Circle –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Participants will join in a circle to respond again to the question: What do these stories tell us about who we are?</li> <li>● Thank you for participation and invitation to the next two dialogues</li> <li>● Drum performer to close out group with song and dance.</li> </ul>

## Dialogue 2 Agenda: “The Struggle/The Resistance”

Time	Activity
5:00-5:30	<p>Networking/community building time: Participants will arrive and have a chance to settle in, get food, and begin getting to know one another.</p> <p>This will be a time for looking at vendor items</p>
5:30-5:45	<p>Formal Welcome –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bridging between the dialogues</li> <li>● Ask elder to begin</li> <li>● Context setting – why have we come together today?</li> </ul>
5:45-6:00	<p>Hashima (“respect” in Swahili) – Respect and dignity at the table</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Re-present list of agreements. Affirming commitments to one another.</li> <li>● Description: Participants respond to the question: How do we respect one another in this space? Returning participants will be asked if they have something to add.</li> </ul>
6:00-6:45	<p>Discussion– Part 1</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Be able to name similarities and differences in the African and African American communities</li> <li>● Description: Identity Breakouts: Warm-up, allow people to get into same cultural groups. Everyone will be given the questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What would you like Africa/A-A to know about us? (respond to other group)</li> <li>○ What has helped shape your identity in America?</li> <li>○ How have we been impacted by efforts to assimilate to whiteness?</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Large Group Debrief - 15 minutes</li> </ul>
6:45-7:00	Break – Place Post-it notes on walls
7:00-8:00	<p>Discussion--Part 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Break into mixed groups (roughly 30 min per topic)</li> <li>● Purpose: Identify common stories related to exploitation</li> <li>● Description: Groups prompted to answer--</li> <li>● (A) Relationship to the land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What experiences have disrupted our relationship to land/nature?</li> <li>○ What ways have we preserved our relationship to land/nature</li> </ul> </li> <li>● (B) Community Relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What experiences have disrupted our family relationships</li> <li>○ What experiences have helped to preserve our culture and family relationships</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8:00-8:30	<p>Closing –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Community Entertainment</li> <li>● Thank you for participation and invitation to the next dialogue</li> </ul>

Dialogue 3 Agenda: “The Vision”

Time	Activity
5:00-5:30	<p>Networking/community building time: Participants will arrive and have a chance to settle in, get food, and begin getting to know one another.</p> <p>This will be a time for looking at vendor items</p>
5:30-5:45	<p>Formal Welcome –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bridging between the dialogues</li> <li>● Context setting – why have we come together today?</li> </ul>
5:45-6:00	<p>Hashima (“respect” in Swahili) –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Re-present list of agreements. Affirming commitments to one another.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Description: Participants respond to the question: How do we respect one another in this space?</li> <li>● Participate in a song to affirm commitments</li> </ul>
6:00-6:30	<p>Focused Dialogue –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Identify shared values, goals and opportunities in order to engage in the “Build the New” conversation.</li> <li>● Description: Break into small groups (3 or 4) and groups are given 3 questions for discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What do we need to have a healing relationship with land and nature?</li> <li>○ How do we reclaim our relationship with nature?</li> <li>○ What does our ideal future look like?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
6:30-7:00	30 minutes of categorizing→ Debrief
7:00-8:00	<p>Interactive Activity –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Purpose: Have participants choose a specific shared value, goal or opportunity that was discussed based on personal interest.</li> <li>● Description: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 30 min creative time → split into smaller topic groups (individual options) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Visual drawing: Tie back to tree → use leaves → tree of ideas</li> <li>▪ Writing and/or Acting out</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ 30 min share → populate the tree</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
8:00-8:30	<p>Closing Circle –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Closing ritual by Elder</li> <li>● Thank you for participation</li> <li>● Drum performer to close out group with song and dance.</li> </ul>

**Appendix 3: Afro-Ecology Curriculum**

**AFRICA HOUSE/CCC/REDEFINE Climate Justice Curriculum  
March 2018 Draft  
PILOT TRAINING AGENDA**

**GOALS:**

1. To introduce the Afro-Ecology and Just Transition concepts to create an African Specific Narrative on Climate and Environmental justice
2. Increase the number of leaders of color acting and leading on environmental and climate, advocacy initiatives, solutions and activities undertaken by the communities.

**OBJECTIVES**

**Participants will:**

1. See how we are connected in an ecological community
2. Increase understanding of climate and environmental justice and how environmental oppression operates
3. Identify climate actions and issues that impacts our community
4. Gain an ecological framework for thinking about issues
5. Plan an action strategy for moving forward issues

<b>Agenda</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Process</b>	<b>Facilitation Notes (Materials)</b>	<b>Time</b>
<b>Welcome</b>	<b>Settle participants</b>	Welcome all participants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce the topic.</li> <li>• Share agenda and objectives.</li> </ul>		
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Understand what people already know</b>	Ask participants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To say their Name</li> <li>• 1 thing which they are expecting or hoping to get out of today</li> <li>• What do you think of when you hear the term 'environment'?</li> </ul>	Seek out responses to the term 'environment' to understand how people orient themselves to the environment.	

<b>Hashima</b>	<b>Group Agreements</b>	Explain what the meaning of Hashima is and why we need group agreements. Write group agreements beforehand and ask if group wants to add anything else.		
<b>Set the context: What is the problem?</b>	<b>Teach the tragedy of the commons</b>	Fish game activity  Discussion Question: What problems might this relate to that we are experiencing today?		
<b>Afro-Ecology (1)</b>	<b>Introduce Afro-Ecology Self-Concept</b>	<p><b>Ecology = Home + to Know</b></p> <p>Afro-Ecology Self-Concept is inspired by our collective indigenous African past, it reminds us of our collective responsibility to one another.</p> <p>The Afro-Ecology is an adaptation of the Just Transition Framework, which will be introduced later, and has three parts. The first is reclaiming our ecological Self-Concept.</p> <p>Introduce Afro-Ecology <b>ecosystem</b>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Self</li> <li>2) Human community</li> <li>3) Nature (land, air, water, biological and non-biological)</li> <li>4) Ancestors</li> <li>5) God or divine spirit</li> </ol> <p>We are bound within a universal connection to each other.</p>	<p>Show diagram. Dotted line in nature represents seen/unseen.</p> <p>Acknowledge that we are spiritual people, and that individual practices and beliefs in cultures differ. This ecosystem is what is common across cultures.</p>	

		<p><b>Economy = Home + Management</b> refers to the management of the home, or management of these relationships. For Afro-Ecology the management of these relationships are our responsibility to each other within this spiritual community.</p> <p>These mutual responsibilities are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Nourishment</li> <li>2) Healing</li> <li>3) Protection</li> <li>4) Purpose</li> <li>5) Faith</li> </ol> <p>Discussion Questions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) How does this worldview resonate with you, does it feel new? Where have you seen this before? Is there anything else that you would include?</li> <li>2) How might we have addressed the tragedy of the commons if this framework had been used?</li> </ol>	<p>Break people into small groups and have them brainstorm ways that the mutual responsibilities are carried out. See worksheet.</p>	
<b>Just Transition (2)</b>	<b>Just Transition Introduction:</b>	<p><b>What is Just Transition?</b> Just transition is a framework created by Movement Generation to help us understand our current economy better, and how we must move forward to change it. Just Transition Framework helps us to understand the bigger systems.</p>	<p>Afro-Ecology defines our roles and opportunities within the system's transformation, based on our shared Afrocentric cultural values.</p>	

		<p>Afro-Ecology defines our roles and opportunities within the system's transformation, based on our shared Afrocentric cultural values. What we are moving toward is reminiscent of our ancestral past.</p> <p>However, our past is also a story of colonization (and slavery). To move beyond our oppressive systems, we need to understand how they operate.</p>		
<b>Video + Interactive Presentation</b>	<b>Overview of Extractive System</b>	<p>View: Story of stuff video</p> <p>Afterwards, walk through Just Transition Framework. Have participants name the various components of the system (ask questions, provide answers if stuck).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) What is the purpose of the system? Enclosure of wealth and power.</li> <li>2) How are resources acquired? Extraction.</li> <li>3) How is labor organized? Exploitation.</li> <li>4) How is this system justified? Consumerism and colonial mindset.</li> <li>5) How is this system controlled? Militarism.</li> </ol>		
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Impact of Extractive Economy</b>	The extractive economy is the colonial economy. What are the rules of the colonial		

		<p>economy? Seek responses from participants, add on from list. Ask for expansion on answers. What did this look like?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Removal from land</li> <li>2) Dependency on government for basic needs</li> <li>3) Definition of status and value</li> <li>4) Erasure of history</li> <li>5) Imprisonment for noncompliance</li> <li>6) Economic exclusion</li> <li>7) Invalidation of worldview</li> <li>8) Isolation</li> </ol> <p>How have you and your family experienced the extractive economy? What is its impact on you?</p>		
<b>Afro-Ecology (2)</b>	<b>Introduction of Climate Change connecting to impacts within the African diaspora</b>	<p>Climate Change is one of the most devastating impacts of the Extractive Economy. Present: What is Climate Change? Connect industrial revolution to the end of the slave trade.</p> <p>Climate change and the oppression of Black people in Africa and America are rooted in the same systemic problem. These same rules of the colonial economy operated here.</p>		

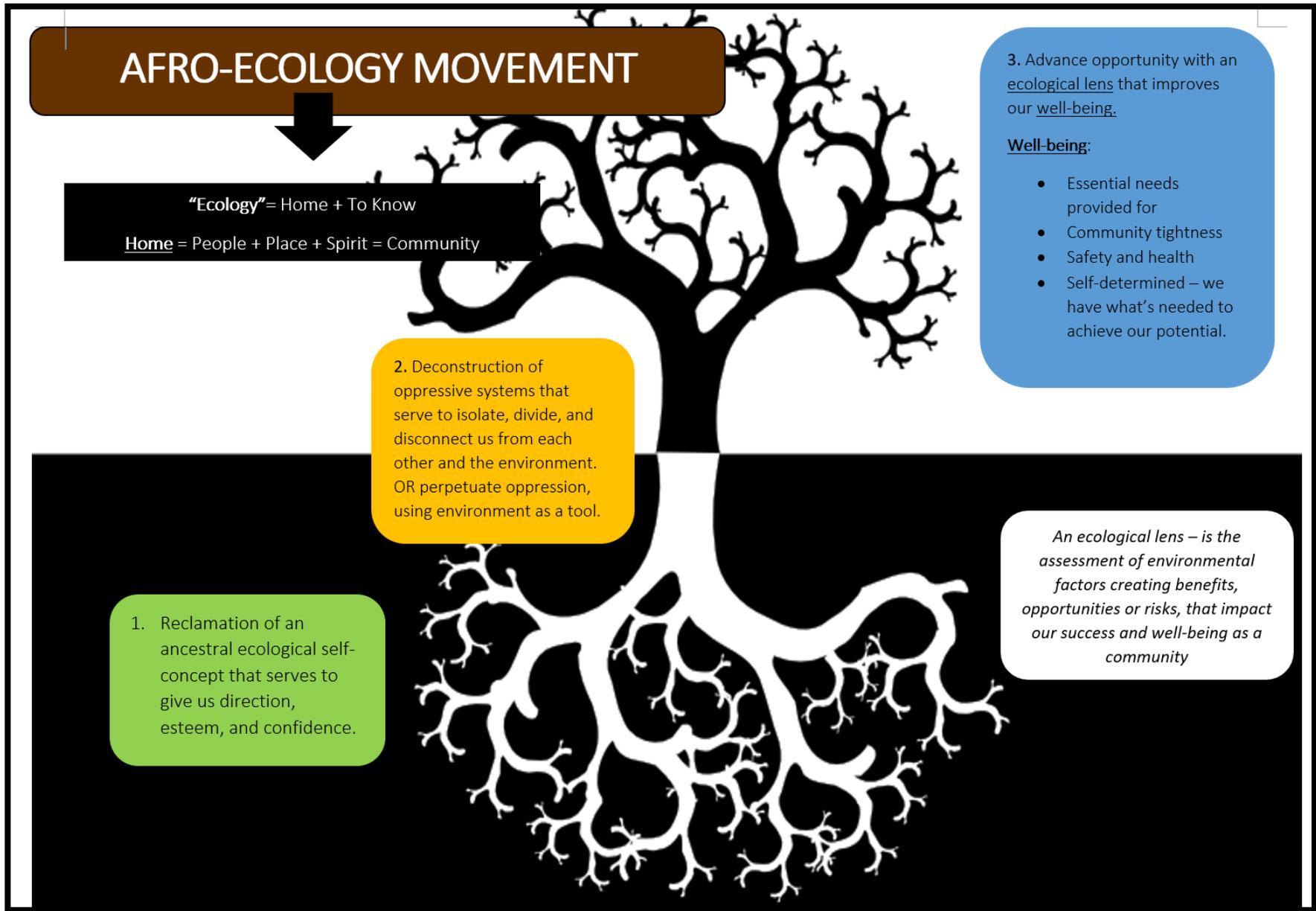
		<p>Examples of this system in the US post:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Slavery</li> <li>Sharecropping</li> <li>Jim Crow laws</li> <li>GI Bill</li> <li>Redlining</li> <li>Crack/Cocaine epidemic</li> <li>Prison Industrial Complex</li> <li>Gentrification</li> </ul> <p>What similarities can you see between the African American experience and the African experience?</p> <p>Ultimately the effect of colonization and institutional racism was to 1) label Black people as inferior, 2) commodify our assets and 3) redefine our relationship with each other and the land.</p> <p>What has been the result of this system?</p>	<p>Option 1) Have participants brainstorm local/national/and home country examples.</p> <p>Option 2) Bring in video on environmental impacts in Africa and environmental justice in US. Then discuss.</p> <p>Option 3) Use Movement Generation Activity Lag effect rope exercise, and use as an interactive timeline for people to place environmental justice issues.</p>	
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<p><b>Just Transition Frame “Fight the bad”</b></p>	<p><b>Resistance to Oppression</b></p>	<p>How have we resisted? [Suggested activity is related to option 3, develop a timeline of oppression, and identify resistance movements – this will take research.]</p> <p>Present definitions of Environmental Justice and Climate Justice.</p>		
<p><b>Just Transition/ Afro-Ecology Frame: “Build the new using the Afro-Ecology Lens”</b></p>		<p>If we know the old economy did not work for us, how do we build a different economy?</p> <p>[See Building Economy for People and Planet from Movement Generation, adapt examples to Pan-African or African American context – current examples come mostly from the Latino community.]</p> <p>Introduce Second Frame of Regenerative Economy + AfroEcology self-concept (to Nourish, Heal and Protect).</p> <p>Break into small groups:</p> <p>What do we already do that is Regenerative? What more could we do? What resources do we need for support?</p>		
<p><b>Strategize/ Activate</b></p>	<p><b>Connect people to tangible examples of advocacy work</b></p>	<p>Give participants option to work on “Fight the Bad” or “Build the new”. Break into groups.</p>		

		<p>Use group voting to identify one strategy under each.  Give each group the Afro-Ecology Frame, the Draft Ecology Lens, and the Regenerative Economy Frame for guidance.</p> <p>Group Session Guided Discussion Questions:  <b>BUILD THE NEW:</b>  Brainstorm -  What do we already do that is Regenerative?  What more could we do?  [PRIORITIZE/VOTE]  What resources do we need for support?  (money expertise)  What information do we need to know to be effective/What questions do we have that we need answered?  How could we get the resources and information we need?</p> <p>How would we bring this back to our communities?</p> <p><b>STOP THE BAD:</b>  Brainstorm -  What do we already do that resists environmental oppression?  What more could we do?  [PRIORITIZE/VOTE]</p>		
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		<p>What resources do we need for support? (i.e. money/expertise)</p> <p>What information do we need to know to be effective/What questions do we have that we need answered?</p> <p>How could we get the resources and information we need?</p> <p>How would we bring this back to our communities?</p> <p>Have each group present back and share.</p>		
<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Process the day</b>	<p>Open for thoughts, feedback on the how to move forward.</p> <p>What excites you about this?</p> <p>What challenges you?</p>		
<b>Closing</b>	<b>Closure and connection</b>	<p>Commitment card – have each person write down a commitment. Give them time to do this.</p> <p>Distribute river rocks with the symbol of an Afro-Ecology tree on it. Remind people of our community responsibilities.</p> <p>In closing circle ask people to share one thing they will take from the training, and the commitment. After they read their card, they give their rock to someone else. The person</p>		

		who receives the rock then reads their commitment.		
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Appendix 5: Just Transition Framework from Movement Generation

