

Story/Skillshare: Building Powerful Multiracial Coalitions and Engaging Unlikely Allies

February 6, 2020

Biographies of Presenters



Krystal Abrams is the Regenerative Ecosystems and Pesticide Manager at Beyond Toxics. She was raised in a Cherokee-Muscogee family in northern Florida. After graduating from a community college she embarked on a road trip across America which led her to settle in Eugene and study Environmental Sciences at the University of Oregon. During her time at the UO she collaborated with the McKenzie Watershed Council (MWC) and the McKenzie River Trust (MRT) to monitor and restore critical riparian habitat along the McKenzie River. After graduation, Krystal recruited and managed volunteers for the Walama Restoration Project, leading non-chemical environmental restoration work parties and nature hikes around the Eugene-Springfield Area. When she's not reaching out to advocate for environmental education and conservation, you can find her whipping up some speed on a nearby bike path or hiking and enjoying the great outdoors.



Pablo Alvarez is the Environmental Justice Organizer for Beyond Toxics and the NAACP. Pablo was born and raised in Guatemala City, until the age of 14. He came to the U.S. in pursuit of greater opportunities and an education which he obtained at the University of Oregon. The majority of Pablo's studies have mainly focused on human rights. Through life experiences in Guatemala and his work with refugees in South Africa, policy analysis in Washington, D.C. and paralegal work with immigrants in Springfield, OR, Pablo discovered a perverse pattern in which communities who had the least power and resources to stand up for their human rights, were the ones most impacted by environmental degradation and climate change. He is motivated and inspired by the work at Beyond Toxics and wishes to advance their mission and vision in the community. In a unique job-sharing relationship between organizational partners, Pablo also works part-time as an Environmental Justice organizer with the Eugene-Springfield NAACP. When he isn't out fighting for rights he is usually listening to music as he explores random sites on google maps. He plans to travel to them all one day."



Lisa Arkin is the Executive Director of the Beyond Toxics, providing innovative policy leadership and grassroots organizing for this statewide environmental justice organization since 2007. Under her guidance, Beyond Toxics embraced the principles of diversity and equity, and adopted an anti-racist ethos to become Oregon's first environmental justice organization. Arkin is dedicated to placing human rights and social justice at the forefront of all environmental protection and climate resilience policies. Beyond Toxics organized the first Oregon Environmental Justice Bus Tour, the first set of regional environmental justice forums and is currently preparing for Oregon's inaugural Environmental Justice Pathways Summit. She has served as appointed member of a number of commissions and workgroups, including Governor Brown's Cleaner Air Oregon Policy Advisory Committee, the Lane County Planning Commission and the State Pesticide Stewardship Partnership Advisory Committee. Arkin is the granddaughter of Russian Jewish immigrants who fled pogroms and persecution to pursue their dream of becoming farmers and dedicates herself to the values of *Tikkun Olam*, taking action to repair the world.



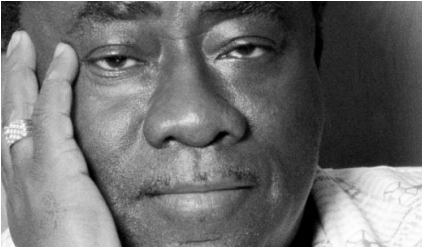
Willa Childress is an organizer with the Pesticide Action Network. Willa grew up on a small farm in rural Oregon. Her passion for environmental justice is deeply rooted in early experiences with ecological destruction, a rural affordable housing crisis, farmworker wage theft, and industry's exploitation of working class people. In 2014, she coordinated the Mesa de Conversacion project in her hometown to generate restorative dialogue between Latinx and white community members. Experiences interning at the Oregon State Legislature and MN-based org The Advocates for Human Rights fueled her interest in political organizing. Willa leads PAN's organizing and advocacy work in Minnesota, where the straddle between urban and rural spaces feels similar to her home state.



Deb Dorman is currently the campaign coordinator for Toxic Tators. Deb is a descendant from the Bois Forte band of Ojibwe in Minnesota. She completed nursing school in 1993 and worked in that field for 10 years. She also worked for the city of Fargo as the Native American Liaison to the Gladys Ray shelter where she dealt closely with the Native homeless population bringing guests medicine picking and to sweat lodges along with various other cultural activities. During this time Deb also organized several events for Idle No More, VDAY, and One Billion Rising campaign. She was an activist at NoDAPL Standing Rock with her daughter in 2016 and has spent a lot of time organizing on the ground. Deb is a proud mother of four beautiful children and loves to spend time in the Minnesota forests medicine picking and foraging with them.



Danna Smith is the founder of Dogwood Alliance. For over 20 years, she has been at the forefront of forest protection in the US, leading hard-hitting grassroots campaigns and organizing with front-line communities, negotiating ground-breaking forest protection commitments from some of the largest companies in the world and helping catalyze a global effort to stop the use of forests as fuel for generating electricity. In the last two years she co-authored a report with a Pulitzer-Prize winning climate scientist on US forests and the Climate Emergency and was a leading partner on the Justice First Tour across the South to build solidarity behind a call for 100% clean energy, forest protection and environmental justice. She is a leading voice connecting the dots between climate change, forest destruction and social justice and pushing for forest protection in the US at a scale necessary to meet the sustainability challenges of the 21st Century. She holds a law degree from Emory University.



Reverend Leo Woodberry is Executive Director of the New Alpha Community Development Corporation has a long history of combating racism and promoting justice. During a rash of African American church burnings in the 1990s throughout the South, he worked with the South Carolina Burned Church Restoration Coalition to bring the arsonists to justice and shut down the operations of the Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina. He has long worked to address issues of environmental racism and climate justice, first working with the African American Environmental Justice Action Network in the 1990's to organize community members around mercury contamination in fish and waterways from pollution from coal-burning power plants, an issue in his county where fish are subsistence food for low-income citizens. He was active in a coalition that prevented the construction of the Pee Dee coal plant, arguing that it would bring pollution and negative health impacts to the community while failing to deliver promised economic benefits and jobs. Rev. Woodberry has served on the Steering Committee of the Peoples Climate Movement and is nationally recognized as an environmental justice leader in the black church community. Rev. Leo Woodberry is currently pastor of Kingdom Living Temple in Florence, S.C. He is executive director of the nonprofit New Alpha Community Development Corporation, which is one of the dozens of local organizations across the South organizing the 2019 Justice First Tour. Rev. Woodberry is also the Environmental Justice Chair of the Sierra Club's Ready For 100 campaign.