

# Fostering environmental and social justice through community-engaged research



Workshop  
AJCU Faith, Justice and Reconciliation  
Assembly  
Loyola Chicago  
July 2024

Iris Stewart-Frey (Santa Clara University)  
Christopher M. Bacon (Santa Clara University)  
Tania Schusler (Loyola University Chicago)  
Jennifer Eagleton (Georgetown University)

# Workshop Goals



Using Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis as a framework, this session will discuss the transformative potential and practical challenges of using community-based participatory action research (CB-PAR) for community-led change towards environmental and social justice.

# Workshop Outline



Environmental justice advocates participate in a rally on Sept. 8, 2018, in Louisiana. Photo by Fernando Lopez/Survival Media Agency/Flickr/Creative Commons

## I Presentations

- shared experiences of building transdisciplinary community-academic partnerships
- goals and strategies to achieve them
- acquiring funding for community-based work.

The projects presented are:

- Towards Water Sustainability, Water Justice, and Climate Resilience through Community-Academic Partnerships
- Action Research Partnerships and Justice Approaches for Food Security and Systems Change
- Community-engaged Research Supporting Young People's Agency to Effect Social Change

## II Discussion

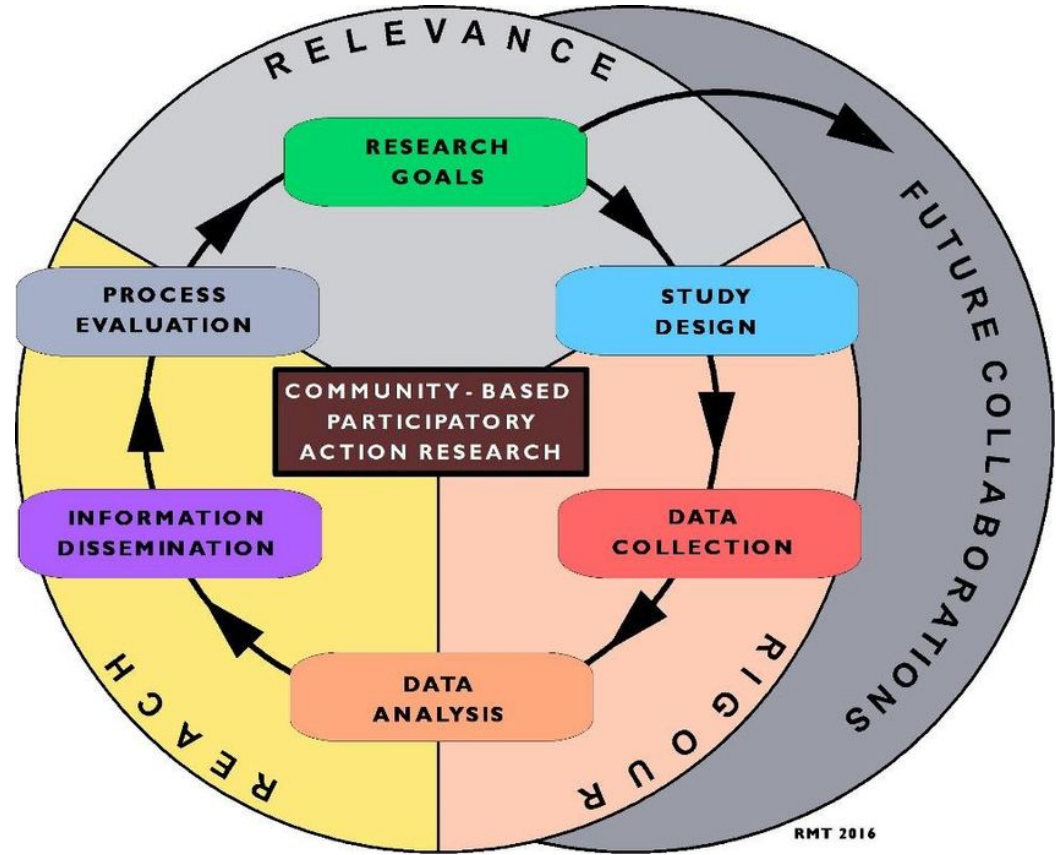
- Potential and challenges of implementing the calls of Laudato Si through CBPAR
- Potential of networking across Jesuit institutions to leverage impact.

# CB-PAR Inspirations

Cyclical process of

Community  
Based  
Participatory  
Action  
Research

Has been shown to increase the  
**Relevance, Rigor, and Reach**  
of research





# Laudato Si inspirations

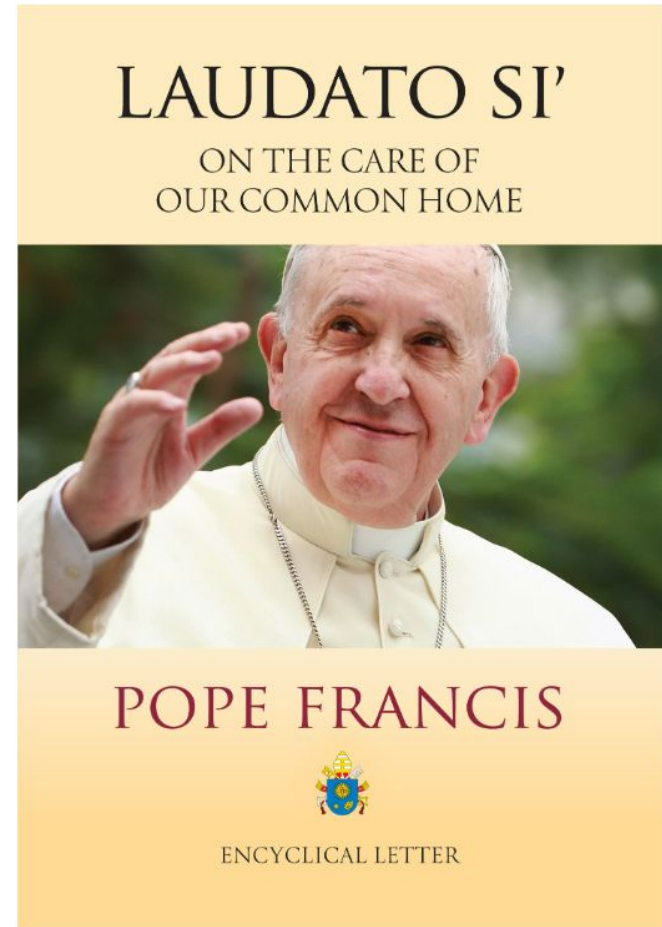
## V Global Inequality:

48. The human environment and the natural environment deteriorate together; we cannot adequately combat environmental degradation unless we attend to causes related to human and social degradation. In fact, **the deterioration of the environment and of society affects the most vulnerable people on the planet**: “Both everyday experience and scientific research show that the gravest effects of all attacks on the environment are suffered by the poorest”...

This is due partly to the fact that many professionals, opinion makers, communications media and centres of power, being located in affluent urban areas, **are far removed from the poor, with little direct contact with their problems**. They live and reason from the comfortable position of a high level of development and a quality of life well beyond the reach of the majority of the world’s population...

we have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the **cry of the earth and the cry of the poor**.

*Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter Laudato Si’ (2015)*





# Towards Water Justice, and Climate Resilience through Integral Ecology and Community-Academic Partnerships



## Collaboration

Water and Climate Justice Lab



Frugal InnovationHub



SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING



UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR PARTNERSHIPS FOR  
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & THE COMMON GOOD  
SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY | 2017-PRESENT

Community Partners,  
Collaborators, Affiliates  
& Students



Central Valley.



Central America

# Compounding Impacts on Water and Climate Justice

- > Growing pressures on society and nature, threatening biodiversity, future availability and intensifying conflicts
- > Commodification of water
- > Persistent questions on differential access to socio-environmental health and protection from the adverse effects of climate change.\
- > who causes these conditions and who 'pays'



[Global Water Forum](#)

Credits: [Drought Monitor](#),  
[Guardian](#)



# Challenges Specific to Water and Climate Justice

- extend beyond the local community scale
- do not line up with political boundaries
- Mining of a non-renewable resource (groundwater, glacial melt)
- Climate resilience connections to droughts and floods
- Need(?) for expensive infrastructure or radical system transformation



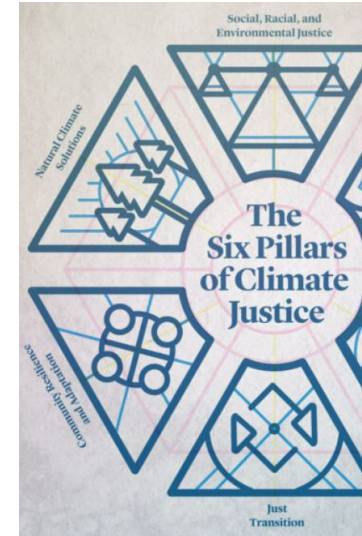
Source: [Columbia Climate School](#)



# Concepts of Water and Climate Justice

Right to use water and enjoy healthy water ecosystems that carry cultural and spiritual meaning.

- Indigenous Water Justice Leadership
- Community Empowerment
- Education and Emergency Preparedness
- Natural and Built Infrastructure Water Access and Affordability
- Transitions to Just Systems

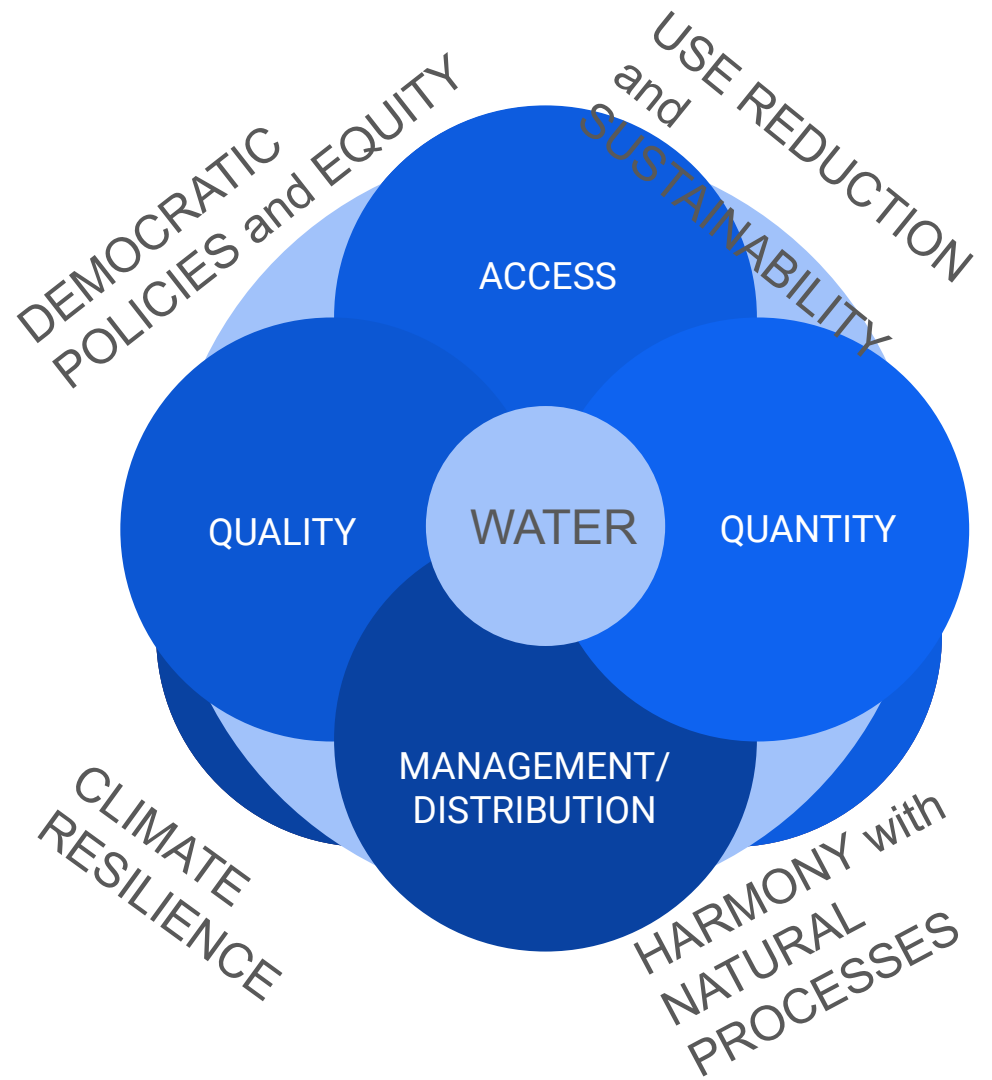


Source: [Oregon Water Justice Framework](#)

[UC Center Justice](#)

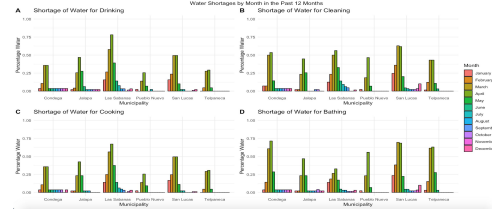
# Water Justice Pathways

- Democratic water policies and inclusive, sustainable development practices that promote a more equitable water distribution
- part of a wider call for socio-environmental justice, interconnectedness expressed in **integral ecology**
- Social and the environmental aspects of justice as mutually dependent on each other.





# Case Study 1: Climate Resilience in Central America



Source: Water Security Hub

Source: Stewart et al., 2021 - Central America



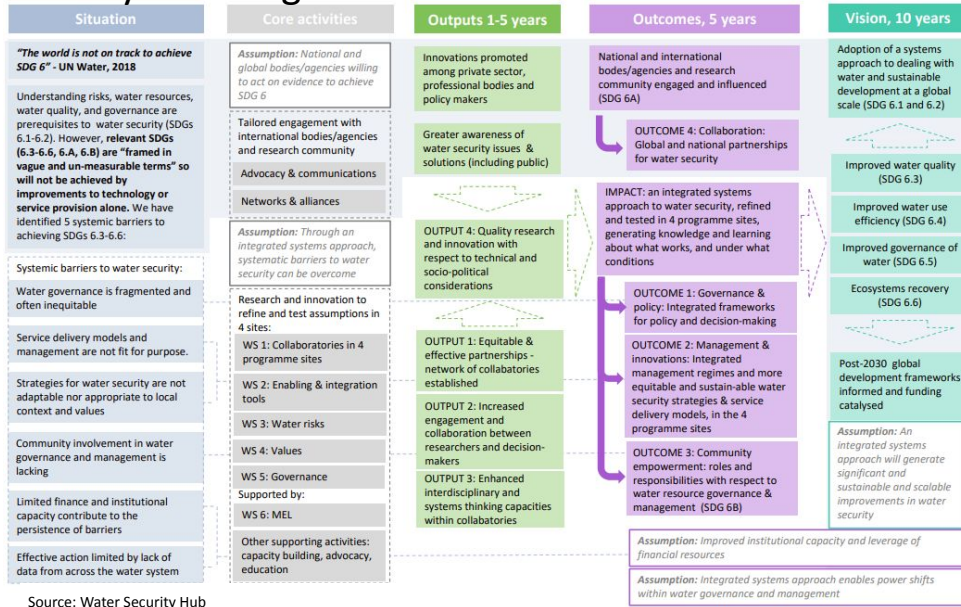


# Case Study 1: Climate Resilience in Central America

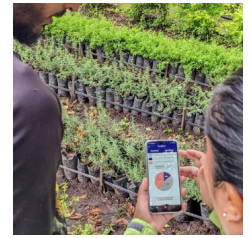
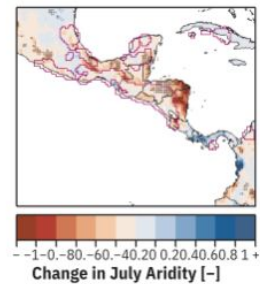
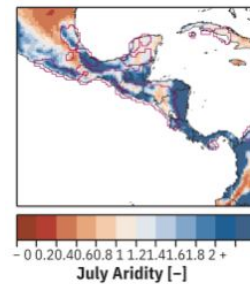
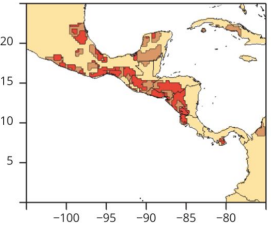
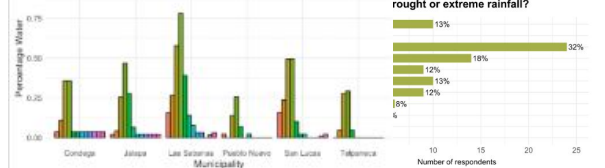
## Central America / Nicaragua

Capacity building for water security and climate preparedness: Analysis of Changes in Climatic Pattern, Survey, Climate App 'NicaAgua'

### Theory of Change: CB-PAR as Driver for Sustainable Water Systems



### Shortage of Drinking Water Throughout Year



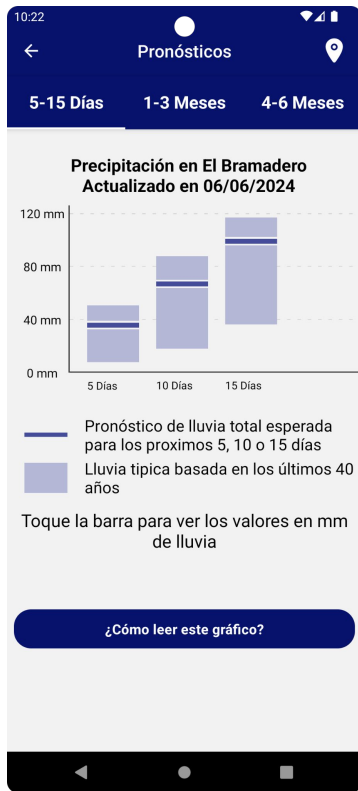
Source: Stewart et al, 2021 - Central America

Source: Water Security Hub





# Development of App 'NicaAgua'



- Short and medium term climate forecasting
- Alerts and warnings
- Local weather station information
- Local climate change analysis



Photo used with permission

# Community Engagement - CBPAR Principles in practice

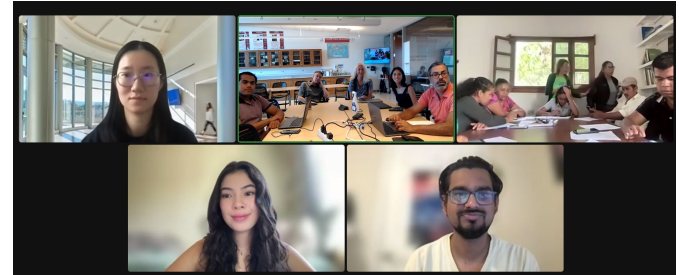
- App development initiation driven by community request
- Frequent meetings with partner organization
- Community need assessment analysis through surveys
- Co-design and Ux focus groups
- Community Empowerment Workshops
- Community Mapping
- Technology Use and Transfer
- Expansion to other regions



SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY  
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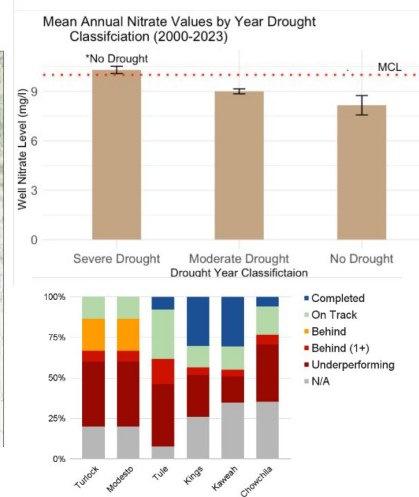
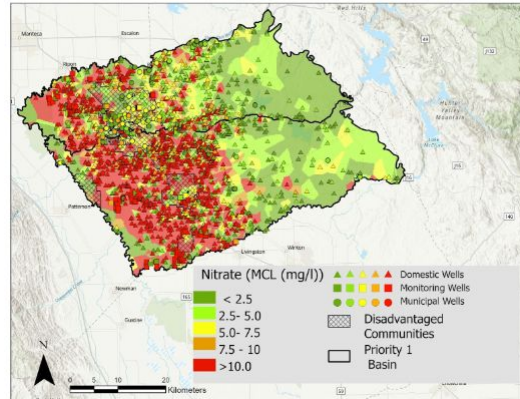
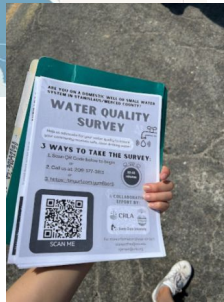
Miller Center  
for Social Entrepreneurship



Photos used with permission



# Case Study 2: Safe Water Access, Sustainable and Equitable Water Systems in the Central Valley



Effectiveness of CV-SALTS Program



# Collaborations and Outcomes



- California Rural Legal Assistance
- Community Water Center
- Waterkeepers
- Valley Improvement Project
- Tuolumne River Trust
- Catholic Charities of Stockton
- Water Equity Science Shop, UC Berkeley



- CV-Salts Process
- Safe Water Access
- Title VI Complaint
- Dairy Order
- Park Access



Credit: [Wall Street Journal](#)





# PFAS and Emerging Contaminants in Drinking Water serving California Tribes:

## Opportunities for academic and community research collaborations

### Conference

May 30th 2024, 9 am - 4 pm  
Benson Center B&C  
Santa Clara University

## Speakers



Otakuye Conroy- Ben  
*Oglala Lakota*



Toki Fillman



Seigi Karasaki



Charlie Toledo  
*Towa*



Gregg Castro  
*Salinan / Rumsien-  
Ramaytush Ohlone*



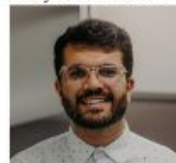
Shaun Livermore



James Sarmento  
*Shasta*



Stephanie Safdi



Spencer Fern



Zach Gigone



Cintia Cortez

## Moderators



Daniel Beene



Iris Stewart-Frey



Clare Pace



Tedde Simon



**NM** COLLEGE OF PHARMACY



ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND THE COMMON GOOD

Santa Clara University

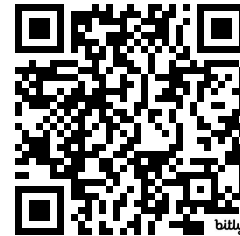


WATER EQUITY SCIENCE SHOP

UC BERKELEY SUPERFUND RESEARCH PROGRAM  
SCIENCE FOR A SAFER WORLD

# What we have learned

- Need for and power of community-driven data collection and analysis connected to policy change and resource distribution that challenge the prevailing paradigm
- Water and climate justice efforts require a multi-scale approach from the community to the regional scale that leverages CBPAR based collaboration and networking across disciplines, geographies, political boundaries, and institutions
- Tangible change requires difficult dialogues about resource distribution, political will towards just transitions, acceptable solutions incorporating ecological and human needs



<https://www.scu.edu/ej/>

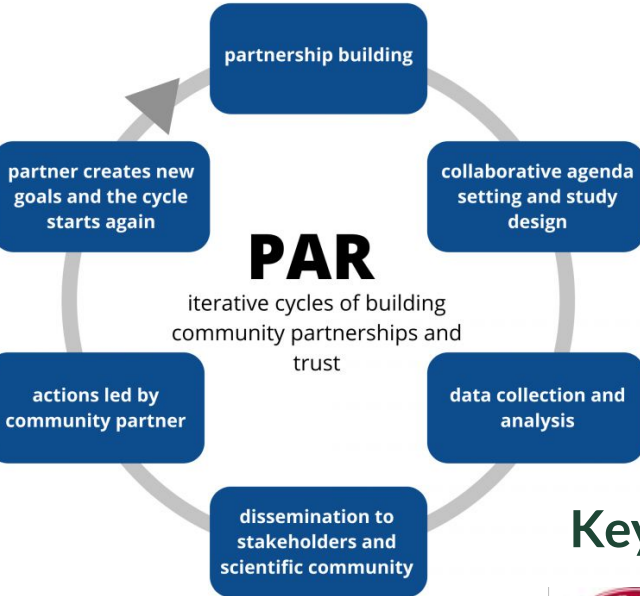
## Community-based Training on App Use and Climate Change



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# SCU's Agroecology, Climate Resilience, and Food Justice Lab



**Christopher M. Bacon**  
Associate Professor and Chair Environmental Studies & Sciences Department  
Environmental Justice & Common Good Initiative  
Santa Clara University



## Key partners





# Smallholder Farmers Worldwide

1. 570 million smallholder farmers (5 ha <)
2. Manage biodiversity and culturally rich landscapes.
3. Produce about  $\frac{1}{3}$  or more of the food that humans eat.
4. Navigate hunger, poverty, water insecurity and exclusion in most places.



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# Climate justice problems

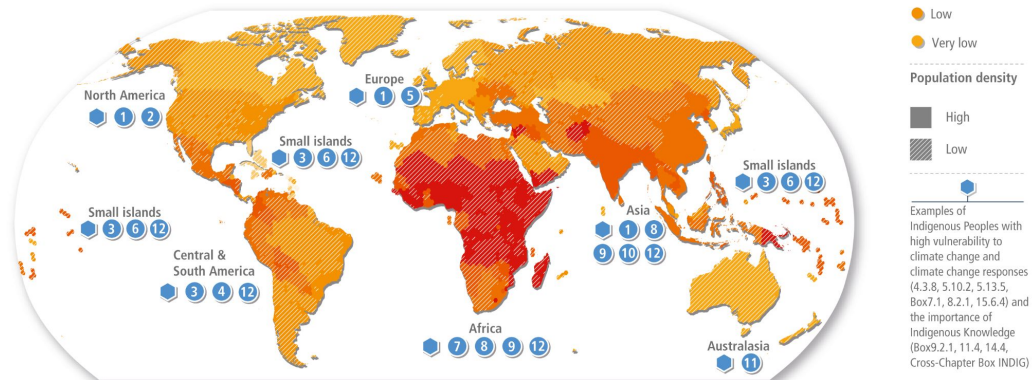
## (1) Distributional Injustices - Who benefits and who pays?

***“Despite contributing less than 0.2 percent of global carbon emissions, the low-income countries of Central America shoulder a disproportionate environmental burden imposed by the world’s most prosperous and carbon-emitting countries.”***

- ***Angelo, P. J. (2022). Climate Change and Regional Instability in Central America. Council on Foreign Relations.***

Observed human vulnerability differs between and within countries and strongly determines how climate hazards impact people and society

(a) Map of observed human vulnerability based on two comprehensive global indicator-systems using national data, plus examples of selected local vulnerable populations and Indigenous Peoples



Examples of local vulnerable populations | Examples of some aspects of vulnerability | Chapter references

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1   Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic   health inequality, limited access to subsistence resources and culture   CCP 6.2.3, CCP 6.3.1</li> <li>2   Urban ethnic minorities   structural inequality, marginalisation, exclusion from planning processes   14.5.9, 14.5.5, 6.3.6</li> <li>3   Smallholder coffee producers   limited market access &amp; stability, single crop dependency, limited institutional support   5.4.2</li> <li>4   Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon   land degradation, deforestation, poverty, lack of support   8.2.1, Box 8.6</li> <li>5   Older people, especially those poor &amp; socially isolated   health issues, disability, limited access to support   8.2.1, 13.7.1, 6.2.3, 7.1.7</li> <li>6   Island communities   limited land, population growth and coastal ecosystem degradation   15.3.2</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7   Children in rural low-income communities   food insecurity, sensitivity to undernutrition and disease   5.12.3</li> <li>8   People uprooted by conflict in the Near East and Sahel   prolonged temporary status, limited mobility   Box 8.1, Box 8.4</li> <li>9   Women &amp; non-binary   limited access to &amp; control over resources, e.g. water, land, credit   Box 9.1, CCB-GENDER, 4.8.3, 5.4.2, 10.3.3</li> <li>10   Migrants   informal status, limited access to health services &amp; shelter, exclusion from decision-making processes   6.3.6, Box 10.2</li> <li>11   Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples   poverty, food &amp; housing insecurity, dislocation from community   11.4.1</li> <li>12   People living in informal settlements   poverty, limited basic services &amp; often located in areas with high exposure to climate hazards   6.2.3, Box 9.1, 9.9, 10.4.6, 12.3.2, 12.3.5, 15.3.4</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

# Climate justice problems continued....

(2) Procedural + (3) Recognitional Injustice => Injustice in Climate Response



Photo used with permission from Vegetable Producer Cooperative in Nicaragua



## Farmers perspectives on diversification



*Basic grains [primarily corn and beans] are vulnerable to [surplus] rainfall as well as drought, but through diversification I have crops that are resistant to both conditions. For example, I am going to harvest oranges either way, unless there is a big drought. One has assurance that he has a Plan B. In addition, I consider improvement of the soil to be an important aspect of diversification. We have also started recovering eroded soils that were previously abandoned for lack of harvests.”*



# Community-Based Participatory Action Research Approach

Long term 20+ year partnership with local smallholder farmer cooperative, movimiento campesino a campesino.

- Approach - CB-PAR and research ethics
- Last 10 yrs more interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration
  - Ethnography and focus groups, surveys & statistical analysis
  - Hydro-climatic data, modelling and mapping, local monitoring, and perceptions.
  - Research with Nicaraguan youth & SCU undergraduates



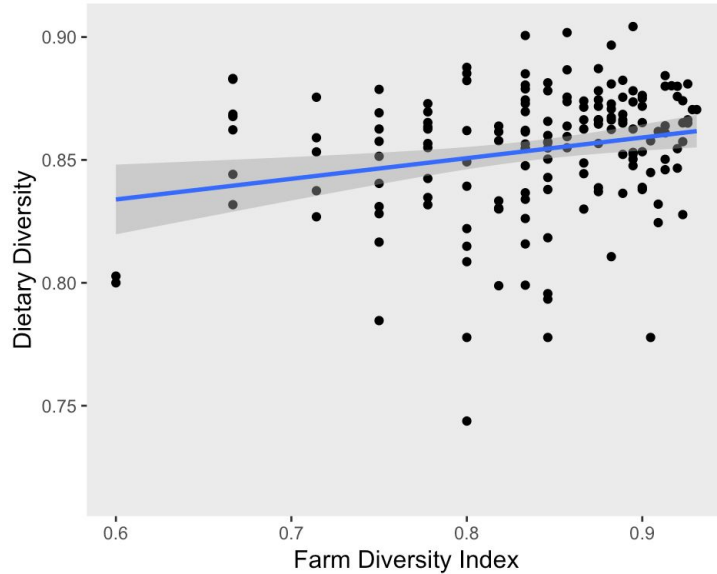
Investigación realizada en  
asociación con







# Food and climate justice program



## Smallholder Farmers' Food Security / Sovereignty, and Climate Resilience in Central America



### Significant Correlates

#### Less Lean Months

1. Total farm area
2. Total income
3. Produces more corn and beans

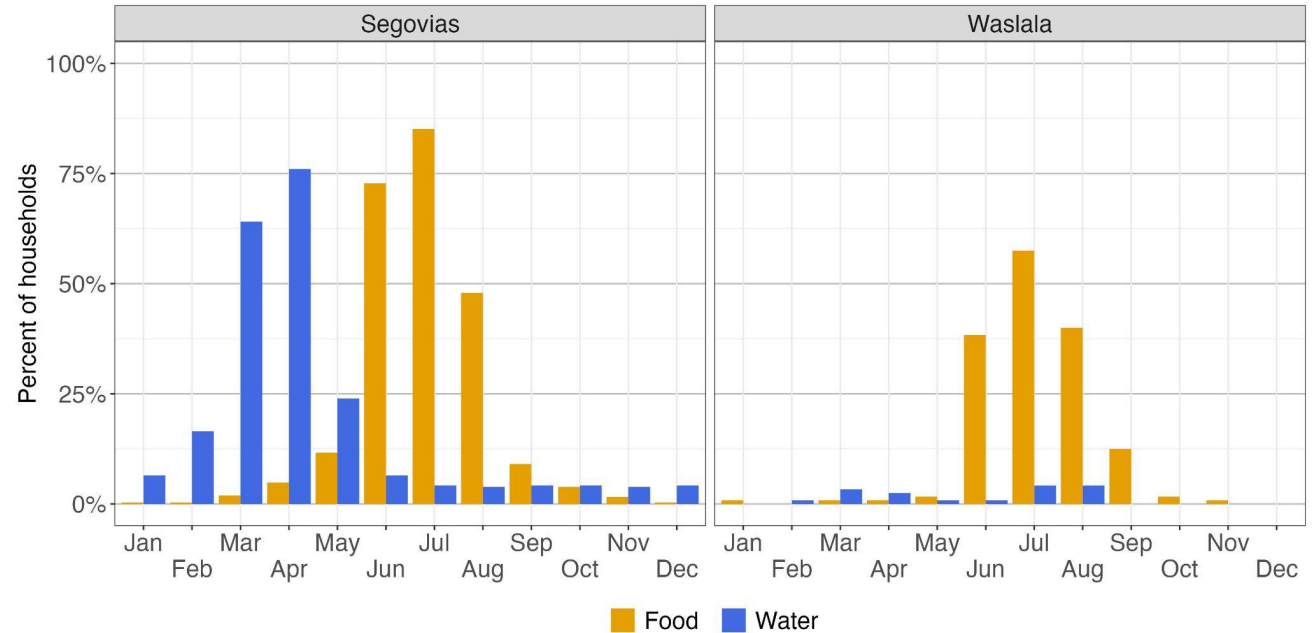
#### Dietary Diversity

1. Farm Diversity
2. Total Income
3. Fewer lean months

Source: Bacon et al. 2023, Nicaragua



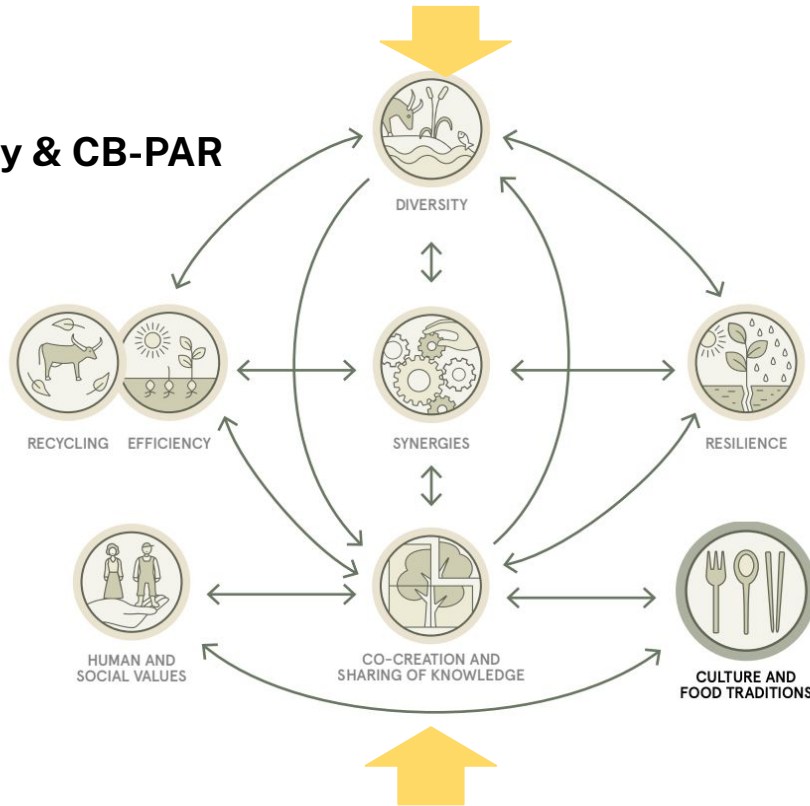
# Seasonality of lean months, by region, 2022



Source: household surveys 2022. n= 429

# Learning resilience together

## Agroecology & CB-PAR



# Case 2: Transforming Emergency Food Assistance in San Jose, CA



## SHCS

- Designated social service provider for Santa Clara County
- Aims to meet basic food, housing, immigration, and security needs + build power, address systemic racism, and create a more just and sustainable society

### SHCS PANTRY VOLUNTEERS

- Emergency food assistance
- Provides supplemental groceries and produce to 25,000 different individuals annually, and 600 - 750 families per day

### SHCS URBAN GARDENERS

- Network of 140 urban gardeners that grow their own products + create collective community knowledge
- Emphasizes long-term access to fresh, culturally-relevant produce

- Address food insecurity
- Opportunities to collaborate to further food justice



Authors: Christopher Bacon, Isabelle Solórzano, Paulina Ursua, and Mary Xiang



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# Definitions of Food Justice

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## SHCS Pantry Volunteers

- “I think people should be able to have sufficient food to live comfortably...That doesn't necessarily mean that they have to have filet mignon every day, but it does mean they should have sufficient food to meet basic nutritional needs.”
- “I don't think I can give that a really good answer...because I haven't heard or read anything about it.”
- “Equal access to good food...I haven't been a victim of not being able to get food.”
- “I'm not sure I would know how to define that. Maybe food that was of, you know, average to good quality, you know, so that people are able to consume it.”

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## SHCS Urban Gardeners

- “I mean, it's food for all, right?”
- “We all have the right to have these affordable foods.”
- “I didn't know this concept of food justice until I became a part of [the SHCS Urban Garden]. The first time they showed it in a workshop, to me it was very eye opening how even the produce that comes from the soil is very politicized.”
- “Food justice would be like we could all have the opportunity to grow our own vegetables.”
- “That's a big thing, you know, keeping accessibility to food, the quality of food, the quality of food being equal to all.”
- “It's about talking about justice. It's talking about rights and laws so for me food justice also includes workers. From the workers to the consumer. And it is a process.”

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Source: 21 Interviews. SHCS Pantry Volunteers' and SHCS Urban Gardeners' food justice definitions

**Daily Average Food Waste at SHCS Pantry in 2022: 822 lbs**



**A FOOD JUSTICE APPROACH TO EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE AND FOOD WASTE MANAGEMENT**

MARCH 2024

A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY, SACRED HEART COMMUNITY SERVICES, AND LA MESA VERDE

A guide for food pantry staff and managers engaged in strengthening food justice and sustainable waste management work.



This is a guidebook initially designed for Sacred Heart Community Service which we hope will serve other food pantries and food justice organizations.



# Brief History of Progress

- 2020-Present: South Bay Food Justice Collaborative
- 2021-Present: Food Waste Tracking and Diversion
- 2022: Baseline Study
- 2023: Worm Compost Program Trainings
- 2023: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Training
- 2023: Story Sharing Workshop
- 2023-Present: Member Feedback and Participation
- 2024: Replicable Resource Guide



# Reflections

1. Long-term, medium-term, and shorter-term CB-PAR partnerships
2. Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary teams
3. Humility, reciprocity, and the ecology of collaboration.



# Community-engaged Research Supporting Young People's Agency to Effect Social Change

Tania Schusler

## Acknowledgements

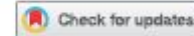
- Amy Krings
- Melissa Hernández
- Toni Anderson
- LUC Center for the Human Rights of Children Faculty Fellowship
- Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab
- The Institute of Cultural Affairs
- Bodhi Spiritual Center Teens
- Chi-Nations Youth Council
- Student Voice & Activism Fellowship
- Ujimaa Medics
- Where I Stand Sponsors & Facilitators



LOYOLA  
UNIVERSITY  
CHICAGO



SACRED KEEPERS  
SUSTAINABILITY LAB



## Integrating youth participation and ecosocial work: new possibilities to advance environmental and social justice

Tania Schusler<sup>a</sup>, Amy Krings <sup>b</sup>, and Melissa Hernández<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Institute of Environmental Sustainability, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA; <sup>b</sup>School of Social Work, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10705422.2019.1657537>

### Association for Community Organization and Social Action's 2020 Best Article Award

- clarity of argument
- attention to marginalized voices
- methodological rigor
- promotion of justice

# Children and youth are vulnerable to pollution



Pollution from Chicago's Fisk and Crawford coal plants causes asthma.  
It's time to move Chicago beyond coal. [www.beyondcoal.org](http://www.beyondcoal.org)

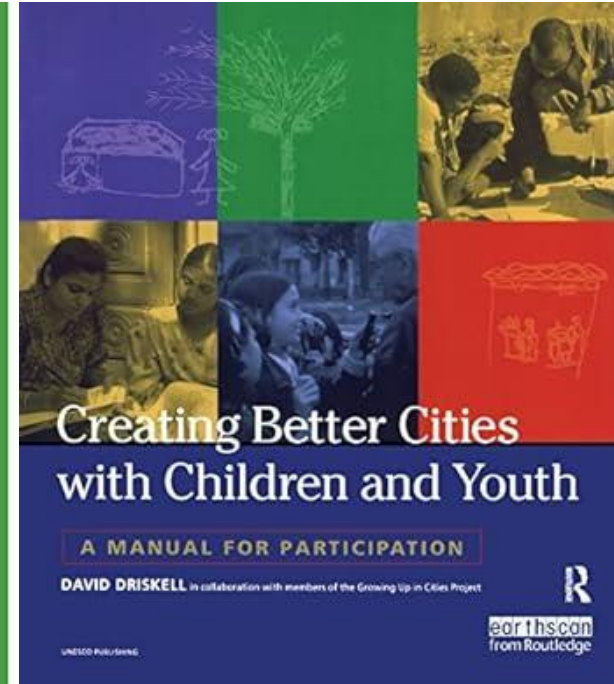
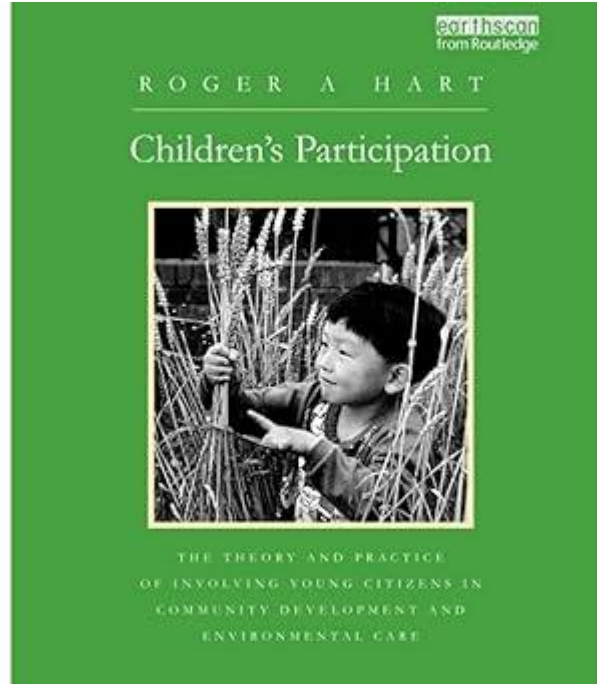




# Youth participation in environmental action benefits communities and youth

Involving young people in decisions that affect their lives

Checkoway, B. & Gutiérrez, L. 2006. Youth participation and community change. *J. of Community Practice*, 14(1-2), 1-9.



# In community-based research, **DO NOT**:

- Rush in response to funding opportunities
- Assume community partner's priorities
- Undervalue community partner's time

# How do youth and their mentors understand the **interconnectedness of environmental and social justice**, the role of **collaboration in movement building**, and their **desired roles** in moving forward social change?

- 23 youth from 5 organizations
  - Ages 14-19
  - African-American, Latine, Native or mixed race
- 8 adults



SACRED KEEPERS' 2018

WHERE I STAND  
YOUTH LOCK-IN

CULTIVATING YOUTH JUSTICE MOVEMENTS FOR  
PEACE & PLANET CONSCIOUSNESS

FOR REGISTRATION, VOLUNTEERING  
& SPONSORSHIP INFO, EMAIL  
INFO@SACREDKEEPERS.ORG OR  
CALL 312.647.7709

SAVE THE DATES:  
APRIL 13TH-15TH  
IN RESIDENCE AT THE INSTITUTE FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS  
4790 NORTH SHELDON ROAD, 60640  
(LIMITED TRANSPORTATION AVAILABLE FOR GROUPS)

TRUTH & JUSTICE SEEKERS...  
IT IS TIME FOR US TO GATHER TO EXPLORE & CONNECT OUR WORLDS...  
TO LIBERATE OUR INTERNAL SELVES TO DEEPLY KNOW HOW WE BEST STAND UP IN WHO WE ARE, FOR ONE ANOTHER  
& FOR THE HEALING OF THE PLANET.

THE SACRED KEEPERS' 2018 'WHERE I STAND LOCK-IN' IS A 2.5 DAY, INTRESIDENCE RETREAT ENGAGING A  
DYNAMIC CROSS-SECTOR OF YOUTH DRIVEN ORGANIZATIONS IN DIALOGUE, ORGANIZING, SELF RESTORATION & TRAINING  
IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE INTERSECTIONS WE ALL STAND IN.  
FOR AGES 14-19

SPONSORED BY

ICA The Institute of Cultural Affairs 4790 N. SHELDON RD. CHICAGO, IL 60640

MWEJN Midwest Environmental Justice Network

SACRED KEEPERS 800.944.4477

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

ALLIANCE FOR GREAT LAKES

UASLP



**SACRED KEEPERS'**  
**2018 WHERE I STAND: CULTIVATING YOUTH JUSTICE MOVEMENTS FOR**  
**PEACE & PLANET CONSCIOUSNESS**  
 April 13th-15th

At no other time in history has the climate of planet and people justice been so strongly dependent on the hands and minds of our youth and community.

The Sacred Keepers' Where I Stand Conference is a 2.5 day, overnight retreat, with a multitude of local organizations, engaging a cross sector of youth dialoguing, organizing and training around the environmental and social justice intersections they all represent.

<b>Arrival Eve (Friday, 5p)</b>  Welcome Address: Toni Anderson & the SKY Council  Meet & Greet/Room Assignments Dinner & A Movie?	<b>Day 1</b>  <b>Keynote Speaker:</b> TBD  <b>Youth Led Morning Plenary:</b> Circular Social/Environmental Justice Movements  <b>Proposed Afternoon Working Groups Topics:</b> Defending the Great Lakes ( <i>Alliance for the Great Lakes</i> ) Lobbying 101 ( <i>Sierra Club</i> ) Youth Globalization/No Borders ( <i>Sacred Keepers</i> ) Build or Burn Workshop ( <i>EquithCity</i> ) Art in Place Consensus as an Organizing Tool ( <i>ICA?</i> ) Social Journalism / Documentation as a Power Tool ( <i>YouMedia?</i> ) Urban Agriculture/Food Justice ( <i>Grow Great Englewood?</i> ) <b>Afternoon Reflection</b> <b>Evening Activity:</b> Conscious Kickback Dance Party?	<b>Day 2</b>  <b>Keynote Speaker:</b> TBD  <b>Youth Led Morning Plenary:</b> Identity, Mindful & Self-Care  <b>Proposed Afternoon Working Groups Topics:</b> Image Shift (Mindful Rant) Timeline of Self (Transform the Collective) Art Practice (Kari Carlson?) Trap Yoga (Kels the Yogi) Vision Board (WaistWare) <b>Afternoon Reflection, Action Steps &amp; Wrap Up</b>
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# Methods

- Participant observation
  - Mindful of positionality
  - Equal participants, not above or apart
  
- Inductive analysis
  
- Member check with Sacred Keepers



# Through “critical youth empowerment”

Jennings, L. B. et al. 2006. Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment. *J. of Community Practice*, 14(1-2), 31-55.

- Welcoming, safe environment
- Meaningful engagement
- Equitable power-sharing between youth & adults
- Critical reflection on interpersonal & sociopolitical processes
- Participation in sociopolitical processes to effect change
- Integrated individual & community level empowerment

## Participants

- Recognized shared experiences of oppression across unique social identities and sought self-determination
- Displayed authentic communication, loving acceptance, and desire for solidarity in collaborative movement-building
- Re-defined what knowledge matters, discerned intentions, and engaged in self-restoration to support youth agency

## In community-based research, **DO**:

- Build and sustain relationships based on trust
- Engage in ongoing two-way communication
- Recognize local knowledge and expertise
- Build on community assets
- Be mindful of positionality
- Participate as an equal partner and co-learner

# In community-based research, **DO**:

- Co-design research
  - Begin IRB early: conventional assumptions unlikely apply
- Foster accountability. In writing, clearly define:
  - Roles and responsibilities
  - Who owns data, who has data access, how data will be used, who receives credit in research products, etc.
- Equitably distribute budget
- Report results back to community

# Reflection and Discussion Questions

- 1) What were the key points that struck you? What might these be inviting you to do?
- 2) What is the transformative potential and what are practical challenges of using community-based participatory action research (CB-PAR) for community-led change towards environmental and social justice?
- 3) How can we learn from each other? Best work together?



# Synergies with the AJCU Laudato Si' Commission

The AJCU Laudato Si' Commission Proposal includes research effort

- What are the obstacles and opportunities for expanding investments into this type of research on your campuses?
- How could “we” expand cross-institutional collaborations and grant proposals to advance shared goals?
- Would you like to participate in a series of 2-4 webinars across AJCU institutions on lessons learned about eco-social research initiatives, and on collaborative federal research funding opportunities?