

Introduction

Candice Youngblood

CANDICE YOUNGBLOOD: Good morning, everyone. My name is Candice Youngblood, and I am a third-year student here at Berkeley Law. More importantly, I am a member of Students for Economic and Environmental Justice, also known as SEEJ.

On behalf of SEEJ, it is my pleasure to welcome you all to our 2019 Symposium, “Ground-Truthing Injustice.” SEEJ was founded in 2009 to create a permanent home for environmental justice studies and advocacy at Berkeley Law. SEEJ is committed to advancing justice for low-income communities and communities of color. We accomplish this mission by engaging with a variety of local, national, and international environmental justice issues through an annual symposium, clinics, and workshops. SEEJ is also helping develop a broader environmental justice curriculum at the law school.

As many of you know, Berkeley Law has a reputation for its spirit of social justice. It has the top ranked environmental law program amongst the top ten law schools, and our environmental law journal, *Ecology Law Quarterly*, is one of the most cited environmental law journals in the country. Yet there are gaps in our curriculum when it comes to environmental justice.

Although our environmental law program has made a lot of progress throughout the years, it remains predominantly oriented around traditional topics of environmental law, such as public lands. Additionally, many social justice students consider environmental justice an issue that environmental law students work on. Furthermore, there has not been a SEEJ symposium in the semesters that I have been a student here. This year’s leadership came into the year with the intention of reviving that symposium, and here we are.

There are three main goals that we hope to accomplish through today’s event. First is raising awareness. In the room today, we have people from all walks of life. There are community members, lawyers, academics, organizers, and other allies. There are social justice students, environmental law students, and graduate students from other departments on campus. But nearest and dearest to my heart are the undergraduate students and the low-income students or students of color who do not yet realize they may have grown up facing

environmental injustices. I was that student when I came to the University of California, Berkeley as an undergraduate.

I came to Cal to major in environmental sciences with trees and oceans in mind, but I left with both the knowledge that I grew up living with environmental injustices and a new desire to fight for communities like my own. Today, I hope that you similarly leave with new knowledge and a desire to aid in this fight. To those who are new to this space, I hope you leave more fluent in the movement's language, including the Principles of Environmental Justice.

This Summit's second goal is increasing diversity. Today, we will have an equity and inclusion workshop from a facilitator with experience specifically in the context of equity in the environmental and social justice spaces. We will have a lunch networking reception designed to help students, particularly disadvantaged students, get their feet in the door. Furthermore, in partnership with *Ecology Law Quarterly*, a special edition of the journal has been set aside for the Summit. All participants of the Summit will be given the opportunity to publish an academic piece, which in turn will diversify environmental legal scholarship, which is, at present, predominantly oriented around traditional topics of environmental law. Because the environmental justice movement emphasizes the notion "We speak for ourselves," we work to ensure that many communities are represented in this room through hard outreach efforts to affinity groups and speakers with personal experience on environmental justice issues.

The Summit's last goal is empowerment. In my first year of law school, we saw a new administration begin. A little over a year later, we saw the U.S. Supreme Court become more conservative than it has been in all of our lifetimes. Many of us are students, and working toward degrees and sitting in the library while history is writing itself outside of those halls can feel disempowering.

Some came to law school with public interest intentions but faced the reality that the private sector may be their answer to the steep cost of law school. Some of us here are community members who are simply exhausted by the sheer number of battles that there are to fight every day. We hope that each of us gain something today, so we all leave as better-informed allies, better-equipped partners, and more hopeful community members.

I must take a moment to note that today's event is an entirely student-led collaborative effort. From the theme, to the name, the graphic design, the caterer, the speakers, and the fundraising, a tremendous amount of thought and effort went into all of it. I want to take a moment to thank some very important people.

First and foremost, I want to thank the rest of the summit steering committee for taking a vision that I hoped for and bringing it to life. Many thanks to Kara Coronado, Liz Glusman, John Hannon, Emily Miller, Jenny Rampell, Kristina Sinclair, and Taylor Wetzel.

I also want to thank our co-hosts for the event, the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice and the Center for Law, Energy and the Environment. Additionally, this event would not be possible without our contributors. To

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To our Berkeley Law faculty in attendance—I want to thank you for supporting us. I also want to thank our very supportive Berkeley Law staff, including Edwin Bish, Ariana Ceja, Jordan Diamond, Rachel DeLetto, Thembi Anne Jackson, Judith Katz, Roger Lin, gar Russell, Savala Trepczynski, and Ari Wolff. And to all of you in attendance, it is an honor to have you here with us, and we hope you enjoy the day's event. Thank you.

Without further ado, I would like to introduce Savala Trepczynski, Class of 2011 and the Executive Director of the Thelton E. Henderson Center for Social Justice here at Berkeley Law. Savala will introduce our 2019 Raven Lecture and opening keynote.

We welcome responses to this Transcript. If you are interested in submitting a response for our online journal, *Ecology Law Currents*, please contact cse.elq@law.berkeley.edu. Responses to articles may be viewed at our website, <http://www.ecologylawquarterly.org>.

