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Reclaiming Economics: An Examination of Environmental Justice Nonprofits' Rhetoric and Strategies for a New Economy

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Reclaiming Economics: An Examination of Environmental Justice
Nonprofits' Rhetoric and Strategies for a New Economy

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A thesis submitted to the
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of the requirements to receive
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ABSTRACT

This project explores how grassroots environmental justice (EJ) nonprofits discursively construct solutions for economic justice under neoliberal capitalism. Specifically, this paper aims to examine if certain EJ organizations use neoliberal or Solidarity Economy (SE) rhetoric and mechanisms for change in their economic campaigns. In the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM), divergent opinions exist about the use of neoliberal rhetoric and reformist strategies in environmental justice (EJ) activism. While some EJ scholars express the movement should advance justice through working to deconstruct capitalism, others assert the radical “high road” is politically infeasible and that groups must collaborate with existing economic and political systems. This study conducts a discourse analysis to assess the text of 40 grassroots EJ organizations’ websites for rhetoric and strategies advocating neoliberal or SE ideology and reformist or radical political approaches to change. Further, this analysis illustrates that the three case study coalitions and their affiliated nonprofits are generally pursuing a Solidarity Economy framework and using both reformist and radical rhetoric and mechanisms for change in their campaigns for economic and environmental justice.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Last November, I discovered the concept of the Solidarity Economy after participating in a workshop about anti-capitalism and alternative economic models. The facilitator of the workshop explained why capitalism possesses an inherently oppressive structure and outlined the concept of the Solidarity Economy, cataloguing various organizations currently working to replace the economic status quo with something better. Drawing upon these discussions and Harrison's research about environmental justice and neoliberalism, I felt inspired to pursue this project.

I must thank my advisors for their tremendous insight and support throughout this process. I would like to thank Jill Harrison for introducing me to the concept of neoliberalism, the importance of the critical perspective, her emphasis on activism in academia. Additionally, I would like to thank Abby Hickcox for bringing forth the work of David Harvey and field of critical geography studies into this analysis. I would also like to express my gratitude to Dale Miller for offering his encouragement and sense of humor throughout this project. Lastly, I would like to thank the Rad-ish Collective for their fierce inspiration and support.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EJ	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
EJM	ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT
SE	SOLIDARITY ECONOMY
SEM	SOLIDARITY ECONOMY MOVEMENT
NE	NEW ECONOMY
GGJ	GRASSROOTS GLOBAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE
CJA	CLIMATE JUSTICE ALLIANCE
CEJA	CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

INTRODUCTION

Rooted in civil resistance against racism and classism, the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) is a social movement that fights the disproportionate amount of environmental burdens placed in communities of color and low-income communities. The term “environmental justice” pertains to “...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to...environmental laws...” (“What is Environmental Justice?”, para. 1). In an economy where GDP growth reflects progress, groups marginalized in society bear the brunt of an economic model prioritizing profit accumulation over social welfare. From toxic air pollution to gentrification, these problems are concerns of environmental injustice because they detrimentally impact the places where low-income communities and communities of color “...live, work, and play” (United Church of Christ & Commission for Racial Justice, 1991; Cole & Foster, 2000; Bullard, 2008, para. 2).

Regarding the involvement of the state, the U.S. government’s historical failure to adequately address issues of environmental injustice prompts some environmental justice (EJ) scholars to question whether strong state collaboration is the most strategic pathway to progress (Benford, 2005; Peña, 2005). As Audre Lorde (1984) once argued, “...the Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s house...” (Lorde, 1984, p.2). Some EJ groups assert that they are not going to wait upon government action when their communities experience structural violence every day from respiratory disease, from police brutality, and at the root cause -- from the governance of a broken economy and demographically homogenous Congress. Scholars advocating radical approaches to EJ express communities must develop economic and political capacity independently from the state, while other groups adopting reformist approaches work within the government to establish policy reform (Peña, 2005). Other academics argue that a mixed approach is the only way to progress, stating that communities must address local capacity

and also become involved in government decision-making practices in order to ensure economic and environmental justice (Anthony, 2005).

Several EJ activists and scholars ascribe the root cause of environmental oppression to capitalism and advocate the need for a transition to a new economic model (Brulle, 2000; Faber, 1998; Benford, 2005). I chose to focus on the Solidarity Economy (SE) alternative economic model in this analysis due to its similarities with the Environmental Justice Movement. Like the EJ Movement, the Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) strives to fight oppression and is historically led by people of color in the United States (Nembhard, 2014). Based on community asset building and horizontal collaboration, the SE model seeks to create a new economy that is localized and democratically governed and based on the ideals of solidarity, cooperation, and self-determination (Miller, 2010).

The purpose of this paper is to explore how grassroots environmental justice (EJ) nonprofits discursively construct solutions for economic justice under capitalism. The central question of this project asks, “Are EJ nonprofits using a Solidarity Economy framework?” This analysis is important due to matters of social justice; it strives to focus on the strategies and rhetoric of grassroots groups who, predominantly excluded by many societal structures, exercise community power in order to reclaim basic human rights. Further, I chose to focus on organizations’ discourses due to its inherent politicized nature as social movement rhetoric. Within this project, I seek to analyze how grassroots EJ nonprofits’ rhetoric and mechanisms for change align with the neoliberal or Solidarity Economy (SE) paradigms and radical or reformist political approaches. I conducted a discourse analysis assessing the text of 40 EJ organizations’ websites for discourses reflecting neoliberal or Solidarity Economy rhetoric and mechanisms for change. Additionally, I evaluated each organization’s degree of reformism and radicalism in their political approach as based upon EJ scholar Devon Peña’s theories of equity and autonomy

(Peña, 2005). Peña defines the equity approach to EJ as using the “Master’s tools” (Lorde, 1984) to achieve change by working with the government (Peña, 2005). Conversely, the autonomy approach pertains to activists cultivating local, horizontal networks in order to address environmental injustice in a way that circumvents government intervention (Peña, 2005).

As I will demonstrate, the majority of grassroots EJ nonprofits associated with the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), and the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) are pursuing economic solutions that reflect aspects of the Solidarity Economy. Additionally, these nonprofits primarily feature radical rhetoric and apply a mixture of radical and reformist mechanisms for change. In order to build community capacity on a local level, these communities use some “radical” Solidarity Economy tactics, such as developing local businesses and food production, as well as cultivating horizontal networks for resource and skills sharing. While empowering their communities through local action, many groups also adopt reformist tactics by advocating for policy reform and teaching their members about effective campaign building. Thus, most groups are using a combination of radical and reformist mechanisms for change while simultaneously strengthening local capacity with strategies associated with the Solidarity Economy (of which I regard as “radical”).

BACKGROUND AND LITERATURE REVIEW

In order to be able to identify neoliberal and SE rhetoric and mechanisms for change in the text of grassroots environmental justice (EJ) nonprofits' websites, I will first briefly review the history the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) and explain its key rhetorical frames. Following, I will define neoliberalism as a political approach and ideology and describe its influence on the EJM and nonprofit organizations working in Leftist social movements.

Next, I will explain Devon Peña's theories of autonomy and equity (Peña, 2005) and apply these ideas to radical and reformist political approaches to social change. Expanding on Peña's idea of autonomy, I will relate EJ scholars' questions about the use of the "Master's tools" (Lorde, 1984) to radical and reformist approaches in the EJM and compare radical EJ mechanisms for change with Solidarity Economy strategies. I will also compare these definitions of radicalism and reformism to EJ activist Carl Anthony's call for a hybrid approach (Anthony, 2005).

Further, I will define the Solidarity Economy (SE), differentiate it from the "New Economy" and compare the U.S.' Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) to the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM). In consideration of the importance of coalition membership in the discourse analysis (30 out of 40 nonprofits surveyed are coalition members), I will introduce the three key EJ coalitions central to this study, including the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), the Climate Justice Alliance (CJA), and the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA).

The History of the Environmental Justice Movement and its rhetoric

Within a global context, the start of the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) cannot be assigned to any particular time in history – activism combatting environmental injustice is as old as oppression itself (Taylor, 2009; Anthony, 2005). However, in the United States,

environmental justice activism originally manifested in Native American and African American resistance against the oppressive conditions imposed by European colonizers. Regarding the official social movement, many scholars attribute the birth of the EJM in the United States to its roots in various other predecessor movements including the Civil Rights, labor, indigenous land rights, and economic justice movements (Cole & Foster, 2001; Faber and McCarthy, 2003; Bastian et al., 2001).

Several academics cite the famous account of activism in the 1980s in Warren County, North Carolina as a catalyst for the start of the official Environmental Justice Movement in the United States (Matsuoka, 2001). In 1982, the movement gained significant visibility when media outlets publicized Warren County residents' use of civil disobedience to resist the siting of a polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) landfill in their predominantly black neighborhood (Matsuoka, 2001; Holifield, 2013). Shortly following the incident in Warren County, the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) and United Church of Christ (UCC) released reports in 1983 and 1987 statistically verifying the disproportionate amount of toxic waste sites established in communities of color in the U.S. (Matsuoka, 2001; Schlosberg, 2013). Soon after, scholars from the University of Michigan integrated the term "environmental racism", as coined by Benjamin Chavis of the UCC, into conversations in academia (Taylor, 2000).

In retrospective analyses, scholars today argue that the movement's historical use of the phrase "environmental racism" produced different political implications in comparison to the term that would eventually replace it: "environmental justice" (Taylor, 2000; Benford, 2005; Holifield, 2013). Some academics argue that because the phrase "environmental racism" featured the explicit diagnosis of racism, its framing resonated more strongly with communities of color as opposed to the ambiguous connotations of "justice" (Taylor, 2000; Benford, 2005; Holifield, 2013). Additionally, the use of term "environmental racism" explicitly invited critical analysis of

white supremacy in the United States and how racism manifests in nuanced forms, prompting academics and government officials to re-examine their traditional definitions of the “environment” and “racism” (Taylor, 2000; Pulido, 1996; Holifield, 2013).

Marking another milestone in the Environmental Justice Movement, activist groups convened for the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 in order to promote inter-organizational collaboration in the EJM (Matsuoka, 2001). While discussing movement strategy at the conference, EJ leaders agreed to adopt the phrase “environmental justice” to describe their collective social movement (Taylor, 2000). As compared with “environmental racism”, the use of “environmental justice” served as an act of rhetorical frame extension because EJ groups viewed the phrase as more inclusive (Taylor, 2000). While sacrificing frame resonance for communities of color, activists hoped the accessible connotations of “environmental justice” would garner more mainstream support for the movement (Taylor, 2000). Critical EJ scholars Benford (2005) and Faber (1998) argue the use of the term “justice” implies solidarity with all groups victimized by environmental oppression and can be applied to advocate the destruction of unjust systems such as capitalism (Benford, 2005; Faber, 1998). In addition to the adoption of “environmental justice” as the movement’s key phrase, participants also drafted *The Principles of Environmental Justice* at the summit. Scholars argue that *The Principles* document reinforced the inclusive nature of the EJM’s rhetorical approach by addressing many issues and relating them back to a unified struggle defined by racism, injustice, and environmentalism (Holifield, 2013; Stanley 2009; Taylor 2000). Expanding upon these three themes, Walker (2009) identifies the definitive elements of the EJ master frame (as defined in *The Principles*) as: the identity politics of race, a human-centric view of the “environment”, the demand for participation in policymaking, and the culpability of industry actors (Walker, 2009).

The Environmental Justice Movement has achieved tremendous progress in expanding its scope of impact and “cultural and institutional growth” since its first summit in 1991 (Pellow & Brulle, 2005, p. 3443). Within the last 25 years, various groups have won EJ-oriented policy changes, fostered greater collaboration with state and federal government agencies, and established EJ as a concern in the arenas of rural and urban development (Pellow & Brulle, 2005, p. 3444). In the last few decades, groups’ use of rhetoric and strategies demonstrating solidarity with EJ struggles abroad has grown and extensive research has established environmental justice as a prominent and evolving topic in academic institutions (Pellow & Brulle, 2005, p. 3445). Concerning campaign strategies, several regional environmental justice coalitions have formed and are actively pursuing comprehensive approaches to legislative change (Pellow and Brulle, 2005, p. 3444).

Regarding historical policy change, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 in 1994, requiring all federal agencies to assess the implications of environmental justice in their activities (“Summary of Executive Order 12898”). Following Executive Order 12898, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice (IWG), the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) in order to facilitate the consideration of environmental justice into agency activity (Hill, 2009). Nevertheless, despite these initiatives to address environmental injustice, various elements of this approach caused the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to initially fail at providing adequate legal compensation and representation for communities in need (Carroll & Weber, 2004). Clinton’s Executive Order merely offered a call to action and placed the majority of responsibility on federal agencies to determine the order’s organizational logistics and how to address challenges, from funding restrictions to the legal complexities of disparate impact versus discriminatory intent (Hill, 2009;

Cory, 2012). However, in recent decades, certain state governments have shown tremendous progress in incorporating consideration for environmental justice into their agency activity, most notably through the implementation of comprehensive policy approaches (Targ, 2005).

Regarding the different discourses in EJM, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines “environmental justice” as “...the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to...environmental laws...” (“What is Environmental Justice?”, para. 1). However, Faber (2008) views the EPA’s definition as colorblind due its frivolous use of the word “regardless” and its omission of special consideration for low-income communities and communities of color (Faber, 2008). Faber’s analysis surfaces a critical fact about social movements and their use of rhetoric: all discourse is intrinsically political.

Overview of Social Movement Rhetoric

All frames and rhetoric used in social movements are derived from ideologies, which are sets of beliefs an individual uses to analyze and interpret reality (Benford & Snow, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Rhetoric is defined as language that possesses the intention to persuade and framing is the process of using rhetoric to reflect ideology (Taylor, 2000). In social movements, rhetoric and the process of framing can strengthen campaigns by developing cognitive liberation in the public sphere (Taylor, 2000). Cognitive liberation concerns the transition from an observer to an activist role in which an individual recognizes the fallibility of certain institutions and demands change (Taylor, 2000).

Frame alignment in campaign rhetoric measures the degree of which an individual’s belief system aligns with the master frame of the movement (Benford & Snow, 2000). Social movements use an array of frame alignment processes in order to develop messaging strategies that expand its base. The most pertinent frame alignment strategies used in the EJM are frame

extension and frame bridging (Taylor, 2000). Frame extension is the process of broadening the movement's ideological discourse in order to become more appealing to the general public and frame bridging concerns the act of the combining frames that are similar (Benford & Snow, 2000). In this project, a central coalition nonprofit featured in the discourse analysis, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, uses frame bridging as their main rhetorical strategy in order to unite economic, environmental, and social justice groups under one anti-oppression, anti-capitalist framework ("Get it Done!", 2014).

The Environmental Justice Paradigm (EJP) acts as the movement's central value system. The EJP is based upon the morals outlined in the *Principles of Environmental Justice* and provides the ideological foundation for the movement's rhetoric (Taylor, 2000; Benford & Snow, 2000). As catalogued in the *Principles of Environmental Justice*, the EJP emphasizes environmental sustainability, justice, autonomy, movement development, and participatory political and economic solutions (Taylor, 2000). The *Principles of Environmental Justice* also emphasizes the relationship between classism, racism, and sustainability, accounting for the complexity in how different kinds of oppression manifest (Taylor, 2000).

Related to its anti-oppression framework, another important characteristic of the Environmental Justice Paradigm regards its focus on cultivating solidarity through its members' collective subaltern consciousness. As defined by Faber (2009) and Benford (2005), the subaltern consciousness is a unique type of political awareness that all oppressed groups possess due to their shared experience of being marginalized in society (Faber, 2009; Benford, 2005). Scholars argue that communities of color and low-income communities apply their common experience of being oppressed in order to galvanize action in solidarity with one another (Faber, 2009; Benford, 2005). Also relating to solidarity, some academics also express that the EJM in the United States should organize with environmental and economic justice movements abroad

(Kalan & Peek, 2005). Kalan and Peek (2005) recommend that the marginalized communities of the Global North should collaborate with the oppressed groups of the Global South in order to develop stronger networks and link campaigns to a universal discourse about positionality and oppression (Kalan & Peek, 2005). Concerning global economic justice, many EJ activists link their solidarity with periphery countries to the destructive influence of globalization and the Western neoliberal project (Choudry, 2007).

Neoliberalism and the Environmental Justice Movement

Reflecting upon the changes in the Environmental Justice Movement's discourse and strategies since the rise of neoliberalism, activists and critical EJ scholars express concern about the influence of the neoliberal state on the EJM and its radical ideological roots (Harrison, 2014; Holifield, 2004, 2009; Benford, 2005). However, in order to effectively analyze the impact of neoliberalism on this movement, one must become familiarized with the history of the United States' neoliberal project.

Neoliberalism as an ideology and policy approach was officially introduced into the public arena in the 1980s as a revival of past liberalism tactics that aimed to generate economic stability and growth (Harvey, 2005; Peck & Tickell, 2002). President Ronald Reagan facilitated the adoption of "roll-back" policies in order to reduce restrictive government intervention in the market by decreasing spending on social services, increasing privatization, and deregulating the marketplace (Holifield, 2004; Harrison, 2013; Peck & Tickell, 2002). Concerning environmental and labor regulation, the first wave of neoliberalism in the 1980s sought to boost GDP growth by disempowering programs that were not seen as competitive, indirectly rendering federal social service and regulatory organizations, such as the EPA, as politically subordinate (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Faber, 2008; Harvey, 2007).

Following the deconstruction of Keynesian social welfare programs in the 1980s, the Clinton administration facilitated the transition of neoliberal ideology into a more institutionalized form through the application of “roll-out” programs in the 1990s (Holifield, 2004; Harvey, 2005). Through the use of “roll-out” policies, the federal government further integrated neoliberal tactics by shifting its position from deconstructive economic reform to the construction of policies and institutions exerting political control (Peck & Tickell, 2002). Though still characterized as rational economic strategy, the second wave of neoliberalism essentially sought to influence national and global politics by establishing self-appointed control over the rules of international trade and enacting domestic policies that used privatization to criminalize poverty (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Aguirre, Eick, & Reese, 2006). By indirectly enforcing the punishment of systemically disadvantaged groups, this approach incentivized government and industry actors to generate profits through providing privatized funds, services, and goods to control specific groups (e.g.: detention centers, structural adjustment programs) (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Aguirre, Eick, & Reese, 2006).

Neoliberal ideology expresses that the role of the State should be minimized and assumes the “invisible hand” is a panacea for all social, environmental, and economic issues (Faber, 2008). This political approach advocates for the creation of an intensely liberalized marketplace governed by competition. The unfortunate side effect of such a design, resides in the fierce need for firms to compete. Private firms are encouraged to cut corners, relax environmental and labor regulations, and thus, perpetuate historical patterns of environmental and social oppression (Peck & Tickell, 2002; Martinez & Garcia, 1996; Faber, 2008). Neoliberal ideology centers upon the ideals of individualism, free choice, and laissez faire magic (Larner, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Its ideology approaches social justice with an individualistic framing, implying that all social change arises from personal behavioral changes, most notably through consumer power and

volunteerism (Larner, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Another concern raised about the dominance of neoliberal ideology in society pertains to its hypocritical portrayal as being “nonpolitical” and objective because this depiction positions its ideological hegemony to become somewhat invisible (Duggan, 2003, p. 10; Peck & Tickell, 2002). As I conclude my attempt to define the basic concepts of neoliberal policies and ideologies, it is important to note that neoliberalism itself is an incredibly complex, contradictory and ever-changing system (Peck & Tickell, 2002). The discrepancy between neoliberal ideology’s glorified promises and its actual impact exemplifies itself in its impact on regulation and nonprofits engaging in Leftist social movements.

Table 1. Neoliberal Ideologies and Mechanisms for Change

Category	Neoliberalism
Core Values:	Active individualism, competition, economic efficiency, choice, laissez faire,
Goals:	Achieve economic growth and social welfare via the marketplace; economic profits; accumulation of wealth based on meritocracy
Strategies:	deregulation, privatization, public sector agency reform/downscale, individual choice, activism via consumerism, behavioral change, managerialism, promote consumers to appeal to the marketplace
Key Terms:	Individualism, competition, growth
Approach to Government:	Minimalist role or interventionist in certain social aspects
Power Structure:	Top-down, bureaucratic; directed by federal government or industry, limited opportunities for participation, technocratic
Identification of Problem:	Intervention of government; potential of social sector to negatively influence market outcomes

Neoliberalism and Environmental Regulation

Neoliberal ideology perpetuates environmental injustice because its rhetoric supports the status quo of power systems in the United States and simultaneously blindly glorifies the myth of meritocracy. Neoliberal ideology as applied to government policy often ignores the reality that certain economic and political structures condone social inequity and environmental degradation.

Faber (2008) argues that neoliberal corporate actors strategically use a network of think tanks, foundations, and other industry groups to form the polluter-industrial-complex (Faber, 2008). According to Faber, the polluter-industrial-complex is a system in which corporate actors strive to control public discourse and discredit environmental movements in order to protect their accumulation of profit (Faber, 2008).

When applied to environmental regulation, the impact of neoliberal policy imposes profound restrictions on regulatory agencies' ability to address injustice because its framework automatically classifies all forms of regulation as detrimental to the generation of profit (Faber, 2008). Though, the neoliberalization of policy officially started in the 1970s and 1980s, neoliberal ideology's antagonism toward government regulation continues to progressively diminish the capacity of federal agencies (Harvey, 2007). One may only look to the 2014 spending bill for strong evidence of its anti-government intervention framework. Last year's spending bill significantly decreased the EPA's funding again, forcing the agency to employ the lowest number of staff since 1989 (O'Keefe, 2014). Compounded by the extreme influence of corporate power in politics, it is understandable why some EJ activists' distrust the government and its "Master tools" (Benford, 2005; Peña, 2005).

Regarding the Environmental Justice Movement, scholars highlight the tendency for neoliberal ideology and policy to evade environmental and social costs, and instead, place the onus of action on the individual (Harrison, 2014; Allard & Matthaai, 2007). Harrison (2014) states that the values of neoliberalism fundamentally contrast with those of the Environmental Justice Movement because they conflict with the EJM's emphasis on distributive justice, participatory justice, and recognition (Harrison, 2014). Additionally, academics argue that, evident in the EJM's critique of globalization, capitalism and other oppressive systems, the EJ

movement seeks to deconstruct these structures and thus, can never align with reformist neoliberal ideology (Benford, 2005; Faber, 2009). Similar to the disempowerment of government regulatory agencies, neoliberal policies control nonprofits by positioning them to provide social welfare services while fostering systems that restrict the political nature of their advocacy.

Nonprofit Autonomy and Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism restricts the autonomy of nonprofit organizations in Leftist social movements through sustaining the dynamics and processes of the nonprofit industrial complex (Gilmore, 2007). Rodriguez (2007) defines the nonprofit industrial complex as system of relationships that employ financial power over nonprofits in order to control social movement discourse (Rodriguez, 2007). The nonprofit industrial complex primarily manifests in the form of corporate actors fostering nonprofits' reliance on their foundations' funds and through the integration of neoliberal, market-based bureaucratic forms of management that distance service providers from their clients (Rodriguez, 2007).

In degrading the social safety net, neoliberalism creates a "shadow state" that incentivizes the third sector of nonprofits to provide the services the Keynesian-welfare government previously administered (Gilmore, 2007). Various academics assert that the need for "band-aid" organizations essentially undermines nonprofit-driven social change (Gilmore, 2007; Baines, 2008; Faber, 2008). By positioning these groups to devote their organizational capacity on ameliorating the effects of welfare disparity, many groups must focus on mitigating the social strife caused by the state instead of using their resources for the development of systemic-oriented campaigns (Gilmore, 2007; Baines, 2008; Faber, 2008). Walker (2009) speculates that neoliberalism can de-radicalize nonprofits through the adoption of a sterilized, managerial messaging due to the concerns about funding and the need to align with neoliberal discourses (Gilmore, 2007; Walker, 2009). The influence of neoliberal hegemony over nonprofits,

especially those of the radical Left, could relate to the degree of radical and reformist rhetoric evident in the discourse analysis.

In the context of environmental justice (EJ) organizations' rhetoric, scholars argue that the nonprofit industrial complex influences the EJM because environmental organizations run by people of color are funded substantially less than white-dominated, mainstream environmental nonprofits (Faber, 2008; Valentine, 2013). Additionally, a study of environmental organizations demonstrates that the majority of funding provided by foundations goes to the more bureaucratic, professionalized environmental nonprofits who seek strictly reformist approaches, rather than the more radical, grassroots organizations using direct action and community organizing tactics (Brulle et al., 2007). Further marginalization may arise from the fact that the societal critiques offered by many EJ activist groups may be considered too "harsh" by dominant social groups, "...the people whose work requires that they tell uncomfortable truths may then find themselves shut out -- because people cannot handle what they are hearing" (Anthony, 2005, p. 1099). Anthony's argument regarding the relatively low amount of funding allocated to the EJM relates to Peña and Benford's distrust of using existing legal structures to achieve progress because these systems are predominantly run by the white power elite (Pena, 2005; Benford, 2005).

Autonomy and Equity in Environmental Justice

Critical EJ scholars question if working with the same systems that created and currently condone oppressive societal dynamics is the most effective strategy in the Environmental Justice Movement. In particular, Benford (2005) and Peña (2005) question whether the "Master's tools" of electoral politics can deconstruct the "Master's house" (Benford, 2005; Peña, 2005). Concerning the discourse analysis, I will draw upon Devon Peña's (2005) definitions of "autonomy" and "equity" and Benford's (2005) implied differentiation between reformism and

radicalism in order to define the “radical” and “reformist” political approaches of different nonprofits.

In “Autonomy, Equity, and Environmental Justice”, Peña (2005) describes the concepts of “equity” and “autonomy” as they apply to environmental justice (Peña, 2005). The idea of environmental equity presents that all people should experience an equal balance of environmental burdens and benefits and is theoretically based on Rawls’ theory of justice (Peña, 2005). Peña (2005) believes that organizations that follow the equity-based framework are more likely to work in electoral politics and apply political pressure on government representatives to enact policy change (Peña, 2005). Peña (2005) and Benford (2005) define the strategy of achieving justice through policy change as adopting a reformist approach. These scholars criticize equity-based, reformist approaches because they believe it encourages organizations to depend on the “Master’s tools” of existing legal systems to restore justice, while these same structures historically created the injustice in the first place (Peña, 2005) and are likely to manipulate activists’ campaigns in the future (Benford, 2005). For the purpose of creating a clear distinction between reformist and radical mechanisms for change, within the discourse analysis I define organizations that direct the majority of their organizing efforts for policy change as “reformist”.

Contrasting from equity-based theory, Peña’s idea of autonomy centers on addressing community needs directly through the development of local community assets (Peña, 2005). Using horizontal collaboration to generate place-based systems for community management, Peña (2005) defines “autonomy” as the process in which “...social actors have created a social field of interrelationships in which the power to control the conditions of production and reproduction is diffused (or horizontally distributed) and self-generated by participants in place” (Peña, 2005). The autonomy theory manifests in societies through a process called

“autochthonous ecosystem management” in which groups create social networks and asset inventories to address needs for community goods and services, operating primarily without government intervention and based in indigenous knowledge and traditions (Peña, 2005, p. 1607). Examples of autochthonous management include “...traditional use area councils and land use planning councils, community gardens, community-supported agriculture, artisan and producer cooperatives, and mutual aid societies” (Peña, 2005, p. 1653). The autonomy-based approach to EJ can be broadly defined as “radical” according to Peña’s perspective because it advocates for systemic change by building community resiliency in a way that circumvents strong collaboration with the federal government (the assigned root cause of injustice). Carter (2014) also cites the strategy of moving away from the dependence on policy reform through the creation of community governance in exercising networks of local businesses, nonprofits, and other actors (Carter, 2014). He also expresses that, while these groups risk having to de-radicalize their rhetoric, this method can expedite projects to rectify local environmental injustice (Carter, 2014).

In this discourse analysis, I use Peña (2005) and Benford’s (2005) implied definitions of reformism and radicalism in the Environmental Justice Movement; however, I do not completely agree with their dismissal of reformist approaches. A central discourse in environmental justice rhetoric is the call for government and industry accountability. In order to obtain concrete, enforceable standards that ensure an improved distribution of environmental burdens and benefits, government agency collaboration and policy change are essential. Furthermore, grassroots groups successfully achieve policy change often (Bullard & Johnson, 2000). The act of solely advocating for radicalism over reformism, or vice versa, may fail to account for the complexity of how divergent rhetoric and strategies can construct strong, comprehensive social movements. Many EJ organizations feature radical rhetoric and still apply reformist approaches.

Nonprofits categorized as “reformist” still provide vital contributions to the Environmental Justice Movement and their strategies should not be disregarded. Rather, one may argue the EJM relies upon employing a diversity of rhetorical frames and mechanisms for change.

As EJ activist Carl Anthony argues, the EJM needs an inside-outside approach that focuses on local community needs and also works through the government to holistically build systemic change (Anthony, 2005). Anthony also states that the Environmental Justice Movement struggles with group fragmentation caused by different identity and class politics (Anthony, 2005). Anthony cites an example of this fractionalization in the incidence of some low-income grassroots EJ groups feel abandonment by middle class activists who move up bureaucratic ladders in order to enact policy change (Anthony, 2005). Referring to W.E.B DuBois’ “double consciousness” battle between multiple identities, Anthony (2005) argues that the EJM should use their groups’ shared subaltern consciousness as an advantage (Anthony, 2005, p. 1161). In spite of different cultures and identities, the EJM can work to further unite itself in communities of color’s global, historical struggle against oppression (Anthony, 2005). As the founder of Urban Habitat, an Oakland-based environmental justice organization, Anthony blends the pursuit to change policy with the campaigns that address local communities’ daily needs -- these two goals are intertwined (Anthony, 2005). He expresses that Urban Habitat operates from a framework of cultural recognition and community leadership in order to empower local leaders to become involved in land use development and policy (Anthony, 2005). Urban Habitat’s focus on participation and leadership of communities of color in urban development mirrors important principles of the Solidarity Economy.

The Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM)

The Solidarity Economy (SE) is an exceptional alternative economic model to capitalism because it operates from a social justice framework. The Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM)

is a social movement that pursues an economic alternative to capitalism through creating localized economies that are organized by cooperative production, democratic participation, and resource sharing (Miller, 2010). Operating in a decentralized framework that values horizontal collaboration, the Solidarity Economy (SE) strives to cultivate networks that share goods and services in order to address local economic needs and develop resiliency. This movement labels itself as an alternative to neoliberal capitalism, rather than as an approach that can be coopted by it, because it seeks to fundamentally transform traditional capitalist modes of exchange, production, and consumption (“The Basics - SolidarityNYC”). Some of the more relatable mechanisms for change of the SEM include: democratically governed worker cooperatives, local food production, credit unions, and cooperative housing (“The Basics – SolidarityNYC”).

Highlighting the importance of political solidarity, the ideology of the Solidarity Economy strives to prioritize people over profits and generate democratic power from the bottom-up (Miller, 2010). Grounded in cultural recognition and the right to reclaim self-determination, the SE ideological master frame focuses on issues of “racial justice, environmental justice, ecology, immigrant justice, religious and spiritual freedom, anti-militarism, LGBTQ justice, indigenous sovereignty, prison abolition, economic justice, and gender justice” (Miller, 2010, p. 8). In light of the influence of the Eurocentric lens upon the documentation of cooperative economic models, most websites and papers outlining the Solidarity Economy Movement fail to grant adequate recognition to its racial roots and histories.

In concern to the United States, the use of Solidarity Economy strategies such as the creation of cooperatives and mutual benefit societies started in African Americans’ resistance to slavery (Ifateyo, 2014; Nembhard, 2014). Nembhard (2014) argues that slaves used cooperative economics and the SE model as a survival tactic, originating in the horizontal networks established in the formation of the Underground Railroad (Ifateyo, 2014, para. 30; Nembhard,

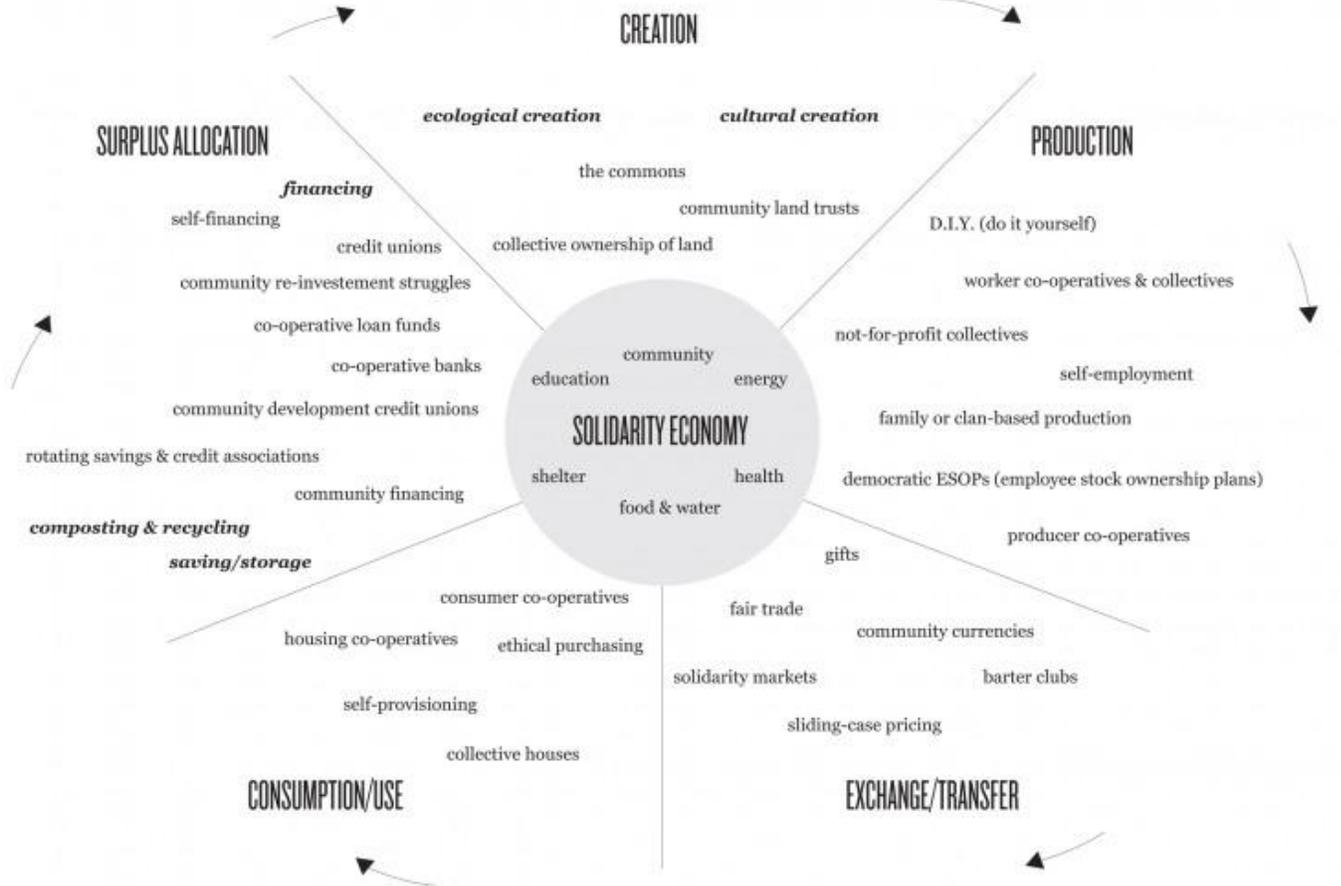
2014). Describing the historical resistance to the black SE strategies, Nembhard (2014) states that the white economy not only excluded black people, but also tried to impose social control over black communities by ensuring their dependence on the goods and services of the white economy (Ifateyo, 2014; Nembhard, 2014). Drawing upon the insight of W.E.B DuBois, Nembhard describes that DuBois' advocacy for cooperatives was born out of need for black community resiliency and autonomy:

He said that we should voluntarily form a group economy based on a sense of solidarity and use producer and consumer cooperatives to position ourselves to serve our economic needs separately from the white economy. This way we could control our own goods and services and gain income and wealth - stabilize ourselves and our communities. Then if we wanted to join the mainstream economy, we could join from a position of strength.

(Ifateyo, 2014, para. 6)

Starting in slave resistance and continuing through the Civil Rights Movement, activists of color have developed economic resiliency through creating Solidarity Economics for decades. Most recently, activists' advocacy for the SE has been in reaction to the rampant police murders of people of color, as widely publicized in 2012 and 2014 (Luna, 2014; Whitfield, 2014). Drawing the connection between capitalism and structural violence, some activists demand the need for a new economy in order to protect communities of color from a racist economy and government policies (Luna, 2014; Whitfield, 2014; Ragland, 2014). In light of the destruction caused by colorblind ideology in the United States, it is important to highlight the difference between the rhetoric of the Solidarity Economy and of the "New Economy" economic movements.

Figure 2. Solidarity Economy Diagram retrieved from SolidarityNYC



The “New Economy” versus the Solidarity Economy

As critiques of capitalism surface as a mainstream discourse, social movements advocating an economic transition are also becoming more popular, especially with the help of trendy rhetoric, such as the “kind economy”, “sharing economies”, and the “New Economy”. However, most alternative economic models proffered by activist groups possess the strategies of resource sharing, control of the commons, and cooperative economics found in the Solidarity Economy model. The “New Economy” (NE) is an economic model that depicts itself as an alternative to capitalism and features the same exact mechanisms for change as the SE, yet it lacks the SE’s racial justice and collective subaltern consciousness framework. Similar to the difference between “environmental justice” and “environmental racism”, the NE generally

adopts a liberal and equity-based approach to social justice that fails to account for the essential diagnostic aspect of racism and other forms of oppression. While activists adopt different definitions of the “New Economy” (NE) and often apply them within a social justice framework, the mainstream concept of the NE is essentially a white cooptation of the Solidarity Economy model (Loh, 2013).

Dominant narratives about the “New Economy” economic model are often associated with a particular demographic: white, upper middle class people, and more specifically, progressive, “granola” types. Activists of color express grievance about the predominantly white face of the “New Economy” at conferences, funding boards, and within the mass media, while communities of color are the groups actually implementing the SE structures that the NE represents (Loh, 2013; Hudson, 2014). Blinded by a Eurocentric lens, many advocates of the “New Economy” do not recognize that cooperative economics in the United States started in slave resistance (Hudson, 2014; Nembhard, 2014). Even the name choice of the “New Economy” exemplifies this ignorance and “...inherently erases work that predates the ‘new economy’ movement” (Hudson, 2014, para. 2). For white communities who fail to recognize the model’s racial roots, their advocacy of the NE can be viewed as a disrespectful cooptation and the act of taking credit for an idea that is not historically theirs to claim. Considering white peoples’ rich history of coopting and manipulating innovations discovered by people of color and the historic racism pervasive in “progressive” movements, this idea is not unfounded (Loh, 2013; Nkromo, 2014).

Table 2. Solidarity Economy ideologies and mechanisms for change

Categories:	Solidarity Economy
Core Values	Solidarity, reciprocity, participation, autonomy, equity, community, rights-based, anti-oppression, self-determination, community resilience, cultural recognition
Goals	Social justice, social welfare, economic justice, corporate accountability, autonomy, community protection/freedom
Strategies	SEM: Creation of social networks linking goods and services, coalitions with social movements, sharing resources, movement fusion SE: local food production, consumer cooperatives, worker cooperatives, local control of the commons,
Key Terms	Reciprocity, autonomy, solidarity, equity, self-determination, collective empowerment
Approach to Government	Reformist: Facilitate collaboration of the three sectors Radical: Develop alternative local economy protected from State influence
Power Structure	Decentralized, consensus-based/democratic decision-making; vertical and horizontal collaboration
Identification of Problem	Neoliberal capitalism, globalization, structural oppression, wealth disparities, climate change, individualism, competition, abuse of corporate power/governments

RESEARCH QUESTION

What kinds of rhetoric do grassroots EJ nonprofits use in framing economic solutions?

How do these economic discourses and mechanisms for change align with neoliberal or Solidarity Economy frameworks and radical or reformist political approaches? Are these EJ nonprofits using a Solidarity Economy approach in their campaigns for economic and environmental justice?

Coalitions in Discourse Analysis

In order to assess what kinds of economic discourse EJ nonprofits use and how they align radical or reformist political approaches to change, I chose to sample grassroots EJ organizations who belong to coalitions. I analyzed the text of 30 nonprofits featuring membership to one or more of the following coalitions: Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ), the Climate Justice

Alliance (CJA), and the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA). I decided to focus on the members of these coalitions in order to determine organizations' relative uniformity or diversity in their use of rhetoric and mechanisms for change in each alliance. Further, I selected these three coalitions as case studies due to their strong inter-organizational collaboration. These groups are closely connected. For example, members of the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) serve on both the Coordinator Committee of the Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ) and the Steering Committee of Climate Justice Alliance (CJA). In order to better contextualize the results of the discourse analysis, one should become familiarized with each coalition nonprofit's mission, mechanisms for change, and value system.

Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ)

The Grassroots Global Justice Alliance is a technical assistance and networking organization that helps set agendas and foster collaboration among environmental justice and leftist social justice groups in the United States. Their main mechanisms for change include coalition building, training, leadership development, conferences, and political education. Identifying as an anti-capitalist organization advocating for economic, climate, and gender justice, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance operates from a value-system based in eco-feminism ("GGJ Mission"; "Get it done!", 2014). As expressed on their website, "... we say 'YES!' to transitioning with justice— economically, ecologically, socially and politically. We say 'YES!' to a just transition away from a world order defined by capitalism, hetero-patriarchy, racism and imperialism" ("Get it done!", 2014, p.2).

Climate Justice Alliance (CJA)

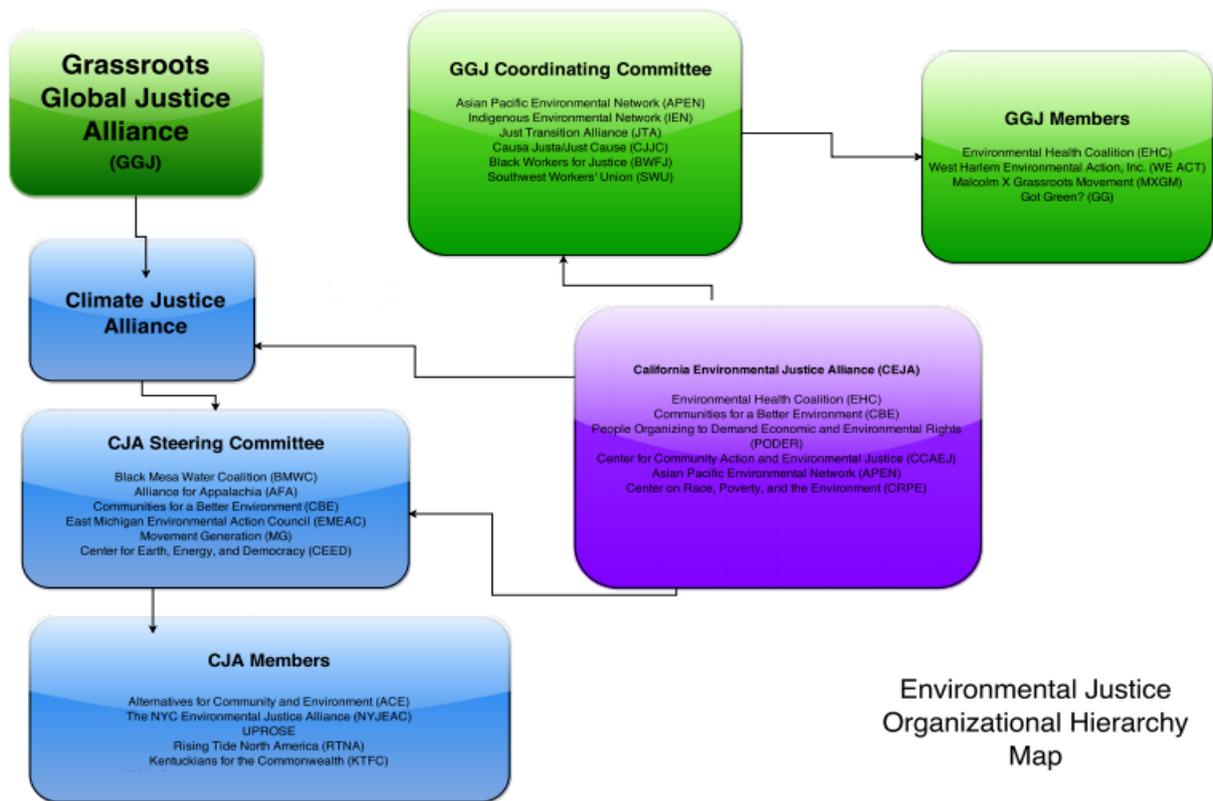
The Climate Justice Alliance (CJA) is the daughter organization of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (GGJ) and serves to implement the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance's "Just Transition" campaigns. On their "Who is CJA" webpage, CJA states that their mission is to

“...to forge a scalable, and socio-economically just transition away from unsustainable energy towards local living economies ...” (“Who is CJA”, para.1). The Climate Justice Alliance organizes for change through community organizing, coalition-building, training, political education, solidarity organizing, and leadership development. Through their “Our Communities” campaigns, the Climate Justice Alliance develops relationships with EJ leaders in different communities and provides technical assistance to these groups in order to help them foster a “Just Transition”. The focus of the Climate Justice Alliance’s training programs generally address the following topics: advocacy for green jobs, the development of cooperatives, food sovereignty, social movement theory, community organizing, direct action, and campaigns for local control over the commons (“Our Power Campaign”, 2015). Thus far, the Climate Justice Alliance has fostered collaboration with six sites in developing local, green economic transitions and plans to add up to nine more cities to by the end of 2015 (“Get it done!”, 2014, p. 9).

California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)

The California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) is a coalition of six EJ organizations that uses inter-organizational collaboration to campaign for EJ-oriented policy change in California (“Vision and History”, 2014). CEJA’s members include: the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN), Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCA EJ), the Center on Race, Poverty, and the Environment (CRPE), the Environmental Health Coalition (EHC), and People Organizing to Demand Environmental and Economic Rights (PODER) (“Members”, 2014). The California Environmental Justice Alliance cites its primary strategies as community organizing, movement development, and policy advocacy (“Vision and History”, 2014). Various members of CEJA also serve on the directing committees of the Climate Justice Alliance and the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance (“Members”).

Figure 3. Organizational Hierarchy of Affiliated Grassroots EJ Nonprofits



METHODS

Concerning my approach, I chose to use the method of discourse analysis because this field explores the importance of rhetoric in the social construction of reality (Phillips & Hardy, 2002; O’Halloran, 2003). I specialized my focus by incorporating the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) due to its emphasis on social justice advocacy (Wodak & Meyer, 2008). CDA is rooted in the ideologies of Foucault and Horkheimer’s Critical Theory and strives to systematically evaluate society in order to improve it (Wodak & Meyer, 2008). I applied these methods in order to conduct a discourse analysis of 40 grassroots environmental justice organizations by surveying their website content for specific rhetorical themes. Thirty out of the forty organizations are affiliated with these three environment and climate justice coalitions: the

Climate Justice Alliance, the Global Grassroots Justice Alliance, and the California Environmental Justice Alliance. I additionally assessed ten organizations not affiliated with these coalitions in order to serve as a somewhat a “control” group. However, it is important to note that I excluded any discussion of these 10 nonprofits. Rather, I only included their contributions in the quantitative data.

Regarding the process of the analysis, I gathered information about the nonprofits’ rhetoric by copying and pasting the text of every webpage of an organization’s website into a separate document, resulting in documents ranging from 5 to 96 pages long. Using specific codes, I read each organization’s content and marked the corresponding codes descriptive of their rhetoric into a spreadsheet. For the purpose of this discussion, I use the term “code incidences” to describe the existence of code alignment, meaning the nonprofits’ use of a specific phrase or theme aligning with its code.

The categories assessed for discursive themes included: oppression terminology, relationship with the State, economic solution, mechanisms for change, SE rhetoric, SE strategies, other rhetoric, other strategies, neoliberal rhetoric, neoliberal strategies, political approach, coalition membership, and common corporate funders. Following the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), I coded the text based on the organization’s word choice as written, and in some cases, according to implicit meanings in the text (Wodak & Meyer, 2008). I organized my coding data into four separate categories based on organization membership to the Climate Justice Alliance (12), the Global Grassroots Justice Alliance (12), both Climate Justice Alliance and Grassroots Global Justice Alliance membership (3), California Environmental Justice Alliance (3), and no membership (10). To supplement my analysis of prevalent trends, I also included a few passages from editorial articles written by EJ and SE activists (mostly

affiliated with the organizations surveyed) from sources such as *The Huffington Post* and *Yes! Magazine*.

It is crucial to state that there are several limitations of this research design. The most prominent limitation is the discourse analysis' failure to record the degree of code incidences. According to research design, the presence of a certain discourse is recorded in the data as evidence of its corresponding code; however, its record does not account for code frequency. If the term "sustainable development" appears once or twenty times on a nonprofit's website, the group still received only one tally for the "sustainable development" category in the data spreadsheet.

Additionally, the codes for certain coding categories, especially the "Solidarity Economy rhetoric" and "economic solution" categories, feature dozens of codes that are extremely similar or only tenuously relate to their category. I added to the list of codes as I conducted the discourse analysis in order to make the analysis more thorough, although the unintended consequence of this decision made it more difficult to analyze trends in rhetoric. Instead of gathering substantial data within a few general categories, the tallies for each code were dispersed in various similar categories (e.g.: "healthy and just" and "green and just"). This method of constantly adding new codes also resulted in a less thorough data collection for the nonprofits surveyed in the beginning of the process. Relating to some codes' tenuous connection to their category, a few of the descriptors in the "Solidarity Economy" categories, such as "horizontal collaboration" and "resource sharing", are very broad and can be also applied to neoliberal capitalism in certain contexts.

A final limitation of this study concerns the small number of groups sampled. There are hundreds of active grassroots EJ groups in the United States, I only surveyed 40 of them. Thus, this analysis can only serve to suggest possible trends in the three coalitions and their members.

This project was subject to my personal interpretation and does not account for all of the rhetoric and mechanisms for change used by these coalitions nor does it reflect the entirety of the Environmental Justice Movement.

ANALYSIS

Economic Solution

Codes:

Green Economy (GE)	Clean Environment (CE)
Green Jobs (GJ)	Clean Economy (CEC)
Just Transition (JT)	Clean energy (CEN)
Grassroots Economies (GRE)	Solidarity with civil society organizations (SCO)
Resident Vision of community/economy (RVC)	Anti-Market-based solutions (AMBS)
Solidarity Economy (SE)	Anti-green economy (AGE)
New Economy (NE)	Green and sustainable (GS)
New Paradigm (NP)	Inclusion of environmental externalities (EE)
Anti-Capitalist (AC)	Equitable and Local (EL)
Economic Opportunity for all (EO)	Regional Economy (RE)
Job Equity (JEQ)	Healthy and sustainable (HS)
Local Economy (LE)	Long-term Employment (LTE)
Calling for a New System (systemic change) (CNS)	Economic Justice (EJ)
Transition away from Fossil Fuel economy (TFF)	Local Labor (LL)
Need Changes in current economy (NC)	Invest in Human Capital (IHC)
Safe jobs (SJ)	Precautionary Principle (PP)
Local Jobs (LJ)	Green and Just (GJ)
Just and sustainable (JS)	Sustainable Business (SB)
Clean and just (CJ)	Immigration Reform (IR)
Sustainable Development (SD)	Living wage/family supporting job (LW)
Safe and healthy (HSE)	Renewable Energy (RE)
Community Resiliency (CR)	Sustainable Economic Development (SED)
Government Accountability (GA)	Energy Efficiency (ENE)
Anti-Imperialist (AI)	Community protection (COMP)
People over Profits (POP)	

Table 3. Economic Solution Coding Results

Code	Occurrence in Organizations' Rhetoric
Community Resiliency (CR)	22
Living Wages"/"Family-supporting jobs (LW)	17
Resident-driven Vision of Community/economy(RVC)	16
Systemic Changes Needed in "Current Economy" (CNS)	16
Local Economy	14
Transition away from Fossil Fuels (TFF)	14
Just and Sustainable (JS)	13
People Over Profits (POP)	12
Healthy and Sustainable (HS)	11

Out of the 40 organizations surveyed, the most common discourses used for economic visions included the need for an economic model that features community resiliency (CR), living wages (LW), and a resident-driven vision for a new economy (RVC). Regarding interesting findings, five groups advocated for an anti-imperialistic new economy, seven nonprofits used the phrase "people over profits", four expressed sentiments of "anti-capitalism", and four organizations asserted the need to adopt a "Solidarity Economy" framework.

Oppression Terminology

Codes:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Institutionalized (structural) Racism (IR) | Racial Justice (RJ) |
| Environmental Racism (ER) | Decolonization (D) |
| Other Oppressions (classism, sexism, etc.) (OO) | Frontline Communities (FC) |
| People of Color (POC) | Multi-racial (MR) |
| Immigrant Rights (IMR) | Indigenous Rights (INR) |
| Low-income communities (LC) | |

Table 4. Oppression Terminology Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations' Rhetoric
People of Color (POC)	30
Low-income Communities (LC)	23
Other Oppressions; intersectionality (OO)	15
Immigrants/Immigrant Rights (IMR)	13
Racial Justice (RJ)	10
Institutional/structural racism (IR)	10
Environmental Racism (ER)	11
Decolonization (D)	9
Subaltern Consciousness; advocacy to investigate community's own oppression (SC)	9
Frontline Communities (FC)	6

The most common descriptors about membership and oppression included: “people of color” and “low-income communities”. The code “other oppressions”, referring to an explicit anti-oppression framework or the consideration for other kinds of social oppression (e.g.: gender, nationality, etc.), was the third most common description. An intriguing discovery in the oppression terminology category concerned the relative significant occurrence of “decolonization” (9) as compared to the code tally of historically popular term, “environmental racism” (11). The majority of incidences of “decolonization” were featured in the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance-affiliated organizations’ rhetoric. The presence of decolonization discourse may suggest that some groups of the GGJ coalition are adopting a strategic shift away from the liberal “environmental justice” frame to discourse that features more explicit diagnosis.

Mechanisms for Change

Codes:

- Policy/Voting (PV)
- Direct Action (DA)
- Coalitions/Networks (CN)
- Training (work, leadership) (T)
- Educational Outreach (EO)
- Community-driven Projects (CP)
- Critical Education (CE)
- Conferences (C)
- Litigation (L)
- Policy Analysis (PA)
- Community Organizing (CO)
- Media (M)
- General Research (GR)
- Academic Scholarship (AS)
- Participatory Research (PR)
- Professional Science Research (“expert”) (PSR)
- Pollution Monitoring (PM)
- Cultural Expression/Art) (CA)
- Technical Assistance (TA)
- Youth Development (YD)
- Leadership Development (LD)
- Administrative Complaints (AC)

Table 5. Mechanisms for Change Coding Results

Code	Occurrence in Organizations’ Rhetoric
Policy Change/Voting Power(PV)	33
Trainings (T)	29
Leadership Development (LD)	29
Coalition-building/Networking (CN)	28
Nonviolent Direct Action (DA)	22
Technical Assistance (TA)	20
Critical/Political/Popular Education (CE)	19
Conferences (C)	15
Participatory Research (PR)	15
Community Projects (CP)	13

The most common mechanisms for change cited were voter empowerment for policy change, trainings, leadership development, and coalition building. Generally, the majority of organizations hosted trainings about community organizing with the intention of empowering people to become involved in policy change. Other trainings focused on political education and the development of specific skills, such as gardening, which aligns more closely with Peña’s focus on cultivating local capacity and restoring place-based cultural autonomy (Peña, 2005).

The combination of trainings, leadership development, coalition building, and popular education of the Climate Justice Alliance, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, and the California Environmental Justice Alliance-affiliated organizations may illustrate tactics to simultaneously build local community assets and strive for policy change through the electoral political system.

The importance of networking and conferences is evident in the code scores of the websites affiliated with the Climate Justice Alliance and the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance. Nonprofits’ involvement in the series of Climate Justice Alliance-hosted “Our Power” conferences was highlighted on several groups’ web pages. The use of conferences, political education, and skill-sharing to enrich these three coalitions’ campaign strategies also possibly demonstrates that groups are connecting their struggles on a national scale in order to collectively reclaim politics and economics.

Relationship with the State

Codes:

Perception of the State:

High gov’t collaboration (HGC)

Some gov’t collaboration (SGC)

Low gov’t collaboration (LGC)

Tone for Describing Relationship with the Government:

Neutral (Neu)

Negative (Neg)

Mixed (M)

Positive (P)

Table 6. Relationship with the State Coding Results

Code	Occurrence in Organizations’ Rhetoric
Negative (NEG)	28
Neutral (NEU)	5
Mixed (MIXED)	7
Positive (POS)	0
High interest in Government Collaboration (HGC)	26
Some interest in Government Collaboration (SGC)	9
Low interest in Government Collaboration (LGC)	5

Out of the 40 organizations surveyed, the majority of nonprofits depicted a negative or mixed attitude toward the government and highlighted the State’s neglect and lack of adequate action on their behalf. The highest occurrence of “negative” rhetoric was recorded in the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance-affiliated nonprofits, while the Climate Justice Alliance members scored the highest code occurrence of “neutral” and “mixed”. Regardless of their tone toward the government, the majority of groups indicated a strong desire to collaborate and engage in local and national politics. Many organizations often framed their desire to work with the government in the context of reclaiming their rights to the political system and achieving better representation as low-income, communities of color.

Solidarity Economy Rhetoric

Codes:

- “Civic Engagement” (CE)
- “Community Power”(CP)
- Gender Equity (GE)
- Prison Justice (PJ)
- Anti-Police Brutality (APB)
- Anti-corporate Power (ACP)
- Indigenous Recognition/rights/ sovereignty (IR)
- “Intergenerational” (I)
- Border Justice (BOJ)
- Vertical Integration (VI)
- Subaltern consciousness (understanding the roots of their oppression..) (SC)
- Anti-Criminalization (ACC)
- “Ecofeminism” (EF)
- “Food Justice” (FJ)
- Community Resiliency Plans (CRP)
- Anti-bio-colonialism (BC)
- “Prior consent” (PC)
- Decision-making Empowerment (DE)
- Cultural Recognition/Protection (CR)
- “Democratic Power”(DP)
- “Ecological Sustainability” (ES)
- “Autonomy”/ “Self-determination”(A)
- “Collective Action” (CA)
- “Climate Justice” (CJ)
- “People Power” (PP)
- “Solidarity with..” (S)
- “Bottom-Up” – (BU)
- Transparency (T)
- “Ecological Justice” (EJ)
- “Social Justice” (SJ)
- Opposition to ‘market-based solutions’ (OMS)
- “Mutual Benefit” (MB)
- Anti-militarization (AMI)
- Reclaiming Space and Recognition (RSR)
- Immigrant Rights (IMR)
- Reparations for historical oppression (REP)
- Colonization of Periphery (COP)
- Investment in Local Economy (ILE)
- “Multi-ethnic” (ME)
- Cultural food traditions (CFT)
- Lack of trust in state/democratic processes (LTD)
- Campaigns about Criminalization (CC)
- Against Privatization (AP)
- Traditional Knowledge (TK)
- Right to Know (RTK)
- Food sovereignty (FSV)
- Anti-neoliberalization (ANE)
- Restorative justice (REJ)

Table 7. Solidarity Economy Rhetoric Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations’ Rhetoric
------	--

Autonomy (A)	28
Cultural Recognition/protection (CR)	26
Social Justice (SJ)	24
Ecological Sustainability (ES)	24
Community Power (CP)	20
Investment in Local Economy (ILE)	19
Democratic Power (DP)	17

Regarding SE rhetoric, many groups contained discourses about autonomy and the right to self-determination. The second most common theme in the website text was the desire for cultural protection and recognition accompanied by a range of tactics, from anti-gentrification campaigns to advocacy for cultural competency trainings for government agencies.

Grassroots nonprofits associated with the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance scored the highest for codes in the “Solidarity Economy rhetoric” category, featuring 175 incidences, while CJA scored second highest with a 132 code score. The highest tallies in the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance category related to the themes of autonomy, solidarity, anti-corporate power, anti-militarization, reclaiming space, and investment in local economies. Similar to the strong presence of anti-capitalist discourse in Grassroots Global Justice members, four GGJ-affiliated organizations also explicitly cited the “Solidarity Economy” and “anti-neoliberal” positions.

SE Mechanisms for Change

Codes:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Cooperatives (C) | Micro-enterprise Development (MED) |
| Public Participation (PUP) | Local food production (LFP) |
| Decentralized energy production (DEP) | Community Mapping (CM) |
| Horizontal Collaboration (coalitions) (HC) | Community Gardens (CG) |
| Consensus Decision-making (CD) | Local Business Development (LBD) |
| Resource (information, services) Sharing (RS) | Anti-mixed zoning; land use democracy (AMZ) |
| Solidarity organizing (SO) | Decentralized organizational structure (DOS) |
| Democratic Participatory Decision-making (DPD) | Unions; worker centers (U) |
| Local Control of Commons (LCC) | Local Climate Adaptation Plan (LCAP) |
| Community Asset Development (CAD) | Community Resiliency plan (CRP) |

Table 8. Solidarity Economy Mechanisms for Change Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations' Rhetoric
Horizontal Collaboration (HC)	38
Resource Sharing (RS)	30
Solidarity Organizing (SO)	21
Democratic Participatory Decision-making (DPD)	18
Local Food Production (LFP)	17
Local Control of the Commons Campaigns (LCC)	15

In general, the sample contained economic mechanisms for change aligning more with the SE framework than with neoliberal strategies. Among the 40 groups, the most common SE strategies included: horizontal collaboration, resource sharing, solidarity organizing, local food production, campaigns for local control of the commons, and democratic participatory decision-making. As noted earlier, these strategies are also used within capitalism, yet I argue these organizations' strategies align more strongly with the Solidarity Economy because their tactics also reflected SE ideology.

Connecting to the prominent themes of self-determination and autonomy, many organizations engaged in community asset development by creating local gardens and campaigning for community-controlled resources, such as local, democratically governed energy generators and water supply systems. For example, Black Mesa Water Coalition, a target group supported by the technical assistance of the Climate Justice Alliance, created a toolbox document about local entrepreneurship and highlighted the power of cooperatives to generate local revenue apart from extractive industries (Schmidt, p. 13). Black Mesa Water Coalition also stated in a newsletter that they are in the process of constructing community gardens in order to increase food sovereignty, health, and the reclamation of their traditional cultural practices (Schmidt).

Some of these strategies may relate to Peña’s theory of autonomy in EJ as it advocates “...a focus on autonomy-based struggles for the sustenance of right livelihoods through self-government of environmental management in local places” and its emphasis on re-adopting indigenous knowledge (Peña, 2005, p.1748).

Other Rhetoric

Codes:

State neglect Rhetoric (SN)	Disaster Preparedness (DP)
Government and Industry Accountability (GIA)	Fair Trade Advocacy (FTA)
Anti-green washing (AGW)	Proactive; affirmative (P)
Anti-carbon trading (ACT)	Challenge mass media (CMM)
Advocacy of green technology/chemistry (AGT)	Fundraising Equity among Nonprofits (FEN)
Proactive; affirmative (P)	

Table 9. Other Rhetoric Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations’ Rhetoric
Call for Government and Industry Accountability (GIA)	32
State Neglect (SN)	24
Proactive (P)	15
Anti-Carbon Trading (ACT)	7
Precautionary Principle (PP)	7
Anti-Green Washing (AGW)	6

Demanding accountability from government and industry actors, expressing grievance about State neglect, and using the term “proactive” were the three most common codes from the “Other Rhetoric” category. In most contexts, the grassroots groups used the term “proactive” to describe their efforts to build community resilience in spite of industry abuse, government inaction, and, in some cases, the failure of the electoral political system. This use of “proactive” was often framed as an act of “taking matters into their own hands”. One can argue that the

application of this rhetoric aligns with Peña’s emphasis on working independently from the government in order to achieve community resiliency (Peña, 2005).

Other Strategies

Codes:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Green Space Campaigns (GS) | Zero Waste/Recycling Programs (ZRP) |
| Campaigns for Public Amenities (CPA) | Fundraising Sustainability Campaign (FSC) |
| Open Space Campaigns (OSC) | Campaigns for Public Amenities (CPA) |
| Alternative Transit (carpools) (AT) | Redevelopment/remediation of certain site (RE) |
| Permaculture systems (grey water, etc.) (PS) | Health and Wellness programs (HW) |
| Green Zones (GZ) | Community Resiliency Plan/Climate adaptation (CRP) |
| Transit Access Campaigns (TAC) | Preventing/closing Pollution Sites (PPS) |
| Clean Power Campaigns (CPC) | Reduce GHGs Campaigns (RGC) |
| Transformation of Brownfield Sites (TBS) | Affordable Housing campaigns (AHC) |
| Anti-gentrification Campaigns (AG) | Anti-criminalization campaigns (ACC) |

Table 10. Other Mechanisms for Change Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations’ Rhetoric
Preventing/closing Pollution Sites (PPS)	22
Redevelopment/remediation of certain site (RE)	14
Affordable Housing Campaigns (AHC)	11
Transit Accessibility/Affordability Campaigns (TAC)	11
Zero Waste Programs (ZRP)	10
Green Space Campaigns (GS)	10
Climate Change Community Resiliency Plans (CRP)	10
Anti-Criminalization Campaigns	9
Open Space Campaigns (OS)	8
Anti-Gentrification Campaigns (AG)	7
Reduce Greenhouse Gases Campaigns (RGC)	7

The three most popular discourses for the “Other Strategies” portion included: preventing or closing pollution sites, advocating for the redevelopment or remediation of certain sites, and organizing affordable housing campaigns. Relating back to self-determination rhetoric, anti-

gentrification and anti-criminalization campaigns were also fairly common in the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance-affiliated nonprofits. The text of these organizations often featured strong sentiments about neglect and distrust of government agencies, citing grievances about police brutality, the prison industrial complex, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

Neoliberal Rhetoric

Codes:

Market-based solutions (MS)

Individualism (I)

Individual-based solutions, rhetoric (IS)

Consumer Power (CP)

Smaller Gov't Interference (SMG)

Competition (C)

Sustainable growth (SG)

Table 11. Neoliberal Rhetoric Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations' Rhetoric
Consumer Power (CP)	1
Sustainable GDP Growth (SG)	1
Smaller Government (SGO)	0
Competition (C)	1
Advocacy for Free Market problem-solving (MM)	0

In general, there was little presence of neoliberal rhetoric. Though consumer power, sustainable GDP growth, and competition were present in two groups' content, in contrast, some organizations stated explicit aversion to neoliberal policies and economics, also advocating against the "green-washing movement". Further, a couple of nonprofits stated explicit disinterest in "market-based solutions".

Neoliberal Mechanisms for Change

Codes:

Market-based solutions (MS)

Sustainable business development (SBD)

Quantifying EJ communities (QEJ)

Green Training Programs (GTP)

Social entrepreneurship (SE)

Green Jobs (GJ)

Home Retrofits (HR)

Table 12. Neoliberal Mechanisms for Change Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Occurrences in Organizations' Rhetoric
Sustainable Business Development (SBD)	24
Market-based Solutions (MS)	21
Individual Behavioral Change (IS)	17
Green Job Training Programs (GTP)	14
Campaigns for Creation of Green Jobs (GJ)	6
Energy Efficiency Home Retrofits (HR)	3

Sustainable business development, market-based solutions, and individual behavioral change were the most popular neoliberal mechanisms for change adopted by these grassroots nonprofits. While the majority of organizations used the term the “green economy” in their visions for a new economy, the Indigenous Environmental Network condemns the idea, expressing the concept is a capitalist scam (“Carbon Trading”, 2014; “End WTO”, 2013). It is difficult to draw conclusions about the high occurrence of advocacy for a “green economy” because each group administers a unique definition of this term.

Political Approach

Codes:

Reformist (REFORM) = more willing to work with existing government structure, economy, market-based and policy solutions

Radical (RAD) = primarily emphasize community capacity development, lack of trust in gov't, right to self-efficacy, local economies, SE principles

Table 13. Political Approach Coding Results

Code	Evaluation of Political Strategy
Radical Approach (RAD)	10
Reformist Approach (REFORM)	12
Mixed Approach; both radical and reformist elements (MIXED)	18

The classification of the “radical” and “reformist” political approaches used in this discourse analysis were based on the definitions implied in Pena (2005) and Benford’s (2005) calls to re-radicalize the Environmental Justice Movement. According to Benford (2005), the radical approach is defined by the desire to work predominantly autonomously from federal and state governments. This framework generally questions the efficacy of using the “Master’s tools” and instead favors developing community resilience through local organizing and collaboration (Pena, 2005; Benford, 2005). The radical frame expresses that social progress stems from developing local capacity via networks and resource sharing. In this analysis, the term radical was also used according to another definition in order to characterize organizations’ rhetoric that addresses the root cause of issues and demands systemic change. Defined broadly, organizations categorized as “reformist” view policy change within the legal system as an effective strategy toward progress in the EJM and do not denounce the use of the “Master’s tools” (Benford, 2005; Peña, 2005). Reformist organizations achieve policy change and improved political representation through voter empowerment, campaigns for specific measures, and filing environmental lawsuits and administrative complaints.

The results were fairly balanced, with the majority of organizations using a mixed approach adopting both radical and reformist strategies and rhetoric. The nonprofit that aligned most strongly with Peña’s idea of “autonomy” was the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement due to its advocacy for decolonization and Afrikan sovereignty (“Why we say “New Afrikan”, 2015; Why we say “free the land!”, 2015). In support for the notion that a mixed approach is necessary, the nonprofit featuring the most radical discourses, the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement, also advocated using the electoral political system to achieve change (Davie, 2014). This trend of

adopting a mixture of radical and reformist rhetoric and strategies reflects Anthony's call for a collaborative inside-outside approach in the Environmental Justice Movement (Anthony, 2005).

DISCUSSION

I will present the discussion of my analysis by first introducing the similarities between the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) and the Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) as discovered in my literature review. I will continue by describing my case study of an EJ nonprofit actively implementing a Solidarity Economy and relate the common discourse of "Just Transition" (as used by the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and the Climate Justice Alliance) to Solidarity Economy strategies. Following, I will relate common SE discourses and mechanisms for change in the nonprofits' economic rhetoric with Peña's theory of autonomy (Peña, 2005). Concerning scholars' question about the "Master's tools" (Benford, 2005; Peña, 2005), I will address the value of hybrid political approaches and offer possible explanations for the trend of EJ organizations using radical rhetoric and reformist tactics through identifying possible barriers to radicalism.

The Solidarity Economy Movement and the Environmental Justice Movement

It is evident that the Solidarity Economy Movement (SEM) and the Environmental Justice Movement (EJM) in the United States possess some strong connections due to their similarities in ideological frameworks, mechanisms for change, and bodies of leadership. Both movements were born out of civil resistance against economic and environmental injustice and primarily led by communities of color. Additionally, both movements advocate an anti-oppression framework and feature discourses aligning with anti-capitalism. Demonstrating solidarity with marginalized communities abroad, the EJM and SEM also relate their members'

collective subaltern consciousness to rhetoric about global solidarity. In relation to Peña's concept of "autochthonous ecosystem management", activists of the SE strive to use horizontal collaboration, resource sharing, and community asset development in order to strengthen local community capacity without extensive dependence on government action (Pena, 2005, p. 1608). As illustrated in the discourse analysis, several EJ organizations are using similar SE strategies to develop local economic and political resilience.

The "Solidarity Economy" and "Just Transition"

Though only four nonprofits explicitly referenced the Solidarity Economy, all groups are incorporating some aspects of its rhetoric and mechanisms for change into their work. The most noteworthy nonprofit implementing an SE framework was the California Environmental Justice Alliance's San Francisco group, People Organizing to Demand Economic and Environmental Rights (PODER). Regarding their efforts to create a Solidarity Economy in San Francisco, PODER states that their organization "...envisions worker-owner cooperatives, social enterprises, community currencies, consumer coops, community banks, worker centers, and other solidarity-based economic practices" ("Sowing Seeds, Growing Justice, ReStoring Community", p.11). PODER values the SE model because it grants the freedom to

...recognize our individual and collective assets, redefine the value of our ideas and labor, provide dignified working conditions, instill democratic decision-making, and invest in the resiliency of our local neighborhoods. ("Sowing Seeds, Growing Justice, ReStoring Community", p.11)

Far more pervasive than the explicit reference to the SE was the use of the phrase "Just Transition" as defined by the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and the Climate Justice Alliance. The Climate Justice Alliance explains that their "Our Communities" campaigns will

build new economies through a “Just Transition” featuring “...new sources of livelihood including recycling plants, local food production, ecological remediation, community owned energy systems...” (“Climate Justice Alliance Convening”, para. 5). I argue these strategies for a “Just Transition” correlate well with those of the Solidarity Economy model because they focus on localized environmental management, job creation, and food production.

Relating back to SE rhetoric, within a Grassroots Global Justice Alliance document delineating their campaign goals for 2015, the organization emphasized the need to reconnect with organizations already implementing a “Just Transition”, and mentioned a nonprofit called “Cooperation Jackson” (“Get it done!”, 2014, p.5). Upon reviewing the website of Cooperation Jackson, the nonprofit describes their mission as “...building a solidarity economy in Jackson, Mississippi, anchored by a network of cooperatives and other worker-owned, democratically self-managed enterprises” (“Mission and Purpose”, para.1). Thus, the fact that the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance actively seeks to learn from a nonprofit building a Solidarity Economy to inform their “Just Transition” model strengthens my claim that certain EJ groups are adopting SE rhetoric and strategies in their pursuit for economic justice.

Visions for a New Economy: Reclaiming Rights and Community Resiliency

In framing their visions for a new economy, most nonprofits expressed a desire for community resiliency, cultural recognition, and self-determination. The majority of grassroots groups advocated for the general reclamation of political space. Nonprofits featuring more radical rhetoric often contextualized the idea of cultural recognition as reclaiming one’s culture back from the exploitation of white people. Within a *Huffington Post* article titled “From Climate Oppression to 21st Century Leadership: What Will the New Black Economy Look Like?”, William Copeland, a member of the East Michigan Environmental Action Council and member

of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, defined the reclamation of black culture as an essential aspect of the next economy. Regarding the section of the article titled “Healing our Culture”, Copeland writes,

Our culture is a multi-billion dollar industry because it is powerful and it has the ability to change lives. Let's reclaim our culture from being a profit extracting mechanism for others to being our channel for healing, expression, and institution building. (Copeland, 2015, para. 12)

Related to cultural recognition, several nonprofits' engagement in solidarity organizing with marginalized communities abroad was also a common SE theme in the analysis. More specifically, many nonprofits connected their local struggle to reclaim economic and environmental rights as acting in solidarity with nations colonized by the First World. Relating to these discourses, PODER's vision for new economy acknowledges the need for global solidarity,

...the transformation will take more than our neighborhoods or the city or even the nation...the journey begins at home and that by organizing at home and in solidarity with communities across the country and world, we can rebuild a new economy in the hands of our peoples. (“Sowing Seeds, Growing Justice, ReStoring Community”, p.12)

Almost all groups' rhetoric possessed a demand for their community's right to self-determination, whether employing direct action to close a pollution site or developing food security through the cultivation of local gardens. In cases where organizations facilitated anti-criminalization and anti-gentrification campaigns, their commentaries stated distrust in the government, yet their rhetoric framed their approach as reclaiming their rights despite oppressive policies and programs. A few organizations further related this discourse to their shared subaltern consciousness and the use of solidarity as means to counter the state's “divide and conquer”

strategy that often fractionalizes social justice struggles (“Organizing”, para. 5). San Francisco’s Causa Justa/Just Cause group featured a call to action advocating for their communities to resist this state tactic by building “black and brown unity” (“Organizing”, para. 5). Related to the fragmentation of social movements, some EJ scholars’ discouragement of using the “Master’s tools” were not mirrored in the results of the discourse analysis. Rather, the majority of groups employed a combination of primarily radical rhetoric and reformist approaches to change.

Radicalism, Reformism, and the Master’s House

Many members of the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance and the Climate Justice Alliance featured the same radical (systemic-oriented and often anti-capitalist) rhetoric and still pursued reformist approaches (policy advocacy). Additionally, most of the organizations surveyed framed their relationship to the state as negative and still advocated for solutions that require strong collaboration with the government. Benford (2005) and other scholars note the discrepancy between EJ groups’ radical rhetoric and their reformist approaches, yet, I argue that reformist approaches should not be polarized from the radical and disregarded as detrimental to true progress.

Several organizations are applying some of Peña’s “autochontomous management” strategies to develop community resiliency alongside collaboration with the government (Peña, 2005, p. 1608). For example, in addition to building campaigns based on voter empowerment and policy change, San Diego’s Environmental Health Coalition also provides SALTA leadership programs to develop community health and skills sharing (“SALTA”, 2011). I argue that some groups are applying both radical and reformist rhetoric and mechanisms for change collaboratively in order to enact systemic change in the Environmental Justice Movement. While applying autonomy-based methods to cultivate community capacity through building place-

based economies, many groups also using reformist mechanisms such as hosting leadership trainings focused on policy campaigns. Even if nonprofits' efforts only align with Peña's (2005) radical tactics to address local needs or only with reformist strategies based on formal legal frameworks, these roles are still invaluable to the movement, especially when united under coalition membership. As EJ activist Carl Anthony emphasizes, the EJM needs an inside-outside approach (Anthony, 2005). It is also possible that some organizations may internally align with more radical views and present themselves as strictly reformist in order to survive in their respective political climates.

Radical Rhetoric and Reformist Strategies: Possible Barriers to Radical Activism

Several scholars express that the “Master’s tools will never dismantle the Master’s House” (Benford, 2005, Peña, 2005, Lorde, 1984). However, there are many reasons why nonprofits cannot be as radical in their rhetoric and strategies as they would like to be. In light of the nonprofit industrial complex, the historical criminalization of people of color, and the militarization of the police state, one may consider adopting a more empathetic view while assessing reformist approaches and rhetoric. In my assessment of why groups cannot pursue more radical strategies, I have no answer to this question as contextualized in Peña’s definition of “radical” (the development of local, cultural, and political autonomy from the state) (Peña, 2005). Thus, for the purpose of this discussion, I break away from my previous definition of radical tactics as defined by Peña’s theory of autonomy and apply the term “radical” in a different sense. Instead, I will attempt to examine the possible barriers to adopting radical activist tactics for nonprofits in Leftist social movements. In this context, my use of the term “radical” is based on scholar Steve D’Arcy’s (2009) definition and pertains to forms of activism traditionally viewed as radical action (e.g.: direct action, civil disobedience, property damage, riots, armed

struggle) (D'Arcy, 2009). D'Arcy (2009) expresses that radical tactics in activism strive to achieve change through widespread social mobilization from the bottom-up (D'Arcy, 2009).

While describing radical activist tactics D'Arcy writes,

This path seeks to connect with masses of people, although not by means of that most domesticated mode of mass participation – electoral politics – which is favored by liberals and social democrats, but instead by means of building grassroots protest movements, in which people participate by taking to the streets in the fight for social justice. (D'Arcy, 2009, para. 8)

Drawing upon Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assertion that riots are the “language of the unheard”, D'Arcy also argues that the use of more radical, militant protest tactics are beneficial for democracy because they create spaces for oppressed groups to exercise collective agency and spark social dialogue through disruption. Most importantly, he argues that such civil unrest is often historically and morally justified (D'Arcy, 2014, para. 1). In the context of the Environmental Justice Movement and other Leftist social movements, such militancy in more radical forms of protest may not be applicable to the long-term goals and sustainability of nongovernmental organizations due to influence of the nonprofit industrial complex (Rodriguez, 2007).

While many EJ nonprofits adopt radical rhetoric, the widespread use of radical tactics may be incompatible to organizational sustainability due to neoliberal policies. Under the tactic of privatization, the onus of providing social services is placed on nonprofits while the neoliberal strategy of devolution inadvertently allows local governments to incorporate personal value systems in determining which programs to fund (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012; Gilmore, 2007). For nonprofits, privatization manufactures an unhealthy dependence on government contracts

and devolution increases organizations' vulnerability to the discrimination of local governments (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). Therefore, these two elements may encourage nonprofit groups to avoid confrontational radical rhetoric and strategies in order to remain financially stable (Hasenfeld & Garrow, 2012). On a related note, the increasingly limited scope of politics represented in the two-party system and mass media also may encourage reformism as it may be considered the most strategic option to garner public support for movements.

Duggan (2003) attributes the transition of LGBTQ movement discourses about radical queer liberation to hetero-normative, reformist narratives to neoliberalism and the U.S.' Right-centric spectrum of politics (Duggan, 2003). Regarding this political shift and fundraising restraints, she writes, "Following the national political culture to the right, and pressed by the exigencies of fundraising for survival, gay civil rights organizations have adopted neoliberal rhetoric and corporate decision-making models" (Duggan, 2003, p. 45). The dominant neoliberal ideas of justice Duggan (2003) cites, such as the advocacy of "equality" and "colorblindness", coupled with the unstable funding dynamics for the nonprofits under neoliberalism, may sequester radical rhetoric from reaching wide audiences without strong ideological or organizational resistance (Duggan, 2003, p. 45). Apart from neoliberal restrictions over nonprofits, another possible barrier to radical tactics is the concern for community safety.

There exists an inherent danger in challenging many status quo norms, especially through radical rhetoric and mechanisms for change. This danger strongly intensifies if one belongs to a group marginalized by dominant society. Within an article relating police brutality to the nation's oppressive economy, Ed Whitefield of the "Fund for Democratic Communities" and affiliate of the Climate Justice Alliance, speaks to the intrinsic risk for communities of color in expressing

dissent to existing power relations. Whitfield draws a connection between police brutality and challenging the status quo of capitalism as he expresses,

There are some of us, like Mike Brown, that the wealthy and powerful have no place for...And if we are defiant, if we refuse to move out of the way, if we refuse to become invisible...if we assert our humanity instead, demanding to be noticed, refusing to comply, then we might be summarily executed—like Mike Brown, left lying in the street as a sign to others that we must obey. (Whitfield, 2014, para. 11-12)

Another potential barrier to radical activism relates to the state's historical antagonism toward communities of color and Leftist social movements. Furthermore, the United States' increasingly militarized police force and its propensity to criminalize activists of color may influence certain groups' desire to participate in radical strategies, such as riots. Two years ago, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) released a report titled "Take Back the Streets" illustrating how the militarization of police forces in the U.S. and abroad are sequestering individuals' right to protest (Deshman et al., 2013). Delineating on the abuse of power to control protests, the report lists some unethical police tactics as "...mass arrests, unlawful detentions, illegal use of force...the increased criminalization of protest movements, the denial of march permits..." (Deshman et al., 2013, p. 2).

People of color, especially young black men, are arrested and experience police brutality at an extremely disproportionately high rate; the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement states that an un-armed black man is shot every 28 hours (Eisen-Martin, 2012, p. 3). Thus, civil disobedience, a tactic where arrest is often expected, may not be appear as the most safe strategy in the face of a state that largely condones police murders. The government's adoption of certain punitive policies and programs may also increase the risks of employing radical tactics for undocumented

groups. The Obama administration's new Priority Enforcement Program (PEP) features the same dynamic of Secure Communities through fostering collaboration with local enforcement and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency (ICE) based on (misdemeanor) criminal charges, which may discourage some groups from engaging in radical social movement tactics due to fear of arrest and eventual detainment or deportation ("DHS Secretary", 2014). From communities in Ferguson protesting in the streets to Dreamers performing direct action at government offices, it is very crucial to note that, in spite of various current and historical risks associated with radicalism, radical activist tactics are extremely, courageously active.

Andre Damon (2015) further expresses that the United States' post-9/11 counter-terrorism policies and programs have exacerbated the government's "police state" presence and its influence over protestors (Damon, 2015, para.14). Current discourses about terrorism and the retrospective categorization of Leftist groups as "terrorist organizations" often obscure and inaccurately contextualize existing power dynamics to fit the lens of the dominant group. For example, in the 1940s and 1950s, black communities had to hide their participation in cooperative economics in order to avoid being associated with communism caused by the intimidating government surveillance of the Red Scare (Nembhard, 2014). In a society where the media defines Earth First activists' acts of property damage as "eco-terrorism", the fear of being regarded as a threat to national security could possibly discourage groups from participating in more militant, radical tactics. As I risk generalizing about the government, it is important to assert that the state may not necessarily create a safe environment for certain groups and Leftist social movements to militantly protest or exercise more radical rhetoric (e.g.: the FBI's assassination of Black Panther Fred Hampton).

Regardless of possible barriers for nonprofits to engage in radicalism, I must also recognize that many groups may choose reformist mechanisms for change simply because these strategies are the most effective. The use of radical and reformist rhetoric and strategies in Leftist social movements is extremely sensitive to various factors, including the stage in the development of a critical mass, the time in history, and the surrounding political environment. I believe that the nonprofits surveyed in this analysis are extremely knowledgeable about social movement theory and strategically apply their mechanisms for change and rhetoric according to their changing environments and stages in their respective campaigns. Concerning the need for reformist strategies, as previously expressed, the use of a legal framework to establish enforceable policy changes is imperative for the Environmental Justice Movement. For several issues, only policy reform can require accountability from government and industry actors in the struggle for economic and environmental justice. Additionally, the scale of reformist tactics proves very advantageous to any social movement; the successes of achieving statewide and national legislative changes can guarantee state action or least the intention of taking action. Reformist rhetoric and mechanisms for change possess a strategic place in the EJM, regardless if they internally align with radical ideology or not. The act of radicals disregarding the contributions of reformists (and vice versa) can fragment campaigns and create insular groups that diminish the power of any collective social movement. Regarding the divide between radical, liberals, and anarchists, D'Arcy (2009) expresses that such discriminatory divisions are detrimental to the creation of a unified anti-capitalist front and that these sects need to "meet people where they are at" in order to strategically expand the campaign (D'Arcy, 2009, para. 7).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on Benford (2005) and Peña's (2005) questions about the efficacy of using the "Master's tools", I admire these scholars' critical explorations and recommend academics conduct further research on the different strategies communities use to implement Peña's theory of autonomy in EJ (Peña, 2005). In light of various discussions about radical and reformist political approaches, I also recommend that future scholarship focus on the advantages of pluralistic strategies in the Environmental Justice Movement. Lisa Duggan (2009), in *The Twilight of Equality?*, describes how the conflict between class politics and identity politics in the progressive Left during the 1990s and early 2000s inadvertently advanced the neoliberal project (Duggan, 2003). Emphasizing the need to unify as a movement in spite of differing class and identity politics and the neoliberal manipulations of such identities, Duggan writes

Now, at this moment of danger and opportunity, the progressive left is mobilizing against neoliberalism and possible new or continuing wars. These mobilizations might become sites for factional struggles over the disciplining of troops, in the name of unity at a time of crisis and necessity. But such efforts will fail; the troops will not be disciplined, and the disciplinarians will be left to their bitterness (Duggan, 2003, p. 3)

Duggan highlights the interconnection between identity and class politics, arguing that favoring one kind of politics as more important than the other is detrimental to creating a united Leftist movement against neoliberalism (Duggan, 2003). Her perspective is important to consider while exploring the role of reformist and radical approaches in the EJM. Instead of denouncing liberal reformist strategies or disregarding radical Marxist theories, I believe there is a place for both in the Environmental Justice Movement. While questions about re-radicalizing the movement are extremely important, it might also be helpful to investigate the how radical and reformist

mechanisms for change and rhetoric can be strategically applied in planning national and international campaigns. Many organizations are already using this hybrid approach.

Regarding alternative economy movements, academics should explore how to ideologically bridge the Solidarity Economy and New Economy movements. There exist strong tensions about race, class, and privilege in different groups' advocacy for the Solidarity Economy and other alternative economic models. Lauren Hudson, a member of SolidarityNYC, an organization building a Solidarity Economy in New York City, wrote an article last year examining the racial tensions arising in the "New Economy" movement (Hudson, 2014). Recalling an anecdote about a woman of color whose local grocery store failed due to massive competition with a predominantly white grocery co-op and a lack of ally support, Hudson expressed,

What really defines the boundaries of the new economy, when the same voices are silenced both here and within capitalism?...who is this new economy for, when it continues to jeopardize economic resilience in communities of color? (Hudson, 2014, para. 3)

Noting the pervasiveness of racism in businesses associated with the "sharing economy", such as the racial discriminatory practices of Uber drivers, Hudson stresses activists of alternative economic models must incorporate a critical social justice lens into their work to prevent future inequity (Hudson, 2014, para. 10). Hudson's argument proves extremely important to burgeoning movements for cooperative economics in the United States, especially in consideration that some groups pursuing just economic models may not consider the difference between their intention and their actual impact. I fully agree with Hudson's (2014) call to action.

Future research should focus on developing effective strategies to politicize the membership of alternative economy movements that do not already feature an anti-oppression framework.

It is important to note that, though an organization may express it advocates a social justice focus, its daily operations and relationships may not perfectly demonstrate this vision. Within my own experiences engaging in Leftist activist organizations, it is fairly common for groups to explicitly advocate an anti-oppression framework and still allow oppressive power dynamics to manifest in organizational and interpersonal relationships in the group (eg.: patriarchy, white supremacy). In other words, an organization as a whole may view itself as advancing social justice, yet while engaging in meetings, all the white, cisgender male-identifying people occupy the majority of the space without reflecting on the political implications of this interpersonal behavior. All Leftist social movement organizations feature components in which they can improve and thus, scholars may be able to contribute to the growth of EJ organizations' creation of new economies through examining the alignment of the group's ideals with their operating structure and day-to-day activities.

Relating to the mainstream environmental movement, scholars should examine strategies on how to incorporate a social justice value system into this movement. Various EJ scholars and activists criticize the mainstream environmental movement as rooting their activity from a place of privilege (Valentine, 2013). They argue the mainstream environmental movement primarily consists of white environmental groups advocating for causes such as the conservation of wilderness, while various low-income, communities of color's environmental struggles often concern the fight for environmental health in their neighborhoods. I agree with their critiques. In light of the decreased amount of funding awarded to EJ groups versus mainstream environmental groups, scholars should investigate tactics for mainstream environmental nonprofits to integrate

and amplify a regard for social justice into their activities (Valentine, 2013; Faber, 2008; Brulle et al., 2007). As suggested by my one of my advisors, the adoption of a “climate justice” framework may prove the most effective means for mainstream environmental groups to adopt a more inclusive value system. The ideological frame of “climate justice” applied by certain groups, such as the Divestment Student Network (DSN), appeals to the mainstream environmental concern of climate change, yet relates the crucial aspect of justice to the fact that certain communities disproportionately bear the impact of energy extraction and climate change (“Fossil Fuel Divestment Student Network Principles”). Mainstream environmental groups often express their concern about climate change in prompting the question: “What kind of world will my grandchildren live in?” Nevertheless, these groups often fail to acknowledge that low-income communities and communities of color on a local and global scale suffer in this moment due to the extractive activities of “developed” nations and how they exercise their wealth. If mainstream environmental organizations are able to expand their frame to include consideration for social justice, one may argue these groups can strive to serve as allies to the EJM by using their public power to increase awareness about oppression in society.

CONCLUSION

My research question for this project stated, “How do grassroots environmental justice organizations’ rhetoric and mechanisms for change align with those of the neoliberal and Solidarity Economy frameworks?” More specifically, I asked, “Are grassroots EJ organizations pursuing a Solidarity Economy model?” This paper reflects that many grassroots EJ nonprofits are actively using SE rhetoric and mechanisms for change. Thus, my answer is “yes”.

Due to a diversity of environmental factors pressuring nonprofits to conform to neoliberal rhetoric and strategies, there exists good reason to investigate the influence of neoliberal

ideological hegemony over Leftist social movements. However, as I risk simplifying the complexities of U.S. race relations, social movements, and economics, I argue that my research question somewhat mirrors my own personal ignorance. Drawing upon Peña's (2005) critique, it is important to recognize that these nonprofits' discourses about autonomy and self-determination are place-based, complex, and should not be simplified nor romanticized – they must be assessed according to their historical context (Peña, 2005). Thus, unfamiliar with the extensive history of oppressed societies developing Solidarity Economics, especially black communities in the United States, my research question failed to fully recognize that capitalism has never equally benefited people of color as it has white people and that economic movements emphasizing community resilience and autonomy would be fairly common. Upon reflection, I am now aware that economic resistance is active and has been for centuries in spite of neoliberal, capitalist hegemony. In this very moment, the grassroots EJ nonprofits featured in this discourse analysis are enacting amazing systemic change.

In the face of environmental oppression, economic exclusion, and increasing vulnerabilities to climate change, this analysis provides evidence that several communities experiencing oppression in the United States are organizing to resist. Strategically choosing their rhetoric and mechanisms for change, specific environmental justice organizations led by communities of color are not only fighting toxic racism, the exploitation of their communities, and the appropriation of their cultures, they are also working to build community capacity and reclaim economic self-determination. This paper reflects the historical trend that grassroots groups, radical and reformist alike, are building coalitions for justice. Together, they are engaging in trainings, political education, policy advocacy, and the development of local community assets, building power in solidarity.

It is clear that capitalism is ecologically and ethically unsustainable. It is also evident that the political intentions and implications of certain government activities are morally questionable. Members of the Grassroots Global Justice alliance, the Climate Justice Alliance, and the California Justice Alliance are working inside and outside the “Master’s house” (Lorde, 1984, p. 2) in order to see this economy transform into one that prioritizes people over profits. In a time where economic and environmental crises appear to increase, each time with a greater intensity, some argue that the tipping point for a new paradigm quickly approaches. Dominant social groups may or may not choose to do the political consciousness work necessary to strive to serve as allies in the development of a new, just economy. Nevertheless, resistance to the structural violence inflicted by the state and capitalism will continue to persevere. For certain communities, the advocacy of a new economy is not a choice, it’s an act of self-defense (Hall, 2015). Living under a government that primarily fails to recognize its violent history and current oppressive practices, as informed by its residual colonizer mindset, for some, the advocacy of a new economy is not a choice, it’s a step toward self-preservation.

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