

## AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Nicole Metildi for the degree of Master of Arts in English presented on May 28, 2020.

Title: Toward More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Working at the Intersections of Indigenous, Racial Justice, and Environmental Activism

Abstract approved:

---

Dr. Tim Jensen

My thesis consists of two articles that address the ways in which rhetoric emerges from coalitions with unequal power dynamics within the environmental movement. The introduction provides context to help situate my articles within the current environmental movement. In my first article, “Constellating a More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Lessons from Standing Rock,” I advocate for approaching coalitions and their rhetoric through the lens of constellations in order to create more intersectional, coalitional rhetoric. In this paper, I expand upon Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) concept of constellations and apply it to coalitional statements created at the peak of the protests at Standing Rock against the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016. Ultimately, I argue that a constellative approach to coalitions and their rhetoric can allow for more intersectional and coalitional rhetoric to emerge. We will know when coalitions have approached their work in a constellative way when we observe their rhetoric centering the voices of frontline communities and Indigenous people. While my first article advocates for a theoretical approach to coalitional rhetoric, my second article, “Frontline Leadership, Privileged Capacity: Understanding the Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund,” continues the thread of analyzing coalitional rhetoric by examining the messaging of the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) through seven interviews conducted over the span of twelve months with six different activists in the Portland environmental

movement. In this article, I explore how the guiding principle of the PCEF coalition, “frontline leadership, privileged capacity,” led not only to more inclusive and intersectional organizing, but also inclusive and intersectional rhetoric. Together, these articles provide both a theoretical framework and case study analysis of how coalitions composed of power asymmetries within the environmental movement can become more intersectional and inclusive in practice and create more intersectional and inclusive rhetoric.

©Copyright by Nicole Metildi  
May 28, 2020  
Creative Commons License

Toward More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Working at the Intersections of  
Indigenous, Racial Justice, and Environmental Activism

by  
Nicole Metildi

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Master of Arts

Presented May 28, 2020  
Commencement June 2020

Master of Arts thesis of Nicole Metildi presented on May 28, 2020

APPROVED:

---

Major Professor, representing English

---

Director of the School of Writing, Literature, and Film

---

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

---

Nicole Metildi, Author

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my gratitude to my thesis committee members, Dr. Tim Jensen, Dr. Ana Ribero, and Dr. Susan Bernardin, without whom this thesis would not have been possible. Thank you for the countless conversations over the past year and a half about racism, environmentalism, Indigenous activism, and how what I was writing about touched all of these issues. I especially want to thank Tim for his unwavering support as I grappled with how to write about and discuss these topics in an ethical and clear manner. What I write about in my thesis required a lot of personal and emotional work and I am so thankful to him for his patience and kindness as I worked on this project. I'd also like to thank Dr. Robert Figueroa, whose class about environmental justice helped me understand the conversations I was entering into. I would also like to thank my thesis writing group for reading my work at its various stages and challenging me to consider the ways in which my work might be considered and utilized by those who read it (this is especially important considering I want to publish these articles in open-access journals). Lastly, I want to thank Carson, my partner in life and fiancé whose unwavering support throughout this whole process has grounded me in love (and reality, which has been really important for my sanity). Carson, thank you for listening to me as I melted down, grappled with the concepts and issues I wrote about in this thesis, and doing the dishes and laundry while I typed away at my computer into the wee hours of the night. I couldn't have done this without you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
1 Introduction.....	1
2 Constellating a More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Lessons from Standing Rock.....	6
3 Frontline Leadership, Privileged Capacity: Understanding the Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund.....	40
4 Conclusion.....	68
5 Works Cited .....	71
6 List of Figures.....	78
7 Appendix: IRB Materials.....	79
7.1 Approved IRB Form.....	80
7.2 Research Consent Form.....	82
7.3 Interview Questions and Guide.....	84
7.4 Recruitment Email Templates.....	85

## Introduction

“Should fighting climate change mean also embracing progressive policies that prioritize people of color—who often are more at risk from global warming—or should advocates stay away from fights over inequality that might alienate some people?” - Geoff Dembicki

In a recently published article in *Vice* titled, “A Debate Over Racism Has Split One of the World’s Most Famous Climate Groups,” author Geoff Dembicki asks the above question by discussing a recent schism between Extinction Rebellion US and Extinction Rebellion America. This discussion is rooted in the question of whether or not people of color should be centered in environmental organizing. This question has been danced around, answered, and contended with by environmental activists for years, picking up steam in the past decade as established environmentalist organizations have increasingly acknowledged that those most impacted by the climate crisis, those on the frontlines of climate change and environmental injustice, are predominately communities of color, Indigenous people, and low-income peoples. In acknowledging this, many organizations and activists are changing their strategies, processes, priorities, and rhetoric to center those most impacted by climate chaos and environmental injustice.

The divide between established environmental groups (which have predominantly consisted of white members and volunteers) and communities of color and environmental justice activists has led to fractured efforts to address the root causes of climate change, and ultimately, has led to the exclusion of frontline voices in environmental policies and campaigns pursued by established environmental organizations. When discussing the damming of the Tuolumne River in the early 1900s and the activists involved, Carolyn Finney notes in *Black Faces, White Spaces*:

*Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, that “for the most part, these citizens were white and middle class, and the environmental groups that were formed during this time period were largely segregated by race and class” (25). The gap between an environmentalism that focuses on universalizing rhetoric (such as “we’re all in this together”) and an environmentalism that prioritizes the needs and demands of frontline communities (those that experience climate chaos the first and worst, which predominantly communities of color and low-income communities), and the need to close that gap leads me to writing the following two articles for this thesis.

In early 2017, I became involved with 350PDX, the local 350.org group in Portland. 350.org is most widely known for its founder, Bill McKibben, and the organization’s call to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million, a safe level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, in order to stop and ultimately reverse climate change. 350.org has been characterized by a predominately white constituency; however, that is changing, as I note in my interview with Anissa Pemberton in my second article. I joined 350PDX because I felt an urgent need to address climate change—I needed to do something. What I didn’t realize was that by becoming involved in the climate movement, I would be exposed to the ways in which the mainstream, established environmental movement had excluded people of color from its constituency and from its organizing priorities.

Again, this is changing. As seen in the *Vice* article, environmental groups are not only including demands from frontline communities, they are being led by those demands. As Dembicki notes, “shortly after XR US was founded in late 2018, local

chapters went through a process of reviewing the organization's demands and voted to add 'a just transition that prioritizes the most vulnerable people and indigenous sovereignty' to the list." Some environmental organizations are transforming from "environmental groups" to "climate justice" or "environmental justice" organizations. This shift in the environmental movement to center the demands and priorities of frontline communities has led me to ask two interrelated questions: How can organizations with differing, but intersecting priorities, work together to disrupt systems and institutions that perpetuate environmental injustice and climate chaos? And building off of this question, how can these intersectional coalitions craft a rhetoric that is built upon inclusive principles and also prioritizes frontline communities? The two articles in this thesis— "Constellating a More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric" and "Frontline Leadership, Privileged Capacity"—help answer these questions.

In "Constellating a More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Lessons from Standing Rock," I advocate for approaching coalitional rhetoric through Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) theorization of constellations, which can provide a way for coalitions of groups of people with unequal power dynamics recognize the intersections between their work, values, identities, and lived experiences *and* present opportunities to center frontline voices and experiences in their action and rhetoric. Simpson's theory of constellations, and its affiliation with Karma Chávez's ideas of "coalitional moments" and "creative rhetoric crafting," enables me to propose three ways that "constellations" can facilitate intersectional, coalitional rhetoric (Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics* 9). These three ways relate to

forefronting frontline voices in coalitional action and rhetoric, helping activists understand how they are politically oriented to each other, and creating opportunities for more honesty, transparency, and accountability within relationships across power asymmetries in coalitions. After a discussion of Simpson's theory of constellations in *As We Have Always Done* and Chávez's theorization of coalitional moments, I apply a constellative approach to two coalitional statements that emerged out of the 2016 and 2017 protests at Standing Rock. In doing so, I work to illuminate how Simpson's concept of constellations can be applied to coalitional rhetoric to help activists and scholars understand how more intersectional, coalitional rhetoric emerges.

In "Frontline Leadership, Privileged Capacity: Understanding the Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund," I interview six activists from Portland, Oregon about their work on the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) ballot initiative campaign and the implementation of PCEF as city code. Through several interviews conducted over a 12-month period, I was able to gain insight into not only the process of creating PCEF and the ballot initiative campaign, but also into how PCEF has impacted the environmental movement in Portland over the past few years. Ultimately, I discover that *how* an environmental campaign is organized is critical to determining what kind of rhetoric emerges out of such a campaign. Campaign processes and organizing practices are inextricably linked to campaign messaging and rhetoric. The guiding principle for PCEF—"frontline leadership, privileged capacity"—is a key factor in the type of rhetoric that emerges from the PCEF campaign. That is, rhetoric that is inclusive and centers frontline voices.

An interest in understanding how coalitions composed of unequal power dynamics overcome power asymmetries with rhetorical practices and actions bridges my two articles. In this thesis, I am motivated by a desire to understand the ways that such coalitions can be successful in their shared organizing campaigns and how issues of oppression, as they present within coalitional organizing spaces, can be addressed. By addressing how white supremacy presents within such organizing spaces, white activists can more honestly and transparently work with frontline groups, which can lead to more accountability. As I mention in my first article, any coalition that consists of unequal power dynamics will always have to contend with the ways in which colonization and racism manifest within coalitional spaces. It is more productive, responsible, and ethical if organizations made up of predominantly white and non-Indigenous peoples acknowledge and address this truth outright. They can do this by following a “frontline leadership, privileged capacity” framework, as the organizations in the PCEF coalition do, and by approaching their coalitional work and rhetoric through Simpson’s concept of constellations.

## **Constellating a More Intersectional, Coalitional Rhetoric: Lessons from Standing Rock**

I am writing this paper from the traditional homelands of the Marys River or Ampinefu Band of Kalapuya on which Oregon State University (OSU) and the city of Corvallis reside. The Kalapuya were forcibly removed to reservations in Western Oregon following the Willamette Valley Treaty of 1855 (Kalapuya etc. Treaty) (ASOSU). This history of dispossession is foundational to OSU, a land-grant university underwritten by the 1862 Morrill Act, which took 10.7 million acres from approximately 250 tribes, bands, and communities to create and endow over 50 universities (Lee and Ahtone). A two-year study conducted by *High Country News* reveals the extent to which colonization and dispossession is intrinsically foundational to the existence of land-grant universities such as OSU. While OSU sits on land taken from the Kalapuya, the land granted to the university includes land taken from the Confederated Bands of Willamette valley, the Coast Tribes of Oregon, the Klamath, the Modoc, the Snake Indians, the Yahooskin band, and the Shoshoni (Western bands) (Lee et al.). The land has been transformed. Where there once were many streams and creeks and riparian areas, sidewalks and asphalt dominate and control the natural landscape, hinting at the colonization of this place, the erasure of history, and the genocide of the Indigenous peoples who were forcibly removed from their traditional lands. This genocide, erasure, and displacement extends throughout the Americas.

While land acknowledgements make a step in the right direction towards acknowledging the seizure of land, dispossession, and genocide of Indigenous people

that sit at the foundation of institutions such as OSU, such acknowledgements risk becoming performative if no material or tangible efforts are made by the institutions to address this history. When decolonial action ends at acknowledgement of harm, change (structural and otherwise) that would tangibly address centuries of genocide and colonization seems unlikely to materialize. The status quo remains and the effects of colonization continue to play out in current events. The construction and permitting process of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) is one example of how colonization continues to play out today. The coalitions that formed between environmental and Indigenous activists around the 2016 and 2017 protests against DAPL's construction are an example of how modern-day colonization can be refused through actions that move past acknowledgment.

### **Intersectionality in the environmental and climate justice movement**

In recent years, environmental organizations representing majority-white constituencies have become increasingly interested in how they can work with and follow frontline leadership, that is, the leadership of organizations representing communities who are on the *frontlines* of environmental degradation, the climate crisis, and who experience oppressive systems and structures first, such as Indigenous people and people of color. In attempting to address long-standing problems of racism and the ways in which white supremacy manifests in organizing, leaders have worked to understand how and why racism and white supremacy manifests and to develop ways to confront and begin to resolve these issues. For example, 350PDX, an environmental organization in Portland, Oregon whose volunteer base is predominately white, held a “Following Frontline Leadership” workshop in March

2019 where participants grappled with answering the question: “How do we show up as allies and accomplices to frontline communities when we are in coalition with them?” In this workshop, the white volunteers present, which I was one of, worked through this question while realizing that the answer would never be clear-cut or simple; rather, “showing up” would always be a process and would not be achieved through one, or even several, actions.

In late 2016, after Donald Trump was elected the 45th President of the United States, I moved to Portland and became involved with 350PDX. I needed some way to channel all the nervous energy and fear I had not only for democracy and the people living in the United States, but also my fear that during the four years under a Trump presidency we would lose the dwindling chance we had at mitigating the impacts of the climate crisis. It is clear to me (and to many others within the environmental movement) that the established environmental movement, a movement that has its roots in conservation and preservation, needs to defer to and follow the lead of Indigenous leadership, leadership from communities of color, and the leadership of other groups who are on the frontlines of the climate crisis. This ideology is not new. However, I would contend that it is far easier for predominantly white environmental groups to agree that frontline leadership should be followed than to actually do so.

As Karma Chávez notes in their review of Aimee Carrillo Rowe's book, *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances*, the focus on “centering honesty and critique” in efforts to create alliances between women of color and white women will continue to be of critical importance to coalitions between activists of color and

white activists (230). This “centering of honesty and critique” is so important because colonialism, racism, and other oppressive histories, systems, and structures will always exist within coalitions between people of color and white people.

Furthermore, in her article, “Locating Feminism’s Subject: The Paradox of White Femininity and the Struggle to Forge Feminist Alliances,” Rowe discusses how the “rhetorical silences” of whiteness, which she categorizes as “universalization and deflection,” shape “feminist theory and praxis in unreflexive and paradoxically exclusionary ways” (77). These “rhetorical silences,” a concept Rowe pulls from Carrie Crenshaw’s article, “Resisting Whiteness’ Rhetorical Silence,” of course extends to all white activists, not just white feminists. In *Queer Migration Politics*, Karma Chávez contends that “coalitional moments” in which activists pursue “creative rhetorical crafting, which sometimes points in the directions of inclusion and utopia” can lead to the creation of new ways of being, and rhetoric, that sit at the intersection of the values and imaginations of all those involved in a coalition (9). These “creative rhetorical craftings” created in coalitions might provide an antidote to these rhetorical silences of whiteness.

While much attention has been paid to alliances and coalitions between groups of disparate power dynamics, and the ways in which whiteness presents within these relationships, little attention has been paid to how those in such coalitions might approach their work in such a way that will nurture and engender an intersectional, coalitional rhetoric that forefronts frontline voices.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, many environmental

---

<sup>1</sup>The term “intersectional” was first coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in her 1989 paper “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.” In this paper, I am drawing from contemporary interpretations of the

groups acknowledge that an intersectional climate justice movement organized through coalitions and alliances can enable more effective and successful organizing. For example, in Sierra Club's 2015 strategic plan (which is also their current strategic plan as of this writing), they say: "Building alliances across and among movements will take many forms in the coming years, and the Club should both respond to and look for opportunities to highlight the intersectionality of our movements" ("Sierra Club Strategic Plan"). Clearly, becoming intersectional—through action, organizing, and rhetoric—is an important goal for environmental organizations. Furthermore, intersectionality is a useful organizing principle from which to analyze and approach coalitional work and rhetoric because it can help ensure that the environmental movement is more "just, inclusive and coherent" (Rodriguez). When a movement is more intersectional and just, it will necessarily decenter whiteness and center frontline voices (more on decentering whiteness later). To that end, this paper asks and is guided by two interrelated questions. First, how might coalitions between groups with unequal power dynamics approach their work together so that intersectional coalitional rhetoric, and action, can emerge? Second, in what ways did rhetoric, formed out of coalitions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, emerge out of the protests at Standing Rock?

---

term, which evolved out of Crenshaw's initial conception of "intersectional." Within activist circles, an intersectional movement "seeks to make visible and address the various privileges and oppressions that we all have in order to build an activist movement that is more just, inclusive and coherent" (Rodriguez). Kristen Moe from *Yes! Media* succinctly describes the evolution of the term, intersectional, as having "evolved from a way of describing the problem to a way of describing the solution." Intersectional has become more of an organizing methodology and less of a way to describe how oppression operates and functions across identities and lived experiences (although it certainly still does that).

To be clear, the formation of intersectoral coalitions is a necessary goal within the environmental movement, and perhaps within any movement that seeks to address and resolve issues that touch different groups of people in unequal ways. Not only is it important that intersectional coalitions form across environmental, racial justice, and Indigenous rights movements, the rhetoric that emerges out of these coalitions must also be intersectional in nature. Coalitions will come and go, forming when needed and disbanding when the issue being addressed has been resolved or the end-goal has been achieved. However, the rhetoric that these coalitions produce will live on. It will live on in the archives of Twitter, Facebook, blog posts or articles written about the coalition, as well as in the memories of those who created or consumed this rhetoric. Building intersectional, coalitional rhetoric in tandem with intersectional coalitions will provide examples of what intersectional rhetoric and coalitions can look like. Coalitions and their rhetoric become individual links within the larger chain of social change that builds upon itself and evolves and persists through time.

**Whiteness must be decentered in order for intersectional, coalitional rhetoric to emerge**

At stake in the questions this paper asks is a need to decenter whiteness in coalitional rhetoric and forefront those who are the most impacted by the issue(s) being addressed by coalitions composed of unequal power dynamics. This will lead to more intersectional and just coalitions and coalitional rhetoric. As it becomes more and more apparent to mainstream and established environmental organizations that the climate crisis is inextricably linked to issues of power, empire, colonialism, and racism, the need for working across differences will only increase. In order to avoid

or endeavor to not recreate the oppressive power dynamics within these organizing spaces, white activists and organizations with a majority white constituency must continually work to decenter whiteness (and themselves) in coalitional spaces.

As Layla Saad writes in *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor*, “allyship is not an identity, but a practice” (125-6). The practice of being an ally (which I will later problematize through the concept of accomplice), requires continual self-reflexivity and a decentering of whiteness. White activists decenter whiteness by “learning to stop upholding whiteness as the norm and instead learning to live and operate in more inclusive ways” (139). In the chapter about intersectionality in *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo says, “Because of how rarely our privilege is examined, even our social justice movements will tend to focus on the most privileged and most well represented people within those groups” (76). If a movement (and therefore a coalition) aims to be intersectional, privilege cannot go unexamined (white privilege, gender privilege, class privilege, etc.). Oluo goes on to say: “Intersectionality helps ensure that fewer people are left behind and that our efforts to do better for some do not make things far worse for others” (77-8). Decentralizing “people who are used to being the primary focus of the movements they are a part of,” and therefore centering people who have been marginalized, is an outcome of intersectionality and is therefore necessary to create intersectional coalitions and rhetoric (77-8). Therefore, in order for intersectional, coalitional rhetoric to emerge, frontline voices must be forefronted in practice (i.e., in how the coalition functions, like through decision-making) and in the rhetoric itself.

This essay advocates for approaching coalitional rhetoric through Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg) theorization of constellations, which can provide a way for coalitions between groups of people with unequal power dynamics to see the intersections between their work, values, identities, and lived experiences *and* present opportunities to center frontline voices and experiences in their rhetoric. More specifically, I offer three ways in which approaching coalitions with power asymmetries through the lens of constellations can help address power imbalances in coalitional rhetoric.<sup>2</sup> As a guiding framework for grappling with issues of unequal power dynamics within coalitional work and rhetoric, Simpson's theory of constellations can aid organizations and activists in three ways:

1. Frontline voices and the voices of those who are most impacted can be more easily forefronted and followed in coalitional discussions, and ultimately, the rhetoric that the coalition creates and embodies;
2. Activists' orientations towards each other can be made more visible;<sup>3</sup>
3. Opportunities for more robust relationships across power asymmetries can become more deeply rooted in honesty, transparency, and accountability.

---

<sup>2</sup> The term "power asymmetries" is derived from Elizabeth R. Cole and Zakiya T. Luna's article "Making Coalitions Work: Solidarity across Difference within US Feminism" in which they discuss feminist coalitional work between white women and women of color.

<sup>3</sup> "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics," a cultural rhetorics performance and dialogue between several cultural rhetorics scholar who write as the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab (CRTL), discuss orientation and location within a web of relations and how these orientations are more easily seen through a constellative approach. In it, Mari (short for Marilee Brooks-Gillies) says that they create multiple possibilities and approaches "by constellating stories in order to visibilize a web of relations. This web can help us [as in scholars] intervene in the discipline by acknowledging our location within a set of dominant institutions within which we are complicit with colonialism" (CRTL, 1. 3). The spirit of Mari's statement is similar to the second way in which Simpson's conception of "constellations" can aid those within a coalition composed of power asymmetries approach their work and rhetoric.

If environmental leaders and their organizations wish to build intersectional coalitions across differences (which will inevitably have power asymmetries) that will forefront the voices of those most impacted by the issues they seek to address, then it will be critical to understand the ways in which those in such a coalition are oriented towards each other. In saying, “oriented to each other,” I am referencing Karma Chávez when she discusses “differential political orientations” in *Queer Migration Politics*, in which orientations are specifically conceptualized in terms of how activists are oriented towards a specific politics or political stance (28). Chávez quotes Sara Ahmed, who refers to orientation as “a direction (taken) toward objects and others” (Ahmed qtd. in Chávez 28). In differential political orientations, “people take up various political orientations,” which are influenced by a number of reasons, e.g., economics, ideology, identities, experiences, etc. (29). What I suggest here is that if activists understand how they are oriented to politics and to each other, this understanding can lead to more honesty, transparency, and perhaps more accountability, within coalitions.

This essay helps advance the aforementioned goals by examining how constellations can help those in coalitions grappling with issues of unequal power dynamics approach their coalitional work and rhetoric. One of the notable ways that constellations might aid those in coalitions with power asymmetries is through its nonlinear conceptualization of time. I’ll go into more depth about how Simpson conceptualizes time within constellations and Nishnaabeg intelligence later in this paper, but suffice it to say, when time is not considered in so linear a fashion, the events of the past become more tied to the present moment, demanding to be

addressed and not seen as simply a part of a past best left forgotten. In this conceptualization, activists are situated at the intersection of the past, present, and future and must contend with how the past affects the present, and how the present will affect the future.

To understand how approaching coalitions characterized by unequal power dynamics through Simpson's theory of constellations can be helpful, this paper will look at two instances of coalitional rhetoric that emerged from the protests at Standing Rock through the lens of constellations. The resistance at Standing Rock against the construction of DAPL and the coalitions that emerged from these protests can serve as a powerful example of intersectional, coalitional rhetoric. DAPL represents the power of extractive industries that work to displace Indigenous peoples from their traditional homelands and reminds Indigenous and environmental activists of the guaranteed possibility that all pipelines will eventually leak oil into water and soil. As a coalition of organizations states in a letter to Obama, "history has taught us [that it] is not a question of '*if*' but '*when*'" there will be a spill ("ED Letter President Obama Dakota Access Pipeline"). In fact, DAPL had a total of five oil spills in its first six months of operation (Brown). DAPL represents and symbolizes colonization and the genocide of peoples indigenous to what is now known as the United States of America, the exploitation of land and water, and the injustice of exposing a select and marginalized few to environmental harm and toxicity.

Many activists and organizations recognized the harm, destruction, and displacement that DAPL not only represented, but actively pursued and created. In response, LaDonna Brave Bull Allard (Dakota/Lakota, Standing Rock Sioux)

organized Sacred Stones camp, with the larger camp, Oceti Sakowin, forming a few months later. It was a historic gathering of Indigenous nations not seen since the Battle of Little Big Horn (“Oceti Sakowin”). In addition to the camps and protests, perhaps because of them, intersectional coalitions also formed to address DAPL. Not only did the protests against DAPL spark a movement and moment that many people felt called to address, it marked one of many moments in the past decade when Indigenous-led resistance and activism began to garner more wide-spread media coverage and when many (but certainly not all) established environmental groups and activists followed the leadership of Indigenous peoples.<sup>4</sup> I’ve chosen to focus on the protests at Standing Rock, and the intersectional coalitions and rhetoric that formed and were created during these protests, because of the widespread, international media attention they garnered.

Looking at a coalitional statement published on Honor the Earth’s website and a letter sent to President Obama from a coalition of environmental, Indigenous, and other social justice organizations (and a media outlet as well), can lend insight into how the organizations were seeking to bolster their coalitional power through shared rhetorical messages. The statements also suggest shared points of solidarity which groups with asymmetric power were able to rally around *while also* acknowledging that many within the coalition were more materially impacted by the issues being addressed than others within the coalition.

---

<sup>4</sup> By “many moments” I am referring to the Idle No More movement in Canada that began in December 2012 as well as the American Indian Movement of the 1970s. These movements, as well as many others, contributed to and made possible the resistance at Standing Rock.

By beginning this paper by locating myself and OSU within the interwoven histories of colonialism, racism, and capitalism, I hope to not only provide the context from which this paper is written, but to also drive home the fact that this paper is not only an analysis of the coalitional rhetoric of the Standing Rock protests, but also a putting into practice of how one might understand themselves within a constellation of relationships between people, places, and histories (such as a coalition).<sup>5</sup> Mab Segrest makes a similar move in her book *Memoir of a Race Traitor*, when she locates herself within the history of racism in the United States and frames “it in more personal and immediate terms” so as to “close the distance between [herself] as a white person (a lesbian, a woman) and the material” (198). By situating myself (a white, cis-heteronormative woman) within the material, relational, and historical constellations of settler-colonialism, I intend to close the “distance between myself and the material” and the present moment to which I am a part of (Segrest 198). It is my desire to more critically locate and scrutinize my place within coalitions with power asymmetries that brings me to this work and to writing this essay.

### **Constellations of coresistance and adjacent accomplices**

In *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*, Leanne Simpson expands upon the concept of constellations, which she draws from the writing of and conversations with Jarrett Martineau (nêhiyaw [Plains Cree], Dene Suline). “Constellations of coresistance,” as theorized by Simpson, are framed through the embodied practice of resurgent acts and place-based relationships

---

<sup>5</sup> Malea Powell and Phil Bratta discuss a similar concept of constellations in their “Introduction to the Special Issue: Entering the Cultural Rhetorics Conversations” where they describe a “practice of constellating” which “provides a material metaphor for honoring” all of the relationships that exist between people that create meaning and culture (Powell and Bratta).

(228). A practice of resurgent acts can be more readily understood in the context of radical resurgence, a concept that reappears throughout *As We Have Always Done* and is crucial to understanding constellations. Simpson writes:

The Radical Resurgence Project uses Indigenous interrogation, critique, and theory, and the grounded normativity these systems generate, as the intelligence system that instigates resurgence and is the process from which grounded, real world, Indigenous alternatives are manifest and realized. It employs the Nishnaabeg story as algorithm, as coded processes that generate solutions to the problems of occupation and erasure and to life on earth. It begins from a place of refusal of colonialism and its current settler colonial structural manifestation (34).

In *As We Have Always Done*, Leanne Simpson does not write for white academics or activists because radical resurgence does not center whiteness. Rather, she writes for Indigenous people, especially Nishnaabeg people; she writes: “As I do in all my writing, I write first and foremost for my own people” (234–35). This is important to note as it puts the concept of constellations in context—it is a theory and concept for Indigenous radical resurgence. Simpson says, “there is virtually no room for white people in resurgence” (228). Her work is grounded in Nishnaabeg intelligence. Instead, Simpson suggests that white people “get out of the way and respect Indigenous self-determination and nationhood” (237). What might this mean for white environmental activists and other non-Indigenous peoples? It might mean that real white allies will show up in solidarity even when they are not centered (231). It means that white people need to orient to Indigenous radical resurgence in such a way that whiteness is not centered. Instead, I propose that white allies would become accomplices to Indigenous radical resurgence.

Pulling from “Accomplices not Allies,” a zine created by Indigenous Action, non-Indigenous accomplices are called to become “complicit in a struggle towards

liberation” (2). To do this, a collective “we” forms. They go on to say that Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks must “[formulate] mutual understandings that are not entirely antagonistic, otherwise we may find ourselves, our desires, and our struggles, to be incompatible” (2). In other words, a coalition must form, one in which all who are a part of this “we” understand their location in the coalition and their orientation to others within the constellation of relationships of that coalition. This “we” forms out of solidarity and shared understanding that each person comes from a different political orientation which necessitates that each person will act and be a part of the coalition in different ways, according to those political orientations. Combining Simpson’s approach and purpose for her writing with Indigenous Action’s zine, I would suggest that non-Indigenous people can still become complicit in Indigenous struggles towards liberation, like the struggle at Standing Rock, by working adjacent to these “constellations of coresistance.” In this way, non-Indigenous folks are oriented to Indigenous resurgence in such a way that does not interfere or impede radical resurgence or Indigenous liberation.

Understanding the role of non-Indigenous accomplices in Indigenous-led movements from this perspective becomes a useful lens from which to understand the relationships and coalitions that formed between non-Indigenous and Indigenous activists at Standing Rock. Understanding who Simpson writes for also puts this concept into a different rhetorical frame, that is, this concept is not for my benefit, a white settler scholar; Simpson’s writings are not for my liberation. However, I would contend that even though a theory or concept might not be *for white people*, it does not mean that white people should not be aware of it or should not understand it or

should not respect it. Rather, I think it is a white settler-scholar's or activist's responsibility to be aware of the histories and traditions of the people whose land they live on and to respect that knowledge. This is my intention—to learn about, be aware of, and apply Indigenous scholarship in a respectful and honest way. It is with this intention and positionality that I approach Simpson's concept of constellations.

Imagining the rhetoric that emerged out of the events and protests surrounding Standing Rock as a constellation, that is, a network of relationships, can serve as an analogy to how multiple factors and actors impact one another within a coalition.<sup>6</sup> If constellations can be understood as networks of relationships, coalitions and collectives can also be understood as constellations. In fact, in Simpson's chapter on constellations, she brings in Martineau's musings on artists' collectives when discussing constellations; she says:

Martineau and I have been talking about constellations as Indigenous intelligence, as theory, and as an organizing concept for years now [...] The concept of constellations provides a different conceptual way of collectively ordering beyond individual everyday acts of resurgence, and Martineau provides several examples of this formation as a mechanism operating in the context of the artist collective. This gestures toward the constellation as an organizing value in resurgent movement building (216).

It is this specific moment in Simpson's conceptualization of constellations that serves as the primary connection between constellations and coalitions, with constellations being a primary mode of thinking about and conceptualizing how coalitions form and function.

---

<sup>6</sup> In "Our Story Begins Here," Malea Powell and the Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab discuss similar concepts to constellations and networks of relationships as they explicate cultural rhetorics, which studies, "meaning-making systems and to the practices that constitute those systems" (CRTL, 1.2).

## Understanding constellations through Nishnaabeg intelligence

Constellations engender a “shifting relationality” and embody a “resurgent practice [that] is a disruptive and deliberate act of turning away from the colonial state” (Simpson 202, 198). Settler colonialism as the norm is generatively refused as “normal” in the concept of grounded normativity, the latter of which Simpson defines as “Indigenous intelligence,” which is the “theoretical fuel for radical resurgence” (35-36). What is instead “normal” is to be grounded, to be connected to place, the relationships with that place, and the relationships held within that place. Generative refusal a concept along with grounded normativity asks: “What if no one sided with colonialism?” (177). To not side with colonialism would mean to generatively refuse it and to *not* “[seek] recognition from the [colonial] state” (170). Generative refusal then means to refuse accepted and established norms created by the settler colonial state and to create an alternative normal, or a normal that exists outside the established norms of settler colonialism. Simpson relates generative refusal to grounded normativity:

Resurgent organizing is organizing based on a refusal of settler colonialism coupled with the embodiment of the alternative, an alternative that amplifies grounded normativity. Radical resurgent organizing refuses both settler colonialism and its many manifestations. It does not allow settler colonialism to frame the issues facing Indigenous peoples and this is critical because settler colonialism will always define the issues with a solution that reentrenches its own power (177-178).

Grounded normativity and generative refusal are deeply intertwined within radical resurgent organizing, deepening radical resurgence within Indigenous intelligence and ways of being, here specifically, Nishnaabeg intelligence. Constellations are held within the context of grounded normativity, and within Indigenous ways of knowing

that forefront understandings of intertwined relationalities. Furthermore, grounded normativity is particular to each nation and their place-based practices and therefore is different for each Indigenous nation because they are all grounded in different places and thus have different relationships with those places.<sup>7</sup>

Indigenous intelligence arises from place and knowledge of that place. This is how I understand grounded normativity—all Indigenous knowledge and intelligence traces back to place. From this grounded normativity and generative refusal, radical resurgence can arise. Activists' orientations, and how they are oriented to others within coalitions composed of power asymmetries, arise out of a specific politics. Where someone is grounded, and what they are grounded in (e.g., place, relationships, a specific politics, etc.), determines how activists are oriented towards each other within a constellation. If, as Simpson writes, constellations is an organizing principle as well as a theory, it can be applied to our thinking around how those within coalitions orient themselves towards each other (216). Furthermore, viewing coalitions through the lens of constellations demands that the orientation of the person that is interacting with the coalition be acknowledged (requiring a level of self-reflexivity and accountability from that person). A constellative approach also takes into consideration the places and lived experiences a person within a coalition comes from and therefore brings into the constellation of relationships that make up that coalition. Rhetorical ecologies present an adjacent way of viewing rhetoric and relationships as “coordinating processes, moving across the same social field and

---

<sup>7</sup> Here I am interpreting Simpson when she refers to “grounded” as not just physically grounded in a place, but also to the more metaphorical conception of “being grounded” as in being grounded in relationships or reality.

within shared structures of feeling” (Edbauer 9, 20). Simpson’s concepts of grounded normativity and constellations help ground analysis in the relationships between places and people from which rhetoric arises, which is especially helpful when attempting to understand the myriad of intricacies between all living beings, rhetoric, places, and histories (which can quickly become overwhelming). It becomes apparent, through even a cursory analysis of the rhetoric that surrounds the protests at Standing Rock, that relationships between people, place, and time (that is, the relationships between the past, present and future) are simultaneously affecting each other and the coalitional rhetoric produced by Standing Rock activists.

Because a constellation consists of more than just rhetoric, but also of people, places and events, time must also be considered as an integral part of a constellation, and thus also an integral part of a coalition. The phrase “as we have always done,” the title of Simpson’s book, embodies the “endless unfolding of the past and the future into the present” (Simpson 247). Thinking about constellations in this way, as situated within the “endless unfolding of the past and the future into the present,” suggests an understanding of constellations (and thus coalitions and relationships) as *not* predicated on linear time. Instead, events in the past, present and future can be understood as fluid and *not* limited to memory (the past) or the imagination (the future). Applying this understanding of time as nonlinear to Standing Rock recognizes the memory and history of colonization continually manifesting in the present as it did in the 2016 and 2017 protests. Not only are the protests at Standing Rock a direct response to past colonization, the protests are also a refusal of past and continued colonization. The pain of the Battle of Little Bighorn (1876) and the

Whitestone Massacre (1863) manifests when protestors generatively refuse an entity representing resource extraction and colonization (i.e., DAPL) when that entity violently works to displace Indigenous peoples from their land (“History,” Allard).

The extraction of gold in the sacred Black Hills, which now bear the scars of colonization in the form of four US Presidents faces being chiseled into them (i.e., Mount Rushmore), the displacement of the Standing Rock Sioux when Lake Oahe was created when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers flooded the surrounding arable lands in the 1950s, contributed to the events at Standing Rock (Allard). A similar chain of events and actions led to the current protests against the construction of pipelines on the territory of the Wet’suwet’en in what is also known as Canada, and in Louisiana where Indigenous peoples and their allies are protesting the construction of the Bayou Bridge Pipeline.

If we start from the understanding that time is an “endless unfolding of the past and the future into the present” or that time is constantly fluid, the past *presenting* in the future and the present moment, linear time collapses and we begin to hear the echoes of the past and see visions of the future constantly asserting and reasserting themselves in current systems and structures (Simpson 247). Put perhaps another way, the protests at Standing Rock are still continuing today, that is, the effects of the protests can still be felt today. Perhaps most notably in the recent federal judge’s decision to strike down the permits for DAPL on March 25, 2020 (“Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Prevails as Federal Judge Strikes Down DAPL Permits”). The 2016 and 2017 protests at Standing Rock live on in the L’Eau Est La Vie protests currently happening in Louisiana, or in any assertion that “Water is

Life,” a rallying cry of Standing Rock protesters. Instead of accepting a linear view of time in which one might say, “The past is in the past, I no longer have to deal with it,” a more fluid sense of time lends itself to a thought process that says, “The past still plays out today and it must be acknowledged and addressed.” This is why those in coalition must address the histories and past that led to their being born and to their political orientations which evolved out of those histories.

Not only does Simpson’s theorization of constellations break down the linear concept of time, it provides a conceptual framework for how those in coalition can locate themselves within a coalition and orient themselves to other people and organizations in that coalition. If we consider the coalitions and events surrounding Standing Rock as a part of a constellation of rhetoric, people, places, history, etc., we might imagine that all of these pieces are nodes, like stars or planets, within a larger constellation, and they are constantly moving and changing in relation to each other.<sup>8</sup> Further, the constellation (or coalition) changes depending on your vantage point. Consider star constellations; if you view the night sky from Asia, you will see different constellations than if you were standing in North America. The location, the place where the viewer stands, changes the constellations that they see and observe. If we apply this to our thinking around a constellation of Standing Rock, we could say that constellations, or coalitions, *must* be grounded in something, perhaps place and/or relationships, to make sense of them. In order for a constellation to be

---

<sup>8</sup> This is similar to what is said by Malea Powell about constellations in “Our Story Begins here”: A constellation “allows for multiply-situated subjects to connect to multiple discourses at the same time, as well as for those relationships (among subjects, among discourses, among kinds of connections) to shift and change without holding a subject captive” (CRTL, 1.2).

interpreted, the placement of the person analyzing the constellation must be transparent and acknowledged (requiring self-reflexivity) in order for them to be accountable to others in that constellation and to build trust. How a person is oriented to and within a constellation must be clear and transparent because there are so many ways to view a constellation made up of relationships and/or rhetoric given the number of places and standpoints you could view a constellation from. Simply put, how can you see, make sense of or analyze a constellation of stars, or a constellation of rhetoric, places, people, and events, if you don't know how the viewer (or activist) is oriented to and within such constellation of relationships?

### **Constellations and Coalitions**

In *Queer Migration Policies: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*, Karma Chávez expands upon how coalitions have historically and conventionally been understood. Chávez frames coalitions in the terms of “coalitions of resistance,” which resonates with Simpson’s phrase “constellations of coresistance” (27). This similarity lends itself to the inherent connection between constellations and coalitions; each opens up exciting possibilities for thinking about being in a coalition, as well as how coalitional rhetoric can be created and conceptualized.

In addition to discussing how coalitions have been traditionally theorized, Chávez introduces and discusses her concept of “coalitional moments” which “occurs when political issues coincide or merge in the public sphere in ways that create space to reenvision and potentially reconstruct rhetorical imaginaries” (8). She goes on to say:

Analysis of coalitional moments provides *opportunity to witness activists' creative rhetorical crafting*, which sometimes points in the directions of inclusion and utopia but also shows how activists inventively draw resources toward building *alternative rhetorical imaginaries and possibilities* for livable lives (9; emphasis added).

Chávez's expansion and understanding of what coalitions can be and are, recognizes how coalitions of activists provide insight into the rhetorical capacity of coalitions as well as the role coalitions have in "building alternative rhetorical imaginaries and possibilities;" which I understand as building new futures, worlds, and societies that sit at the convergence of the values and imagined possibilities of all those involved in a coalition.<sup>9</sup> Viewing manifestos and statements of support as "coalitional moments"—as places where we can observe activists building new futures together—allows us to better understand how the rhetoric of the people involved in a coalition interacts with and impacts each other (9).

In her book, Chávez analyzes Wingspan and Coalición de Derechos Humanos' 2006 statements which "link queer rights and justice with migrant rights and justice," arguing that they are indeed manifestos, which she says are "statements that dramatically emphasize the necessity of the 'now'" (25). Manifestos, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as "public declaration[s] or proclamation[s], written or spoken," are unique rhetorical moments that encapsulate the stance of a coalition and the moment when the values and demands of multiple actors intersect to demand a specific action (or actions) ("manifesto, n."). Chávez further defines manifestos as "coalitional possibilities that emerge from the moments these

---

<sup>9</sup> I am thinking about "rhetorical capacity" as it is conceptualized within Nathan Stormer and Bridie McGreavy's article "Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric's Ontology: Capacity, Vulnerability, and Resilience." As theorized by Stormer and McGreavy, rhetorical capacity derives from the "mutual vulnerabilities between entities" (1).

manifestos reflect and create,” that is, coalitional moments (Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics* 23). These manifestos, these coalitional statements, emerge out of realities created by state and federal laws, while simultaneously imploring these governmental bodies to remedy and reverse the material realities and consequences they themselves created (24).

The rhetoric of these statements is reflexive—it reflects the coalitions desires and seeks to create new futures and alternative realities through its rhetoric. The rhetoric of the statements also serves to reinforce and continually create the coalition in its image. The following coalitional statements (which I consider here as manifestos, as Chávez does) give us insight into how the rhetoric, values, goals, and perspectives of environmental justice, Indigenous activist groups, and environmentalists interacted with each other as well as how the coalitional moment of these statements reflected and also contributed to the rhetoric of the movement of Standing Rock as a whole.

### **Orientations, Accountability, and Priorities**

At the beginning of this essay I proposed that approaching coalitions with power asymmetries through the lens of constellations could help address power imbalances in coalitions and lead to more intersectional, and thus more just, coalitional rhetoric. In the following two coalitional statements, I will analyze how approaching these coalitions and the rhetoric in these statements through the lens of constellation illuminates activists’ orientations towards each other, which can then lead to opportunities for more robust relationships founded upon honesty, transparency, and accountability. We will know when trust, transparency, and

accountability have been cultivated within these coalitions (and intersectional, coalitional rhetoric created) when the voices and the priorities of those most impacted by the construction of DAPL are forefronted within coalitional rhetoric, as we will see in the following coalitional statements.

### **Coalitional Statement #1: Letter to Obama**

In their letter to President Obama with the subject line, “Halt Construction and Repeal the Army Corps of Engineers Permits for the Dakota Access Pipeline Project,” sent on August 25, 2016, a coalition of 31 environmental and Indigenous organizations make a clear demand to the President of the United States to complete a full Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the construction of the pipeline, that “formal tribal consultation” be conducted, and that the pipeline be “evaluated in a transparent manner with opportunities for public input” and participation. At the top of the letter, the coalition organizations are listed, with the Indigenous groups listed first—Indigenous Environmental Network and Honor the Earth. This ordering of the groups within the coalition at the top of the letter, with Indigenous groups listed first, also occurs in the coalitional statement posted on Honor the Earth’s website, which is the second statement I will analyze.

The letter begins with a nod to the common interests held by the organizations and members co-signing this letter. They note that DAPL would cross “through communities, farms, tribal lands, sensitive natural areas and wildlife habitat.” Here the co-signers make a note of all the shared people, places, and animals who will be affected by the construction and operation of DAPL, linking common interest amongst the groups, signaling solidarity and how this issue is intersectional.

However, the letter pays special attention to the “sacred sites and drinking water supply” of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, noting that construction of the pipeline would “constitute an existential threat to the Tribe’s culture and way of life.” While the letter notes that the pipeline will most certainly threaten the peoples, animals, and lands that surround and are downriver of the construction site, it prioritizes how the pipeline will specifically and materially impact the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, which is an example of forefronting frontline voices and needs within coalitional rhetoric.

As with the other statement I have chosen to analyze in this essay, the letter includes “we” and “our” statements, signaling to the audience the solidarity between the organizations and their commitment to a shared cause. This echoes the “we” the writers of “Accomplices not Allies” discuss, which forms a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, where the non-Indigenous people have decided that they will be complicit in the struggle for Indigenous liberation. In one instance in the letter, the writers say: “our organizations and our millions of members and supporters are concerned about the threat these projects pose to our safety, our health, and the environment.” This statement depicts the level to which the organizations and their members identify as a part of a unified coalition of organizations working together for a shared cause, or in this case, a shared demand of the United States President—especially when they point to the threats DAPL poses to “our safety” and “our health.” Coalitions work towards shared causes and find common ground in manifestos or coalitional statements (or letters to the President), and yet, while they point out their shared common ground, interests, values, and demand (i.e., how this issue is intersectional) throughout the letter they chose to prioritize the interests of the

Standing Rock Sioux Tribe by recognizing the specific sort of harm the pipeline presents and represents to “the Tribe’s culture and way of life.” Rather than making universalizing claims like “we’re all in this together,” which runs the risk of obfuscating the fact that certain groups of people are impacted unequally by the pipeline, the letter’s rhetoric avoids this universalization. Instead it focuses on solidarity while also forefronting the priorities of those who will be most affected by the construction of DAPL. The organizations recognize their shared concerns while centering Indigenous ways of life, land, and sacred sites by placing the priorities of Indigenous sovereignty and rights at the center of the letter.

The act of the coalition centering the priorities of the Indigenous groups and members of the coalition is a rhetorical move that signals to the reader (President Obama) that the coalition is aware of the political implications of such an act and that the coalition is aware of the power dynamics inherent to a coalition made up of groups representing Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks. This move of being aware of the power dynamics within the coalition and within structures and systems of power at play in the United States government can be more easily understood when considered through Simpson’s concept of constellations.

Viewing a coalition as one type of constellation can aid those who are in a coalition to more easily “see” the connections between their identities, lived experiences, and privileges and what impact those things have on the power dynamics of the coalition. I suggest that this is what happened within the coalition of organizations that wrote this letter to Obama. The messaging and rhetoric of the letter itself suggests that the members of the coalition recognized: (1) the importance of

forefronting frontline groups and their needs (i.e., Indigenous groups and their priorities); (2) the power dynamics both internal and external to the coalition; and, (3) the interconnections between each of the group's values and priorities. Through this series of recognitions of the differential political orientations of those within the coalition writing this letter, not only are all of the groups represented within the letter itself but the needs and demands of those most vulnerable to the construction of DAPL, the Standing Rock Sioux, are prioritized.

The rhetoric of the letter suggests that each group within the coalition understands where they sit in relation to each other, and recognizes the wide range of priorities held by each, but then prioritizes those who are most impacted by the construction of the pipeline when they drive home that this pipeline will impact the way of life of the Standing Rock Sioux. By doing this, the rhetoric of the letter also recognizes those who have been most impacted by a history of colonization that paved the way for the construction of DAPL, connecting it to the centuries-long history of colonization. The concept of constellations is best situated to analyze the rhetoric of this letter as it also makes space for the interconnection between the past and the present as they interplay within coalitional spaces and rhetoric. Specifically, when the letter refers to the 1851 and 1868 treaties with the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota tribes and the fact that permits for DAPL were not evaluated through the "responsibilities guaranteed" in these treaties, harkening to a history littered with broken treaties and promises made by the US government to Indigenous peoples. As I said before in my discussion about how constellations are theorized by Nishnaabeg intelligence, time is not so linear within a constellative approach. Rather, time is an

“endless unfolding of the past and the future into the present” (Simpson 247).

Through this invocation of treaties more than a century old, the letter to Obama blurs the lines between the past and the present. The past asserts itself in the present moment.

**Coalitional Statement #2: “Coalitional Statement Supporting Tribal Lawsuits Against Dakota Access”**

As I hinted at above, the “Coalitional Statement Supporting Tribal Lawsuits Against Dakota Access” on Honor the Earth’s website lists the organizations that co-signed this statement. These organizations represent Indigenous rights activists, environmental activists, and environmental justice activists. As in the first statement analyzed, they list the Indigenous groups first. The statement on Honor the Earth’s website, an organization founded by Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe) “uses indigenous wisdom, music, art, and the media to raise awareness and support for Indigenous Environmental Issues.” The publication of this statement on Honor the Earth’s website suggests that the coalition of organizations who wrote the statement forefront and center Indigenous environmental issues and that Indigenous environmental issues are at the center of the statement.

In the statement, the coalition states that they support the “tribal lawsuits against US Army Corps permits for the Dakota Access Pipeline” and center their statement around the demand that all construction activities of DAPL be halted and that all United States Army Corps of Engineers’ (USACE) permits for the pipeline be repealed. Like the letter sent to Obama, this coalitional statement of support includes many “we” statements displaying to the reader their solidarity with each other as well

as the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. They are united in their dispute of the actions and decisions made by the USACE.

This statement also, like the letter to Obama, references the context for the protests at Standing Rock and the history of colonization and genocide that lead to this coalitional moment. However, the statement posted on Honor the Earth's website makes these connections clearer and more explicit. The statement references the lack of consultation with tribes and the lack of consent from the tribes in terms of the United States government's decision to permit the pipeline's construction. This language mirrors a long history of settlers ignoring and refusing to consult with tribes before displacing Indigenous people from their traditional lands. Clearly, the members of both coalitions that created these two statements understand themselves as a part of a constellation of relationships between the past and the present, as well as the relationships between each other.

The statement on Honor the Earth's website recognizes how colonization lead to the DAPL project while refusing colonization as the normal state of affairs. It refuses the assumption that "the goal of the project must be achieved" regardless of human or environmental costs. This refusal of settler colonialism and the corporatization of land echoes the politics of generative refusal inherent to any constellation of coresistance. They say:

[The] USACE did consider a "No Build Alternative," but always founded upon the assumption that the goal of this project must be achieved. This is a fundamentally false premise. We reject the assumption that corporations have a right to operate that trumps human rights and the rights of nature.

Not only does this statement articulate a generative refusal of the assumptions that form the base of the settler-colonial state—assumptions that advocate for extractive industries and practices for the goal of profit and capitalism—it also creates an alternative to the settler-colonial imagination while recognizing how these assumptions have been foundational to centuries of dispossession, extraction, and colonialism. By acknowledging the assumptions of the USACE as fundamentally false and how that relates to the premise that the interests of corporations supersedes the interests and rights of humans and nature, the writers of the letter are identifying the connection between the permits granted for DAPL’s construction and the assumptions that create and perpetuate a settler-colonial state. There is, however, an inherent tension here with how Simpson defines generative refusal at one point in *We Have Always Done* as that which does *not* “[seek] recognition from the [colonial] state” (170). After all, the letter is addressed to the leader of the United States, President Obama, which might lead us to question whether or not generative refusal is actually occurring in the letter. However, I believe Simpson makes room for varying levels of generative refusal that might still appeal directly to a colonial power while also questioning the assumptions of the settler-colonial state when she says that generative refusal and radical resurgent organizing do “not allow settler colonialism to frame the issues facing Indigenous peoples” (177-178). When the writers in this statement question the assumptions of the USACE, they are exercising generative refusal. But, the writers do not stop at simply stating and refusing this assumption, in the words of Chávez, they create “alternative rhetorical imaginaries and possibilities for livable lives” when they suggest that there is an alternative to this assumption that

a “No Build Alternative” was not viable or possible (9). That is, the pipeline does *not have* to be built, the rights of humans and nature *are* equal to, if not above, those of corporations or the settler-state.

### **What conclusions can be drawn from these statements?**

Through an analysis of these statements, I am suggesting that the rhetoric of these coalitional statements can lead to the hypothesis that those in the coalition were approaching their coalitional work in a constellative way (even if that wasn’t explicitly stated or acknowledged). Such an approach makes it easier to see the differential political orientations of those within the coalition and therefore the activists within the coalition are able to have more transparent and accountable relationships with each other because they have done the hard work of reflecting and understanding how they relate to the other members in the coalition. I would contend that one of the most explicit examples of this orienting can be found at the beginning of the statements when both coalitions position the Indigenous-led groups at the beginning of the list of organizations that signed on to the statements. As I have noted above, this move not only is an act of forefronting frontline and Indigenous voices within the statement, it also shows *how* the organizations within the coalition orient themselves to each other. That is, they orient themselves in such a way that Indigenous and frontline voices are acknowledged first and prioritized.

As I discussed in the introduction to this essay, orienting is especially important and relevant for white and non-Indigenous activists within coalitions that have unequal power dynamics. White activists must engage in self-reflexivity that

continually works to decenter their whiteness. This hard work must occur if truly intersectional, coalitional rhetoric is ever going to emerge out of coalitional work done by groups of people with power asymmetries.

Activists who understand how they are politically oriented towards those they are in coalition with can cultivate mutual accountability within the coalitions they are a part of. We can observe this accountability occurring when frontline groups are forefronted in the rhetoric and actions of the coalition. Accountability to power asymmetries and the differential political orientations of each person in a group can lead to intersectional, coalitional rhetoric that “seeks to make visible and address the various privileges and oppressions that we all have in order to build an activist movement that is more just, inclusive and coherent” (Rodriguez). We can see this type of intersectional rhetoric occurring in the coalitional statements analyzed in this paper. The rhetoric in these statements prioritizes those most impacted by the construction and operation of the Dakota Access Pipeline, that is, Standing Rock Sioux.

### **Applying constellations to future coalitional work and rhetoric**

By approaching coalitions composed of power asymmetries, specifically the rhetoric that emerges from these coalitions, activists (and those studying these coalitions) can more easily conceptualize and understand how they orient themselves in relation to those within a coalition. Such orienting has the possibility to nurture honesty, transparency, and ultimately accountability within a coalition’s constellation of relationships. While we cannot always see the evidence that such transparency and

honesty are occurring, we can analyze the possible outcomes of such things. As I have postulated through an analysis of two coalitional statements that emerged out of the protests at Standing Rock, we can hypothesize that accountability and transparency have blossomed within a coalition when the emergent coalitional rhetoric pursues intersectionality by prioritizing the voices and demands of those most impacted by the issue being addressed and by recognizing how the organizations' goals intersect and are interrelated.

Clearly each statement displays an understanding of how each organization is aware of their orientations towards each other—this is seen in the ordering of the organizations at the beginning of the statements and the absence of any reference to conservationist or preservationist goals (goals endemic to established environmental groups). The coalitional statements analyzed here prioritize the material impacts the pipeline will have on the Standing Rock Sioux people—and through this orienting arises accountability which is seen when frontline communities are forefronted in the statements' demands. This implies that the predominately non-Indigenous and white groups decentered themselves and followed frontline leadership—this is how they were accountable to their Indigenous and frontline partners.

While I can never say for certain that honesty or transparency actually existed within the relationships of the coalitions represented in these statements, I can point to what I would expect to result from such transparent orientations. That is, accountability that is seen through the forefronting of Indigenous voices in coalitional rhetoric and public statements. The outcome of honest and transparent relationships is accountability backed up by actions (the actions of decentering whiteness and the

forefronting of Indigenous voices) and white activists becoming accomplices with Indigenous people fighting for liberation and radical resurgence. The outcome is working adjacently to constellations of coresistance, that is, working alongside these fights for liberation—not centering whiteness, but actively *decentering* it by not being at the center of a coalition composed of power asymmetries. When it comes down to it, every coalition that has power asymmetries between its members will also be haunted by colonialism and genocide. No amount of orienting is going to change that. This is not to say that coalitions between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples cannot, or should not, form. Rather, it simply means that colonialism and genocide must be confronted by white activists. White activists can do this by understanding how they are politically oriented to others within a coalition composed of unequal power dynamics. This act of self-reflexivity can provide opportunities for accountability within such coalitions. We can see when this honesty and accountability have occurred when the voices of frontline groups are centered and the material priorities of those most impacted are prioritized in the demands of the coalitional statements and rhetoric. This is what true intersectional, coalitional rhetoric will do, it will reflect the constellation of relationships between activists in such coalitions, while generatively refusing settler-colonialism and genocide and the ways in which they continue to insert themselves in the present moment.

## **Frontline Leadership, Privileged Capacity: Understanding the Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund**

In a recent article published in *Vice*, Geoff Dembicki discusses how a decision to prioritize communities of color has divided Extinction Rebellion (XR) activists in the United States into two groups: XR US and XR America. In his article, “A Debate Over Racism Has Split One of the World’s Most Famous Climate Groups,” Dembicki talks with activists from XR US who have embraced the demand for “a just transition that prioritizes the most vulnerable people and indigenous sovereignty [and that] establishes reparations and remediation led by and for Black people, Indigenous people, people of color and poor communities for years of environmental injustice” (“We Demand”). Rather than emphasizing or prioritizing people who have been historically excluded from mainstream environmentalist movements and who are the first and worst impacted by climate change, often referred to as “frontline communities,” the activists who split off from XR US to form XR America have replaced this demand with language that focuses on “one people, one planet, one future” (XR America qtd. in Dembicki). Ultimately, Dembicki’s article grapples with the question, “Should fighting climate change mean also embracing progressive policies that prioritize people of color?” This question reveals and implies that the environmental movement *has not* been prioritizing people of color while also drawing attention to a turning a point in the environmental movement in which environmentalists, especially those with majority-white members and leadership, must decide if they will prioritize people of color, or not.

As many scholars and activists have noted, mainstream environmental organizations have historically been comprised of majority white constituencies and

were created to work for conservationist and preservationist ends. In the introduction to *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, Carolyn Finney points out that “the dominant environmental narrative in the United States is primarily constructed and informed by white, Western European, or Euro-American, voices. [...] Missing from the narrative is an African American perspective” (3). It is the missing perspective of communities of color and other frontline communities that must be addressed, included, and prioritized in the environmental movement today.

In the late 1800s, Sierra Club and other “elite hunting and wildlife protection” organizations advanced preservationist ideals that sought to protect the environment and wilderness from human use (Gottlieb 23). At the same time, these preservationist ideals were challenged by conservationist ideas which pushed for the “the right use” of land and natural resources, which was foundational to Theodore Roosevelt’s conservationist policies and ideology that stated: “The preservation of our forests is an imperative business necessity” (Roosevelt qtd. in Gottlieb 23). As William Cronon points out in “The Trouble with Wilderness,” these preservationist and conservationist ideologies worked to create and perpetuate the human/nature binary, which constructed “human” as White and male and Othered not only nature, but people of color and Indigenous people (Cronon 20). As Cronon points out, the nascent conservationist and preservationist environmental movements “encourage us to ‘preserve’ peopleless landscapes that have not existed in such places for millennia” (18).

As Finney, Gottlieb, and Cronon assert, the American environmental movement can trace its roots to the late 1800s and early 1900s when the United States was focused on creating preserves for the wilderness through the National Park System, which displaced Indigenous peoples and placed the priorities of White citizens at the forefront of such programs.

Environmental justice movements and activists take a different path than the traditional environmental movement that has its roots in preservation and conservation ideologies. Instead of separating humans from nature, communities are firmly planted in and considered in relation to their environment. At the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in October of 1991, Dana Alston said:

For us the issues of the environment do not stand alone by themselves. They are not narrowly defined. Our vision of the environment is woven into an overall framework of social, racial, and economic justice. [...] The environment, for us, is where we live, where we work, and where we play (Alston qtd. in Gottlieb 5).

The rhetoric of environmental justice places people *within* their environments and considers them a part of the environment, which refuses the “Othering” effect the nature/human binary White, traditional American environmentalism creates. It is this binary which lays the path towards environmental racism. As DeLuca and Demo point out:

The construction of pristine wilderness as nature, largely the product of an urban, upper-class, white, industrialized cultural formation, marginalized other cultures’ visions of nature and human-nature relations, most obviously those of Native Americans. [...] In taking as their charge the preservation of wilderness, *environmental groups relieved themselves of the responsibility of protecting non-pristine areas and of critiquing the practices of industrialism that degraded the general environment* (257; emphasis added).

As traditional environmentalists pursued organizing campaigns that preserved these pristine areas at the expense of protecting communities who were having their air,

water, and soil contaminated by toxic waste facilities constructed in their neighborhoods, people of color, low-income peoples and others on the frontlines of environmental degradation were fighting for a livable present and future.

As Luke Cole and Sheila R. Foster note in *From the Ground Up:*

*Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement:*

Racism and other prejudices have historically excluded activists of color and grassroots activists from the traditional environmental movement. In fact, some of these activists regard the traditional environmental groups as obstacles to progress, if not outright enemies (30).

In *Black Faces, White Spaces*, Finney says something similar. She asserts that the “lack of agreement and understanding of how race and racism have infiltrated” environmental work creates barriers to building strong relationships between mainstream environmentalists and black people (20). Activists of Rising Tide North America also recognize this “lack of understanding of how race and racism” impact environmental work when they assert in a zine titled *The Climate Movement is Dead* that environmental activists “need to put serious effort into combating classism, racism, sexism, ageism and the many other forces of domination within [the] movement,” going on to say that, “Focusing on anti-oppression is difficult but essential to building a broad movement for climate justice” (18).

Scholars have taken notice of how environmentalists have acknowledged the need to address the ways in which racism presents and operates within environmental organizing. Dorceta E. Taylor, professor and Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Michigan’s School for Environment and Sustainability shared in a 2014 report titled *The State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations, and Government Agencies* that, “Despite the growth

in the ethnic minority population in the U.S., the percentage of minorities on the boards or general staff of environmental organizations does not exceed 16% in the three types of institutions studied” (2). A similar trend was found in the demographics of the members and volunteers of environmental organizations—they were predominately white (2). As the study finds, “Despite the professed interest in increasing diversity in environmental organizations, there is a gap between the desire to see diversity initiatives developed and actually supporting such activities once they are in place” (4). This study points to an ongoing issue of diversity within the environmental movement that will continue if mainstream environmental organizations made up of majority-white members, volunteers, staff, and board members do not change how they operate and recruit new members, volunteers, and staff. As Marcelo Bonta and Charles Jordan point out in their essay “Diversifying the American Environmental Movement:”

As the nation continues to diversify, the environmental movement is left with one of the greatest challenges it will face this century. In order to become an influential and sustainable movement for generations to come, it needs to successfully address its diversity crisis (13).

This paper seeks to address the divide in the environmental movement over issues of racism, classism, and other forms of oppression by studying an environmental campaign that promises to prioritize communities of color. This essay does a case study analysis of the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) ballot initiative, which sought to address climate change and environmental injustice by prioritizing communities of color and low-income peoples. PCEF was a ballot initiative campaign that ran in the November 2018 election in Multnomah County, Oregon. It sought to increase the business licensing surcharge fee on companies that made over \$500,000

in Portland and \$1 billion nationally, annually. The \$50+ million raised annually by the initiative, which passed by a wide margin and is now Portland City Code, will go towards weatherizing houses, which is critical for building resilience in the face of the extreme weather scientists have warned will become normal as climate change continues unhindered, and as the cost of heating and cooling homes increases as a result. PCEF will also provide funding for green job training, rooftop solar, local food projects and green infrastructure, prioritizing underserved populations and neighborhoods as the first beneficiaries of these projects

Specifically, this paper studies the rhetoric of the PCEF ballot initiative campaign and how the way in which the ballot initiative campaign was run was integral to the inclusive rhetoric seen in the campaign promotional materials, website, and ultimately, the language of the ballot initiative itself. *How* the campaign was organized was an integral component of *why* the rhetoric and messaging of PCEF was inclusive of low-income people and people of color—groups who have been historically left out of mainstream environmentalism.

As Finney points out, the divide within environmentalism is rooted in narratives—and thus rhetoric—that perpetuates racism and classism within the mainstream environmental movement. Storytelling, narrative, and the rhetoric constructed around environmental campaigns is critical to addressing the diversity crisis that Bonta and Jordan point to and the ways in which racism continues to persist within the environmental movement. As one of my interviewees, Damon Motz-Storey pointed out when asked how he responds to activists who wish to recreate PCEF in their cities, he shared, “It all trickles down to messaging.

Storytelling is everything.” While this paper addresses a specific environmental campaign in Portland, Oregon, the conclusions drawn from interviews with activists who worked on this initiative have far-reaching implications for the broader environmental movement as a whole.

This paper is guided by two interrelated questions. First, how does the rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund campaign, the ballot initiative itself, and the implementation of PCEF recognize and center frontline communities? Second, to what degree has the Portland Clean Energy Fund campaign and implementation impacted the Portland environmental movement? At stake in these questions is a call across environmentalism to center and follow the leadership of frontline communities in order to create a just transition.<sup>10, 11</sup>

Through a close analysis of the PCEF ballot initiative campaign materials, website, the language of the city code created by the passing of PCEF, and interviews with several key people involved in the PCEF campaign, its creation, and its implementation, it has become clear to me that how activists organize is one of, if not the, critical factor to creating not only inclusive rhetoric, but an inclusive and intersectional environmental movement that centers frontline communities.

---

<sup>10</sup> According to the Oregon Just Transition Alliance, frontline communities refers to, “people of color, low-income communities, and rural and tribal people [who] are at the front line of environmental and climate injustice.”

<sup>11</sup> According to the Just Transition Alliance, a Californian nonprofit founded in 1997, a just transition is “a principle, a process and a practice.” Furthermore, “The principle of just transition is that a healthy economy and a clean environment can and should co-exist. The process for achieving this vision should be a fair one that should not cost workers or community residents their health, environment, jobs, or economic assets. Any losses should be fairly compensated. And the practice of just transition means that the people who are most affected by pollution—the frontline workers and the fenceline [sic] communities—should be in the leadership of crafting policy solutions” (“What is Just Transition?”).

If environmental leaders and their organizations wish to truly address the causes of climate chaos and work towards a just transition, then it will be critical to not only create rhetoric and messaging that centers frontline communities and how they are impacted by climate chaos, but to organize in ways that truly center and follow frontline leadership. If they do this, inclusive rhetoric will simply follow. This essay articulates this relationship between organizing and the rhetoric of an environmental campaign by examining the messaging and narrative constructed around the PCEF ballot initiative campaign and its implementation as city code in 2019 and 2020 through several interviews held in the Spring of 2019 and the Winter of 2020. While I did not realize it a year ago, interviewing those who were involved in PCEF over a span of 12 months would lead to valuable insights into how the rhetoric of PCEF was inclusive and how the Portland Clean Energy Fund contributed to a more inclusive and just environmental movement in Portland. The inclusivity of PCEF and the coalition's commitment to including frontline communities at the decision-making table from the very beginning lead to an organizing process that centered frontline communities. The process of organizing the campaign was inseparable from how the campaign was messaged.

### **The use of interviews in this research**

Seven interviews were conducted between March 2019 and March 2020 with six people who were involved with the PCEF ballot initiative campaign and are involved in its implementation (one interviewee was interviewed in 2019 and 2020). The aim of the interviews was to understand the extent to which the messaging and rhetoric of the campaign was inclusive of frontline communities. The interviews also

helped me understand the extent to which PCEF has transformed the environmental movement in Portland. To do this, the interviews included questions that addressed the following areas:

- How the rhetoric of PCEF campaign, the ballot initiative itself, and the implementation of PCEF recognizes and centers frontline communities
- The rhetorical and messaging strategies used during the ballot initiative campaign and during the implementation of PCEF
- How PCEF has impacted the environmental movement in Portland, Oregon

After the interviews were conducted, I listened to and transcribed the recordings of the interviews. After transcribing the interviews and analyzing them for trends, I reached out to all interviewees with notes I took during the interviews, points of clarification, and quotations from their interviews to determine: (1) I was not misrepresenting what they said; and, (2) to clear up any questions I had about what they had said during our conversation. During the interview process and the writing of this article, it has been a priority to correctly represent the interviewees and their thoughts about PCEF and the Portland environmental movement.

Recurring trends appeared across the interviews and through an analysis of the ballot initiative campaign materials and the language of the ballot initiative itself, which is now Portland City Code. After a close analysis of these texts and trends, I will conclude with some preliminary conclusions that can be drawn from the interviews, as well as what implications these conclusions might have for environmental activists.

## **Messaging during the PCEF ballot initiative campaign**

Dr. Adriana Voss-Andreae, a founder and former Executive Director of 350PDX, and co-chief petitioner of PCEF, said of the campaign, “It was clear, from the earliest discussions, that PCEF’s success hinged on its being led by communities of color. Indeed, it turned out to be critical throughout.” She went on to illuminate why PCEF’s success hinged on being led by communities of color when she said:

It was very important that the initiative be led by communities of color if we were going to move the movement in the direction we wanted, that is, towards a more equitable environmental movement that addresses the root causes of the climate crisis which include racial, social, and economic injustices.

I believe, this statement points to the necessity that those leading, and those initiating environmental justice campaigns, should be people from communities facing the greatest danger from environmental injustices and climate change—those from frontline communities. I bring this up here because I will be coming back to this point throughout this paper—the centering of frontline communities, which includes communities of color and low-income peoples, was crucial to setting the stage for the Portland Clean Energy Fund to have race and class-inclusive rhetoric. Indeed, the principle of “frontline leadership, privileged capacity” was at the heart of how PCEF was organized. In my interview with Khanh Pham, the Organizing Director for OPAL (an environmental justice organization in Oregon that leads the Oregon Just Transition Alliance), we talked a lot about what this meant. She says: “Centering frontline communities and people of color means that the leaders of these communities have real decision-making power and are at the table at the beginning of the discussion, not at the end, where they have limited power to change things.”

Choosing to center and follow frontline voices is a rhetorical strategy and a conscious decision that was made by the PCEF Steering Committee as it crafted the ballot initiative language and campaign messaging strategy. One example of frontline voices being centered during the PCEF campaign was when the 350PDX Communications Team created an “explainer” video for PCEF that featured members of the Steering Committee who lead organizations representing frontline communities.<sup>12</sup> In these videos, these members explained PCEF and why it mattered to their communities. While 350PDX staff and volunteers, myself included, managed the creation of the videos and leaned upon our volunteers’ professional videography skills, we followed the guidance and direction of the PCEF Steering Committee regarding what content was included and who would be centered in the videos. Staff members from environmental organizations with predominantly white constituencies, like 350PDX and the Sierra Club, were not featured in the video. Instead, only leaders from organizations representing frontline communities were, that is, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Verde, Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), Coalition of Communities of Color, and OPAL. Highlighting leaders from frontline organizations sent the message that this ballot initiative campaign was led by and is for frontline communities—it was not an environmental campaign that centered white people or whiteness. Rather, the role of white and otherwise privileged environmentalists was to support the frontline organizers of the campaign. This happened when I and other 350PDX volunteers drove the creation of

---

<sup>12</sup> Here I should note that I was an interim staff person working at 350PDX during the campaign and lead the creation of the video from the staff side of things.

campaign materials but deferred to frontline leadership for the content and strategic direction of these materials, as happened in the creation of the explainer and marketing videos for the PCEF campaign. This also occurred when Sierra Club and 350PDX offered their office space to be used as the headquarters for the campaign and spaces where volunteers could conduct administrative tasks for the campaign, phone bank, hold Steering Committee meetings, train volunteers, etc. 350PDX and Sierra Club, organizations with a predominately white membership and volunteer pool, lent their capacity to the campaign. This is what the PCEF coalition's guiding principle of "frontline leadership, privileged capacity," looked like in practice.

As Jessica Beckett, PCEF's Field Director, observed in her interview, "Frontline-led organizations set the language and strategies of the communications of the campaign." This is how the rhetoric of the campaign and the language of the ballot initiative itself became and was inclusive of people of color and low-income communities. The campaign around the Portland Clean Energy Fund moved past theoretical musings on how to make the ballot initiative inclusive to *being inclusive* by being led by frontline communities and leaders. In other words, the rhetoric and language, and the ballot initiative itself, was inclusive and centered frontline voices because it was created and led by frontline leaders.

One of the ways we can see this occurring in the messaging of the campaign itself is in the specific word choices made in the campaign materials. In these materials, words like "vulnerable," "deficient," or "susceptible" were avoided. Instead, materials focused on a "people 1st" message and on using empowering language (Damon Motz-Storey, Communications Manager for the PCEF campaign).

When I spoke to Jessica, there was a strong emphasis on not moving into messaging of fear, but to focus on people instead. She said, “Rhetoric of mainstream environmentalism is rooted in fear and urgency, we wanted to focus on people and passion.” During my conversation with Jessica, it became clear that it was really important to the PCEF Steering Committee that the campaign’s rhetoric focus on passion and people and how this ballot initiative would benefit those who feel the effects of climate change the most and the first, which are not the constituencies of the mainstream movement—that is, white people. To this point, she said, “There was powerful urgency in the campaign, but we were not rooted in fear—we were rooted in passion.”

Within the environmental movement in Portland, there have been ongoing discussions about how to dismantle the ways in which white supremacy presents within organizing spaces. In a widely circulated document about the characteristics of white supremacy, Tema Okun lists “urgency” as one of the defining characteristics of white supremacist culture. The pointed focus on “passion” and “people” in PCEF’s organizing and rhetorical strategy provides an antidote to how this characteristic of white supremacist culture, that is, urgency, operates and presents within organizing spaces in the environmental movement. As Jessica points out in her quote above, the PCEF campaign focused on people and passion, not fear and urgency, which I believe served to neutralize urgency (as it presents as characteristic of white supremacy) within organizing spaces.

To be clear, the climate crisis *is* urgent, and it should be addressed with urgency. Environmental activists just need to focus on the *right* kind of urgency. As

discussed in a blog post I wrote for 350PDX in 2019 about listening in the environmental justice movement, “Not all urgency is bad—it’s what you do with that urgency, how you respond to others, how you listen (or don’t listen) to them as you search for solutions that matters” (Metildi). Mainstream and white environmentalists must not set aside and further marginalize people of color by ignoring the demands of frontline communities and their priorities. Doing so would play into white supremacist and ultimately racist behavior, further alienating people of color from an already historically white-led movement. The PCEF Steering Committee refused the urgency of white supremacy. They included and were led by the priorities of communities of color.

To understand how priorities of communities of color were included in the messaging and rhetoric of the PCEF campaign, I asked my interviewees how the messaging of the ballot initiative acknowledged the effects of the climate crisis on frontline communities. When answering this question, Jenny Lee, the former Advocacy Director at the Coalition of Communities of Color during the PCEF campaign and current Advocacy Director of APANO, described using “show don’t tell” rhetorical strategies. She said: “We wanted to be sure that there were ways [for voters] to feel that [PCEF] was tangible—we did this through focusing on how it would benefit people and who it would benefit.” When further discussing what this strategy looks like in on-the-ground canvassing, Jenny shared that the 2018 Oregon wildfires were fresh in people’s mind during the campaign and they leveraged the wildfire to create an image in peoples’ minds about the impacts of climate chaos and environmental injustices on frontline communities. She shared that they talked to

voters “about people living outside in shelters and people who couldn’t close their windows or [who don’t] have modern AC that would have enabled them to breathe cleaner air [during the wildfires].” Helping voters visualize environmental injustice through discussing the impacts of the wildfires on frontline communities, and also through the mapping of urban heat islands (another visualization of environmental injustice Jenny mentioned), was one way the campaign recognized those who are on the frontlines of climate change and environmental injustice. It also epitomized the “people first” narrative described by Damon.

When I talked to Anissa Pemberton, the former PCEF field organizer for 350PDX, and now the PCEF Coordinator for the Coalitions of Communities of Color, about how the rhetoric around PCEF acknowledged the effects of the climate crisis on frontline communities, they lent specific insight into how the rhetorical dynamics and nuances of centering frontline leadership within the context of a predominately white environmental organization. They shared:

The tone [of the campaign] removed the idea that this was radical and made it very approachable. Messaging was phrased in such a way that showed that PCEF was created to benefit people and to uplift Portlanders. The Coalition wasn’t messaging this as a reparations measure, but ultimately it acts as a reparative measure for communities of color and low-income communities.

I found this particularly interesting. While the campaign did not explicitly call itself a reparative measure, the outcome was reparative in nature. I believe this has wider implications for activists seeking to enact policies that will have reparative outcomes, but who may not want to lean so heavily on reparative messaging in their campaign. One of the ways PCEF did this was to focus on messaging such as, “1% from the 1%,” which shifted the focus of the campaign onto large corporations who should

“pay their fair share” to fund the types of weatherization projects, job training programs, etc. that the Portland Clean Energy Fund would create if passed. This focus on who or what the coalition viewed as the “true” cause for environmental injustice was a way to unite all of the environmental movement in Portland under PCEF, whether or not they supported reparative outcomes.

### **How frontline communities were centered in PCEF campaign materials**

To further illuminate how frontline communities were centered in the rhetoric of the PCEF campaign, I’ll discuss the promotional materials of the PCEF ballot initiative campaign such as print materials, content on the website (which was very similar to the printed materials), and the ballot initiative language itself.

Rather than list environmental organizations that represent a majority-white constituency first, organizations that serve communities of color and are led by communities of color and low-income communities are listed on campaign materials first (Figure 1). This decision highlights and forefronts frontline communities as the leaders of the Portland Clean Energy Fund, which they were. Who the leaders of PCEF were was also clear during the press release announcing the number of signatures gathered to qualify PCEF for the November 2018 Multnomah County ballot on July 5, 2018, where people from frontline communities stood closest to the podium at City Hall (Figure 2) (Stewart).



Figure 1: Organization logos as listed on the PCEF website.



Figure 2: Photo from the press release / rally delivering over 60,000 signatures to get PCEF on the November 2018 ballot. Photo by Hailey Stewart for the Portland Tribune.

The text of the ballot initiative itself focuses on prioritizing low-income communities and communities of color—whether that be in the programs that the money will fund, the committees who choose which projects to fund, or the nonprofits that are chosen to receive funding. All throughout the initiative’s language, phrasing like “promotes [...] economic, social and environmental justice outcomes” and specific mention of *who* would benefit first from the fund, that is “low-income residents and communities of color,” were repeated.

In discussing who the Clean Energy Projects would be for, in Chapter 7.07 of Portland City Code, Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits (the official title of

PCEF), states that, “At least one half, of the projects under this section should specifically benefit low-income residents and communities of color.” City code later states that these projects must have “an emphasis on those that benefit low income individuals and that broaden access to energy efficiency and clean renewable energy infrastructure to low income communities and communities of color.” In reference to the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Committee, city code states that:

Committee members shall have demonstrated commitment to furthering the goals of the City’s Climate Action Plan and empowering historically disadvantaged groups, including women, people of color, people with disabilities, and the chronically underemployed.

The section about Clean Energy Jobs Training also prioritizes training for these demographic groups as well.

The language of the ballot initiative itself, now official Portland City Code, makes it explicitly clear who is prioritized and who benefits first from the revenue generated by PCEF, that is, “historically disadvantaged groups, including women, people of color, people with disabilities, and the chronically underemployed.” By repeating the groups of people this initiative is meant to benefit, it becomes clear who this initiative is for and what centering frontline communities looks like in practice.

The centering of frontline communities within the language of the ballot initiative did not just happen by coincidence. Because communities of color and other frontline-led organizations and leaders were at the decision-making table from the very start of PCEF’s creation, Portland City Code now includes language and measures that prioritize communities of color and low-income peoples. An understanding of the correlation between who is at the decision-making table when

ballot initiative language is in its nascent stage and who is represented in the language of city codes and policy is critical to understanding how inclusive and anti-racist policies and legislation are made. Communities of color, low income peoples, and other historically disadvantaged groups *must* be in those decision-making roles in order for not only the rhetoric of any campaign to be inclusive, but for the resulting policies to be inclusive.

### **Messaging during implementation (2019 – Present)**

The interviews conducted in February and March of 2020 focused on the current implementation of the fund and how PCEF impacted the Portland environmental movement. In my interview with Jenny, she shared that her main role, in regard to PCEF, “has been sharing the story and sharing what happened” during the campaign. Both her and Damon mentioned the strong collaboration with local government officials to implement the fund, in particular the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability, the department directly overseeing PCEF. Jenny says:

Working with the Bureau of Planning and Sustainability and the staff at the PCEF office has been really positive. This is a really powerful partnership, [it’s] community-led, a true partnership with the city with the community leading. This is what a partnership can look like when our goals are aligned. It is a good example of government centering community in program leadership and implementation.

Damon shared similar sentiments:

We worked very closely with the City of Portland to develop the message together even though they could have decided to do it themselves. We got to weigh in and share who we thought the target audiences were.

The implementation of the fund has remained true to the spirit of the ballot initiative campaign and, indeed, to the language of the initiative itself. When I talked

with Damon and Jenny about how the implementation of PCEF, specifically the creation of the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Committee, is progressing, they said similar things. Jenny shared that they “have been focused on preserving the integrity of the fund [and] making sure that the fund is operating as designed.” Regarding the creation of the committee and soliciting the public to apply to volunteer on the committee, Damon shared:

Learning how to message around our need for a group that was representative of communities of color, who are the primary beneficiaries of the program, has been a really fascinating experience. We’ve had to really carefully refine the message so that we were communicating that yes, absolutely all people were welcome to apply to be in the committee, but that we needed to do things differently than how a recruiting process that is not race aware or is race blind might do things.

What is interesting here is Damon’s focus on the messaging and process of recruiting committee members, which he describes as “race aware,” which I would propose is one way to center frontline communities. This example of how the fund is being implemented shows how the principle of “frontline lead, privileged capacity” continues to guide PCEF even as it is now managed by the City of Portland.

### **How PCEF impacted the Portland environmental movement**

“PCEF has impacted the environmental movement in Portland greatly.”  
– Anissa Pemberton

Across all three interviews conducted more than a year after PCEF was passed, all interviewees agreed that PCEF has positively impacted the environmental movement in Portland. Everyone who I interviewed mentioned the relationships created and strengthened over the course of the initiative’s existence, echoing Adriana’s thoughts from our conversation a year ago when she mentioned that the

relationships created during the creation of PCEF were critical to the ballot initiative's success. Damon sums up PCEF's impact here:

Groups that came together to work on PCEF have enormous built trust and relationships, which has fundamentally moved the needle on the environmental movement. It means that many partnerships are now easy. Connections were created that were just not there before. This has led to much more robust conversations that are much better informed and [it has led to] more stakeholders at the table.

Because of these relationships and partnerships, the Portland environmental movement has been able to shape local policy in real, tangible ways. Damon shared that “because the PCEF network is so cohesive and well-coordinated, we are able to shape policy in very concrete ways.” He gave the example of the Portland Climate Emergency Declaration, which went through a public comment period in February and March of 2020, as an example of how coordination between the PCEF network lead to inclusion of key topics in the declaration that were important to the coalition.<sup>13</sup>

A more surprising impact PCEF has had on the environmental movement was noted in its impact on the May 2020 election. Both Jenny and Damon noted that if a candidate running in the May election wanted to be seen as an “environmental” candidate, they cited PCEF as something they support or had supported in 2018.

Damon said:

Candidates that are seeking election are talking about PCEF and how to leverage it—it's very fascinating to me. It's become a really popular political thing. I will be honest with you, I really didn't expect this. They are doing this to prove that they have a strong environmental platform.

He went on to say:

---

<sup>13</sup> As of May 5<sup>th</sup>, the Declaration is still in draft stages. Comments received in February and March of 2020 are being reviewed as of the publication of this article.

Something else that is interesting is that other candidates who were nowhere close to as involved [as Khanh Pham] have also been making big claims over PCEF, including Sam Adams and Ozzie Gonzales, who are both running for Portland City Council.

Jenny further enumerated that, “Khan Pham is running on the same concepts that PCEF ran on, a greater articulation of the Oregon Green New Deal, and so that’s exciting to see that continue.” Clearly, PCEF is still impacting Portland politics and environmentalism today, and perhaps will also impact Oregon state politics and environmental policy in the future.

Another exciting impact PCEF had on Portland was on the city government itself—it is more aligned with how the PCEF Steering Committee and the wider PCEF coalition defines environmental justice. Damon stated:

The city now understands better the core values of environmental justice and equity because they worked so closely with the [PCEF] coalition. It’s been good that we’ve had this partnership, so now when they put the word out about grant opportunities, it will be better aligned with what we’ve done before. That is, the 2018 ballot initiative campaign and also the process of collaborating on early implementation including hiring staff, recruiting grant committee members, and developing a shared communications plan about PCEF with the City.

The PCEF campaign not only impacted the May 2020 election campaign, the relationship between Portland city government and environmental groups in Portland, and the relationships between these organizations, it also significantly impacted predominately white environmental groups in Portland. The impact was most clear in my discussions with Anissa, they said:

White folks at 350PDX are way more excited about the racial justice and equity conversations that the justice advocates are encouraging. There’s a genuine interest because they are starting to see that this is a strategic thing to do, regardless of whether or not they agree with all the nuances in these conversations. 350PDX has gone from having 2% young people to 12%. The

number of people of color in the org has doubled. This is not because the staff has done a bunch of outreach—it's because our image has changed. I see a lot of critical thinking in the climate movement about what the outcomes of our work are going to be.

Anissa noted that this shift in the environmental movement in Portland was “not completely due to PCEF,” they went on to say that they “think it's the national shift as well as who represents the climate movement and who's at the forefront of the climate movement. Communities of color are leading our movement at this point.” Not only does Anissa note the way that 350PDX has changed as a result of PCEF, they note that PCEF and this shift in the environmental movement is a part of a larger shift towards communities of color leading the movement and a wider consciousness about how environmentalism, racial justice, and issues of equity are intrinsically intertwined.

The shift in the environmental movement parallels the shift towards a Green New Deal in environmental policy and activism over the past year and a half in the United States. As mentioned earlier, Khan Pham is running for the Oregon State Legislature as a pro-environment candidate, which is largely based on her role in the PCEF ballot initiative campaign and her vision for a Green New Deal in Oregon. The connection between PCEF and the Green New Deal was something Jenny and Damon mentioned several times in their interviews. Jenny mentioned: “We can say about PCEF: ‘Here is one way that [the Green New Deal] can look for Portland’—and that's exciting.” Jenny went on to say about the connection between PCEF and the Green New Deal:

“PCEF was pre-Green New Deal (in the wider national consciousness. I first heard about it that summer in the context of a campaign in another state). Now [PCEF] really aligns with [the Green New Deal] and that visioning or messaging.”

The comparison between the Green New Deal and PCEF has been an exciting connection made by activists across the nation. Both Damon and Anissa mentioned a conference they attended in Florida in the past year where activists asked them how they could recreate PCEF in their own communities. Environmental activists are excited about how they can create tangible solutions that align with a just transition and the spirit of the Green New Deal. Many see the Portland Clean Energy Fund as one model for doing that.

One of the most poignant answers to the question I asked about how other's might replicate the success of PCEF in their jurisdictions was from Damon. He said: "People are asking us, 'How do you say this in a way that works?'" It all trickles down to messaging. Storytelling is everything." This statement shows how important creating processes that support inclusive rhetoric, messaging, and narratives is to passing ballot initiatives and policies like the Portland Clean Energy Fund and working towards a just transition.

### **On looking forward and creating inclusive messaging in environmental campaigns**

I ended many of my interviews with a question about how to create inclusive messaging and rhetoric in environmental campaigns. To this question, Damon's thoughts revolved around slowing down, listening, and acting upon the feedback received by others. He said:

Slow down and don't rush to complete your materials. Whenever you are working on a project, budget lots of time for sharing stuff with people and letting them review stuff without an urgent timeline behind it. The more people who look at the communications, the more likely someone is going to catch something, which leads to far more robust communications that won't leave anyone behind or alienate someone.

He went on to expand upon how strong relationships founded upon trust, like those created out of the PCEF campaign, will lead to more inclusive rhetoric:

The more trusted community partners you have to look over your materials before you make them public to a wider audience, the better. Demonstrating to those partners that you are willing to make changes (i.e., no rubber stamp) leads to far more inclusive messaging practices.

To the question of how to create inclusive rhetoric, Jenny discussed the importance of recognizing who the audience and supporters are when environmental groups are trying to create inclusive campaign rhetoric. She shared that recognizing and responding to “the strong support of people of color for environmental issues, who have often been excluded from the mainstream movement work” is key. She went on to say:

The goal here was to reach these supporters, and likely supporters of color, and center them in our messaging and represent the people who are the most impacted by and also the most passionate about creating change. [...] I really think about who is impacted. [Climate change and environmental injustice] does not fall upon everyone equally.

To have inclusive rhetoric, the messaging must “demonstrate what those experiences are.” That is, the experiences of those who are impacted by climate change and environmental injustice the worst and first. Jenny’s statement aligns well with Anissa’s previous comments in which they connect racial justice and equity to the Portland environmental movement. Jenny’s statement above, that many voters of color support pro-environmental policies and initiatives, addresses the politically strategic nature of gearing environmental messaging and campaign rhetoric to communities of color. If environmental groups want to pass bold environmental policies and elect pro-environment candidates, they must appeal to voters from frontline communities in order to pass such policies.

The strategic nature of centering frontline communities was not something that I was inherently expecting to encounter within my conversations; however, it is a theme that also came up in the *Vice* article I referenced at the beginning of this paper. In the article, Dembicki quotes a XR US activist, Bea Ruiz, who comments on the addition of the demand for a just transition that prioritizes people of color and Indigenous sovereignty to XR US's list of demands. They say: "That's the only thing that's going to work. And it's the only morally right thing to do" (Ruiz qtd. in Dembicki). Another activist and writer, Julian Brave NoiseCat, asserts that not prioritizing communities of color in the climate movement is "politically kind of stupid" (NoiseCat qtd. in Dembicki). A recent poll conducted by the Yale Program on Climate Communication in April 2020 revealed that "Hispanics/Latinos (69%) and African Americans (57%) are more likely to be Alarmed or Concerned about global warming than are Whites (49%)" (Ballew et al.). Considering the comments by Jenny, Anissa, NoiseCat, and Ruiz, "strategic" takes on a political meaning when discussing the prioritization of people of color in environmental campaigns and rhetoric. That is, it is strategic to center and follow the priorities of people of color and frontline communities because it is not only the morally right thing to do, it is also the politically effective thing to do. More people of color will vote for pro-environmental legislation and candidates than white people. Indeed, Anissa, pointed out in their interview just how strategic centering and following frontline communities is:

People are realizing that following frontline leadership is strategic and it is going to get long term wins. And while it takes more time to work in coalition and normalize collaboration, it creates much better outcomes and much more inspiring ideas that are going to pull in a mass amount of people.

I would like to extend this notion of “strategic” to the relational aspect that many of the interviewees remarked upon as being crucial to PCEF’s success. That is, it was strategic to center frontline voices because this centering led to more robust relationships built upon trust. Which, as Damon pointed out, has led to tangible wins, like getting the City of Portland aligned with grassroots organizers in Portland about what environmental justice is and getting the PCEF coalition’s priorities into Portland’s Climate Emergency Declaration. As Finney states, the lack of understanding around how racism impacts environmentalism creates barriers to “building strong relationships between mainstream environmental organizations and African Americans” (20). Barriers to strong relationships between mainstream environmentalists and people of color can dissolve when mainstream environmental groups begin to understand how racism impacts their organizing, when the demands of frontline communities are prioritized in environmental campaigns, and when frontline communities are at the decision-making table of environmental initiatives and campaigns from the start. Strong relationships can lead to a wider base of support for the environmental movement and bigger wins at the ballot box for pro-environment initiatives and candidates.

As many of my interviewees mentioned in their interviews, “frontline leadership and privileged capacity” was a guiding principle and framework critical to PCEF’s inclusivity and success. Damon sums this up nicely when he said:

We’ve talked through [the PCEF ballot initiative campaign] with community advocates on the ground about how we created a compelling framework: Frontline leadership and privileged capacity. PCEF isn’t just a policy that has been inspiring people across the country, it represents a process for how we’ve been doing this (i.e., creating and implementing PCEF) that is uniquely

grounded in equity and inclusion. That is what makes me really excited. Even though there has yet to be a project funded, it is inspiring.

The process of creating, organizing, and implementing PCEF, that is, *how* PCEF was organized and came into being, was an integral component of PCEF's success and is foundational to its contributions to the environmental movement. As those who I've interviewed have stated, the process of centering frontline communities in practice is crucial to creating messaging and rhetoric that centers those communities. Organizing practices and campaign rhetoric are inseparable. As Damon stated, to create inclusive rhetoric, people must be included in the process of creating that rhetoric.

Environmental groups, or any other group for that matter, cannot simply say that they want to have inclusive narratives or messaging, they must embody that inclusivity as the PCEF coalition did.

Ultimately, in order for the environmental movement to truly work towards a just transition and to be successful, it must be led by frontline leaders and organized in such a way that prioritizes the needs and demands of frontline communities. If environmental organizations and activists do this, inclusive rhetoric will simply follow.

## Conclusion

“We’ve got to center the people who have historically become the most vulnerable to climate change. If not, what the hell are we doing?”

– Cherri Foytlin, qtd. in Dembicki

In the introduction to this thesis, I began with a question posed in the *Vice* article, “A Debate Over Racism Has Split One of the World’s Most Famous Climate Groups,” which asked if the environmental movement should “prioritize people of color—who often are more at risk from global warming” in their organizing priorities and demands (Dembicki). What I have proposed in this thesis is that in order for the environmental movement to be strategic and successful, it must acknowledge the established environmental movement’s historical exclusion of people of color and Indigenous people. The environmental movement must address who the climate crisis and environmental injustices impact the most not only because it is the morally correct thing to do, it is also the strategic thing to do.

As Anissa Pemberton discussed in their interview for my second article about PCEF, following frontline leadership is strategically aligned with their goal of prioritizing the needs and demands of frontline communities. In his article in *Vice*, Geoff Dembicki found a similar line of reasoning in his interviews with Extinction Rebellion US activists:

U.S. activists figured their version of the organization couldn’t be successful without some tweaks to its strategy. Shortly after XR US was founded in late 2018, local chapters went through a process of reviewing the organization’s demands and voted to add ‘a just transition that prioritizes the most vulnerable people and indigenous sovereignty’ to the list. ‘That’s the only thing that’s going to work,’ said Bea Ruiz, an Oakland-based member of the national team. ‘And it’s the only morally right thing to do.’

As Dembicki later writes, polling data from the Yale Program of Climate Communications indicates that “steps to recruit new and presumably whiter and more conservative members isn’t likely to be hugely successful,” echoing similar statements expressed by Anissa and Jenny in their interviews about PCEF (Dembicki). At this moment, the environmental movement is being challenged to address how it has historically excluded people of color and Indigenous people from the movement—and more importantly, it is beginning to change. This is not to say that the environmental movement has not been challenged on this point before, which would be altogether very far from the truth. Perhaps instead, the collective consciousness of people across the world is being raised to the urgency of environmental issues, propelled by the increased prevalence of extreme climate events such as droughts across Syria and floods in southeastern US; by mass protests by young people from Europe to India; and, by increased media attention on Indigenous-led environmental campaigns, from Standing Rock to Wet’suwet’en. Combined with this increased collective consciousness is the increased awareness that climate change, racism, genocide, and colonialism are inextricably linked through modern systems and institutions that perpetuate environmental, racial, and social injustice, as well as the continued displacement and genocide of Indigenous people. It has become increasingly clear that activists who may not have worked together in the past, must work across differences in order to address the root causes of the issues they are focusing on, such as climate change, environmental racism, violations of Indigenous sovereignty, environmental injustice, and other related issues. Ultimately, to solve one, you must solve the others.

The principle of “frontline leadership, privileged capacity” offers concrete guidance for activists in coalitions with power asymmetries. Frontline activists and white and non-Indigenous activists have clear roles in such coalitions. I hope that the case study of the Portland Clean Energy Fund ballot initiative and campaign offers activists guiding principles they can use to approach coalitional work that seeks to address environmental injustices and climate change in a way that centers communities of color. PCEF provides evidence that if environmentalists wish to have inclusive rhetoric and messaging, they cannot just create rhetoric that talks about inclusive values—environmentalists must embody inclusive practices. Following the principle of “frontline leadership, privileged capacity” gives activists a way to do this.

While my project cannot resolve the myriad of ways in which oppression present within coalitional organizing spaces, I do hope that the work that has been done within this project will offer a framework for activists to approach work done in coalitions that have power asymmetries. Approaching discussions of coalitional rhetoric through Leanne Simpson’s concept of constellations and applying this concept to coalitional relationships themselves, can aid activists as they attempt to create honest, transparent relationships grounded in mutual accountability.

## Works Cited

- “About.” *Portland Clean Energy Fund*, portlandcleanenergyfund.org/about.
- Allard, Ladonna Brave Bull. “Why the Founder of Standing Rock Sioux Camp Can’t Forget the Whitestone Massacre.” *YES! Media*, YES! Media, 3 Sept. 2016, [www.yesmagazine.org/democracy/2016/09/03/why-the-founder-of-standing-rock-sioux-camp-cant-forget-the-whitestone-massacre/](http://www.yesmagazine.org/democracy/2016/09/03/why-the-founder-of-standing-rock-sioux-camp-cant-forget-the-whitestone-massacre/).
- ASOSU. “Indigenous Land Recognition.” *Oregon State University*, 31 Mar. 2020, [asosu.oregonstate.edu/land-rec](http://asosu.oregonstate.edu/land-rec).
- Ballew, Matthew, et al. “Which racial/ethnic groups care most about climate change?” *Yale Program on Climate Change Communication*, Yale University and George Mason University, 16 Apr. 2020, [climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/race—and-climate-change/](http://climatecommunication.yale.edu/publications/race—and-climate-change/).
- Bonta, Marcelo, and Charles Jordan. “Diversifying the American Environmental Movement.” *Diversity and the Future of the U.S. Environmental Movement*, edited by Emily Enderle, Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, 2007, pp. 13-33, [www.uvm.edu/sustain/sites/uvm.edu.sustain/files/uploads/Documents%20Archive/For\\_Website/Documents\\_for\\_Website/Miscellaneous/diversity\\_and\\_the\\_future\\_of\\_the\\_environmental\\_movement.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/sustain/sites/uvm.edu.sustain/files/uploads/Documents%20Archive/For_Website/Documents_for_Website/Miscellaneous/diversity_and_the_future_of_the_environmental_movement.pdf).
- Bratta, Phil, and Malea Powell. “Introduction to the Special Issue: Entering the Cultural Rhetorics Conversations.” *enculturation: a journal of rhetoric*,

*writing, and culture*, 20 Apr. 2016, [enculturation.net/entering-the-cultural-rhetorics-conversations](http://enculturation.net/entering-the-cultural-rhetorics-conversations).

Brown, Alleen. "Five Spills, Six Months in Operation: Dakota Access Track Record Highlights Unavoidable Reality — Pipelines Leak". *The Intercept*, 9 Jan. 2018, [theintercept.com/2018/01/09/dakota-access-pipeline-leak-energy-transfer-partners/](http://theintercept.com/2018/01/09/dakota-access-pipeline-leak-energy-transfer-partners/).

"Chapter 7.07 Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits." *The City of Portland, Oregon*, City of Portland, 2019, [www.portlandoregon.gov/citycode/index.cfm?cce\\_78811\\_print=1&c=78811](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/citycode/index.cfm?cce_78811_print=1&c=78811).

Chávez, Karma R. Review of *Power Lines: On the Subject of Feminist Alliances*, by Aimee Carrillo Rowe. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 2009, pp 228-231.

Chávez, Karma R. *Queer Migration Politics: Activist Rhetoric and Coalitional Possibilities*. University of Illinois Press, 2013.

"Coalition Statement Supporting Tribal Lawsuits Against Dakota Access." *Honor the Earth*, 3 Aug. 2016, [www.honorearth.org/nodaplpermits](http://www.honorearth.org/nodaplpermits).

Cole, Luke W., and Sheila R. Foster. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*, New York University Press, 2000. ProQuest Ebook Central, [ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/osu/detail.action?docID=2081629](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/osu/detail.action?docID=2081629).

Cole, Elizabeth R., and Zakiya T. Luna. "Making Coalitions Work: Solidarity across Difference within US Feminism." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2010, pp. 71-98. *JSTOR*, doi:[www.jstor.org/stable/40608000](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40608000).

Crenshaw, Carrie. "Resisting whiteness' rhetorical silence." *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 61, no. 3, 1997, 253-278.

Crenshaw, Kimberlé. "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics." *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, vol. 1989, no. 1, 1989, [chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8](http://chicagounbound.uchicago.edu/uclf/vol1989/iss1/8).

Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History*, vol. 1, no. 1, Jan. 1996, pp. 7-28. *JSTOR*, [doi:www.jstor.com/stable/3985059](https://doi.org/10.2307/3985059).

DeLuca, Kevin Michael, and Anne Teresa Demo. "Imaging nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the birth of environmentalism." *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, vol. 17, no. 3. Sept. 2000, pp 241-260.  
[doi:dx.doi.org/10.1080/15295030009388395](https://doi.org/10.1080/15295030009388395).

Dembicki, Geoff. "A Debate Over Racism Has Split One of the World's Most Famous Climate Groups." *Vice.com*, Vice, 28 Apr. 2020, [www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/jgey8k/a-debate-over-racism-has-split-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-climate-groups](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/jgey8k/a-debate-over-racism-has-split-one-of-the-worlds-most-famous-climate-groups).

"Draft Climate Emergency Declaration summary of engagement and public comments available for review." *City of Portland, Oregon*, City of Portland, Oregon, 4 May 2020, [beta.portland.gov/bps/climate-action/news/2020/5/4/draft-climate-emergency-declaration-summary-engagement-and-public](https://beta.portland.gov/bps/climate-action/news/2020/5/4/draft-climate-emergency-declaration-summary-engagement-and-public).

- Edbauer, Jenny. "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, vol. 35, no. 4, 2005, pp. 5-24, doi.org/10.1080/02773940509391320.
- "ED Letter President Obama Dakota Access Pipeline." *Sierra Club*, 25 Aug. 2016, [www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/blog/ED%20Letter%20President%20Obama%20Dakota%20Access%20Pipeline.pdf](http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/blog/ED%20Letter%20President%20Obama%20Dakota%20Access%20Pipeline.pdf).
- Finney, Carolyn. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors*, University of North Carolina Press, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, [ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/osu/detail.action?docID=1696225](http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/osu/detail.action?docID=1696225).
- "History." *Standing Rock Sioux Tribe*, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, [www.standingrock.org/content/history](http://www.standingrock.org/content/history).
- Gottlieb, Robert. *Forcing Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement*, Island Press, 1993.
- Indigenous Action. "Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex." *Indigenous Action Media*, v. 2, 2 May 2014, pp. 2, [www.indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/accomplices-not-allies-print-friendly.pdf](http://www.indigenousaction.org/wp-content/uploads/accomplices-not-allies-print-friendly.pdf).
- Lee, Robert, and Tristan Ahtone. "Land-grab universities." *High Country News*, 30 Mar. 2020, [www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities](http://www.hcn.org/issues/52.4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities).

Lee, Robert, et al. "Land-Grab Universities: A *High Country News* Investigation."

*High Country News*, Mar. 2020, [www.landgrabu.org/](http://www.landgrabu.org/).

"manifesto, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, Mar. 2020,

[www.oed.com/view/Entry/113499](http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/113499).

Metildi, Nicole. "Attentive Silence: The role of listening in the environmental justice

movement." *350PDX*, 350PDX, 26 Aug. 2019, [350pdx.org/listening-in-the-environmental-justice-movement/](http://350pdx.org/listening-in-the-environmental-justice-movement/).

Moe, Kristin. "Get Intersectional! (Or, Why Your Movement Can't Go It Alone)."

*YES! Media*, 5 Apr. 2014, [www.yesmagazine.org/about/](http://www.yesmagazine.org/about/).

"Oceti Sakowin." *Stand with Standing Rock*, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe,

[standwithstandingrock.net/oceti-sakowin/](http://standwithstandingrock.net/oceti-sakowin/).

Okun, Tema. "White Supremacy Culture." *Dismantling Racism Works*, dRworks,

2011, [collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White\\_Supremacy\\_Culture\\_Okun.pdf](http://collectiveliberation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/White_Supremacy_Culture_Okun.pdf).

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. Seal Press, 2019.

"Our Core Principles." *Oregon Just Transition Alliance*,

[www.orjta.org/about/principles-of-a-just-transition/](http://www.orjta.org/about/principles-of-a-just-transition/).

Rodriguez, Majandra. "Facing climate change through justice and intersectionality."

*350.org*, 350.org. 3 Sept. 2015, [350.org/facing-climate-change-through-justice-and-intersectionality/](http://350.org/facing-climate-change-through-justice-and-intersectionality/).

Ross, Derek G. "Common Topics and Commonplaces of Environmental Rhetoric."

*Written Communication*, vol. 30, no. 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 91–131,  
doi:10.1177/0741088312465376.

- Rowe, Aimee M. Carrillo. "Locating Feminism's Subject: The Paradox of White Femininity and the Struggle to Forge Feminist Alliances." *Communication Theory*, vol. 10, no. 1, Feb. 2000, pp. 64-80.
- Saad, Layla F. *Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World, and Become a Good Ancestor*. Sourcebooks, 2020.
- Segrest, Mab. *Memoir of a Race Traitor: Fighting Racism in the American South*. 2nd ed., The New Press, 2019.
- Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resistance*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.
- "Sierra Club Strategic Plan." *Sierra Club*, 7 May 2015, [vermont.sierraclub.org/sites/vermont.sierraclub.org/files/documents/2019/06/sierra-club-strategic-plan%20%281%29.pdf](https://vermont.sierraclub.org/sites/vermont.sierraclub.org/files/documents/2019/06/sierra-club-strategic-plan%20%281%29.pdf).
- "Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Prevails as Federal Judge Strikes Down DAPL Permits." *Earthjustice*, Earthjustice, 25 Mar. 2020, [earthjustice.org/news/press/2020/standing-rock-sioux-tribe-prevails-as-federal-judge-strikes-down-dapl-permits?fbclid=IwAR3OxLaVO6FTZ2zrQjAgWEE4PikGxpEPqUAT\\_NdewCUPkTadgI6yuTILBw](https://earthjustice.org/news/press/2020/standing-rock-sioux-tribe-prevails-as-federal-judge-strikes-down-dapl-permits?fbclid=IwAR3OxLaVO6FTZ2zrQjAgWEE4PikGxpEPqUAT_NdewCUPkTadgI6yuTILBw).
- Stewart, Hailey. "Portland Clean Energy Fund doubles signatures needed for November ballot." *Portland Tribune*, 5 Jul. 2018, [portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/400243-295727-portland-clean-energy-fund-doubles-signatures-needed-for-november-ballot-?wallit\\_nosession=1](https://portlandtribune.com/pt/9-news/400243-295727-portland-clean-energy-fund-doubles-signatures-needed-for-november-ballot-?wallit_nosession=1).

- Stormer, Nathan, and Bridie McGreavy. "Thinking Ecologically About Rhetoric's Ontology: Capacity, Vulnerability, and Resilience." *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, vol. 50, no. 1, 1 Nov. 2017, pp. 1-25, [muse.jhu.edu/article/648459](http://muse.jhu.edu/article/648459).
- Taylor, Dorceta E. "Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations, Government Agencies." *University of Michigan, School of Natural Resources & Environment*, Jul. 2014, [vaip1.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ExecutiveSummary-Diverse-Green.pdf](http://vaip1.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ExecutiveSummary-Diverse-Green.pdf).
- The Climate Movement is Dead: Long Live the Climate Movement*. Rising Tide North America, [drive.google.com/file/d/0BxvILt8g-aDfdDNxYWduRzRDeWc/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/0BxvILt8g-aDfdDNxYWduRzRDeWc/view).
- The Cultural Rhetorics Theory Lab (CRTL) (Malea Powell, Daisy Levy, Andrea Riley-Mukavetz, Marilee Brooks-Gillies, Maria Novotny, Jennifer Fisch-Ferguson). "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics Practices." *enculturation: a journal of rhetoric, writing, and culture*, 2014, [enculturation.net/our-story-begins-here](http://enculturation.net/our-story-begins-here).
- "We Demand." *Extinction Rebellion US*, [extinctionrebellion.us/](http://extinctionrebellion.us/).
- "What is Just Transition?" *Just Transition Alliance*, [jtalliance.org/what-is-just-transition/](http://jtalliance.org/what-is-just-transition/).

## LIST OF FIGURES

<u>Figure</u>	<u>Page</u>
1. Image with PCEF Steering Committee organization logos.....	56
2. Photo of PCEF coalition delivering signed petitions to City Hall.....	56

## APPENDIX: IRB MATERIALS

7.1 Approved IRB Form.....	80
7.2 Research Consent Form.....	82
7.3 Interview Questions and Guide.....	84
7.4 Recruitment Email Templates.....	85

## Approved IRB Form



**Oregon State University**  
**Research Office**

Human Research Protection Program  
& Institutional Review Board  
B308 Kerr Administration Bldg, Corvallis OR 97331  
(541) 737-8008  
[IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)  
<http://research.oregonstate.edu/irb>

Date of Notification	February 10, 2020		
Notification Type	Approval Notice		
Submission Type	Initial Application	Study Number	IRB-2019-0456
Principal Investigator	Tim Jensen		
Study Team Members	Metildi, Nicole		
Study Title	Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions		
Review Level	<b>FLEX</b>		
Waiver(s)	Documentation of Informed Consent		
Risk Level for Adults	Minimal Risk		
Risk Level for Children	Study does not involve children		
Funding Source	None	Cayuse Number	N/A

**APPROVAL DATE:** 02/07/2020

**EXPIRATION DATE:** 02/06/2025

A new application will be required in order to extend the study beyond this expiration date.

**Comments:** Waiver of documentation under Institutional Policy. Note - some interviews already occurred for non-research purposes; consent will be obtained to use that data for this research.

The above referenced study was approved by the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that the protocol meets the minimum criteria for approval under the applicable regulations pertaining to human research protections. The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring compliance with any additional applicable laws, University or site-specific policies, and sponsor requirements.

Study design and scientific merit have been evaluated to the extent required to determine that the regulatory criteria for approval have been met [[45CFR46.111\(a\)\(1\)\(i\)](#), [45CFR46.111\(a\)\(2\)](#)].

**Adding any of the following elements will invalidate the **FLEX** determination and require the submission of a project revision:**

- Increase in risk
- Federal funding or a plan for future federal sponsorship (e.g., proof of concept studies for federal RFPs, pilot studies intended to support a federal

- grant application, training and program project grants, no-cost extensions)
- Research funded or otherwise regulated by a [federal agency that has signed on to the Common Rule](#), including all agencies within the Department of Health and Human Services
- FDA-regulated research
- NIH-issued or pending Certificate of Confidentiality
- Prisoners or parolees as subjects
- Contractual obligations or restrictions that require the application of the Common Rule or which require annual review by an IRB
- Classified research
- Clinical interventions

#### Principal Investigator responsibilities:

- Keep study team members informed of the status of the research.
- Obtain IRB approval for project revisions prior to implementing changes as required by section 8.6 of the Policy Manual.
- Report all unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others within three calendar days.
- Use only approved consent document(s).

## Research Consent Form

**Study Title:** Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions

**Principal Investigator:** Tim Jensen

**Study team:** Nicole Metildi

**Version:** 2; January 27, 2020

---

We are inviting you to take part in a research study.

**Purpose:** This study researches the messaging and rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) ballot initiative campaign as well as the messaging around the current implementation of the fund. This research aims to study the extent to which the messaging and rhetoric of the campaign was inclusive of frontline communities, and the extent to which it did (and is) transforming the environmental movement in Portland.

We are asking you if you want to be in this study because you either worked on the campaign or are currently a part of its implementation.

**Voluntary:** You do not have to be in the study if you do not want to. You can also decide to be in the study now and change your mind later.

**Activities:** The study activities include a 45 min – 1 hour interview to be conducted over the phone or in-person in Portland, OR (whichever is most convenient) and follow-up conversations and/or emails about information collected during the interview to ensure that any quotations or information included in the final study represents what you intended to say and does not misrepresent you.

Interview questions will revolve around questions regarding the environmental movement in Portland, the rhetoric and messaging of the PCEF ballot initiative and its implementation, and the PCEF campaign and implementation itself.

You will have the opportunity to review and approve quotations attributed to you.

This process will consist of the study team:

- Emailing quotations from your interview to confirm that we are interpreting what you said correctly
- Gaining your consent to include quotations attributed to you in the final study

**Time:** Your participation in this study will be approximately 1 to 1.5 hours. This includes the 45 min - 1 hour interview and approximately 15 min – 30 min spent responding to emails to confirm that the information and quotes collected from the interview correctly represents you and your intended meaning.

**Risks:** The possible risks or discomforts associated with the being in the study include potential social or reputational risks as responses during the interviews will be

included in the study and attributed to you. This may pose a risk if the quoted or included parts of the interview misrepresents your intended meaning. To mitigate this risk, all quotes and data gathered during the interview will be approved by you before they are included in the final study report.

**Benefit:** We do not know if you will benefit from being in this study directly. However, a formal analysis of the process involved in creating, running the campaign, and implementing the Portland Clean Energy Fund (PCEF) may benefit you.

**Confidentiality:** We plan to make the results of this study public and plan to include direct quotes attributable to you in the final study report. Thus, your name and the organization you are affiliated will be a part of the final study.

If you give consent to be audio recorded, the study members (Tim Jensen and Nicole Metildi) will have access to the audio recordings. These recordings will be used to verify the data collected during the interviews and will be destroyed three years after the study has been completed, in accordance with Oregon State University protocols. Study data will not be stored for future studies and all research records will be stored securely.

Regulatory agencies and Oregon State University employees may access or inspect records pertaining to this research as part of routine oversight or university business. Some of these records may contain information that personally identifies you.

The information that you give us will only be used for this study. We will not share information about you with others or use it in future studies without your consent.

**Study contacts:** We would like you to ask us questions if there is anything about the study that you do not understand. You can call Tim Jensen, the PI for this study at 541-737-1344 or email him at [tim.jensen@oregonstate.edu](mailto:tim.jensen@oregonstate.edu). You may also call Nicole Metildi at 949-521-3039 or email her at [metildin@oregonstate.edu](mailto:metildin@oregonstate.edu) with any questions about this study.

You can also contact the Human Research Protection Program with any concerns that you have about your rights or welfare as a study participant. This office can be reached at (541) 737-8008 or by email at [IRB@oregonstate.edu](mailto:IRB@oregonstate.edu)

## **Interview Questions and Guide**

Notes for IRB: I do not expect to get through all of these questions during the interviews as different participants will have different expertise on the subject. Thus some questions will be more relevant to some participants than others. These questions are meant to be a guide for myself and for my participants. I will send this guide to them before our conversation so that they are prepared for the discussion. I will follow the logic or flow of the conversation.

### **Mainstream environmental movement in Portland**

- How do you think Portland's mainstream environmental movement has changed over the past 5-10 years?
- Can you speak to the inclusivity (or exclusivity) of the mainstream environmental movement in Portland (in the last 5 years)? How has this changed in that timeframe?

### **Rhetoric / Messaging**

- How would you describe the messaging strategies of the PCEF ballot initiative campaign, and its implementation, to people living in Portland?
  - Follow up: Do you think PCEF (specifically its rhetoric) recognizes (and or centers) those left out of mainstream environmentalism, specifically frontline communities and working-class peoples? If yes, how so?
- How and to what extent do you think the messaging surrounding the campaign (i.e., the website, volunteer trainings, pamphlets, emails, mailers, social media, events, etc.) acknowledges the effects of a changing climate on frontline communities in Portland?
- What communication and messaging strategies were employed during the campaign and during implementation?
- Can you tell me about how the messaging of the fund during implementation compares to the messaging of the fund during the ballot initiative campaign?

### **Campaign / Implementation**

- Why do you think the PCEF campaign was successful?
- Can you speak about the coalitions involved in creating, campaigning, and implementing PCEF?
  - Follow up question(s): How did the coalition/steering committee form? How did the coalition and steering committee impact messaging and implementation decisions?
- Can you tell me about the implementation phase of the fund? How is implementation progressing currently? How (or is) the community involved in the implementation?

### **Looking forward**

- What do you think are some best practices for having inclusive rhetoric or messaging in environmental campaigns?

## Recruitment Emails Templates

### 1. Email to leaders of organizations that are a part of the PCEF Steering Committee:

Hello <name of the leader of the organization>,

I wanted to reach out to you about a project I am working on that is a part of my graduate thesis work at Oregon State University called “Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions.” I am researching the messaging and rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund ballot initiative campaign as well as the messaging around the current implementation of the fund. This research aims to study the extent to which the messaging and rhetoric of the campaign was inclusive of frontline communities, and the extent to which it did (and is) transforming the environmental movement in Portland.

Would you, or someone in <organization’s name>, be willing to talk to me about the messaging around PCEF over the phone or in-person when I am in Portland <date when I will be in Portland>? I anticipate that this will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

I’m attaching potential interview questions to this email to give you a sense of what type of questions I hope to ask. I am also attaching the consent form for this study.

Thank you and please let me know if you have any questions! My contact information is below.

Nicole Metildi  
metildin@oregonstate.edu  
949-521-3039

#### Study Information:

- Study Title: Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions
- Principal Investigator / Thesis Advisor: Tim Jensen; tim.jensen@oregonstate.edu
- Contact information for study team: Nicole Metildi; metildin@oregonstate.edu

## 2. Email to potential study participants:

Hello <potential participant's name>,

I wanted to reach out to you about a project I am working on that is a part of my graduate thesis work at Oregon State University called “Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions.” I am researching the messaging and rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund ballot initiative campaign as well as the messaging around the current implementation of the fund. This research aims to study the extent to which the messaging and rhetoric of the campaign was inclusive of frontline communities, and the extent to which it did (and is) transforming the environmental movement in Portland.

If applicable, describe how I got their contact information: I received your contact information from the representative who said you would be a good person to talk to about this topic.

If the person who gave me their contact info was their employer: However, you are in no way obligated to be a part of this study if you do not want to be.

Would you be willing to talk to me about the messaging around PCEF over the phone or in- person when I am in Portland <date when I will be in Portland>? I anticipate that this will take about 45 minutes to 1 hour.

I'm attaching potential interview questions to this email to give you a sense of what type of questions I hope to ask. I am also attaching the consent form for this study.

Thank you and please let me know if you have any questions! My contact information is below.

Nicole Metildi  
metildin@oregonstate.edu  
949-521-3039

### Study Information:

- Study Title: Rhetoric of the Portland Clean Energy Fund and How it Functions
- Principal Investigator / Thesis Advisor: Tim Jensen; tim.jensen@oregonstate.edu
- Contact information for study team: Nicole Metildi; metildin@oregonstate.edu

OSU HRPP and IRB  
IRB NUMBER: IRB-2019-0456  
IRB APPROVAL DATE: 02/07/2020  
IRB EXPIRATION DATE: 02/06/2025