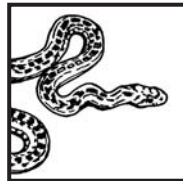
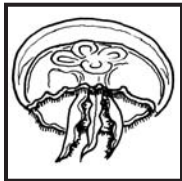
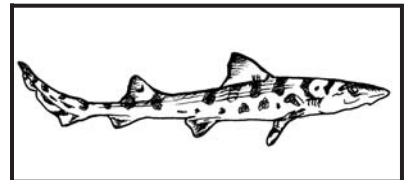
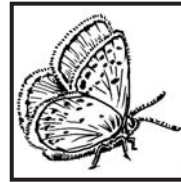
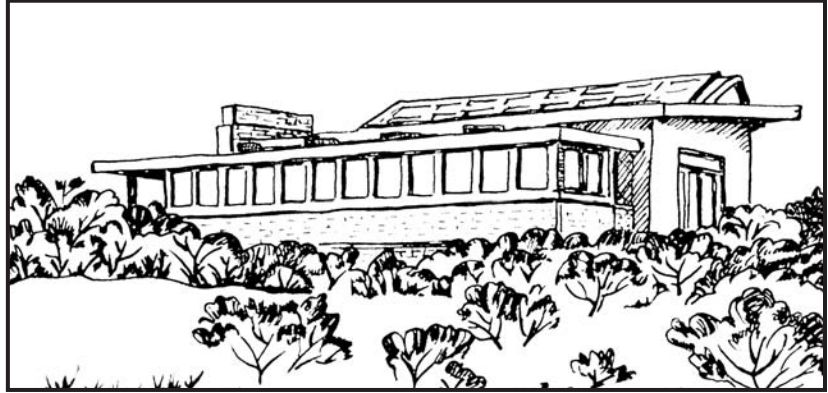


# Calling Nature HOME

Restoring Environmental Justice in an Urban Wetland



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## Acknowledgments

Many people have helped to develop the activities contained in this guide. Former park naturalists Patrick Marley Rump, Damien Raffa, Cleo Woelfle-Erskine, and Benjamin Stone-Francisco developed many of the activities at the core of the Heron's Head Park education programs. Hundreds of San Francisco teachers have also shared their insights and activities over the years. We would also like to acknowledge the other educators and publishers of curricula who have allowed us to adapt their activities and inspire our work: Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge's "Salt Marsh Manual," Integrated Waste Management Board's "Closing the Loop," Kids for the Bay, Kids In Parks, Occidental Arts and Ecology Center, Save the Bay, the Stewardship and Environmental Education Collaborative-SF, Sharing Nature with Children, Environmental Concern Inc., and The Watershed Project.

Literacy for Environmental Justice provides education and stewardship programs at Heron's Head Park on behalf of the Port of San Francisco.  
[www.sfgov.org/site/port\\_page.asp?id=102470](http://www.sfgov.org/site/port_page.asp?id=102470)

LEJ's work at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area is a partnership with the California State Parks Foundation.  
[www.calparks.org](http://www.calparks.org)

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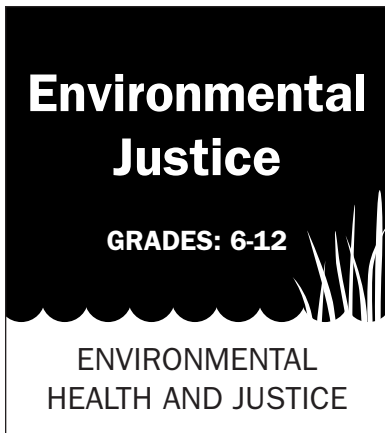
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***Dedicated to the youth of southeast San Francisco***



## Environmental Justice Seroes and Heroes and the Four R’s of Environmental Justice

**Overview:** Students will further explore environmental justice themes through an introduction to leaders within the movement and through the discussion of the concept of the Four R’s of Environmental Justice. Multiple learning modalities will be engaged in this lesson.

### KEY CONCEPTS

- **The Four R’s of Environmental Justice (reverence, responsibility, reclamation, reciprocity) are key concepts that the environmental justice movement advocates.**
- **Environmental justice is a complex movement with many key players in various communities who have been affected by environmental racism. A number of women and men have emerged as leaders within the movement.**

### OBJECTIVE

- **Students will understand the different types and levels of action that people take related to environmental justice.**
- **Students will learn that environmental justice is a local, state, national, and global movement.**
- **Students will analyze actual environmental burdens and solutions faced by communities that they live in or that are comparable to their own.**

### CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE CONTENT STANDARDS

**Grade 6: Investigation and Experimentation 7d**  
**Grade 7: Investigation and Experimentation 7be**  
**Grade 9-12: Investigation and Experimentation 1m**

### MATERIALS

- **Music player**
- **Selected music with printed lyrics**
- **Seroes/Heroes biographies with pictures**
- **Four R’s of Environmental Justice description handouts**
- **Optional environmental justice-related videos/multimedia (SF Environment - Educational Library (415) 355-3700)**

### MINIMUM TIME

**1 hour**

### FACILITATOR

**This activity will be led by LEJ staff or the classroom teacher.**

**BACKGROUND/  
CONTEXT/  
CONNECTION**

The environmental justice movement has emerged within the past few decades as awareness grew regarding the disproportionate impact that toxic sites have had on marginalized communities without much economic or political clout, mainly low-income communities of color.

The earliest known government record of environmental racism can be found in a 1971 report by the US Council on Environmental Quality, which noted that low-income people and many people of color were disproportionately exposed to environmentally hazardous conditions.

Warren County, North Carolina became a catalyst for the movement in 1982. With a predominantly African American population, Warren County was already saddled with more industry than any other county in the state. A landfill was built in the county to dispose of **PCB-** (polychlorinated biphenyls, a carcinogenic industrial by-product) contaminated soil from fourteen counties from around the state. Civil rights and environmental activists sought to disrupt transportation of the contaminated soil to the landfill through civil disobedience, lying down in front of the trucks. More than five hundred people were arrested; the landfill was not closed, but this action gave the issue of environmental racism some effective media exposure.

In 1983, Robert Bullard published an article entitled, "Solid Waste Sites and the Black Houston Community" (*Sociological Inquiry* Vol. 53, (Spring 1983): 273-288). His research found that landfills were not randomly situated around the city, but were concentrated in African American communities, particularly around schools. Bullard found that housing discrimination and zoning issues that have culminated from decades of discriminatory policies had led to the inequitable outcome.

The United States General Accounting Office conducted a survey of Southern states, and in 1983 found that three out of four landfills were located near communities of color. In 1987, the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice published the results of a nationwide survey as "Toxic Wastes and Race," concluding that the most significant factor in determining the locating of hazardous waste facilities was not income but race. The same study found that three out of five African American and Latino United States residents live in proximity to a toxic waste site.

In response to these revelations, actions were taken toward remedying the reality of environmental racism in the United States. In 1991, the First National People of Color Leadership Summit met in Washington DC, and forged the Principles of Environmental Justice. In 1992, the National Law Journal reported on the discovery that the EPA was more stringent about

toxic site cleanup (faster clean up times and stricter fines) in wealthier white communities than they were in lower income communities of color. The EPA established the Office of Environmental Justice in 1992. In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, which stated that federal agencies were now accountable for correcting environmental injustices within their jurisdictions. Around the same time, the Interagency Group on Environmental Justice was established.

Even today, the environmental justice movement is still going strong across the nation and around the world because environmental inequities based on race and income are still being perpetuated. To mark the twentieth anniversary of their groundbreaking study, the United Church of Christ commissioned “Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty, 1987-2007: Grassroots Struggles to Dismantle Environmental Racism.” Using 2000 census data, a current national database of commercial hazardous waste facilities, and Geographic Information Systems, the authors concluded that 20 years after the original study, disproportionately large numbers of people of color still live in hazardous waste host communities, and that they are not equally protected by environmental laws. Their research found that in California, the proportion of people of color in neighborhoods hosting hazardous waste facilities was 30% higher than those living in non-host neighborhoods (81 vs 51%). Host neighborhoods are typically economically depressed, with poverty rates 1.5 times that of non-host communities.

Visionary leaders have emerged to address environmental injustices and to empower communities in dynamic and innovative ways. These leaders are often given scant recognition for their justice-oriented actions, so it is the responsibility of the people to spread the word to inspire others toward action. Students will examine and discuss what inspired them and others to action.

### *INTO* Introduction

The pre-trip activity “Principles of Environmental Justice” should be conducted prior to this activity so that concepts of environmental justice can be introduced to the students. Students should have a general understanding of the principles in order to relate them to this activity.

The students will begin by listening to a chosen piece of music that in some way relates to environmental justice principles. The instructor will distribute copies of the chosen song’s lyrics and inform the class that they will have a group discussion after hearing the song. The artist and song should be culturally relevant to the class. The song should also inspire critical thinking and action. An example of an appropriate song would be Stephen Marley’s “Mind Control,” Marvin Gaye’s “Mercy, Mercy

Me (The Ecology),” Sweet Honey in The Rock’s “More Than a Paycheck,” Mos Def’s “New World Water,” or Niyorah’s “Global Warming.”

After listening to the song, the students will have the opportunity to address key concepts and emotions that arose while listening to the song and answer the facilitator’s guiding questions. This activity will act as an icebreaker that stimulates **conscientization**, or increased critical awareness that may become a catalyst for the students to look at the world through a more critical lens.

## *THROUGH* Activity

Students will be divided into groups of four. Each group will receive a biography of a chosen environmental justice shero or hero – an agent of change who fought tirelessly to reverse environmental injustices. The groups will be responsible for learning about their assigned leader and teach the rest of the class about this individual through a creative means. Encouraging creative forms of expression and the act of teaching others can enhance the learning experience for all participants. Examples of creative presentations for their leaders include: displaying artwork, performing a skit, presenting a song/poem/spoken word piece, etc. All presenters must convey:

**Who is their leader? What community/communities do they represent? What injustice(s) have they been faced with? What actions did they take to address these injustices?**

Some of the key actions that may have been taken by the leaders include:

- Influencing policy and legislation at the local, state, or national level.
- Changing the organizational practices of the perpetrators of environmental justice.
- Fostering coalitions and networks among allies in the environmental justice movement.
- Promoting community education
- Strengthening individual knowledge and skills.

After the presentations, the “Four R’s of Environmental Justice” should be introduced. This is a concept that has emerged through years of work by the LEJ staff who have provided place-based service learning opportunities in the Bayview Hunters Point community.

Environmental justice advocates:

- **Reverence:** All life is sacred, and we are all interconnected. It is important to value the complexities of ecosystems and to nurture biodiversity. What sustains flora and fauna also sustains humans.

- **Responsibility:** Governments (local, state, and federal) as well as corporations should be held accountable to serve their constituents in environmentally sustainable and socially just ways. All people have a duty to ensure that the public and private sectors are held accountable. A related concept is one of personal reflection and holding oneself accountable.
- **Reclamation:** We, as people, should reclaim our communities and our land. Community members should demand safe and non-toxic places to live for all human and non-human residents, not just the privileged few.
- **Reciprocity:** All living things must nourish to be nourished. Plants and animals exchange carbon dioxide and oxygen with one another for survival. People should support what supports us: the natural world. Students can take action and be a part of positive social change. Students may have the opportunity to speak up for those who may not be able to speak.

Each group can have their own discussions based on these questions:

**How is (or was) the s/hero creating reverence toward what s/he is hoping to protect? How is (or was) s/he taking responsibility? How is (or was) s/he demanding accountability? How is (or was) s/he reclaiming the rights of the community and the health of the land? How is (or was) s/he acting in a reciprocal manner?**

The students can have a larger group discussion based on what was shared out in the small groups. Hopefully, the students will find commonalities between the case studies and their own community leaders, which may inspire action to create a more environmentally sustainable and socially just society.

#### **OUTCOME**

Students will understand the profound transformative power of community organizing through real-life situations and draw connections to their own lived experiences.

### *REFLECTION*

**Do the students feel inspired by any of the sheroes or heroes?** Is this because the students know the leader or community in the case study? Do the students feel an affinity to a certain case for other reasons? Why?

**Do the students consider themselves to be advocates for environmental justice?** In what ways are they advocates? What types of actions have they taken? In which communities?

**Have the students name other leaders whom they consider to be environmental justice sheroes and heroes.** Who are these leaders?

With which communities are they involved? How are they connected to environmental justice?

**Which of the Four R's resonates with them?** Can the students explain why? Students can brainstorm ideas for other R's that make sense in the context of environmental justice.

## BEYOND

Students can be asked to bring in their own musical choices with an empowering message to share with the class. It could be a song by a popular or obscure artist, or a song that was written by the student.

Students can conduct research on other environmental justice heroes and heroes from their own communities and elsewhere. Research can be conducted through videos, books, journals, internet sites, local organizations, and through interviews with community members. Research can be presented through videos, photographic essays, a formal report to present to local policy makers, slide presentations, or a creative avenue such as music, theater, or art. These culminating activities can be presented to the rest of the school and to community members as a catalyst for change at the local level.

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## COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Asian Pacific Environmental Network  
310 8th St. #309  
Oakland, CA 94607  
(510) 834-8920  
[www.apen4ej.org](http://www.apen4ej.org)

Chinese Progressive Association  
1042 Grant Avenue, 5th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94133  
(415) 391-6986  
[justice@cpasf.org](mailto:justice@cpasf.org)  
[www.cpasf.org](http://www.cpasf.org)

Communities for a Better Environment (CBE)  
1440 Broadway, Suite 701  
Oakland, CA 94612  
(510) 302-0430  
[www.cbecal.org](http://www.cbecal.org)

The Brower Youth Awards  
<http://www.broweryouthawards.org/>

The Goldman Environmental Prize  
[www.goldmanprize.org](http://www.goldmanprize.org)

Greenaction  
1095 Market Street, Suite 712  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
(415) 248-5010  
[greenaction@greenaction.org](mailto:greenaction@greenaction.org)  
[www.greenaction.org](http://www.greenaction.org)

History of environmental justice information:  
[www.geology.wisc.edu/~wang/EJBaldwin/PCR/pcrwhatispcrEJhistory.htm](http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~wang/EJBaldwin/PCR/pcrwhatispcrEJhistory.htm)

## MEDIA ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE:

*On the web:*

## TED Talks:

Majora Carter on Greening the Ghetto

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQ-cZRmHfs4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gQ-cZRmHfs4)

Van Jones keynote at Powershift 09

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIOv8RCkcXE](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xIOv8RCkcXE)*Feature films:*

A Civil Action

Erin Brockovich

*Documentaries:*The Garden ([www.blackvalleyfilms.com](http://www.blackvalleyfilms.com))Unnatural Causes ([www.newsreel.org](http://www.newsreel.org))When the Levees Broke ([available at amazon.com](#))

SF Environment

11 Grove Street

San Francisco, CA 94102

(415) 355-3700

[www.sfenvironment.org/](http://www.sfenvironment.org/)

Youth United for Community Action

2135 Clarke Ave.

East Palo Alto, CA 94303

(650) 322-9165

[www.youthunited.net](http://www.youthunited.net)

West County Toxics Coalition

305 Chesley Ave.

Richmond, CA 94801

(510) 232-3427

[www.westcountytoxicscoalition.org](http://www.westcountytoxicscoalition.org)*Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty: 1987-2007*[www.ejrc.cau.edu/TWARTFinal.htm](http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/TWARTFinal.htm)

## Profiles of Environmental Justice Seroes and Heroes



photo courtesy Charles Slay, IMC

### HENRY CLARK

Henry Clark lives in Richmond, CA. The City of Richmond has hundreds of toxic polluting factories and sites, including one of the nation's largest oil

refineries. Many of these sites border the community of North Richmond.

In 1986 Clark started a group called the West County Toxics Coalition (WCTC). The mission of WCTC is to empower low and moderate-income residents to exercise greater control over environmental problems that impact their quality of life in Contra Costa County, particularly West Contra Costa County. West Contra Costa County is a community where toxic sites are highly concentrated.

Through means of direct action, protesting, letter-writing campaigns, and attending government meetings, the WCTC successfully shut down a Richmond-based toxic waste incinerator in 1991—a company that had been emitting 70 tons of toxins annually into the air. The programs of WCTC empower residents to become actively involved in the development and implementation of environmental justice policies and programs that affect the critical health needs of underrepresented populations. Helping to address health care concerns, WCTC has also opened up a community health center in North Richmond.



photo courtesy Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice

### MARIE HARRISON

Marie Harrison is a lifelong community member of Bayview Hunters Point. Her community is burdened by a majority of the City's

toxic industrial sites, including the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, a federal Superfund site. Bayview Hunters Point residents experience the highest rates of asthma, cancer, and hospitalizations in the City.

Harrison has been working towards justice in the Bayview Hunters Point community for decades. Harrison's grandson lived in close proximity to the PG&E Hunters Point power plant and suffered from chronic asthma and nosebleeds. He was hospitalized with a medical emergency related to his condition; this very personal experience helped to transform Harrison into an environmental activist.

Harrison serves as a community organizer for Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, an environmental advocacy group. She also serves on community councils, advisory boards, and is a contributing reporter for the Bay View Newspaper. Harrison focused on shutting down the power plant and was committed to this effort until the plant was permanently closed. Through community organizing and empowerment, direct action protesting, letter-writing campaigns, and attending government meetings, a victory was achieved—after years of community opposition and pressure, the PG&E Hunter's Point power plant was officially decommissioned in May 2006. Through the combined efforts of Harrison, community members and groups including LEJ, justice was finally served to the residents of Bayview Hunters Point. Harrison's focus is the next big struggle, the safe and just clean-up of the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard.



Photo courtesy Center for American Progress

### VAN JONES

Van Jones is a Yale Law graduate, husband, father of two, and a tireless advocate for the planet and its people, especially the most disenfranchised. It is his belief that working-class people of color disproportionately suffer from environmental burdens, and it is time for these burdens

to be replaced by benefits. Jones is a champion of “Eco-Equity,” that is the right of a clean, safe, healthy, and equitable society, starting in communities that are in the greatest need.

Jones is the cofounder of both the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and Green for All, located in Oakland, CA. The mission of these organizations is to address both the challenges of social justice and environmental sustainability. Through the advocacy efforts of Van Jones, the City of Oakland passed a “Green Jobs Corps” proposal in 2007. The City allocated funds to train Oakland residents in eco-friendly “green-collar jobs.” Besides his advocacy work Jones also authored the bestselling book *The Green Economy: How One Solution Can Solve Our Two Biggest Problems*, addressing how green jobs can empower the most oppressed communities.

Jones continues to help forward environmental justice issues into the national forefront, claiming that going “green” should be for all. He has served as the Special Advisor for Green Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation for the White House Council on Environmental Quality.



photo courtesy Greenpeace

### VON HERNANDEZ

Von Hernandez lives near the large city of Manila in the Philippines. His hometown of Quezon City is the location of numerous toxic waste

sites that includes one of the region’s largest garbage dumps. Toxic waste from multinational technology companies and garbage are added to the site daily.

Waste disposal is a municipal nightmare in the Philippines and the Philippine government has even touted waste incineration as the solution to the problem. Incinerators were built to burn the garbage in an effort to ease the situation. Hernandez did not see incineration as a solution but as a threat to environmental and public health. When garbage is burned, it releases toxic ash spread through the air, leading to numerous health issues.

Hernandez became active as a toxics campaigner for Greenpeace International, which led him to become the convener of the Philippine Clean Air Coalition. The coalition held numerous protests, testified in hearings, and waged a public educational campaign drawing attention to the devastating health impacts of waste incineration. In 1999, Hernandez’s perseverance paid off and the Philippine government approved an incineration ban by passing the Clean Air Act of 1999. This was a momentous feat, the first country in the world to ban waste incinerators! Hernandez has taken this struggle worldwide and travels to other countries supporting communities facing the same issues.



photo: Scott Wintrow/  
Getty Images

### MAJORA CARTER

Majora Carter grew up in the diverse borough of the Bronx in New York City. Low-income and working-class people of color make up the largest group of residents in this area; at its height the borough handled more than 40% of New York's solid waste despite accounting for just 16% of the city's population. South Bronx is the location of two sewage-treatment plants and four power plants impacting environmental and public health. South Bronx residents also have some of the highest rates of asthma in the nation.

In 2001, Carter learned that the City planned to add another waste-processing facility to South Bronx. Enough was enough; Carter formed Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx) not only to stop the garbage depot—in which they were victorious—but to improve the overall health of the community. With the help of a small grant, Carter set up a training program for local residents, many of them ex-convicts and the chronically unemployed. The Bronx Environmental Stewardship Training (BEST) puts trainees through a multi-month program learning specialized jobs skills that are focused around environmental sustainability and green technologies.

Through the BEST program and Carter's leadership, local residents were engaged to improve the overall health of their community, creating clean and green spaces as well as "green-collar jobs." Carter has moved on from SSBx, but she continues to help restore the environment and empower underserved communities.

### WINONA LADUKE

Winona Laduke is Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe), living and working on the White Earth reservation in Minnesota. Laduke is an internationally renowned Native American activist in culturally-based sustainable development, renewable energy and resources, focusing primarily on the rights of indigenous peoples.

photo courtesy  
Nativeharvest.com

As a teenager, Laduke addressed the United Nations on issues affecting native peoples. She also presented her research on the impacts of mining within Indian land to the International Indian Treaty Council. Laduke has risen to be one of the leading Native American figures working with various organizations to regain stolen Indian land, promote better health and education in indigenous communities, and preserve the environment.

She is founder of the White Earth Land Recovery Project (WELRP) one of the nation's largest reservation based non-profit organizations. Laduke writes extensively on Native American and environmental issues and has authored five books. She ran for vice president on the Green Party ticket in 1996 and 2000 with Ralph Nader. Laduke continues to work towards environmental justice for indigenous communities nationally and internationally.

The following profiles and photos of Brower Youth Award winners are courtesy of The Earth Island Institute:



Drew Altizer photography

**ERICA FERNANDEZ, 16**  
Oxnard CA

When Erica found out that a liquefied natural gas facility was proposed for the coast of Oxnard and Malibu with a 36-inch pipeline routed through low-income neighborhoods, she was outraged. She worked in concert with the Sierra Club and Latino No on LNG group to mobilize the youth and Latino voice in protests and public meetings. She organized weekly protests at the BHP Billiton offices in Oxnard, met regularly with community members, marched through neighborhoods that would be most impacted, reached out to the media, and brought more than 250 high school students to a critical rally. Her passionate testimony at the California State Lands Commission meeting was quoted in news articles, and helped convince the Commission to vote to deny the project. Next, she helped convince the California Coastal Commission to vote 12-0 against the project, and worked on a letter writing and phone call campaign to the Governor asking him to veto the project, just as the commissioners did. Erica's community organizing and dogged determination played a crucial role in helping her community to resist a multinational billion-dollar corporation.



Drew Altizer photography

**CARLOS MORENO, 19**  
Boston MA  
[www.ace-ej.org/reep](http://www.ace-ej.org/reep)

Carlos understood the seriousness of youth violence as an environmental justice issue because of its tremendous impact on where and how we live. In 2001, the state funding for after school programs in Massachusetts dropped from \$14 million to nothing, and youth violence steadily increased. Through the Summer Jobs Campaign, Carlos addressed the increase of violence in the city of Boston and helped create more opportunities for summer youth employment. Over the course of three years, Carlos helped the United Youth & Youth Workers of Boston to mobilize 320 youth to attend a city meeting and organized hundreds of youth to attend and speak at committee meetings, vigils, and rallies at the City Hall, the Boston Commons and the State House. Carlos also coordinated a question and answer session between gubernatorial candidates and youth, to solicit their positions on youth issues. The Summer Jobs Campaign has garnered exceptional media attention and has initiated a crucial dialogue between the youth and city officials, resulting in an increase of \$750,000 for summer jobs.

**KARI FULTON, 22**

Washington DC

[www.ejcc.org](http://www.ejcc.org)

Kari worked on two different environmental justice projects that connect and inspire people

on both the local and national levels. On the local level, she co-founded the Loving Our City, Loving Ourselves (LOCLOS) campus and community initiative. LOCLOS works to build stronger campus and community solidarity on issues of concern in the Washington, DC area. Kari and LOCLOS coordinated two major neighborhood clean-ups in DC involving local non-profits and artists. On a national level, Kari worked as the Energy Action Coalition Campus Climate Challenge Coordinator for the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative. She supported and trained hundreds of young people at more than 50 universities and has become a pioneer organizer working to build up the youth climate movement amongst young people of color, in particular, students at historically black colleges and universities. My hope,” she said, “was for people of color and low-income individuals to get information that will help them take advantage of the growing green movement so that they are not left behind economically or environmentally.” Through her work students have created their own organizations and have become climate champions on their campuses and in their communities.

**LA CONSTANCE SHAHID, 18**

San Francisco CA

[www.lejyouth.org](http://www.lejyouth.org)

La Constance Shahid was a breath of fresh air in her inner-city San Francisco neighborhood of Bay View Hunter’s Point. Her work to restore the adjacent Yosemite Wetlands – named after Yosemite Street – helped to “improve the air and water quality, which we definitely need,” La Constance said. She was an active member of the Plants Gone Wild Native Plant Nursery Project, working to combat the destructive effects of industrialization and landfills on the native wetlands. La Constance also worked to get young people in the community involved by putting up posters, speaking at youth groups and walking around the neighborhood. One of the older members of the organization, she inspired the younger participants, serving as a model and a mentor. She and her peers repaired the community garden at Candlestick Point Recreation Area, built a 1200 square foot shade house to host native California seedlings, and created a strong community of youth activists who care about community stewardship. She was instrumental in creating LEJ’s Bay Youth for the Environment Program, training and inspiring the next generation of stewards for Candlestick Point SRA.