



Faith and Environmental Justice:

SPEAKING TRUTH

Watershed Moments
in Global Leadership

High School Curriculum for Young Leaders



This module explores how organizations and individuals can contribute to environmental justice. The first part will explain the lives of three activists who faced danger to stand up for their communities and local environments. The second part explores organizations and government-led projects that aim to level the environmental playing field between developed and developing countries. The third part will explore the nature of the planet. Finally, the module will conclude with a discussion of the explored themes and will provide suggestions for a final class project. The effort to make nature's beauty and resources equally available to all is embodied in the concept of environmental justice.

Background



PreMed HQ. N.d. "Environmental Justice."
<https://www.premedhq.com/environmental-justice>

Environmental justice is:

“(noun) The fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, incomes and educational levels with respect to the development and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies.”¹

Environmental *injustice* is widespread globally. Governments locate toxic waste sites in poor and underserved areas. Tree-planting projects often focus on already green, wealthier neigh-

borhoods. Environmental injustice has gained some attention in the U.S. recently because of Flint, Michigan's unsafe drinking water, but the problem is not limited to Flint or to the U.S. more generally. This module will explore the effects and extent of environmental injustice further as we look at efforts to create more just environments.

We are glad that you have joined the Fund for the Future of Our Children in our effort to inspire students from multiple faith backgrounds. This module aims to connect faith-based motivations with care for the environment and the people who are most affected by environmental degradation.

¹ Teaching Tolerance. 2016. "Environmental Justice." <http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/environmental-justice-high-school>.

Summary

This section will discuss three activists who responded to environmental injustices against marginalized people. Berta Cáceres fought Multi-National Corporations that wanted to exploit the rivers without consulting local indigenous communities. Chico Mendes began as a labor advocate, but knew that the threat of deforestation could not be separated from the rights of the worker. Wangari Maathai protected the wellbeing of African women through guarding the Green Belt, a heavily forested area.

Exploring Three Activists

Fighting injustice, including environmental injustice, is not easy work. All of these activists risked their lives and, as a result, two of the activists were murdered. Unfortunately, this is not unusual. On average, two people per week are killed for environmental activism.²

Because environmental justice is about connecting environmentalism to the needs of people, the way that people's religions and cultures relate to the environment often motivates activism. In this module, students will become familiar with the diverse ways that spirituality/faith can facilitate activism that recognizes the full needs of disadvantaged and disenfranchised people.

² Global Witness. 2014. "Deadly Environment." April 15. <https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/environmental-activists/deadly-environment/>.

“Our Mother Earth – militarized, fenced-in, poisoned, a place where basic rights are systematically violated – demands that we take action”³

Berta Cáceres (1971-2016) was an indigenous activist who fought for the wellbeing of her people, the Lenca, and the rivers that surrounded them. Her mother, a social activist who aided refugees from El Salvador, raised Cáceres during the violent conditions of 1980s Central America. Cáceres dedicated her life to promoting indigenous rights, especially in regards to the environment. In 1993, she was one of the founders of the National Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), which responded to indigenous needs by rejecting illegal logging, demanding protection of territorial rights, and defending other environmental and human dignities.

Preventing the major dam project along the Gualcarque River became a project of COPIHN in 2006. The dam would have destroyed the river which sustains the Lenca people both physically and spiritually. In 2015, Cáceres received the Goldman Environmental Prize for her work on this project. In 2016, Cáceres was murdered because of her activism.⁴

Berta Cáceres



Simon, Yara. 2015. “Remembering Slain Indigenous Activist Berta Cáceres.” *Remezcla*.
<http://remezcla.com/lists/culture/berta-caceres-indigenous-rights-activist/>

³ Goldman Prize. 2015 “Berta Cáceres.” <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>.

⁴ Biographical information summarized from: Goldman Prize. 2015 “Berta Cáceres.” <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>.

Honduras and the Dangers of Environmental Activism

Honduras, a mid-sized country with a long history of violent conflict, is one of the most dangerous places in the world to be an activist. In 2014, Honduras had the highest murder rate in the world. Journalists and activists are regularly targeted for violence by the government and others.⁵ Indigenous people are especially likely to be targeted for their environmental activism. About 116 people were killed in 2015 for their environmental activism in Honduras; 40% of those murdered were members of indigenous communities.⁶ Within the small organization of COPIHN alone, two activists were murdered, in addition to Cáceres, since the anti-dam activism began.⁷



Global Affair Canada. 2012. "Honduras."
Government of Canada.

https://www.international.gc.ca/cil-cai/country_insights-aper-cus_pays/map-carte_hn.aspx?lang=eng

⁵ Human Rights Watch. 2015. "World Report 2015: Honduras." <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2015/country-chapters/honduras>.

⁶ Rowlands, Lyndal. 2016. "Justice for Berta Incomplete without Land Rights." March 14. *Common Dreams*. <http://www.commondreams.org/news/2016/05/14/justice-berta-caceres-incomplete-without-land-rights-un-rapporteur>.

⁷ Ibid.

Berta's Motivation

Cáceres and Spirituality

Although she was raised Catholic, Cáceres was a member of the indigenous Lenca people and identified most closely with this belief system. She maintained some close relationships with priests in the Catholic Church, but parts of the Church remained hostile towards indigenous people, making Cáceres's engagement with the Church uncomfortable.⁸



Berta Cáceres sits by the Gualcarque River, which she fought to protect. Goldman Prize. 2015 "Berta Cáceres." <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>

Cáceres drew motivation from Lenca spirituality. She explained the connection between Lenca beliefs and the environment:

"Lenca people are ancestral guardians of the rivers, in turn protected by the spirits of young girls, who teach us that giving our lives in various ways for the protection of the rivers is giving our lives for the well-being of humanity and of this planet."⁹

Cáceres said that at the beginning of this campaign, she would go to the river to "feel what the river was telling me" and she "knew it [the anti-dam campaign] was going to be difficult, but I also knew we were going to triumph, because the river told me so."¹⁰

Lenca spirituality is connected to environmentalism in other ways, too. In the Lenca creation story, the trees cry out when the first man cuts them down in order to clear ground space for planting maize. God tells the man to ask forgiveness of the earth by performing a *compostura*, a sacrificial ceremony. Today, the idea of human responsibility for any violence done to the earth, even in the name of production, contributes strongly to Lenca environmentalism.¹¹

⁸ Shirley, Betsy. 2016. "A Martyr of 'Laudato Si?'" *Sojourner*. March 18. <https://sojo.net/articles/martyr-laudato-si>.

⁹ Goldman Prize. 2015 "Berta Cáceres." <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>.

¹⁰ Shirley, Betsy. 2016. "A Martyr of 'Laudato Si?'" *Sojourner*. March 18. <https://sojo.net/articles/martyr-laudato-si>.

¹¹ Shirley, Betsy. 2016. "A Martyr of 'Laudato Si?'" *Sojourner*. March 18. <https://sojo.net/articles/martyr-laudato-si>.

This spirituality inspired Cáceres and her coworkers. She said: “In our fight to protect the Gualcarque River, the most powerful element has been the Lenca people’s spirituality and an impressive tenacity in the struggle that continues to this day.”

Motivated Activist

Cáceres drew other motivations from her upbringing. She was especially inspired by her mother, who was a midwife and the mayor of her town, despite gender discrimination. Berta grew up listening to Leftist radio broadcasts where she learned about the rights of workers and the importance of activism.¹²



Cáceres with her mother
Goldman Prize. 2015 “Berta Cáceres.”
<http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>

Cáceres was driven to serve the Lenca people, even when it was difficult. After her death, one of her friends told this story about Cáceres’s creative activism through a connection to the people she served:

After Cáceres called an impromptu virtual meeting at the community center, everyone present came to speak to her on a shared mobile phone. Cáceres was finishing routine negotiations with the government. According to the friend of Cáceres,

who was visiting the center, Cáceres “asked the almost exclusively illiterate, campesino/na [subsistence farmer] group, ‘¿Cheque sí, o cheque no?’ All raised their thumbs toward the little cell phone and called out, ‘Sí!’ No joint decision had been required, and yet she had sought consensus.”¹³

In another story, Cáceres was asked how to say “integrity” in Spanish and answered with the word for “coherence.”¹⁴ Her actions were always motivated by her values.

¹² Bell, Beverly. 2016. “The Life and Legacy of Berta Cáceres.” March 10. *Democracy Now*. http://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/10/the_life_and_legacy_of_berta.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Bell, Beverly. 2016. “The Life and Legacy of Berta Cáceres.” March 10. *Democracy Now*. http://www.democracynow.org/2016/3/10/the_life_and_legacy_of_berta.

In Her Own Words

“We have a chant that we’ve really taken to heart, that says, ‘They fear us because we’re fearless’” Interview in Havana, 2009¹⁵

“We must shake our conscience free of the rapacious capitalism, racism, and patriarchy that will only assure our own self-destruction”¹⁶ Goldman Prize Speech, 2015

Impact

Spiritual Change

Cáceres was most interested in protecting the “spiritual rights” of the Lenca people.¹⁷ Her environmental victories were victories for the Lenca for whom the rivers are sacred. Her prominence in the environmental activist community raised awareness of indigenous spiritual rights in relation to the environment.

Despite her distance from Catholicism, she created significant change in the Catholic Church. She was close with two Catholic priests, Fr. Moreno Coto and Fr. Fausto Milla, who were local priests who supported her activism. However, at the higher levels of the Church in Honduras, Cardinal Oscar Andrés Rodríguez stood directly in the way of environmental activism. He instructed Catholics not to cooperate with COPIHN. Andrés Rodríguez represents one tradition within the Church which rejects grassroots activism and has long denied the rights of indigenous people. Cáceres helped to push back against that tradition when she visited the Pope in 2014. Possibly as a consequence, the Pope’s *Laudato Si* paper on the environment acknowledges the intersection between environmental degradation and the disproportionate effect on indigenous people.¹⁸

¹⁵ Bell, Beverly. 2016. “Interview with Berta Cáceres: to fight again repression in Honduras is to fight for our Whole Continent.” March 23. <http://otherworldsarepossible.org/interview-berta-caceres-fight-against-repression-honduras-fight-our-whole-continent>.

¹⁶ Goldman Prize. 2015 “Berta Caceres.” <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipient/berta-caceres/>.

¹⁷ Awid. 2016. “Interview with Berta Caceres—Guardiana de los Ríos.” April 26. <http://www.awid.org/resources/interview-berta-caceres-guardiana-de-los-rios>.

¹⁸ Whole paragraph summarized from: Shirley, Betsy. 2016. “A Martyr of ‘Laudato Si?’” *Sojourner*. March 18. <https://sojo.net/articles/martyr-laudato-si>.

Effect on the Environment

Despite her early death, Cáceres won her last and main battle against the Agua Zarca dam, which seems to have stopped construction for the foreseeable future. Prior to her death, her activism caused the World Bank to pull out its support, effectively halting construction. After her death, Sinohydro, a dam-building company and a giant corporation, pulled out of the project, giving the construction on the dam seemingly no possible way forward.¹⁹

Suggested Activities:

Learning activity: Have students learn more about the challenges that indigenous people face through this role-play activity: http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/lesson_3_aboriginal_land_rights_and_mining,10605.html

Activism project: Show community members in your place of worship or school that human rights for indigenous people include environmental protection:

Discuss:

- What makes the river important to the Lenca people?
- Are there important natural sites in your religious tradition?
- What did Berta Cáceres mean by talking about “spiritual rights” as part of protecting the environment?

Action:

- Make advertisement posters that show the connection between “spiritual rights” and protecting the environment. Hang these posters up around your community.

¹⁹ Garcia, Claudia and Irene Bano Ruiz. 2016. *DW: Made for Minds*. July 3. <http://www.dw.com/en/the-deadly-price-of-environmental-activism/a-18657369>.

*"My dream is to see this entire forest conserved...If a messenger from heaven came down and guaranteed that my death would help to strengthen the struggle, it could even be worth it. But experience teaches us the opposite... I want to live."*²⁰

Mendes quoted by Sue Branford, a Brazilian expert on Mendes

Chico Mendes (1944-1988) was a leader of the *seringueiros* (rubber tappers) in the Amazon of Brazil. Born with the name Francisco Alves Mendes

Jr. to a family of *seringueiros*, Mendes was illiterate until he was 20 years old and was never formally educated. Rubber tapping, a practice which extracts resources without harming the trees of the Amazon, came into conflict with logging and agriculture, which depleted the lands and made the lives of the *seringueiros* difficult. Mendes was active in organizing the workers to stop deforestation through his union, Xapuri Rural Workers Union. He pioneered the protest technique known as



Revkin, Andrew. 2008. "The Uncertain Legacy of Chico Mendes." December 22. *The New York Times*.
http://dotearth.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/12/22/the-uncertain-legacy-of-chico-mendes/?_r=0

**Chico
Mendes**

empate, where the protesters block the path of destructive equipment with their bodies. Mendes's activism expanded beyond workers' rights to reforestation, forest reserves, and biodiversity.

Mendes earned acclaim for his work when he received the Global 500 Award from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), among other honors. He was murdered in 1988 by local loggers because of his work.

²⁰ BBC. 2008. "The Life and Legacy of Chico Mendes." *BBC News*. December 22. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7795175.stm>.

About Brazil

Much of the Amazon is located in Brazil. Brazil has experienced mass deforestation since the 1970s with 19% of the Amazon having been cleared.²¹ Demand for soy and beef led to deforestation, but the rich soil of the Amazon quickly depletes without its indigenous, intense biodiversity. The government, interested only in short term profits, did little to help before Chico Mendes's activism. However, the attention called to deforestation by Mendes and others began to reverse the process of deforestation in the late 1980s. At first, this downward trend was slow, but more recently the rate has become an even stronger trend. The rate of deforestation in 2015 was 75% less than that between 1996 and 2005.²² Use this interactive tool from the



World Atlas. 2015. "Brazil."

<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/samerica/br.htm>



A Seringueiro at work in Brazil's Amazon Rain Forest, World Wildlife Foundation. "Rubber Tappers from Brazil, Peru, and Bolivia." June 16. <http://www.wwf.org.br/informacoes/english/?46182/Rubber-tappers-from-Brazil-Peru-and-Bolivia-share-experiences-on-rainforest-rubber>.

Center for Foreign Relations to learn more about the problem of deforestation in Brazil: [http://www.cfr.org/interactives/amazon-deforestation/?cid=soc-facebook-in-amazon_ig-063016#/.](http://www.cfr.org/interactives/amazon-deforestation/?cid=soc-facebook-in-amazon_ig-063016#/) Read the rest of this section to learn about how Chico Mendes contributed to this trend.

Motivation

Chico Mendes was driven to protect the *seringueiros* and the Amazon, which he loved. An expert on Brazil, Sue Branford, described walking in the Amazon with Mendes:

"Chico had a profound love of the tropical forest. As we walked at a fast pace through the trees to visit a community of rubber-

²¹ Butler, Rhett. 2014. "Brazil." July 13. *Mongabay*. <http://rainforests.mongabay.com/20brazil.htm>.

²² Tollefson, Jeff. 2015. "Stopping Deforestation: Battle for the Amazon." April 1. *Nature News*. <http://www.nature.com/news/stopping-deforestation-battle-for-the-amazon-1.17223>.

tappers, he was constantly pointing out with delight parrots and other birds, though generally all I managed to see was a flash of colour.”²³

Branford adds that Mendes was mainly “driven by a burning sense of social justice.”²⁴

Mendes said that he was introduced to social justice through meeting revolutionary Euclides Tavora who taught him about socialism and populism while hiding among the rubber tappers after his illegal involvement in anti-government activities. Mendes’s experience of meeting Tavora inspired him to listen to international radio, where he was further educated and motivated.²⁵

Religious Motivation and Impact

Mendes was not a church goer and had some conflicts with the Catholic Church, but certain aspects of Catholicism resonated with his activism and in his life. When the *seringueiros* began to fight the loggers, they often allied with the Catholic Church.²⁶ At the time, liberation theology was taking hold in Latin America.

Liberation theology is:

a Catholic movement which was particularly prevalent in 20th century Latin America, which “sought to apply religious faith by aiding the poor and oppressed through involvement in political and civic affairs. It stressed both heightened awareness of the ‘sinful’ socioeconomic structures that caused social inequities and active participation in changing those structures.”²⁷

In the Amazon, churches sympathetic to liberation theology built “base communities” which met for weekly Bible studies that focused on social justice issues. In Mendes’s area, most of the members of these groups were rubber tappers. Many of Mendes’ colleagues became activists through these groups.²⁸ Mendes never participated in these activities, but maintained some close relationships with activist priests. Non-activist priests, however, resented this new form of theology and tried

²³ BBC. 2008. “The Life and Legacy of Chico Mendes.” *BBC News*. December 22. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7795175.stm>. [written in British English, hence the spelling].

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Tal, Alon. 2006. *Speaking of Earth: Environmental speeches that moved the world*. Rutgers University Press.

²⁶ Revkin, Andrew. *The Burning Season : The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Amazon Rain Forest*. Washington, US: Island Press, 2012.

²⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica. “Liberation Theology.” <http://www.britannica.com/topic/liberation-theology>.

²⁸ Revkin, Andrew. *The Burning Season : The Murder of Chico Mendes and the Fight for the Amazon Rain Forest*. Washington, US: Island Press, 2012.

to undermine Mendes's work. One priest in the Brazilian Amazon accused liberation theology of being "religion for people with no faith."²⁹

Mendes did not talk about his personal relationship with faith often, although he was reported to have once responded to threats on his life, saying, "I really believe in God, and I'm going to take hold of God and drive these bad people away."³⁰ Mendes was murdered while he was briefly visiting his home over Christmas. One of his friends, a local priest, presided over his funeral, where more than a thousand people gathered.³¹ Liberation theology built on and supported Mendes's activism. His experiences with it may not be clear, but the influence of the church surrounds his story.

Impact

Mendes's activism changed those around him. His death even inspired this song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEP7MD3Nfvw>

Here are some of the translated lyrics:³²

[Chico Mendes] was a defender and an angel
of all the Amazon.
He died in cold blood,
and Collor de Mello and the police knew it.
When the angels cry
rain falls on the village,
...
the jungle drowned in weeping.
...When the angels cry
it is for each tree that dies

You can find the rest of the translation here: <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/cuando-los-angeles-lloran-when-angels-cry.html>.

Mendes had an impact on the environment. He brought the problems of the Amazon to an international audience. He advocated for the idea of "forest reserves,"

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Maná. "Cuando Angeles Lloran." Translation from Lyrics Translate. <http://lyricstranslate.com/en/cuando-los-angeles-lloran-when-angels-cry.html>

where trees would be maintained so that peasants and indigenous peoples could use sustainable practices to extract their resources. After the World Bank and Inter-America Development Bank accepted the idea, Brazil was pressured to create the first reserve in 1988, just before Mendes's death.³³ International pressure and attention on the Amazon contributed to a reduction in the deforestation rate of Brazil. Today, giving indigenous peoples control of protected forest areas has proven to be one of the most effective ways of limiting deforestation.³⁴ Although Mendes's activism did not stop deforestation, it was able to bring the will and attention to the problem in order to stem the crisis.

Suggested Activity

Learning Lesson:

- Any of the lesson activities presented here engage with themes related to Mendes's work: http://www.pbs.org/journeyintoamazonia/teacher_chico.html
- This activity presents Mendes's murder as a mystery, but also shows how fighting deforestation creates enemies: http://www.sln.org.uk/geography/who_killed_chico_mendez.htm

Activist Lesson: In Mendes's struggle, demand for wood harmed the rainforest. Have students think of other products that might hurt the environment. Have small groups of students pick one product. They should brainstorm ten ways to reduce their consumption of the product.

³³ Encyclopedia Britannica. "Liberation Theology." <https://www.britannica.com/topic/liberation-theology>.

³⁴ Erickson, Jim. 2013. "Protected areas successfully prevent amazon rainforest deforestation." *Michigan News*.

“When you start doing this work, you do it with a very pure heart, out of compassion.”³⁵

“A lot of people say, ‘They could kill you.’ And I say, ‘Yes, they could, but if you focus on the damage they could do, you cannot function.’... you cannot see the fear they see... At this particular moment, I am only seeing one thing – that I am moving in the right direction.”³⁶ – Wangari Maathai

Wangari Maathai



Capital Lifestyle. 2015. “Africa Celebrates African Environment Day and the Life of Wangari Maathai.” March 4. *Lifestyle Magazine*.
<http://www.capitalfm.co.ke/lifestyle/2015/03/04/africa-celebrates-africa-environment-day-and-life-of-wangari-maathai/>

Wangari Maathai (1940-2011) was the founder of the Green Belt Movement, an African movement to stop deforestation. She was born in Nyeri, Kenya. Maathai was the oldest child of six in a family of subsistence farmers. Her parents sent her to be educated by Catholic missionary nuns after her brother questioned why he was getting an education but his older sister was not.³⁷ She excelled, received a scholarship to study in the United States, and eventually became the first woman in East and Central Africa to earn her PhD (which she did at the University of Nairobi).³⁸ She became politically active after witnessing the suffering of women in

Kenyan slums and observing how desertification was forcing women to travel further for firewood and to struggle to feed themselves and their families. She was involved in the National Council for Kenyan Women and decided to start a tree-planting program through the organization. The organization spread and influenced much of Sub-Saharan Africa. Maathai also played an instrumental role in preventing the building of a skyscraper by Kenya’s authoritarian president in one of Nairobi’s only green spaces. In 2004, Maathai received the Nobel Peace Prize for her work.

³⁵ Maathai, Wangari. 2000. “Speak Truth to Power.” Green Belt Movement. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-truth-to-power>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Telegraph. 2011. “Wangari Maathai.” September 26. *Obituaries*. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/politics-obituaries/8790642/Wangari-Maathai.html>.

³⁸ The Green Belt Movement. N.d. “Biography.” <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/biography>.

Kenya and Environmental Activism

Kenya's environmental degradation has a strong effect on its economic wellbeing. Only 8% of Kenya's land can serve as farmland, but 75% of its workforce works on farms. Recent droughts have deteriorated Kenya's conditions.³⁹ The soil is over-



Kenya Map Facts.
<http://kenyamap.facts.co/kenyamapof/kenyamap.php>

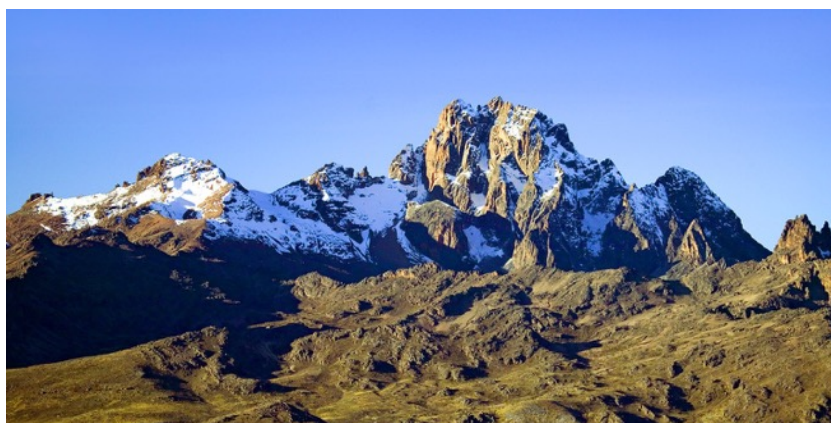
worked in many places. The government policy of attacking environmental activists makes the conditions even worse. The president during Maathai's period of activism was Daniel Arap Moi, a ruthless dictator who saw Maathai's activism and the activism of others as a threat to his power.

Motivation

Maathai found inspiration in both the spiritualities of the Bible and of the Kikuyu people. She was raised as a Catholic with knowledge of the spiritual stories from her family's Kikuyu heritage. She spoke about the intersection of the two, saying that missionaries taught that God was not on Mount Kenya (as traditional spirituality believed) but in heaven. She said that people have failed to

"find" heaven. Rather, she believed "the Kikuyu people were not wrong when they said that God dwelled on the mountain, because if God is omnipresent, as theology tells us, then God is on Mount Kenya too."⁴⁰ This belief, she argued, could help save the environment because the Kikuyu people would fight for the maintenance of a holy mountain, where God resides.

Maathai's initial motivation, however, did not come from religion. She said she cared more about "how to solve problems on the



Africa Point. 2014. "Save Mount Kenya."
<http://www.africapoint.com/save-mount-kenya.html>

³⁹ Foundation for Sustainable Development. "Environmental Sustainability in Kenya." <http://www.fsdinternationalorg/country/kenya/envissues>.

⁴⁰ Maathai, Wangari 2004. . "The Cracked Mirror." *The Green Belt Movement*. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/the-cracked-mirror>

ground.”⁴¹ Still, after she looked at the larger picture, she “came to realize that the work of the GBM [Green Belt Movement] was driven not only by passion and vision but also by certain intangible core values,” including “love for the environment,” “gratitude and respect for the Earth’s resources,” “self-empowerment,” and “the spirit of service,” all of which she saw as present in the Bible.⁴² She recognized that “The Bible understands the importance of recognizing the smallest.”⁴³ She also finds Kikuyu spirituality as a hopeful contrast to Western Christianity, explaining: “Until the arrival of the Europeans, communities had looked to Nature for inspiration, food, beauty and spirituality. They pursued a lifestyle that was sustainable and that gave them a good quality of life.”⁴⁴

Suggested Activity

To explore Maathai’s relationship of religion to activism further, have the class read this speech on the biblical story of Peter and John helping a crippled beggar at the Temple and consider how international leaders should work with African environmentalism:⁴⁵ <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/rise-up-and-walk>

Maathai was also inspired to do her work based on her experience interacting with nature as a child. In her Nobel Peace prize address, she describes the idyllic scene of trying to pick up strings of frog eggs like beads. She reminisces about this environmentally sustainable version of Kenya, while challenging her listeners to restore “the home of the tadpoles and give back to our children a world of beauty and wonder.”⁴⁶

Hear Wangari Maathai talking about her motivation and experience: <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/taking-root-documentary> (Warning: there is some violence in this video by the police against protesters)

⁴¹ Maathai, Wangari. 2010. *Replenishing the earth: Spiritual values for healing ourselves and the world*. Image, 13.

⁴² Maathai, Wangari. 2010 *Replenishing the earth: Spiritual values for healing ourselves and the world*. Image, 14.

⁴³ Maathai, Wangari. 2010. *Replenishing the earth: Spiritual values for healing ourselves and the world*. Image, 68.

⁴⁴ Maathai, Wangari. 2004. “The Cracked Mirror.” *The Green Belt Movement*. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/the-cracked-mirror>.

⁴⁵ Maathai, Wangari. 2005. “Rise up and Walk.” *The Green Belt Movement*. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/rise-up-and-walk>

⁴⁶ Maathai, Wangari. 2005. “Nobel Prize Lecture.” Stockholm, Sweden. *The Green Belt Movement*. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2004/maathai-lecture-text.html

Impact

Spiritual Change

Maathai aimed to change how people viewed environmentalism in the Christian Bible. She said that the teachings of the New and Old Testament offer guidance that is not often acknowledged by Christian clergy on “how the earth’s natural resources ought to be treated.”⁴⁷ She also advocated for the incorporation of Kikuyu and other African traditional beliefs because they can restore the “identity, self-pride, confidence and hope”⁴⁸ that is necessary for advocacy. One of the ways that she has done this is through focusing on Kikuyu beliefs about trees as “a symbol of peace.”⁴⁹

Environmental Change

Maathai’s focus on trees has also helped her change the environment. Her project has planted 10 million trees, providing jobs for fifty thousand people in many African countries across the Green Belt. She has won the United Nations Environmental Program Global 500 award for her work.⁵⁰ She also stopped President Moi from building an unnecessary skyscraper on top of the only green space left in Nairobi. For this effort, she earned public condemnation and false accusations of “subversion” and sexual ‘misconduct,’ but ultimately achieved her goal of preventing construction.⁵¹



Wangari Maathai plants trees with children as part of the Green Belt Movement. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/>

⁴⁷ Maathai, Wangari. *Replenishing the earth: Spiritual values for healing ourselves and the world*. Image, 2010, 20.

⁴⁸ Maathai, Wangari. 1995. “Bottlenecks to Development in Africa.” 4th Annual UN Women’s Conference. Beijing, China. <http://www.greenbelt-movement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/bottleneck-to-development-in-africa>.

⁴⁹ Maathai, Wangari. 2005. “Nobel Prize Lecture.” Stockholm, Sweden. *The Green Belt Movement*. http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2004/maathai-lecture-text.html.

⁵⁰ Komisar, Lucy. 1992. “Kenya: Where Environmentalism and Authoritarianism Clash.” May 31. *The Baltimore Sun*. http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1992-05-31/news/1992152129_1_wangari-maathai-green-belt-movement-kenya.

⁵¹ Maathai, Wangari. 2000. “Speak Truth to Power.” Green Belt Movement. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-truth-to-power>.

Democratic Change

Maathai also moved Kenya towards democracy by insisting on the power of the people, especially women. She tells a story about protesting the government with mothers whose sons were arrested for protesting. The police attacked the mothers and Maathai. The mothers, however, refused to leave Nairobi and took shelter in an Anglican church. Maathai explains that the soldiers refused to break into the church because some of them were Christians and could not reconcile using force in a church with their morals and beliefs.⁵²

Another time, Maathai placed her own life in danger while standing up against the threat of a military government. She said that her organization responded to rumors of military-government incorporation by issuing a statement, which led the government to try to arrest members of her organization. She explains her own ordeal:

“I went into my house and locked myself in because I was so convinced that no one could get me out—it had been so reinforced for security...they broke into the house, literally cutting the windows so that they could reach me.”⁵³

She describes the events as frightening. Still, she bravely continued to resist the government’s anti-democratic nature.

Suggested Activity

Watch this video explanation of the International Tree Planting Campaign. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/get-involved/be-a-hummingbird>. Then, contribute to tree planting in some way:

- Option 1: Find a place to plant trees in your community.
- Option 2: Do a fundraiser for the Green Belt Movement.

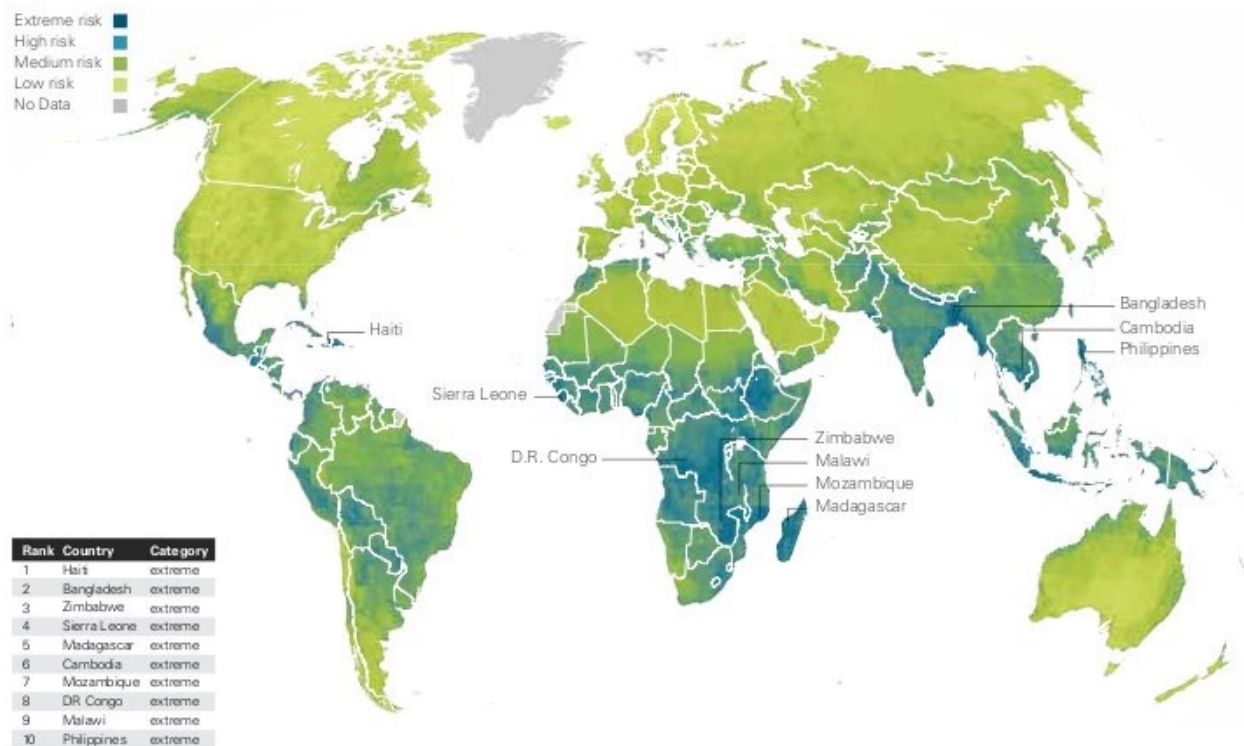
⁵² Maathai, Wangari. 2000. “Speak Truth to Power.” Green Belt Movement. <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org/wangari-maathai/key-speeches-and-articles/speak-truth-to-power>.

⁵³ Ibid.

The disproportionate neglect or targeting of marginalized populations in issues of climate and environmental problems also occurs on the country-to-country level. Developing countries are often victims of developed countries' unsustainable environmental policies and actions. The richest 20% of the world is responsible for 60% of its pollution.⁵⁴ At the same time, underdeveloped countries feel the negative impact of climate change more than developed countries through more incidences of extreme weather-related events and because they do not have the resources to protect their populations and to address emergencies when they occur.⁵⁵

Large Scale Projects

Figure 6: Climate change vulnerability index 2012



Source: Maplecroft. (2012). The Climate Change and Environmental Risk Atlas. Available at <http://maplecroft.com>

⁵⁴ Roberts, J. Timmons, and Bradley Parks. *A climate of injustice: Global inequality, North-South politics, and climate policy*. Mit Press, 2006.

⁵⁵ Hynes, William and Shannon Wang. 202. "Green Growth and Developing Countries A Summary for Policy Makers." OECD. June. Accessed June 6, 2016. <http://www.oecd.org/greengrowth/greendevlopment/50526354.pdf>.

This section will explore what large organizations (countries, global NGOs, and international institutions) have achieved in order to give poor populations the tools to fight environmental challenges. This section will explore three countries: Chile, Morocco, and Egypt. Two of the countries excel at environmentally sound collection of water through the cheap and effective gathering of dew in large nets.⁵⁶ Two other projects involve energy and the environmentally-friendly solar power to serve those without access to energy. Both of these projects serve and lift up the poorer members of developing nations while contributing minimal harmful waste. Support from international bodies, NGOs, and national and local governments have allowed these projects to succeed.

Chile

Chile is a country located in the western coast of South America and is a democratic, Spanish speaking country with a majority Catholic population.

The Challenge

Chile faces problems with clean water, especially because much of their water is polluted by raw sewage.⁵⁷ Also, Chile is home to the Atacama Desert, the “driest desert in the world.”⁵⁸ Within the history of record keeping, the Atacama Desert has never experienced rain.⁵⁹ Still, this parched desert has over one million residents.⁶⁰

Solution

In 2001, a Canadian nonprofit, Fog Quested, installed dew-catching nets in Falda Verde, an Atacama Desert town which is near the mountains and coast. The project’s dew nets have



CIA Worldbank. “Chile.”
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ci.html>

⁵⁶ Chandler, David L. 2012. "How to Get Fresh Water out of Thin Air." *MIT News*. August 30. Accessed June 13, 2016. <http://news.mit.edu/2013/how-to-get-fresh-water-out-of-thinair-0830>.

⁵⁷ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ci.html>

⁵⁸ Central Intelligence Agency. N.d. “Chile.” *The World Factbook*.” <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ci.html>.

⁵⁹ Visiland, Peter. N.d. “The Driest Place on Earth.” *National Geographic*. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0308/feature3/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

been able to collect 1,000 liters of water daily.⁶¹ An MIT research team made this volume of collection possible through research and support.⁶²



Mccann, Jaymi. "Bringing the Driest Place in the World to Life: 'Fog Catchers' Attempt to Harvest Moisture with Huge Nets in Chilean Desert." Mail Online. 2013. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2301226/Fog-catchers-attempt-harvest-moisture-huge-nets-Chilean-desert.html>

Morocco

Morocco is located in North Africa and borders on the desert region of the Sahara. Currently under the rule of Mohamad VI, Morocco is a monarchy. It has a 99% Sunni Muslim population⁶³ and has pride in its interreligious cooperation. This section will explore two environmental problems that Morocco faces and how creative initiatives have aimed to tackle these challenges.



CIA World Factbook. "Morocco."
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>

Problem: Access to Water

Morocco has limited water,⁶⁴ a problem worsened by the fact that much of the water is polluted by raw sewage.⁶⁵ This makes rural life difficult and drives up the cost of food for most Moroccans because 85% of Morocco's agricultural land is not irrigated.⁶⁶

Solution: Dew Nets

Much like in Chile, dew nets have been used to capture water. The project is called CloudFisher. In the South-

⁶¹ Ng, Shelley. "World's Driest Desert in Chile Harvests Water from Fog." NY Daily News. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/world-driest-desertchile-harvests-water-fog-article-1.1304082>.

⁶² Chandler, David L. 2012. "How to Get Fresh Water out of Thin Air." MIT News. August 30. Accessed June 13, 2016. <http://news.mit.edu/2013/how-to-get-fresh-water-out-of-thinair-0830>. Ac-

⁶³ CIA. 2016. "Morocco." *World Factbook*. July 11. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>.

⁶⁴ USAID. 2016. "Water and Sanitation." *Where we work: Morocco*. February 3. <https://www.usaid.gov/morocco/water-and-sanitation>.

⁶⁵ CIA. 2016. "Morocco." *World Factbook*. July 11. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mo.html>.

⁶⁶ USAID. 2016. "Water and Sanitation." *Where we work: Morocco*. February 3. <https://www.usaid.gov/morocco/water-and-sanitation>.

Western region of Ait Baamrane, 40 dew-collecting panels are in use. The project, put in place in Spring 2015, targets the heavily dewy area, the anti-Atlas Mountains.

Success

The project already regularly provides 400 people with access to clean water,⁶⁷ which in turn protects women from the dangerous water-collecting trips.⁶⁸ The project helps provide water to more people than alternatives because the cost of retrieval of dew water is three times cheaper than that of well water.⁶⁹ Fog water is



The Star Online. "Moroccan Villagers Harvest Fog for Water Supply." - Environment. June 19, 2015. Accessed June 22, 2016.

especially useful because it provides locals with access to water even in times of drought.⁷⁰ This project is made possible only because of the cooperation of a Moroccan NGO, Dar Si Hmad, and German companies, Aqualonis.⁷¹ Again, the support of multiple groups allows for change that lifts the poorest up without hurting the environment and by allocating the most creative resources to those in most need. This is an example of environmental justice that can be replicated.

Problem: Energy Dependency and Scarcity

Morocco is the only North African country with no natural gas reserves. Their traditional energy needs were primarily met with imported oil, natural gas, and coal. These imports drive up electricity prices and make Morocco dependent on other

⁶⁷ Dar Si Hmad. N.d. "Fog-Harvesting." Dar Si Hmad. Accessed June 10, 2016. <http://www.darsihmad.org/fog-harvesting/>.

⁶⁸ Dar Si Hmad. N.D. "The Tableau Foundation Challenge: From Fog Nets to Neural Nets." *Driven Data*. Accessed June 22, 2016. <https://www.drivendata.org/competitions/9/>.

⁶⁹ Dar Si Hmad. 2015. "France 24: Moroccan Villagers Harvest Fog for Water Supply." December 10. Accessed June 12, 2016. <http://www.darsihmad.org/moroccanvillagers-harvest-fog-for-water-supply/>.

⁷⁰ Choukrallah, Zakaria. "Moroccan Villagers Harvest Fog for Water Supply." Moroccan Villagers Harvest Fog for Water Supply. June 19, 2015. Accessed June 21, 2016. <http://phys.org/news/2015-06-moroccan-villagers-harvest-fog.html>.

⁷¹ Toutonghi, Pauls. 2016. "Could Harvesting Fog Help Solve the World's Water Crisis?" *The New Yorker*. Accessed June 9, 2016. <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/couldharvesting-fog-help-solve-the-worlds-water-crisis>.



Domonoske, Camila. "Morocco Unveils A Massive Solar Power Plant In The Sahara."

NPR. February 4, 2016.

Accessed June 22, 2016.

<http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/02/04/465568055/morocco-unveils-a-massive-solar-power-plant-in-the-sahara>

nations.⁷² Morocco, however, has served as a leader in the move towards sustainable, renewable and reliable energy. Only 20 years ago, 22% of rural villages had access to electricity. In 2014, 97% of rural villages had access.⁷³

Solution: Solar Power

Morocco is addressing its energy needs in a more sustainable and self-reliant way. For example, the power station Noor, constructed in 2014, is "the largest solar plant in the world."⁷⁴ This project supports people in the rural areas who may have trouble gaining access to electricity and other resources. It also reduces Morocco's fossil fuel consumption by 29%.⁷⁵ The solar power plant will even eventually generate enough electricity for the country's population and generate surplus for revenue generating exports.⁷⁶ The electricity generated through these plants will further help cut the country's "carbon emissions by 760,000 tons a year."⁷⁷

Success through Support

This project was supported by the World Bank with assistance from the Clean Technology Fund.⁷⁸ The cooperation between these groups and the Moroccan government led to its success.

⁷² The World Bank. 2015. "New World Bank Support for Morocco to Increase Access to Healthcare and Boost Green Energy." April 24. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2015/04/24/new-world-bank-support-for-morocco-to-increase-access-to-healthcare-and-boost-green-energy>.

⁷³ Sconosciuto, Lucia. 2014. "EBRD helps bring electricity to Rural Morocco." December 17. *European Bank for Reconstruction and Development*. <http://www.ebrd.com/news/2014/ebd-helps-bring-electricity-to-rural-morocco.html>.

⁷⁴ Neslen, Arthur. 2015. "Morocco Poised to Become a Solar Superpower with Launch of Desert Mega-project." *The Guardian*. Accessed June 7, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/oct/26/morocco-poised-to-become-a-solar-superpower-with-launch-of-desert-mega-project>.

⁷⁵ Parke, Phoebe. 2016. "World's Largest Concentrated Solar Plant Opens." *CNN*. February 8. Accessed June 21, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/africa/ouarzazate-moroccosolar-plant/>.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Cook, Jesselyn. 2016. "How Morocco Is Harnessing Solar Power To Achieve Energy ..." *The Huffington Post*. February 8. Accessed June 9, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/morocco-solar-plantnoor_us_56b4d738e4b04f9b57d95871.

⁷⁸ Parke, Phoebe. 2016. "World's Largest Concentrated Solar Plant Opens." *CNN*. February 8. Accessed June 21, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/08/africa/ouarzazate-moroccosolar-plant/>.

Egypt

Egypt, another North African country, has a remarkable ancient history and has played an important role in the modern world. Unfortunately, Egypt has been experiencing political turmoil since the Arab Spring protests in 2011. Egyptians have suffered economically and have often encountered violence.⁷⁹ Still, progress has been made in order to solve its energy shortages.

The Problem: Power Shortages

Many Egyptians regularly experience power shortages, which interfere with daily life. These shortages are exacerbated by the political situation in Egypt. Terrorist attacks have destroyed oil rigs and natural gas sites. Changing government authorities has meant that projects for improving the situation have often fallen

through.⁸⁰ Many poor villages do not have reliable access to electricity.

Solution: Solar Power Plant

A solar power plant in Egypt has been running since Spring 2015. The plant will provide energy to 264 rural villages, which could not previously access electricity regularly.⁸¹ The energy will be clean and will limit CO² in the atmosphere.⁸² It will create new jobs and power over 6,000 homes, while exporting the surplus energy.⁸³



"Egypt Launches New Solar Power Plant." Egyptian Streets. March 06, 2015. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://egyptianstreets.com/2015/03/06/egypt-launches-new-solar-power-plant/>



CIA World Factbook. N.D. "Egypt." <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/eg.html>.

⁷⁹ Fanz, Ashley. 2016. "Egypt's Long and Bloody Road from Arab Spring to Hope and Chaos." April 27. CNN. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/04/27/middleeast/egypt-how-we-got-here/>.

⁸⁰ Ismail, Akram. 2014. "Power Generation Crisis in Egypt." September 3. *The Middle East Institute*. <http://www.mei.edu/content/at/power-generation-crisis-egypt>.

⁸¹ "Masdar Special Projects: Siwa Solar PV Plant, Egypt." Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

<http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

⁸² "Masdar Special Projects: Siwa Solar PV Plant, Egypt." Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

<http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

⁸³ "Masdar Special Projects: Siwa Solar PV Plant, Egypt." Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

<http://www.masdar.ae/en/energy/detail/siwa-solar-pv-plant-egypt>.

Success through Support:

This solar power plant project was funded by the government of the United Arab Emirates, which may improve the success of the project in the long-term. Further, the project provides electrical power to those rural poor that were not previously served.

Understanding the complex beauty of the earth and nature may help students feel a connection to it and a responsibility to guard it. This section provides some information which you can share with students in order to supplement the material about human interaction with the planet.

The Extensive Earth

The countless benefits that we rely on and derive from nature cannot be detailed fully here. This short section aims to provide a small view into the vast natural world.

So far, while humans have identified over 80,000 species of edible plants, we rely on just 30 plants to address 90% of our food needs.⁸⁴ That means that the vegetable-based parts of our diets are likely based on less than 0.03% of edible plant species. An individual human being is unlikely to encounter most of the earth's plants in their lifetime. Over half of the earth's plants are native to only one country—Brazil.⁸⁵ Additionally, plant properties have not been thoroughly explored. Many plants in the Amazon Rainforest, the area that Chico Mendes defended, have been found to have medicinal properties, but scientists have only studied 1% of Amazon species to find such uses.⁸⁶

The Unexpected Earth

Among the vast species of the earth, there are many awe-inspiring phenomena. For example, some scientists believe that plants communicate.

Below, this module summarizes and expands on some of the ideas expressed in the PBS Documentary, *What Plants Talk About*. The basic idea of the documentary is that plants sometimes behave like animals in search for food and in defending themselves. The full documentary can be viewed here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CrrSAc-vjG4>.



⁸⁴ Matthews, Kevin. 2013. "Ten Shocking Plant Facts You didn't know." December 30. *Care 2*. <http://www.care2.com/causes/10-shocking-plant-facts-you-didnt-know.html>.

⁸⁵ Matthews, Kevin. 2013. "Ten Shocking Plant Facts You didn't know." December 30. *Care 2*. <http://www.care2.com/causes/10-shocking-plant-facts-you-didnt-know.html>.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Finding Food

All plants find food. Some use photosynthesis (the following video may be effective in explaining photosynthesis to students: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pD68uxRLkM>). On the other hand, some plants are carnivorous. In that way, they are more like animals. The Venus Fly Trap and the Pitcher Plant are examples of these types of plants. They trap bugs and eat them through the production of a strong digestive fluid. The process can be seen in these videos:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bPQsVY6rduY>
Picture: Yong, Ed. 2016. "Venus Fly Traps are even creepier than we thought." *The Atlantic*. <http://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2016/01/the-venus-fly-trap-counts-the-struggles-of-its-prey/424782/>



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WmecgSsSpD4>
Picture: Carnivorous Pitcher Plants. <http://www.carnivorous-plants.com/pitcher-plant.html>

Plants also find nutrients through their roots. Roots grow more quickly in areas without nutrients and their growth slows in high nutrient areas. Some scientists suggest that this means that plants have many choices in the way they collect food. They pause in high nutrient areas to gather more food. Another plant that the PBS documentary examines, the dodder vine, targets tomato plants by "smelling" their chemical outputs. This webpage explains a related experiment, which could be adapted to the classroom context if there is access to potted plants: <http://www.npr.org/sections/krulwich/2012/05/24/153583873/do-plants-smell-other-plants-this-one-does-then-strangles-what-it-smells>

Plants may also use odors to communicate about danger. If a caterpillar is eating a tomato plant, the tomato plant may let off a smell to alert predators of the presence of the caterpillar. Defensive tactics can also help tomato plants prevent a new caterpillar from arriving when experiencing an infestation. The caterpillars come from eggs laid by pollinators. The plants can change their flowers so that new pollinators, ones which don't lay caterpillar eggs, would come. This plant response to danger is reminiscent of the origin story in Lenca spirituality, explored earlier, in which the

trees call out for help people are cutting them down. Similar to spiritual traditions, scientists are seeing something deeper in plant behavior. Plants may also care for each other by avoiding their close relatives' roots in order to share resources between plant families.

In addition to plant life, the world is also filled with animals that have unexpected abilities. The Pistol Shrimp is only 1-2 inches long, but can be as loud as the engine of an airplane.⁸⁷ Bees can determine angles and use them to find food and to communicate to other bees about how to find food.⁸⁸ There is so much more in the natural world that students can explore. Hopefully, the information in this section provides a start.



A pistol shrimp on a coin for size comparison!
Derbyshire, Daniel. 2008. "Deadly pistol shrimp that stuns prey with sound as loud as Concorde found in the UK." November 13.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1085398/Deadly-pistol-shrimp-stuns-prey-sound-loud-Concorde-UK-waters.html>

Humans and the Earth

Unfortunately, nearly 7 in 10 of the world's plant species are going extinct.⁸⁹ Species are heading toward extinction at a rate 5,000 times faster than would be the case without human-made environmental damage.⁹⁰ It is important for students to be able to contrast the importance and beauty of nature with the realities of environmental degradation.

Suggestions for Class Discussion:

- What natural occurrence surprised you the most?
- Do you know about other plants and animal that captures your imagination?
- What does your religious tradition say about why the earth is important?
- What, in your everyday life, do you appreciate about the earth?

⁸⁷ TodayIFoundOut.com. N.d. "Ten Amazing Fact about Animals." November 3. <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2010/11/10-amazing-facts-about-animals/>.

⁸⁸ Ibid

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

The main lesson to take from this module is that environmental activism is diverse because environmental degradation affects all people in different ways and to different extents. Activists are found on every continent. They can be part of large groups or can be individuals. They can get support from international organizations or they can be primarily dedicated to fighting a specific organization's environmental violations.

Wrap Up

Whatever the situation, fighting for the earth takes time, effort, resources and dedication. The individuals examined in this module took their motivation from their faith tradition, culture, and community. In this final section, we offer example discussion questions to explore the students' motivations and suggest an activity to connect this learning with community action.

- Questions for Reflection
 - What is the similarity between the activists? How are they different? How about the projects?
 - What motivated you the most to care about the environment from this lesson?
 - Which activists' story made you think about something differently? How?
 - Did any environmental projects change the way that you think about the environment? Why or why not?
 - What was the role of religion and/or spirituality for each activist? Do you think any of those motivations may also apply to their projects?
- End of Unit Activity
 - Watch this video on social justice and the environment: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dREtXUij6_c
 - Think about environmental injustice in your communities. Possible ways to do so:
 - ▶ Online research.
 - ▶ Meet with a local nonprofit or with communities in need to learn more.
 - ▶ Discuss in class.

- Do a small project to address, in part, the particular environmental justice problem, for example:
 - ▶ Raise money for a local nonprofit that deals with environmental injustice.
 - ▶ Write letters to the city council asking them to plant trees in a poorer neighborhood.
 - ▶ Hold a subsidized vegetable stand in a food desert (neighborhood with no or little access to fresh foods).