

# People of Color Environmental Justice “Principles of Working Together”

## PREAMBLE

“WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational [, multiethnic] People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to ensure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives [and to support traditional cultural economics] which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and [, water, air, ] land and the genocide of our peoples, to affirm and adopt these *Principles of Environmental Justice*.”

Principles of Environmental Justice  
October 27, 1991  
First People of Color Leadership Summit  
Washington D.C.

### PRINCIPLE ONE: PURPOSE

- 1. A The Principles of Working Together uphold the Principles of Environmental Justice and to eradicate environmental racism in our communities.
- 1. B The Principles of Working Together require local and regional empowered partnerships, inclusive of all.
- 1. C The Principles of Working Together call for continued influence on public policy to protect and sustain Mother Earth and our communities and also honor past promises and make amends for past injustices.

### PRINCIPLE TWO: CORE VALUES

- 2. A The Principles of Working Together commit us to working from the ground up, beginning with all grassroots workers, organizers and activists. We do not want to forget the struggle of the grassroots workers. This begins with all grassroots workers, organizers and activists.
- 2. B The Principles of Working Together recognize traditional knowledge and uphold the intellectual property rights of all peoples of color and Indigenous peoples.
- 2. C The Principles of Working Together reaffirm that as people of color we speak for ourselves. We have not chosen our struggle, we work together to overcome our common barriers, and resist our common foes.
- 2. D The Principles of Working Together bridge the gap among various levels of the movement through effective communication and strategic networking.

- 2. E The Principles of Working Together affirm the youth as full members in the environmental justice movement. As such, we commit resources to train and educate young people to sustain the groups and the movement into the future.

### PRINCIPLE THREE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

- 3. A The Principles of Working Together recognize that we need each other and we are stronger with each other. This Principle requires participation at every level without barriers and that the power of the movement is shared at every level.
- 3. B The Principles of Working Together require members to cooperate with harmony, respect and trust—it must be genuine and sustained relationship-building. This demands cultural and language sensitivity.
- 3. C The Principles of Working Together demand grassroots workers, organizers and activists set their own priorities when working with other professionals and institutions.
- 3. D The Principles of Working Together recognize that community organizations have expertise and knowledge. Community organizations should seek out opportunities to work in partnerships with academic institutions, other grassroots organizations and environmental justice lawyers to build capacity through the resources of these entities.

### PRINCIPLE FOUR: ADDRESSING DIFFERENCES

- 4. A The Principles of Working Together require affirmation of the value in diversity and the rejection of any form of racism, discrimination and oppression. To support each other completely, we must learn

about our different cultural and political histories so that we can completely support each other in our movement inclusive of ages, classes, immigrants, indigenous peoples, undocumented workers, farm workers, genders, sexual orientations and education differences.

4. C The Principles of Working Together require respect, cultural sensitivity, patience, time and a willingness to understand each other and a mutual sharing of knowledge.

4. B The Principles of Working Together affirm the value in our diversity. If English is not the primary language, there must be effective translation for all participants.

#### **PRINCIPLE FIVE: LEADERSHIP**

5. A The Principles of Working Together demand shared power, community service, cooperation, and open and honest communication.

5. C The Principles of Working Together demand that people from the outside should not come in and think that there is no leadership in the grassroots community. The people in the community should lead their own community and create legacy by teaching young people to be leaders.

5. D The Principles of Working Together demand that people from grassroots organizations should lead the environmental justice movement.

5. B The Principles of Working Together demand accountability to the people, responsibility to complete required work, maintain healthy partnerships with all groups.

#### **PRINCIPLE SIX: PARTICIPATION**

6. A The Principles of Working Together demand cultural sensitivity. This requires patience and time for each group to express their concerns and their concerns should be heard.

6. B The Principles of Working Together require a culturally appropriate process.

6. C The Principles of Working Together have a commitment to changing the process when the process is not meeting the needs of the people. The changes should be informed by the people's timely feedback and evaluation.

#### **PRINCIPLE SEVEN: RESOLVING CONFLICTS**

7.A The Principles of Working Together encourage respectful discussion of our differences, willingness to understand, and the exploration of best possible solutions.

7. B The Principles of Working Together require that we learn and strengthen our cross-cultural communication skills so that we can develop effective and creative problem-solving skills. This Principle promotes respectful listening and dialogue.

7.C The Principles of Working Together affirm the value in learning strengthening mediation skills in diverse socio-economic and multicultural settings.

#### **PRINCIPLE EIGHT: FUNDRAISING**

8.A The Principles of Working Together recognize the need for expanding sustainable community based avenues for raising funds, such as building a donor base, membership dues, etc.

8.B The Principles of Working Together oppose funding from any organization impacting people of color and indigenous communities. In addition, the Principles oppose funding from any organization that is the current target of active boycotts, or other campaign activity generated by our allies.

8. C The Principles of Working Together encourage larger environmental justice organizations to help smaller, emerging environmental justice organizations gain access to funding resources. We encourage the sharing of funding resources and information with other organizations in need.

#### **PRINCIPLE NINE: ACCOUNTABILITY**

9. A The Principles of Working Together encourage all partners to abide by the shared agreements, including, but not limited to, oral and written agreements. Any changes or developments to agreements/actions need to be communicated to all who are affected and agreed upon.

9. B The Principles of Working Together encourage periodic evaluation and review of process to ensure accountability among all partners. Any violation of these agreements or any unprincipled actions that violate the EJ principles, either:

1. Must attempt to be resolved among the partners
2. Will end the partnership if not resolved AND
3. Will be raised to the larger EJ community

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Respectfully submitted by the Principles of Working Together Working Group  
October 26, 2002

"Principles of Working Together"

Adopted at the  
Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit  
Washington, D.C.  
October 26, 2002

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