

## **Narration for the Climate Racism Presentation**

### **1st Slide: Climate Racism: Unequal Parts**

Thank you for joining us tonight as we explore the unequal impacts of climate racism.

### **2nd Slide: Welcome**

As a community of mostly European descendants, we'd like to acknowledge that we are on (your location's indigenous people) land.

Climate Justice Query: Given the fact of existential climate crisis, are we making timely choices based on our concern and awareness of the profoundly unequal impact climate change has on races, cultures, genders, economic classes, regions and nationalities?

Racial Justice Query: To what degree are our own racial privileges, stereotypes, and assumptions affecting our decisions? Will our decisions promote equity?

### **3rd Slide: Presentation Agenda Preview**

Here is an overview of the agenda.

### **4th Slide: Introduction to Climate Racism**

The first Earth Day was April 22, 1970. Some of you may remember these early Earth Day celebrations because you attended them, or you saw them in the media. If you look back at videos or photos of these early Earth Day celebrations, the absence of people of color is notable. Typically, actions and information around "the environment" were mainly dominated by white people and few people were making any connection between the environment and social justice issues.

History shows that some people were making that connection in the 70's. In fact, the first environmental lawsuit was filed in Houston Texas showing that the city's waste facility siting practices were racist. The emerging environmental justice movement got national attention in 1982 in Warren County in North Carolina. More than 500 blacks and whites went to jail for protesting the placement of a toxic dump in the mostly black and poor county. The protesters were asking: "Why would the government clean up dangerous toxic chemicals that threatened public health but then truck it to and dispose of the chemicals in the heart of the black community? Did black people's health matter just as much as white people's health?" While this protest mobilized a national, broad-based environmental justice movement, the people of Warren County did not get justice

until 2003, when after waiting for over 2 decades, state and federal forces began cleaning up the 142-acre toxic waste dump in the county.

By the way, a faith community, United Church of Christ, played a major role in the beginnings of the environmental justice movement. Benjamin Chavis, an African American Civil Rights activist, was director of the Southern Regional Program of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, and he and others from UCC wrote the first groundbreaking written report on environmental justice in 1983 titled Toxic Wastes and Race.

A key person who worked with Benjamin Chavis was Robert Bullard, who is considered by many to be the father of the environmental justice movement. In this YouTube we are about to show, Bullard talks about the beginnings of the environmental justice movement and the connection between environmental justice and climate justice.

*(Amanpour video clip)*

Since the 1980's, some progress has been made, for example President George W. Bush created an office on Environmental Equity, and President Clinton established a National Environmental Justice Advisory Board and all 50 states have passed environmental justice laws. But the reality is that one of the most important indicators of one's health is one's street address. African Americans and other people of color live in the most polluted places and suffer the health consequences. The poorest of the poor around the world have the worst health and live in the most degraded and at-risk environments. And climate change poses special health and environmental threats. Climate change looms as the global environmental justice issue of the 21st century. The people who contribute the least to climate change, people of color and poor people, are the ones who will suffer most severely from the effects of global climate change.

We are going to show a Ted Talk of David Lammy who is a member of parliament in Great Britain and also the Shadow Foreign Secretary of State. His Ted Talk is called "Climate justice can't happen without racial justice" and he makes a powerful argument for the connection between race and climate change.

*(David Lammy video clip)*

### **5th Slide: Key Takeways**

*(Read the information to highlight the key points.)*

### **6th Slide: Small Group Discussion Queries** (10 min.)

Were there any surprises or learning that rose up for you from the introduction and the videos?

What other stories of climate justice have made an impact on you and/or your family and friends?

Whole Group Sharing (10 min.)

### **7<sup>th</sup> Slide: Climate Impacts and Resilience**

Around the world, greenhouse gases are being released into our atmosphere at an alarming rate accelerating the global rise in temperature and changes in the climate. As you can see from the slide, we are faced with many severe climate events. Tonight, we want to focus on how these events affect people's lives in unequal ways. These changing weather patterns are leading to worsening flooding and drought, affecting crops and so people's food and water supplies. Flooding and heat waves can be dangerous to people's health, especially those suffering from hunger or with pre-existing health conditions. Sea levels are rising and are projected to be foot higher by 2050. Already coastal communities and island nations are facing more flooding and higher tides. In the far north, where warming is happening at twice the rate of the global average, indigenous people are dealing with warmer winters, melting permafrost and Arctic Sea ice, and rising sea levels, forcing some to move and make changes to their way of life. Severe climate events are happening all over the world with marginalized, impoverished people suffering the most as they have limited means for evacuation and recovery. These are just a few examples of how climate change is unjustly affecting communities worldwide. There are many more. We are sheltered from many of the effects of Climate Change here in central PA. As David Lammy pointed out, the places in the world most affected by climate change are those least responsible. The global south, island nations, natives of the tundra, and marginalized communities have contributed the least to the climate crisis. It is the developed countries, like the United States that have the highest carbon emissions and so the highest impact on climate change.

### **8<sup>th</sup> Slide: Global Distribution of Unequal Impacts**

Let's take a look at some maps to get an idea of where these emissions are highest around the world. The top map shows per capita emissions by country while the bottom map shows the areas most vulnerable to climate change caused by those emissions. For example, if you look at the dark brick color in the top map of the United States, it indicates that the US's carbon emissions per person are very high. In the bottom map, the blue and white show low vulnerability to the effects of climate change, with the southern part of our country being more vulnerable than the north. On the other hand the blue tones in the top map of Africa indicate that in general, the countries of Africa have very low carbon emissions. In the bottom map though, the dark brick color indicates how vulnerable they are to the effects of climate change. So you can see that in general where emissions are highest, the impact is lowest and vice versa.

To better understand how people are disproportionately affected by climate change, we want to take a closer look some examples.

### **9<sup>th</sup> Slide: Climate Impacts on People of Color - I**

We will share 3 examples and these by no means cover all the stories of climate injustice in the world. Our first example addresses some of what is happening in the Global South, in this case, South Sudan.

*(video clip)*

### **10<sup>th</sup> Slide: Climate Impacts on People of Color - II**

The next is an example of an island nation in the Central Pacific, Kirabati. Due to its location, sea level is critical to this island nation.

*(video clip)*

### **11<sup>th</sup> Slide: Climate Impacts on People of Color - III**

The people of Kiribati are doing all they can to mitigate the effects of climate change whereas their way of life has done almost nothing to contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. They need developed countries to make changes that will help them keep their county. Not only are these people losing their homes, but their culture and way of life is threatened.

Even within developed countries where emissions are highest, like the United States, there are many people living in poverty whose personal carbon footprint is minimal. Some of these communities are especially vulnerable to weather extremes exacerbated by climate change. They are also less equipped to deal with the disasters when they happen. This next video is about a community in Ironton, Louisiana months after Hurricane Ida hit in August of 2021.

*(video clip)*

**12<sup>th</sup> Slide: Chester City's Industrial Surroundings** Even closer to home is Chester, Pennsylvania, just southwest of Philadelphia on the Delaware River. Chester is a small city of 44,000 mostly African American and low-income residents. Chester has a long history as one of the nation's worst cases of environmental racism. Chester suffers from the largest trash incinerator in America, a sewage sludge incinerator, a paper mill burning waste coal and petroleum coke, numerous chemical plants, toxic waste sites, and much more. In the immediate area nearby are additional major polluters: oil refineries and gas-fired power plants.

*(video clip)*

For years, Chester residents have complained of constant headaches, sore throats, skin disorders, and asthma. Property values of homes have fallen drastically due to structural damages which residents say is the result of many trash dump trucks rumbling down their streets on a daily basis. The toxic and

hazardous waste facilities in Chester handle more than 67% of the county's total waste, and also harbor medical waste from five other states, including all of Pennsylvania.

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) six month study found that Chester has the highest percentage of low-weight births in the state, nearly double the rate for the rest of Delaware county, and a mortality and lung cancer rate that is 60% higher than the rest of Delaware County. The children of Chester have the highest concentration of lead in their bloodstream than anywhere else in the state. Chester also has the highest infant mortality rate in Pennsylvania. The EPA found that the poor health of many Chester residents makes them more susceptible to the aggravating effects of pollution.

### **13<sup>th</sup> Slide: Whole Group Discussion**

We realize that you will likely think more about all you have heard; at this point what are your thoughts about the intersection of white privilege and climate justice?

### **14<sup>th</sup> Slide: Groups Working to Counter Climate Change**

Put the 4 group links in the chat -

**Singularity Botanicals** at <https://singularitybotanicals.net/donations/>

**Action Center Inc. - Chester** at <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/>

**EQAT** at <https://www.eqat.org/donate>

**Th!rd Act** at <https://thirdact.org/donate/>

Information about climate disruption and racism can bring up feelings of hopelessness and helplessness in people. One of our goals for this presentation is to counteract those feelings and inspire people to take action. We are asking all of you to ask yourself what you can do right now to work against climate disruption. If you are interested, please grab a pen and paper to write down the names of the groups to look up online later. These have also been put in the chat. Here are 4 empowered groups working to help both with mitigation of future Climate Change impacts by decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to the unequal impacts already hurting black and brown people.

- In Chester the **African Diaspora Plant Medicine Project** works to provide free herbal medicines to African American communities. Our Friends Meeting is starting to work with this group. You can help us garden here or donate to **Singularity Botanicals** at <https://singularitybotanicals.net/donations/>
- To help with the struggle for a cleaner environment in Chester you can donate to **Action Center Inc. - Chester** at <http://www.ejnet.org/chester/>
- **EQAT or Earth Quaker Action Team** peacefully fights for a just and sustainable economy and is calling for Vanguard to divest from funding

fossil fuel infrastructure and deforestation. The website describes what you can do to put pressure on Vanguard to change their investment policies including a place to donate to EQAT at <https://www.eqat.org/donate>

- **Th!rd Act** is an organization of mostly elders working to have people divest from the 4 biggest banks, Chase, Wells Fargo, Bank of America and Citibank, who are the largest bank funders of fossil fuels and deforestation in the world. You can sign-on to the Customers for Climate Justice Open Letter to CEOs by filling out an online form or donate to Th!rd Act at <https://thirdact.org/donate/>

There are many more organizations, several of which are listed on a resource list on the Climate Justice page of the State College Friends Meeting's website. These groups are working on slowing climate change and addressing the inequities it causes. There are even more organizations that work to provide food, shelter, and a living to marginalized people regardless of the cause of their need.

### **15<sup>th</sup> Slide: Closing Thoughts**

Katharine Hayhoe, an atmospheric scientist said, "We think of climate action as a giant boulder sitting at the bottom of an incredibly steep hill, and it's only got a few hands on it." We think "there's just no way we're going to make it up that hill. Like, just forget it. Why even waste my time?" "But the reality is, when we start to look around and see that 90 percent of new energy installed last year, during COVID, was clean energy, and we start to see that cities all over the world are taking action on climate change, and big businesses, like Microsoft and Apple and AT&T — you know, they're building the biggest solar farm in the U.S., outside of Dallas, to supply major corporations with clean energy. So really, that giant boulder, it is already at the top of the hill, and it's already rolling down the hill in the right direction, and it already has millions of hands on it. It just doesn't have enough to get it going faster. And when we think, well, maybe I could add my hand to that, because I could get it going just a little bit faster, that's totally different than if we think it's at the bottom of the hill, not budging even an inch. So, I find tremendous hope from that."

And so can we all.

Participants can find resources, lists of books, websites, videos, on the Climate Justice Working Group's page on State College Friends Meeting's website.

**Thank you** for being here and contributing your good thinking about racial equity and climate stewardship!

Please, join me in a moment of closing silence.