



**BARBARA FAYE WAXMAN FIDUCCIA PAPERS
ON WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES
CENTER FOR WOMEN POLICY STUDIES
February 2011**

***Bringing Together Feminist Disability Studies and
Environmental Justice****

By

Valerie Ann Johnson

Mott Distinguished Professor of Women's Studies and
Director, Africana Women's Studies Program
Bennett College for Women

Introduction: Writing this essay has been like falling down Alice's proverbial rabbit hole into Wonderland. The more I reflect on feminist disability studies and environmental justice, the more connections between the two I find. And the more connections I find, the more complexity there seems to be between these two areas. To paraphrase Alice, it gets curiouiser and curiouiser. Still, it is a complexity worth exploring. This essay represents an initial venture into what I believe to be a fruitful area of scholarship and activism. This essay brings ideas from several social justice perspectives together in order to connect environmental justice and feminist disability studies in a way that provides a coherent framework needed to address activist work for women and girls.

Two ideas should be kept in mind as this essay unfolds. The first is that feminist disability studies frames disability as a representational system that is socially constructed and of interest as an intellectual concern across a broad spectrum of inquiry and not just the intellectual concern of those in areas (i.e. medicine, social work or rehabilitation) designed to "fix" the "problem" (Garland-Thomson, 2001). The second is that environmental justice generally is defined as: "The pursuit of equal justice and equal protection under the law for all environmental statu[t]es and regulations, without discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and/or socioeconomic status" (Johnsonⁱ, 2004). Absent from that definition are both gender and able-ness, which is why feminist disability studies provides such a compelling framework from which to discuss this "gap" in environmental justice consciousness.

It is also worth noting that both feminist disability studies and environmental justice are grounded in social justice. In the Introduction to the text, *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*, editors Helen Thomas and Jamilah Ahmed (2004) observe that in the radical social and cultural climate of the latter years of the twentieth century, when the nature/culture debate was seriously challenged, we inherited from the social movements of that time the "awakening consciousness of the body as 'an instrument of power'" (Thomas and Ahmed quoting Bordo, 1993).

Feminists are concerned with the environment as reflected in ecofeminism and feminist environmental studies. Although social injustice is addressed in both these perspectives, disability is rarely in the foregroundⁱⁱ. And it is important to note that environmental justice also is not the same as environmentalism. The Earth Charter (www.earthcharterinaction.org), a document created by an independent global organization in 1992 after the Earth Summit in order to codify a global consensus around sustainability, outlines sixteen principles. Principle number twelve (and its subsections) states as follows: **Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.**

- a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic or social origin.
- b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.
- c. Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.
- d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

It is significant to me that, while many forms of possible discrimination are listed, the category of ability or ableness is absent from the list. This omission is troubling because it means that disability becomes subsumed under one of the other categories. Such sublimation can mask or obscure the issues that need to be attended to when considering sustainability as it relates to mental and physical ability. Without explicitly naming ability or ableness as a category where discrimination can occur, we cannot be sure that sustainability (for example) in relation to persons with disabilities would in fact be addressed.

My thinking about the nexus between disability and environmental justice began in earnest as a result of my daughters' participation in the 11th Annual North Carolina Environmental Justice (EJ) Summitⁱⁱⁱ in Whitakers, North Carolina at Franklinton Center at Bricks. My older daughter is classified as "special needs" so that, though her chronological age was twelve years old at the time, developmentally she "tested" around six or seven years old. I maintained a watchful eye and ear from afar -- reluctant to be too intrusive as she participated in the Youth Summit (with the help of her one year younger sister), at which young people addressed environmental issues separately from the larger Summit.

For the most part, her experience was positive although some of the concepts discussed were hard for her to understand at the moment she heard them. I knew, however, that in her own time she would figure out the concepts the Summit organizers were trying to convey to the youth. Although my daughter contributed to the discussion on recycling and helped with the tree planting and other activities, I wondered whether her ideas were fully embraced or just tolerated. And I started thinking then, in a more deliberate manner, about whether the environmental justice community is one of true inclusivity when it comes to those deemed disabled.

In fact, one participant at the Summit, Dr. Della McQueen, reminded us that reliable transportation for those with impaired sight was just as much an

environmental justice issue as access to clean air and water.^{iv} In recent conversation with Lynice Williams, executive director of North Carolina Fair Share^v and member of the Summit organizing committee, we agreed that the subject of disability and environmental justice had not been formally addressed at the Summit but needed to be. Williams (2011) felt that bringing the issue of disability as it relates to environmental justice would draw more (and different) people to these meetings. And as one of the Summit organizers, I know that this has been an unintentional oversight.

In that moment, between witnessing my daughter's participation and hearing the comments from my sister activists, I realized that though we talk about "all peoples' needs" in the environmental justice movement, rarely do we overtly address the issues affecting persons with disabilities. And more subtly, we tend to conflate disability, disease and environmental injustice. What is needed is to disaggregate the possible results of environmental injustice (i.e. exposure to toxic substances emanating from landfills or hog operations that injure the body) from the *person*, however they are embodied.

As an activist and scholar within the environmental justice movement, I have noted, beyond my local and statewide activist community, the absent voices and perspectives from those who self-identify or are identified as disabled. It is especially troubling to note that the disabled women and girls who contribute to the environmental justice movement, especially as advocates and policy makers, are rendered invisible. Even when movement activists rail against the adverse health effects of environmental policies and practices (i.e. placement of landfills, hazardous waste sites, bus depots, etc.) the complexities of disability are seldom part of the discussion.

What is not seen is the implicit assumption that we want healthy environments so that we do not end up damaged (i.e. disabled). This is especially true when we consider what can happen to women and girls, who so often are marginalized. Though we may discuss at length the harms created by bad environmental policies and practices, often with special emphasis on what happens to women and girls, we seldom question our underlying biases and prejudices regarding what is "normal." How can we call for justice and equity without everyone at the table?

The need for there to be a more visible connection between environmental justice and feminist disability studies was brought in even sharper relief for me as I watched, in December 2009, news clips from the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen -- searching in vain for any coverage from the perspective of disabled activists. I even telephoned one of the national activist groups for disability rights to see if they had any representatives in Copenhagen. They did not have any and really thought that climate change was beyond their mission. Who then represents the concerns of persons with disabilities with regards to climate change?

So, as I participate in the environmental movement in my various capacities (activist, scholar, community member) I pay more attention to the connection between environmental justice activism and disability rights activism. This is not just an academic exercise for me. As a parent of a teenaged girl with "developmental delay" I see where we miss opportunities to be more holistic in addressing

environmental challenges.

Defining Feminist Disability Studies: Feminist disability studies represents the merging of feminism and disability activism. I accept the broadest definition of feminism that says it is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (hooks, 2000). The framework provided by Rosemarie Garland-Thomson's paper (Garland-Thomson, 2001) on feminist disability studies is the 'lens' through which I discuss how the environmental justice movement is enriched by the work in feminist disability studies. First, it is worthwhile to unpack a cultural notion of disability. If we look at a "dictionary" definition of disability using one of the popular websites (see Dictionary.com) we find that the first meaning of disability is that one lacks adequate power, strength or physical mental ability; is incapacitated. Second, it is a physical or mental handicap that especially prevents a person from living *a full normal life* [emphasis mine] or from holding a gainful job (Dictionary.com).^{vi} Using the feminist disability studies analytical framework allows us to see how such a definition is socially constructed. It denies agency for the person given this appellation. In fact, this definition could easily describe what it means to be female.

If dis-ability is defined in large part as the lack of power then we should consider the flip side of this coin. Hyper-ability is the excess of power, strength, or physical or mental ability; super capacity and, for a select few who participate in spectator sports, that unusual ability (such as the unusual height required of the best basketball players) is richly rewarded. But a girl reaching seven feet or more in height is considered especially "odd" or "unusual" in a negative sense unless she plays some sort of sport (i.e. basketball or volleyball) in a professional or semi-professional capacity -- or as part of a school athletic team. She is conferred with a "social" disability because this enhanced physical ability has limited application as defined by our society. We celebrate and desire the "abnormal" athletic body that, when defined as other than "athlete," would put the person so defined at a disadvantage. Instead, we accommodate the extra large sizes, the need for more space in all types of conditions (travel, seating, amount of food consumed, etc.), holding hyper-able persons as admirable when they are performers, entertainers, or athletes.

We learn from feminist disability studies that we shape normalcy and in doing so place at the margins those who do not fit our ideas of "the normal." Feminist disability politics upholds the right of women to define their physical difference and their femininity for themselves rather than conform to received interpretations of their bodies (Garland-Thomson, 2001). Our society, however, creates the parameters in which people are stigmatized. I remember when *Warrior Marks* first came out (1993). One of the critiques I remember was the fact that Alice Walker equated the loss of her eye with female genital circumcision. How could she possibly understand the meaning of female circumcision as a Western woman as well as the experience of women and girls undergoing female genital operations? How dare she depict these operations as mutilation? Yet Walker defined for herself the meaning of her eye loss and translated disability into a "warrior mark" (Walker and Parmar, 1993).

We should also consider that “[t]he concept of disability unites a heterogeneous group of people whose only commonality is being considered abnormal” (Garland-Thomson, 2001). Further – “as the norm becomes neutral in an environment created to accommodate it, disability becomes intense, extravagant, and problematic (Garland-Thomson, 2001). As an analytic concept and framework, disability studies has four aspects: First, it is a system for interpreting bodily variations; second, it is a relationship between bodies and their environments; third, it is a set of practices that produce both the able-bodied and the disabled; and fourth, it is a way of describing the inherent instability of the embodied self (Garland-Thomson, 2001). The overlay with feminism illuminates the sexist ways that disability injustice differentially impacts women and men.

Merging Feminist Disability Studies and Environmental Justice: The Civil Rights Movement has largely shaped the ideology of the environmental justice movement. Race, ethnicity and socioeconomic considerations have been the major ways social justice has been envisioned within this movement. Bullard (2001) outlines five principles that should be considered when addressing environmental justice concerns – “the right to protection, prevention of harm, shifting the burden of proof, obviating proof of intent to discriminate, and targeting resources to redress inequities.” However, the population affected by application of these principles is usually depicted solely in racial and class terms. Gender is largely absent when environmental justice is defined and outlined. Even the prominent role black women played and continue to play in the environmental movement is not regularly highlighted.

In an earlier essay, published in 2004, I wrote about black women’s involvement in the environmental justice movement as framed by a concept of ethical consciousness reflected in black womanist/feminist ideology and spiritual authority and as linked to black feminist activity -- demonstrated in my recounting of the stories of individual black women in North Carolina involved in the environmental justice movement (Johnson, 2004). Explicit reference to disability as part of environmental justice is absent; though disability justice is an important social justice movement, it is not explicitly referenced in the context of the environmental justice movement.

We are more accustomed to depicting environmental justice in racialized ways [see, for example, the collection *Faces of Environmental Racism* (2001)]. Even in the otherwise important collection, *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice* (2004), that brought our attention to diverse feminist voices in environmental justice work, there was little discussion or consideration of disability or the possibility of merging feminist disability studies with feminist environmental justice. An otherwise excellent collection of work on the many issues affecting environmental justice, this gap was only apparent to me (as a contributor) upon much later reflection^{vii}.

Merging feminist disability studies and environmental justice forces us to confront power dynamics that reinforce a narrow view of “normal” – one that privileges a particular sense of the human body that is constrictive, not expansive. Feminist disability studies can be integrated into the praxis of environmental justice

by utilizing Garland-Thomson's four aspects of disability: "as a category of analysis, as a historical community, as a set of material practices, and as a representational system" (Garland-Thomson, 2001). The community of persons with disabilities is a heterogeneous group unified by their common depiction as "abnormal" (Garland-Thomson, 2001). This makes it easier to overlook disabled persons collectively and instead see individuals with disabilities as "unique" or "exceptional." One way environmental justice activists can consider disability, therefore, is to think in terms of exceptionalism.

Exceptionalism: One way to frame the particularities of gender, ableness, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and other "identities" as they "shape" our lives is to look at the concept of *exceptionalism*^{viii} --which I define a little differently than is commonly definitions. In brief, it is when a person is "assigned" to a class as evidenced by bodily appearance or phenotype and held to be *exceptional*, therefore marginal to what is considered mainstream or dominant in our society. This designation can carry either positive or negative connotations depending upon the context.

Exceptionalism can also be thought of as another facet of the DuBoisian concept of *double-consciousness*. A two-fold concept, exceptionalism describes the labeling that occurs when: 1) an individual is thought to be different, unique, and unlike other people of their "class" (i.e. disabled, female, or of a particular racial or ethnic identity) because they have achieved some measure of success as defined by extant normative cultural standards; and 2) an individual transcends her/his singular identity, and is subsumed into a corporate identity of *non-success* as defined by these same cultural standards which, in both instances, relegates the "exception" to a marginal space outside of the "normal" ideal. Each aspect of exceptionality relies on a subaltern assumption that "identity" can be essentialized and used as an emblematic category. For example, one could look at the success of skier Bonnie St. John, held out as an individual who overcame her disability by medaling in the 1984 Winter Paralympics^{ix} and who therefore is "exceptional" (i.e. rising above her disability). At the same time, other non-athletic disabled persons are characterized as part of a corporate disabled identity that is pathological (remember the popular definition mentioned earlier) and therefore an "exception" to "normal" society (the dominant culture).

For another example, speak with a group of Black/African college students about their experiences in the educational system and overwhelmingly they will tell how they were treated as "different" (meaning better) than other Blacks/Africans because of their successful academic accomplishments. Exceptionalism does more than describe; it is also an explanatory model. Conceptual use of "exceptional" identifies that part of the abnormal that will not be assimilated into the normal and therefore can help us see more clearly how individuals placed in the exceptional category move in our society.

In our society disability is also defined by one's inability to fit comfortably in society. I cannot help but quote Sontag (1977) here - "The people who have the real disease are also hardly helped by hearing their disease's name constantly being dropped as the epitome of evil" (Sontag, 1977, p. 82). We need to ask ourselves what it means for disabled persons when we use the fear of possible disability in

confronting environmental injustice and advocating for changes in policy regarding the environment. Constant reference to environmental causes of disability renders those who are disabled passive recipients of harm and implies their inability to be full participants in environmental justice work. It removes agency from those identified as “disabled,” especially when those working for disability rights are not part of the environmental justice conversation.

Implicit in environmental justice concerns is that we work to ensure that people are not exposed to those environmental assaults that lead to the creation of “the disabled” or “disability.” Here is the challenge given to those of us in the environmental justice movement – to do as Mia Mingus (inciteblog, August 2010) outlines in her description of Creating Collective Access (CCA): “**Creating Collective Access** (CCA) was about re-thinking how we, as disabled and chronically ill people, engage in movement spaces. This was about imagining something more and knowing that we had to do it for ourselves because it is so rare for movement spaces to ever consider disability and access in ways that go beyond logistics; in ways that challenge the ableist culture of our work. This was about being very clear that we wanted to shift the individualized and independent understanding of access and queer it and color it *interdependent*. This was about building **crip solidarity**” (Mingus, 2010).

If we treat disability as an add-on or second thought, then we continue a practice of marginalization that does not advance social justice. Who has standing to speak on the environmental issues impacting persons with disabilities? If ableism is not seen as equally destructive as the other “isms” (racism, sexism), then we do what Audre Lorde admonished us not to do – create a hierarchy of oppression. This then serves to mask as well as marginalize those environmental justice issues that are salient to people with disabilities.

In environmental justice work, a good portion of our activity is spent in identifying the problems and advocating for remedies. There is an attitude that we do not have the luxury to theorize when lives are at stake. Yet when race, for example, is the focal point for our activities, then other categories -- such as ableness -- are obscured, thus hampering our ability to fully identify and critique the underlying values that drive various environmental policies and practices. One of the positive aspects of environmental justice activism is that those most impacted by environmental injustices comprise our environmental justice leadership. Often these are the people who are ignored. But a project that could come out of the merger between environmental justice and feminist disability studies, for example, could be to illuminate those environmental justice leaders who are disabled women and girls.

Those of us in the environmental justice movement cannot back away from our privileged ideas of ableness. Nor can we ignore how women and girls face different sets of issues regarding ability than do men and boys. Using perspectives from Feminist Disability Studies allows us to better identify quality of life issues with respect to ableness. If we advocate for an improved quality of life, then we must be prepared to be truly inclusive by making sure the perspectives from disabled activists are centered in our activities.

What does this mean for someone who is differently abled? In practical terms, as we advocate for improved living conditions in various communities we also must include in our consideration what that means for those with developmental, emotional, and physical challenges. For example, after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, much of the public discussion revolved around how unprepared governmental disaster relief agencies were and the slowness of the response when called to action. One remedy has been to engage the public in disaster preparedness training. Is there a systematic effort, across **all** communities, to make sure that the disaster relief kits are accessible to people who are sight-impaired, who have limited cognitive skills or impaired dexterity? Are there kits available or designed to be accessible to those who use prostheses?

A further concern is the need for post-disaster trauma counseling. According to a post Katrina/Rita study by Madrid *et al* (2009) even after all the recent national disasters (going back to the Oklahoma City terrorist bombing more than sixteen years ago and up to the recent Gulf oil spill), the United States government is still not adequately prepared to respond to the next natural or human-created disaster. Inadequate preparation and response also leads to “needless creation of psychiatric disability” (Madrid, *et al* 2009). The study also found that one of the most enduring effects of Hurricane Katrina has proven to be psychological distress (Madrid *et al* 2009). And we know that women are disproportionately the caregivers in their families and communities. What is needed are community-based mental health services that are “adequately available, readily accessible” and remain in place as long as the need is there (Madrid *et al* 2009)^x.

We argue that the various environmental injustices create profound harm in communities of color. Of course *harm* is a major concern in environmental justice activism. These “harms” include, for example, exposure to unsafe emissions from hazardous waste facilities, concentrated animal feeding operations, and bus depots, or contamination to the water table from diverse toxic leakages. And the warming of our climate has set into motion various natural disasters (such as drought and flooding) that disproportionately hurt women and children.^{xi} But when harm occurs, do the people harmed become disabled in a way that renders them less capable of active participation in the movement work? Are they stigmatized? How do we talk about girls of color so injured by toxins in their community that they become sterile or struck with various uterine-related cancers -- is this disability? An injury? An assault?

If unable to bear children, are women and girls less woman, less girl, de-feminized?^{xii} What are the rights of disabled women to reproduce and how should we address those who question the rights of disabled women to reproduce? How should we address concerns regarding possible limitations on physical and intellectual ability? Some in society are still concerned that those identified as disabled pass on deleterious “genes?” Here is where the convergence of social justice activity by environmental justice activists, disability rights activists and reproductive rights activists could be quite powerful in promoting more humane and woman-centered reproductive health policies (locally, nationally and internationally).

Applying Environmental Justice and Feminist Disability Studies to a Current Issue: Ableism, sexism and environmental injustice are interconnected systems of exclusion and oppression that also depend on the other oppressive systems -- racism, classism, religious intolerance, etc -- to support unequal treatment of people based on category. We, as a society, construct these inequalities -- they are not natural or inherent. In order to better understand disability as socially constructed we can use representation, the body, identity, and activism (concepts identified by Garland-Thomson, 2001) as our analytical categories and filter these categories through an environmental justice perspective.

One of our current national debates involves defining obesity as a disability. Popular culture encourages us to view obesity as a disability. Witness the proliferation of so-called reality shows regarding weight reduction. Puhl (2010) and fellow researchers found in a recent study of a nationally representative sample of 2,290 American adults that weight discrimination not only was common but the rate of such discrimination was relatively close to the prevalence of race and age discrimination. However, there is no consensus regarding how we define obesity as a disability. There is variability across racial and ethnic identities. Not all “fat” is fat equally. Do we use a legal definition that can be used in litigation?

Medical definitions of disability regarding obesity may differ considerably from legal definitions of obesity. Do insurance companies use a definition of disability that includes obesity? Or do we accept the popular presentation of “normal” that still idealizes the thinner beauty standard? These questions and others suggest how complex a matter it is to define a concept that has such strong objective and subjective criteria attached to its meaning. So, we need to be in conversation with those disability rights activists who have a feminist perspective so that together we can develop a clear critique and understanding of the issues involved in defining obesity as a disability. Even our First Lady’s anti-obesity campaign, an admirable and worthy endeavor can be misconstrued if we focus too much on a biomedical depiction of obesity (White House Task Force on Childhood Obesity, 2011)^{xiii}.

Another approach to addressing obesity as an environmental justice issue would be the issue of food deserts, which, according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are: areas that lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk, and other foods that make up the full range of a healthy diet (CDC, 2011). If we know that a particular community sits in one of these food deserts, we would need to identify the structural reasons for the existence of such a “desert,” learn how the community defines “fatness” as well as healthiness, formulate descriptions of daily food consumption patterns, and work with community activists on the issues they feel are important with regard to food.

While food deserts can be found in urban, semi-rural, and rural communities, in many urban areas the proliferation of fast food restaurants -- that serve high-fat, high sodium, high cholesterol foods -- coupled with the lack of *healthy, clean and safe* play areas -- are structural concerns that impede people’s ability to engage in lifestyles that encourage good health and wellness.

We also should recognize that when a woman is identified as obese there are implicit and explicit, usually negative, assumptions regarding her moral values. So

when environmental justice activities identify an environmental concern, we need to also be aware of the social/cultural dimensions, beyond race and class, of the identified problem. In this case, today's obesity discourse comes out of an earlier anti-fat bias from the early 20th century – a sentiment that came about in part through the interaction of several social factors: industrialization, allowing more people access to more foods; promotion of the ethic of self-denial; and control of undesirable populations through eugenics (Sherwood, 2009). Not recognizing the genesis of our ideas about the body allows us to fall into the trap of prescribing remedies to “help them” as if the people in question need rescuing and are not capable of generating their own solutions.

Those of us in the environmental justice community are not immune to our societies' standards regarding health, beauty and normality. Until we formally confront the values we hold concerning what is healthy, what is beautiful, and what is normal, we will replicate the oppressive structures we seek to overturn. One of the positive effects of preparing this essay has been my own increased consideration of the interconnections between environmental justice and feminist disability studies. With this newly heightened awareness, I noted with increased interest the announcement of an upcoming EPA Region 9 event – the 2011 Disability Employment Opportunities Job Fair. The advertisement read in part: “The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is seeking talented people with disabilities who have an interest in human health, environmental protection, and environmental justice. They specifically seek people who have degrees in Engineering, Physical Science, Biology, Chemistry, Environmental Management/Science, and Environmental Studies, who would like an opportunity to gain professional workforce experience in the San Francisco, California Regional Office.” ☐

Now I want to know more about this job fair. Are the people EPA seeks to recruit, who hold the degrees listed in the announcement, really prepared to address environmental justice issues? Will they see the connections between disability, feminism, and environmental justice? We need to hold EPA and other employers responsible for the way they interact with both the environmental justice community and with the disability rights community. Asking these and other questions, pushing for the answers, and standing at the ready to act as needed are just a few ways to foster the accountability we need from EPA and other employers.

The ideas put forth in this essay are part of a work in progress. I am setting the parameters for further investigation. To be responsible as a scholar/activist as I merge environmental justice and feminist disability studies means that I must work collaboratively with women and girls in the environmental justice movement who identify themselves as women with disabilities. Such a collaboration would allow us to discover the appropriate questions to ask and to challenge unjust environmental policies so that the communities where we live, play, pray, and become educated are safe, clean and fruitful.

REFERENCES

Adamson, M.M. Evans, and R. Stein, eds. 2002. *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics & Pedagogy*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

- Agarwal, B. 2001. "Environmental Management, Equity, and Ecofeminism." In *Feminism and Race*, ed. by K. Bhavnani, pp. 410-455. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bhavnani, K. 2001. *Feminism and Race*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bordo, S. 1993. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bullard, R. D. 2001. "Decision-Making." In *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice (2nd Edition)*, ed. by L. Westra and B. E. Lawson, pp. 3-28. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Carroll, L. 2008 edition. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. London: Puffin Books.
- Garland-Thomson, R. 2001. "Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-defining: Feminist Disability Studies." *Barbara Faye Waxman Fiduccia Papers on Women and Girls with Disabilities*, Center for Women Policy Studies.
- hooks, b. 2000. *Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics*. Boston: South End Press.
- Johnson, V.A. 2004. "Witness to Truth: Black Women Heeding the Call for Environmental Justice." In *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, ed. R. Stein, pp. 78-92. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Madrid, P., Grant, R., and R. Rosen. 2009. "Creating Mental Health Disability Through Inadequate Disaster Response: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina." In *Disabilities: Insights from Across Fields and Around the World: Volume 2 – The Context: Environmental, Social and Cultural Considerations*, ed. by C. Marshall, E. Kendall, M. E. Banks, and R. Mariah, pp. 1-16. Westport, Connecticut: Praeger.
- Mingus, M. 2010. "Reflections on an Opening: Disability Justice and Creating Collective Access in Detroit." <http://inciteblog.wordpress.com/2010/08/23/reflections-from-detroit-reflections-on-an-opening-disability-justice-and-creating-collective-access-in-detroit/>
- Puhl, R. 2010. "Weight Discrimination: A Socially Acceptable Injustice." <http://www.obesityaction.org/magazine/oacnews12/Obesity%20Discrimination.pdf>
- Sherwood, J. H. 2009. "Weighing In" Review of *The Fat Studies Reader*, ed. by E.

Rothblum and S. Solovay. (New York: NYU Press) in *Ms. Magazine*, pp. 57-58, Fall 2009.

Simpson, A. 2002. "Who Hears Their Cry?: African-American Women and the Fight for Environmental Justice in Memphis, Tennessee. In *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics & Pedagogy*, ed. by J. Adamson, M.M. Evans, and R. Stein, pp. 82-104. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

Sontag, S. 1977. *Illness as Metaphor*. New York: Vintage Books.

Stein, R., ed. 2004. *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Thomas, H. and J. Ahmed, eds. 2004. *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Walker, A. and P. Parmar. 1993. *Warrior Marks: Female Genital Mutilation and the Sexual Blinding of Women*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company.

Westra, L. and B.E. Lawson, eds. 2001. *Faces of Environmental Racism: Confronting Issues of Global Justice (2nd Edition)*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Williams, L. 2011. Private Conversation.

Websites

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/FoodDeserts/>

www.dictionary.com

www.earthcharterinaction.org

www.letsmove.gov/obesitytaskforce.php

<http://ncfairshare.org/>

* My appreciation goes to my family for their support and Leslie Wolfe for her patience. I thank God for Her Wisdom in guiding my thoughts.

ⁱ Previously published under the surname Kaalund.

ⁱⁱ For a thorough critique of ecofeminism and feminist environmentalism see the article by B. Agarwal, "Environmental Management, Equity and Ecofeminism" (2001) in *Feminism and Race*, edited by K.K. Bhavnani, pp. 410-455, New York: Oxford University Press.

-
- iii A yearly meeting usually held in one of the more rural areas of North Carolina that brings together grassroots and community activists with academics and government representatives to discuss pertinent environmental justice issues.
- iv Comment made by Dr. McQueen during one of the discussion sessions at the 11th Annual NCEJN Summit in which I participated.
- v North Carolina Fair Share was founded in 1987 to help North Carolinians, particularly those with low incomes, work for a fairer share of economic and political power (<http://ncfairshare.org/>).
- vi The other aspects of this definition include, “anything that disables or puts one at a disadvantage; the state or condition of being disabled; and legal incapacity, legal disqualification (www.dictionary.com).
- vii Another collection on environmental justice that outlines the diverse issues affecting grassroots communities is entitled: *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics and Pedagogy*, edited by J. Adamson, M.M. Evans and R. Stein (2002), Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.
- viii I have written more extensively on this concept in an unpublished paper, ““Deciding to Be ‘Blacknificent: Transforming Bioethics Through Black/Africana Studies.”
- ix Bonnie St. John, an amputee, became the first African-American to win Olympic medals in ski racing. She won silver and bronze medals. More information on Bonnie St. John can be found at her website: <http://www.bonniestjohn.com/>.
- x See also Madrid, P. Garfield, R. Jaber, P. Daly, M., Richard, G. and R. Grant (2008) “Mental Health Services in Louisiana School-based Health Centers Post-Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.” *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 39 (1) 45-51 for another perspective on the aftermath of disaster in terms of mental health.
- xi Environmental activists Vandana Shiva working primarily in India and Wangari Maathai working primarily in Kenya have through their work elevated to international consciousness the challenges faced by women and children with regards to severe environmental degradation.
- xii Andrea Simpson (2002) wrote about EJ activist Doris Bradshaw from Memphis Tennessee who became particularly concerned with the occurrences of reproductive organ cancers among women in her community. I met Doris (and her husband Ken) at one of the first North Carolina Environmental Justice Summits (in 1998) where they presented their concerns regarding the level of toxicity in their community due to the Memphis Defense Depot. EPA has conducted clean-up activities at the site according to information on the Memphis Defense Depot found at their website <http://www.epa.gov/region4/waste/npl/npltn/memdefn.htm>.
- xiii First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move* campaign is outlined in detail at the following website: www.letsmove.gov/obesitytaskforce.php.