

Bridging Movements

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AS VIOLENCE AND ABUSE PREVENTION

In order to comprehensively prevent abuse and other forms of violence, communities and the people who live in them must have access to safe, healthy, productive, and sustainable environments. This includes access to clean air, water, greenspaces and nature in general. It's also important that we are ensuring conditions that invite and support hope for the future. Environments in this sense refer to ecological (biological), physical (natural and built), social, political, aesthetic, and economic environments.

- The **Environmental Justice Movement** was started primarily by **BIPOC communities** in an effort to address the inequity of environmental protection (or lack thereof) where they lived.
- Research has shown that when people have access to green spaces, there is a **reduction in stress levels, which boosts community health** and also decreases rates of violence. This includes opportunities to be near trees and hear birdsong. Humans, and all animals, benefit when others' habitats are also healthy.
- Around the world and in Oregon, **Climate Change is causing widespread destruction and the relocation of people from their homes and communities**. For example, severe droughts in the southern hemisphere have forced families to make dangerous journeys and when people are in crisis they are at higher risk of experiencing trafficking and exploitation. Locally, the historic fires that have swept through Oregon in recent years were also preceded by record draught and thousands are still displaced. Environmental health and safety are factors that lead to increased stability, which can help protect against violence and abuse.
- Growing plants, planting trees, cultivating gardens, and caring for our planet, offer immense **opportunity for collaborative learning, family and community connection, and community change**. Investments in our environments are investments in our future. When we care for our physical and metaphorical soil, we create conditions for healthy growth and increase connections to the land, each other and all the forms of life that exist in our environments.