



New Mexico Environmental Law Center's Statement in Solidarity with Protestors

The events of the last weeks – which have their origins in the very beginning of our nation's history – have laid bare the inequities that are the mainstay of America. The state sponsored violence is vicious and jarring and has resulted in widespread popular resistance. The New Mexico Environmental Law Center unequivocally condemns police violence and stands in solidarity with the communities impacted by police violence and the Black Lives Matter movement.

The massive protest against police violence and systemic racism also provides a glimpse into the more mundane, but equally caustic, day to day violence that existing racist structures perpetuate. The daily machinery of oppression includes the wide array of environmental and public health laws that mediate how each of us relates to the larger global ecosystem.

While our nation's environmental laws are held up as a bastion of progressivism, they do not serve everyone equally. The environmental movement is rooted in the privilege of affluence and whiteness that has historically excluded communities of color.

We in the environmental movement are often the beneficiaries of the privileges that at the same time oppress our neighbors and allies. It would be easy for the Law Center to retweet a statement from a frontline organization or post something on our website expressing outrage at the latest incidents of state violence and then go about our lives. It's much more difficult and important to engage in meaningful and thoughtful evaluation of our place in the framework that perpetuates violence and oppression.

We believe, however, that only with a hard look at ourselves and the system we work in can we begin to really understand and resist the systemic racist structures that dictate who has clean water, air and land and who must pay the price for industrial "progress" that ostensibly benefits us all, but in reality only serves a few. At the Law Center, we acknowledge that we have benefited from the status quo and have begun the difficult and essential process necessary to become a more equitable and inclusive organization. We are having conversations both internally and with community partners to identify ways in which we may have perpetuated oppressive structures and find ways to address our shortcomings to become better partners with communities.

We also call on our white friends and colleagues to reject the easy tropes that "environmental laws protect everyone" or "governments are well meaning" and to truly examine our system of environmental law and policy and ask whether it also contributes to the day to day violence that communities of color live with. We call on our friends and colleagues to consider that environmentalism is more than protecting a scenic area for recreation or aesthetic beauty, but is also a fundamental struggle to ensure human and civil rights to the basic conditions necessary for survival and human dignity. We call on our white friends and colleagues to listen deeply to communities of color; to step up when called to, to step back when asked and to stand in solidarity no matter what.