

## Framing the Discussion

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It is an exciting time to be a member of the environmental movement in the United States. Large events and organizations, including the Super Bowl, the Oscars and Yahoo, are becoming carbon neutral. The largest global retailer, Wal-Mart, is currently going green.<sup>1</sup> Mainstream magazines, including Sports Illustrated and Vanity Fair, are featuring environmentally-focused cover stories and editions.<sup>2</sup> Beyond the financial incentives and the celebrity glamour associated with being green, many previously unengaged segments of the population, including religious communities, people of color and people from different socio-economic classes, are becoming increasingly interested in participating in the movement's efforts.

Currently, however, there is a lack of diversity and inclusivity in environmental institutions and our movement. This is a systemic problem. Diversity is about strengthening the movement we are dedicated to by making it resilient and capable of adapting, regardless of what we face in the future. Widespread understanding of the values that diversity can provide is essential to enhancing our collective effort and the world, yet such understanding is still absent in far too many places.

During my time at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies (F&ES) the school has made substantial efforts to increase diversity among the staff, students and faculty. This is because F&ES,

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<sup>1</sup> In their U.S. stores, Wal-Mart has committed to increasing the efficiency of their vehicle fleet by 25 percent, reducing energy use by 30 percent and solid waste by 25 percent in three years. Gunther, Matt. The Green Machine. *Fortune Magazine*. July 31, 2006. Available at: [http://walmartstores.com/Files/WM\\_Fortune\\_Green\\_Machine.pdf](http://walmartstores.com/Files/WM_Fortune_Green_Machine.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Wolff, Alexander. Going, Going Green. *Sports Illustrated Magazine*. March 6, 2007. Available on the World Wide Web at <http://sportsillustrated.cnn.com/2007/more/03/06/ecoo312/index.html>. May 2007 *Vanity Fair*. The Green Edition. Available at: <http://www.vanityfair.com/magazine/toc/2007/toc200705>.

like many environmental organizations nationwide, recognizes that the institution falls substantially short of where an environmental organization should be in terms of diversity. With a faculty of 43, 18 of whom are tenured, there are only one female and one international tenured faculty members and no domestic faculty of color. In a school where the majority of students are women, 16 percent are domestic minorities, and 30 percent are international students, these faculty statistics are disheartening.

Upon noticing this, in the fall of 2005, I began to speak with several members of the faculty and students about the state of diversity at the school and within the movement. The individuals that I talked to agreed that diversity is important and needs to be improved at the school, yet when I asked why, very few were able to generate a reply. The realization that many prestigious environmental professionals didn't know why diversity is important, despite their professed belief in its importance, initially made both the professors and me uncomfortable. This was followed, however, by open conversations among faculty members and students about reasons why diversity is important to their individual disciplines, the school, and the movement. It surfaced that many faculty members and students are interested in being engaged in diversity work, but are unfamiliar with how to be effectively involved and nervous about doing the wrong thing.

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These encounters and their lessons motivated me to speak with colleagues throughout the country about the state of their organizations, and to examine literature about the demographics of the environmental movement compared to that of the U.S. population. Many colleagues reported similar circumstances at their organizations, and the statistics illustrated that this movement is not diverse compared to national population statistics. Study results presented in *Toward a New Ecological Majority* indicate that, of the nation's Ecological Base (10 percent of the population and 15 percent

of the electorate), 89 percent of members are white, 82 percent are older than 35, 78 percent have attended at least some college and 26 percent earn more than \$80,000 year.<sup>3</sup> According to United States Census Bureau, in 2000 more than 31 percent of people in the U.S. were not white (12.7% Black, 12.6% Hispanic, 3.8% Asian and 2.5% Other).<sup>4</sup>

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National exit polls from the 2004 U.S. presidential election indicate that nearly 25 percent of all voters were non-white – 77 percent White, 11 percent Black, 8 percent Hispanic/Latino, 2 percent Asian and 2 percent Other. It is important to consider the power minority constituencies embody and how that power will continue to grow in the future. In 2010 one in every three people is projected to be non-white and by 2050 it is projected that one in every two people will be non-white.<sup>5</sup> These trends are what Marilyn Loden identifies as our demographic destiny – which occurs when the projected demographic shifts in the population “necessitate that organizations value diversity, since the majority of new entrants into the labor force will be women, people of color, and immigrants.”<sup>6</sup>

One additional tidbit of information also resonated with me. In the Spring 2007 edition of SAGE Magazine, there is a top-seven list of Environmental Icons, listing environmental greats like John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold, Teddy Roosevelt and Rachel Carson.<sup>7</sup> Next to each icon’s name, the author pointed out the race and gender of these leaders. Rachel Carson is the only one on the list that is not a

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<sup>3</sup> *Toward a New Ecological Majority*. American Envirionics. Fall 2006. Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Interim Projections by Age, Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin. <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/usinterimproj/natprojtab01a.pdf>. Accessed from the World Wide Web May 2007.

<sup>5</sup> National Exit Poll Results: 2004 Presidential Election. [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/elections/2004/graphics/exitPolls\\_national.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/elections/2004/graphics/exitPolls_national.html). Accessed on the World Wide Web May 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Loden, Marilyn. 1995. *Implementing Diversity*. McGraw-Hill: 91.

<sup>7</sup> *SAGE Magazine*. Top Seven Environmental Icons List. Volume 2, Issue 1. 28. Available at: [http://environment.yale.edu/posts/downloads/o-u/SAGEVol2\\_Iss1\\_Web.pdf](http://environment.yale.edu/posts/downloads/o-u/SAGEVol2_Iss1_Web.pdf).

white male. I found myself agreeing with the list and I recognize that the foundation of this movement was built on the achievements of these icons, but it was an incredibly poignant moment of realization for me. I don't think this movement can survive if our top environmental icons continue to fit this historic pattern.

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These statistics and concepts — coupled with the realization that environmental organizations and professionals do not understand why diversity is important and that people are interested in engaging in diversity work but don't know how — inspired me to create this book and to distribute it to environmental organizations nationwide. This book identifies why the principle of diversity is important to integrate into the environmental value system and proposes methods to do so.

With the assistance of some excellent sources, an extensive list of environmental leaders was generated. Those individuals, identified by multiple people as leaders that “get” diversity and can articulate why it's important, were then asked to write pieces about why diversity enhances their discipline and the movement. Within one day of the distribution of submission invitations, I received several confirmations from busy environmental leaders, all very enthusiastic about the project. Few of them are diversity specialists. Most are environmental professionals who have valuable experiences and vision that they wish to share with others in this movement.

The individuals who have contributed are a diverse collective. They represent many disciplines, many types of organizations, different

regions, and focus their pieces on various types of diversity and inclusion. They share one common element – a deep passion for and commitment to improving the environmental movement in ways that facilitate diversity and inclusivity. This commonality created a strong foundation on which to piece together their perspectives. Each piece considers a particular topic. The pieces were constructed so to be able to be read alone or as part of a more complete perspective.

The contributors were selected because they are inspirational leaders that have volunteered to be messengers about an ideal that has yet to become mainstream. It is their willingness to explore the difficult question of “Why exactly is diversity important to your discipline and to the movement” and to articulate clear answers that I hope will resonate with people nationwide. There is a common understanding among them, one that acknowledges the strength diversity brings to their organizations and the movement they care so much about. I hope the momentum will shift, aided by the kind of understanding provided in this book, and a wider movement will begin to become truly inclusive.

I look forward to being a part of, and playing a role in, constructing such a movement.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

It is here that I want to acknowledge the assistance of the many incredible people who made this book possible.

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Leveraging diversity effectively enabled me to compile this inclusive publication that explores many facets of diversity, something I could never have done alone and certainly not in the course of one academic year. The benefits of leveraging diversity can be gained at many scales, from completing an individual project to improving a single institution to strengthening an overall movement. Why? Because, at any scale, drawing on all the resources available enhances our ability to fulfill duties true to the missions of our organizations and our movement.

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To really be a dynamic movement, we need to be forward thinking, and one of the principles of being forward thinking needs to be inclusivity. As articulated in this volume, diversity and properly executed inclusivity can provide organizations and the movement with the benefits of preservation, efficacy, efficiency, differentiation, adaptability, and competitive advantage necessary for keeping organizational and movement evolution alive.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**



**Emily Enderle** received a Master of Environmental Management degree from the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies in 2007. At Yale, she concentrated in policy, economics and law, focusing on energy issues and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Prior to her time there, she worked as an environmental consultant, specializing in energy issues, in the San Francisco office of Kearns & West Inc. She

graduated with high honors in environmental studies from Oberlin College in 2003. Increasing diversity and inclusivity within the environmental movement is her personal passion – one she hopes more members of the environmental movement will embrace and actively support.

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