

Now and Later

Ongoing Struggles in Environmental Justice.



This issue, we will be discussing some important campaigns against domineering ecology and the pacification of the movement. Something we often neglected to do in our first issue, which we will practice moving forward, is working to provide content, warnings and preface to our discussion.

Today we have a content warning that we will be discussing grave digging, corporate violence and state violence.

We also wanted to start providing a land acknowledgment and the start of our shows, which is also in a process of revision. So today we're recording on Ohio State's campus. The land that Ohio State occupies is the ancestral and contemporary territory of the Shawnee, Potawatomi, Delaware, Miami, Peoria, Seneca, Wyandotte, Ojibwe & Cherokee Peoples.

Specifically, the university resides on land, ceded in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville and the forced removal of tribes through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. But in saying that, I want to acknowledge that acknowledgment is just one step in recognizing and reckoning with U.S. history, and we need to go much further than solely acknowledgment.

So our opening land acknowledgment will likely change as we continue to learn and grow here on hot and bothered. We would like to welcome all readers to hold us accountable to that promise and be open to suggestions for change. We will also do the work of moving past acknowledgments into action.

So to recap on our last issue, we really set the stage of our time together. We discussed how important it is to base our discussion of any environmental justice related topics and the principles of abolition. And we talked a little bit about the “beginning of the environmental justice movement in the United States” Now we get to tie in our foundation with some real examples that dive a little bit deeper into the past, present and future environmental justice movement and feature our first interview.

We covered a lot of ground in the last print. If you remember, we covered the 1982 Warren County protest in North Carolina, which is one of the hallmark moments in E.J. movement U.S. history. But the Warren County protest was not the first or only of its kind at that time.

The movement resulted as a culmination of civil protests against environmental pollution across the United States, with demonstrations occurring in Triana, Alabama and a region known as Cancer Alley, Louisiana, in addition to Warren County. This accumulation of demonstrations really gave rise to the

environmental justice movement, but also at the same time a lot of organizations started popping up to sustain those fights.

As we talked about the academic roots of the environmental justice movement, it's important to recognize the cultural legacies of resistance that researchers have been studying. The fight against such systems of organizations have been going on since we started populating around agricultural sites, establishing the city states.

Some of the most drastic instances of these practices of domineering ecology stem from European colonizers enforcing agricultural techniques upon land they wish to facilitate settlements on. Over the years with strong black and indigenous resistance all over the colonies and an ever expanding crisis of biodiversity and climate change. Settlers were forced to accept the realities of their occupation. This resulted in settlers taking up actions on their own and or joining other existing camps of resistance around their respective regions. Horacio R. Trujillo observed

“The first major wave of direct actions carried out by radical environmentalists in the United States occurred in 1970, following the first Earth Day celebration. The activists included the Arizona Phantom, who dismantled railroad tracks and disabled equipment in an attempt to stop construction of a coal mine in the desert highlands; the Eco-Raiders, a group of male college students who caused \$500,000 in damage by burning billboards, disabling bulldozers, and vandalizing development projects in and around Tucson; the Fox, who plugged drainage pipes, capped factory smoke-stacks, and dumped industrial waste from a U.S. Steel plant into the Chicago offices of the company’s CEO; the Billboard Bandits, who toppled roadside advertisements in Michigan; and the Bolt Weevils, a group of farmers in Minnesota who disabled 14 electrical towers that were to be used for a new power line across the prairie”

In 1971, Greenpeace was founded to accelerate the movement of environmental justice and forms of direct action, with some of its splinter groups committing to more radical and transformative actions. These groups are thought to have inspired the founders of Earth First!, a collective founded on the principles of economic disruption as a tactic to make unsustainable industries unprofitable. While economic disruption was not a new tactic. Its time at the forefront of radical action was a dramatic shift in perspective for environmental politics, particularly in the face of settler political systems. The scene beforehand had been restricted to polite politics that often led to the perpetuation of extractive social, political and ecological frameworks.

The indigenous struggle against colonization and such frameworks and the

subsequent extractivism is an important foundation for where the movement is today. Focusing on fluid, internal structures, economic disruption and land based politics are just some of the more noticeable characteristics of black and indigenous resistance that are still alive in the milieu of radical environmentalism today, with neoliberal economics on the rise and states engaging in foreign intervention, securing extractive energy resources in global hegemony, more disruptive tactics have transferred from indigenous and black resistance for self-determination to the public imagination of European and American settler and environmentalist movements, meaning that the practice of disrupting trade and sabotaging cargo in the name of negating the forces that prevail over our autonomy has been woven through the history of black people in America and has been taken into the forefront throughout the past 50 to 80 years. Revolts carried out by enslaved folks was a tradition that was embarked on both the boats and in the daily life of working into the colonies, securing our own sense of autonomy outside of the Empire and plantation. The increasing BIPOC presence and the radical settings today has led to an increased attempt to escape the logic of the Anthropocene, the Anthropocene as the era defined by human domination of ecological processes. One particular reason radical black and indigenous resistance has always had a flavor of empire ending is simply because we were left with no other viable option for survival. With the state being one of the most complicit and active agents in the destruction of global biodiversity, planetary toxification and climate change, we must be able to analyze its role in the degradation of our planetary health.

The main reason that the state and market destroy everything that they touch is because they're based on an extractive ideology that aims to make a profit, which is rooted in settler colonialism, as we have talked about at length.

But this profit making does not come from nowhere. It comes at the expense of human lives. Laura Pulido of the University of Southern California defines this process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of a person as racial capitalism.

Pulido wrote that,

“the state refuses to implement meaningful initiatives in order to maintain racial capitalism. Capital does not have to actually address environmental justice issues because it knows there will be minor, if any, sanctions. Indeed, bureaucrats seek to avoid the anger of conservatives by not enforcing the law. The state is not about to dismantle this ‘ecological service’ that allows firms to remain competitive in the global marketplace. When we put together these two facts – the devaluation of people of

color, plus capital acting with legal impunity – environmental racism must be understood as state-sanctioned racial violence.”

This reality has definitely helped bolster acts of solidarity and led to an increase in environmental direct action. Such an understanding of the global powers also allows for change in perspective, especially in communities that have managed to, if not completely escape or ignore state violence, but benefit from it.

Centering of Nondirect Tactics

OK, now let's talk about how the environmental movement has been failing to achieve its goals. I mean, it's not a failure, but it's not a success. It's like an UN success or an UNfailure, but it's something and it's partially because of the co-optation by the state that we've been talking about, but it's also partially because of declines in really impactful direct actions that lead to social change. So what I mean when I say failure is that the environmental movement has to this point failed to stop rampant industrial pollution. The environmental movement in the United States saw its peak in the 1970s, when movement activists gathered by the millions to celebrate the first Earth Day in 1970. This sparked the formation of a bunch of organizations, some we spoke about, but it also sparked the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency.

You know, the EPA and the passing of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act and the subsequent Resource Conservation and Recovery Act in 1976. However, the movement has not seen many significant changes in environmental degradation since the passage of these policies.

Some scholars contend that the RCRA is a representation of the co-optation of the mainstream environmental movement by industrial actors. In fact, pollution has only increased in the U.S. since the peak of the environmental movement in the 1970s. The U.S. now produces 5 million kilotons of carbon emissions annually as compared to 4.3 million in 1970. So the U.S. environmental movement may be regarded as a failed social movement to this point. As environmental degradation is rampant and climate change has not been prioritized at the national policy level.

But leading up to the 1970s, Silent Spring made a huge wave, and the anti-toxics movement produced some policies and everyone was lit on Earth Day in 1970. Everyone was so excited about the blue marble picture and then it seemed like it just stopped.

For those who are unfamiliar, Silent Spring was Rachel Carson's environmental science book about the pesticide DDT, which finally pushed the U.S. government to intervene in the markets rampant production of poisons. You could argue that

they really never stopped producing that level of poison, and I would agree with you. But silent spring was a huge book for the movement in that time anyway. What happened?

Why do we see direct action fade away? And actually what we mean is why do we see direct action kind of fade out of the public imagination like it never actually left?

You know, the last landmark policy change to date on climate was actually a result of the environmental justice movement's activism, rather than the influence of the mainstream environmental movement. With the passage of the executive order 12898 on environmental justice, which was signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994. And that executive order just stated that. In order to address injustice, environmental injustice, we have to consider the ways that our social identities play into the creation of environmental injustice. So this is the executive order that said that race is a factor in environmental harm and we need to eliminate disproportionate exposure to harm based on race and class. And then recently, actually there was Justice 40, which was an executive order signed by President Biden and his first month in office in 2020 that pledged to commit 40% of the investments in clean energy to climate, to disadvantaged communities.

Which sounds great, right? But recently, the Biden administration decided that they're actually not going to consider race as a determining factor of what marginalizes communities, what actually qualifies them as receiving these investments, which is insanity. If you read the first issue, you know that it is very important that we do consider race to be a factor in producing environmental harm. So what does that mean for justice 40? I wish I could talk at length about it, but I can't because I haven't, like, read the whole thing and the outcomes of them saying that race is no longer a factor, but all I'm saying is that it doesn't sound good.

But anyway, after the passing of, you know, the EPA, the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, the Executive Order 1212 898, after the passing of these policies, just like it always happens and a movement policy cycle situation, people became a bit complacent. This complacency led to kind of like the full co-optation of the environmental movement by institutions of whiteness. We touched on this in episode one, but the mainstream environmental movement is generally seen as a racially exclusive movement in which there's a consistent focus on serving the interests of whites. After the 1970s, environmental activists began to focus on recycling as a means to push the environmental agenda forward via the establishment of environmental regulations at federal and state levels. However, this had an unintended negative consequence of hyper focusing the movement's resources on establishing a national recycling infrastructure.

Further, the focus on recycling shifted the burden of mitigating

environmental degradation away from corporations, which were polluting the environment, to individuals who were consuming industrial products. As such, the responsibility for environmental protection was no longer rooted in the need for systemic changes to capital production processes. Another unintended negative consequence of focusing on recycling was that in the face of negative research findings related to pollution from recycling. Environmental activists were kind of, I mean, you could kinda say that. They were “forced” to support recycling, despite its shortcomings as a clean industrial process. So the shift from systemic to individual responsibility for managing environmental disaster also limited the ability of citizens to participate in the environmental decision-making process as the movement focused not on mobilizing citizens to engage in disruptive collective action, but to “consciously consume industrial products.”

Recycling proved to be another instance in which the environmental movement exclusively served the white community while ignoring the impacts of this process on nonwhite communities. And there's actually a really great book by David Pellow called *Garbage Wars*. It talks about how, you know, recycling facilities... they're still polluting facilities and they're still disproportionately negatively harming the health of BIPOC communities, even though they're touted as clean infrastructure.

But as we also discussed just now, the shift away from direct action towards less disruptive tactics is supported by the institutions of racial capitalism and whiteness like this? This is the era of nimbyism, which, if you are unfamiliar, means not in my backyard activism. That's the the acronym in which more powerful social actors such as landowning whites, middle class and upper class whites, etc. are able to push polluting facilities into other neighborhoods. And their activism kind of stops once they achieve that goal, once it's not in their backyard anymore. So this is just another example of racial capitalism. And what Kimberly Crenshaw explains as whiteness, as property, as a facet of critical race theory like the byproducts of industrial pollution are deemed as a problem only to the extent that they harm or do not serve the interests of whites. And after those byproducts are relocated to harm some other population NIMBY activists or set off satisfied. So the point is that the institutions of whiteness that we're discussing have contributed to the failures of the environmental movement and a mixture of ways. We need to move past that and recenter justice oriented approaches to environmental degradation and the climate crisis. If we are ever going to really be able to live through the climate crisis.

Despite the complacency, despite the co-optation or the attempted co-optation, we do see continued resistance on the ground, despite competition by market interests, there is a mainstay of direct action at pipelines and logging sites. I want to say, like front line communities that are on the ground blockading

pipelines. Blocking logging projects, they've always been here. They've never stopped defending their land and their livelihoods. Opposition to pipelines has always been here. It just falls out of the public eye from time to time. And so today we're going to talk about what we can learn from the pipeline issue.

So currently, environmental justice activists have taken the pipeline issue to the center of frontline community organizing. There's a diversity of focal areas within this issue, including the targeting of fracked gas plants, fracked shale mining fields, crude oil pipelines, offshore oil drilling and tar sands pipeline operations. Because there's so many ways that we're extracting resources from this Earth. Specific examples include the Keystone XL Pipeline, Dakota Access Mountain Valley and Enbridge Line three pipelines and locally, the Ohio State combined heat and power plant, which is in Columbus, Ohio, and another one more in Central Ohio; the Northern Loop project from Columbia Gas.

Direct Action Gets the Goods

All right. So the main tactic used by activists across the U.S. to combat the further construction of pipelines has been the use of blockades in addition to intensive public media campaigns and protests raising awareness of the issue. Many of these acts of resistance have been led by indigenous leaders of the environmental justice movement, who organize in pursuit of land sovereignty, self-determination and Earth jurisprudence. The Indigenous Environmental Network has been integral in organizing activists and systematic blockades and demonstrations of vulnerable areas of pipeline construction, in addition to a lot of groups within the network and outside of the network. Activists will camp parked vehicles in front of construction areas, lock themselves to pipeline equipment and occupy tree lines. In addition to the destruction of property such as construction equipment like cranes and forklifts, these are acts of civil disobedience in which activists are often arrested Bail funds are organized to account for those taken to jail and then, coupled with media campaigns and the emergence of a youth led international climate justice protests and strike movement. These tactics have been successful in halting construction of some pipelines in the US. However, activists have been less successful at permanently decommissioning pipelines or winning legal campaigns against them.

WE Resist

Yet the fight against extractive industry stays alive despite the constant state repression. The United States Government's history with the dispossession of native land leaves them well-equipped and trained to repress instances of resistance, often on the payroll of the corporation facing community pushback. Corporations have been doing a lot more than just paying off the cops.

Companies are known to buy off surrounding land around a project just to make sure that they can utilize police forces on a whim. A synthesis of their settler colonial techniques can be observed at Standing Rock, Nick Estes, an organizer with the Red Nation & assistant professor at the University of New Mexico recalls,

“In the early morning hours of Saturday, September 3, 2016, blood was spilled in the struggle over hallowed ground. Caterpillar earthmovers came barreling across the prairie. A small army of attack dogs and their handlers, private security hired by DAPL, guarded the site, followed closely by a spotter helicopter whirling above; all of them were ready for a fight. It was Saturday of Labor Day weekend, a holiday celebrating the working poor who had picketed and protested (and were beaten and shot) to win an eight hour workday. But this holiday weekend, it was unionized pipeline workers who clocked in while Indigenous people formed a picket line. The Indigenous marchers who showed up that day were working to protect their lands and waters—they were Land Defenders and Water Protectors.⁴⁷ Workers who cross picket lines, on the other hand, are called “scabs” because they undermine working-class solidarity ...When the Water Protectors saw the heavy machinery that morning turning soil, it was human remains—their relatives—that were unearthed. Native people quickly formed a blockade. The Water Protectors pushed down fences, throwing themselves in front of bulldozers. A white man jumped from a truck, spraying a line of women and children with CS gas, a chemical that burns skin, eyes, and throats and can cause blindness. The handlers—the people who train animals to hunt human beings: manhunters—sicked attack dogs on the picket line. Blood dripped from the dogs’ maws.”

In Minnesota we have seen law enforcement take \$2.9 million from a Public Utility Commission escrow account that Enbridge set up. That account is filled with \$4.25 million and has been utilized to directly desecrate Anishinaabe land with the line 3 project. That same money has aided in the militarization of county and municipal police forces, with departments betting on getting new equipment when the new Enbridge money comes in. ABC reported reimbursements for resorts, stationary patrols, and “mobile surveillance on multiple believed rally participants”

Alot of the tactics used in pipeline opposition work is linked to anti-logging praxis that grew out of the need to disrupt rampant logging practices approved by state agencies for energy production, resource extraction, or weapons testing. The practice of tree sits can be seen from in the forest of cascadia, atlanta forest, fairy creek, across Appalachian forests and more. In the struggle of the mountain

valley pipeline across the Appalachian region the Yellow Finch tree-sits disrupted construction for 932 days.

But movements all around Turtle Island are changing their strategy or tactic of attack on Wet'suwet'en territory. The company Coastal GasLink has been trespassing on unceded land and is being defended by land defenders. They have seen raids on their houses and shelters by the Royal Canadian Military Police, leaving whole shelters demolished in their path. Blockades and other disruptions have been popping up all around Turtle Island with a wonderful culmination of energy landing on February 17th, 2022. Around 20 individuals sabotage the work site on the pipeline. They told employees to leave and took \$100,000,000 away from a company that is desecrating lands and perpetuating colonial practices for profit. All these struggles have found strength in a connection to the land that the state can never sever, informing networks that can sustain the kind of resistance that demand a paradigm shift in the public imagination.

Before we move on from this section about like ongoing resistance, maybe we should talk a bit about the Ohio State University combined heat and power plant because, hey, we are in Columbus, Ohio, and there is a fracked gas plant being built less than a mile away from where we are producing this issue literally right now. The Ohio State University #SustainabilityQueen has decided to construct a combined heat and power plant on West Campus right next to the School of Environment and Natural Resources to provide heat and power to the new hospital buildings that they are building using fracked gas.

Is this hypocritical and ridiculous, given their commitment to sustainability and being carbon free by 2030 or 2050? Yes. Yes, it is. And we need more students to organize against the fracked gas plant because the Sierra Club has tried and failed in a more litigious way of taking them to court.

We tried and failed, as well as organizing with some students because we didn't get enough people on board and there needs to be a critical mass because otherwise, like at this point, the gas plant is going to be built. But when is it going to be decommissioned? Like it needs to happen soon. It shouldn't even be built in the first place. But more people need to organize against it, or we will get nowhere.

INTERVIEW

Today, we're here with Dr. Deondre Smiles joining us in this interview. Dr. Deondre Smiles, an Indigenous geographer who studies Indigenous

geographies/epistemologies, science and technology studies, and tribal cultural resource preservation/protection

HNB

We're super excited to have you here today. Thank you so much for coming.

Dr. Deondre Smiles

Yeah, thank you very much for having me. It's an honor and a pleasure to get to be part of things like this.

HNB

Maybe start off just asking if you could tell us a bit about yourself? Who are you? And what is your relationship with environmental justice & the environmental justice movement?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

Sure, I'd be happy to tell you a little bit about myself. So I'm an assistant professor in the Department of Geography at the University of Victoria, which is a lovely public university located up on the west coast of Canada, up in Victoria, British Columbia. I've been up there since July. Before that, I was a Ph.D. student and then post-doc here at Ohio State in the Departments of Geography and Department of History. I do a lot of work surrounding indigenous governance and critical indigenous geographies. More specifically, I study the ways that indigenous contestations over burial grounds and over the treatment of Indigenous dead can really unlock new political possibilities, both for the living and the deceased. The living has been the focus of my recent research, which really focuses on the ways on how we can apply the lessons from indigenous nations protecting burial grounds and such, and take that and transfer it over to the ways that they protect the environment and what we call the more than human. So, yeah, you know, admittedly, I'm an academic more than more than an activist. I guess in the traditional sense, a lot of the work that I've done in environmental justice has been in the academic sphere, but I've been really, really fortunate to be in contact in collaboration with a lot of folks who have been doing a lot of work on the ground in these sorts of endeavors.

HNB

Yeah, that's so amazing. It's really great to hear about your work. So like you mentioned. I know you've moved from Columbus recently, but I also wanted to ask if you could comment on maybe some of the direct action that exists in Ohio and the Midwest. You did just mentioned, you've had a chance to work with people who are on the ground. Could you comment on that? We did talk a lot about pipeline actions in the first segment of our show today. So we're just

wondering like what are the challenges in sustaining direct action and resistance in our region specifically?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

That is a great question, and we happen to live in one of the regions of North America, which has a lot of stuff going on related to direct action in the activism, especially surrounding pipelines. I think about work being done in my home state of Minnesota, for example, surrounding Enbridge's Line 3.

There's been a lot of things going on here over the last couple of years surrounding the reconstruction of what Enbridge calls the new Line three, which they're building through northern Minnesota. The old Line 3 is a 70 plus year old pipeline that is getting close, if not beyond the end of its service life, and it's sprung multiple leaks over the years, including what we understand to be the largest inland oil spill in American history about a little over 30 years ago, up there in northern Minnesota. And, you know, people are familiar with Line 3. They're familiar with the stuff surrounding DAPL

Line five across the Mackinac Straits here in Michigan. But also there's other things that kind of exist, kind of more below the surface rights of a lot of energy resources flow through states such as Ohio, where fracking and the oil and gas industry have very, very deep roots.

Here even is close is, say, places like the Ohio State University. I know one of the examples of direct action that I was in proximity to when I was here as a postdoc was the push against the building of a power plant on campus. one of the things where students felt really strongly about that. So there's a lot of work going on in indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts in the region. And, you know, it varies in public consciousness, right? Like I said, things like DAPL & Line # are very, very visible.

But there's also the really subtle ways that these sorts of things move across space. I teach a course called Indigenous Environmental Activism, both at UVA can. I also first started at OSU and I asked the students at OSU to do an assignment. They pulled up a map on this software called ArcGIS online, and I had them add a map layer of pipelines to the map and I asked them, you know, take a look at how close these pipelines come to your homes.

And a lot of the students are actually really quite surprised. I was in a city like Columbus. We actually have a lot of these pipelines that move really, really close to this major metropolitan area of 2 million people. So all of this is to say that this is a region for a lot of direct action for really, really important reasons.

HNB

And I think it's important that we're taking a land based approach, especially as anti-colonial academics and activists. That means centering a land back

movement and all of what we're doing. So like, what kind of state co-optation do you foresee that we need to be weary of?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

Yeah, so that's a really, really good question, and that's something to be really, really mindful of. The state has a long history of infiltrating activist movements and trying to co-opt messages and trying to make them less potent, right?

So what I mean by less potent is trying to reshape aims into ones that do not directly threaten hegemony, do not directly threaten capital, do not directly threaten the relationship between the states and the energy industry. I think one of the biggest things is keeping the sounds really quite simple but I can unpack this. It really keeping the eye on the prize if land back is a goal than really thinking about, well, how is it that we can? And I say "we" I mean, these movements can transfer, you know, privilege and land back to indigenous nations. And how can these movements uphold indigenous viewpoints? And how can they do so in a way that is not sanitized right now? Can they do so in ways that don't follow what I like to call this very liberal framework of recognition and co-optation where indigenous viewpoints just happen to be in sync with the desires of the state and the desires of capitalism versus these broader systems of abolition and sovereignty and resurgence that really, quite honestly threaten to rupture these systems and then this really positive generative way?

HNB

Absolutely. So kind of going back to the comment that we keep bringing up about co-optation, like throughout the EJ movement, there has been a reflection that there is more of a need for direct action. And like in the EJ movement, direct action has kind of fallen out of the line of our current environmental organizing. But I'm wondering if that's true if we consider the sustained presence of indigenous resistance to neo colonialism as within this realm of struggles? Like what are examples of direct actions taken in the last five, ten years? You kind of have talked about some already, but what does that mean for building momentum? And like, how do we get back to that away from this attempt at co-optation of our movement?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

So one of the central pillars of the research that I do and and more broadly, the ways that we have talked about indigenous resistance and resurgence among indigenous circles here in the past couple of decades are really focuses on instead of direct action and indirect action focuses on these frameworks of every day versus, what I would call, spectacular action. So when we think about blockades, we think about the pipeline protest. We think about, you know, people

getting arrested up in places like northern Minnesota protesting, you know, pipelines that's what we would call very spectacular action. It's action that is made to be visible. It's action that is made to grab people's attention. And that is really good. It's really good at getting in the media. It's really good at grabbing the everyday Americans attention for better or for worse.

But it also becomes really easy for the state to kind of co-opt these sorts of things and to just painted as just simple protest or painted as criminal activity. I think about a lot of the anti-protest laws that are increasingly being signed into law across the U.S. When we think about more everyday, mundane actions, I think this is where we start to see actions that the states cannot co-opt quite easily, right? And so I talk to my students and I say, what would it look like if we were to view the act of waking up and going about our everyday lives as a form of resistance, right? What would it look like to take any sort of action that we do in our daily or weekly or, day to day everyday, you know, routines that we don't give a second thought to what would happen if we approach that as a form of activism? That's something that I really encourage my students and encourage people more broadly to think about when it comes to indigenous resistance and resurgence as a whole, but also activism as a whole. I think direct action, by its very definition right, means very sustained, very targeted action towards a given goal. In a capitalistic society where our very existence is generally ground down into, to use Marxist language, here into this system where we're selling our labor power to capitalists, to the states, right? And our daily routine is built around that. What would it look like for us to just take a step out of that out of that routine?

What might that look like for direct resistance? I'll use indigenous examples as one of the key example in the logics of the colonial state, of the settler colonial state. Indigenous peoples like myself are where we're not supposed to be here right now. We were supposed to be assimilated out of society and our political systems and our cultural systems are supposed to be gone. So by very definition, me waking up in the morning and me sitting here in the studio with you talking about indigenous viewpoints, is an example of direct action that is very mundane and quotidian. I don't mean mundane and like the negative connotation, but it's something like, I wouldn't think twice about doing this sort of thing. But in logic's where I'm not supposed to be here talking to you right now, my people's lands are supposed to be divvied up already and open for exploitation, and it's not. That is a very, very powerful form of direct action. And I think that's something that I really encourage people to take a look at like, get out there in the streets, protests, do blockades, do what you need to do, but also be mindful of the very everyday activities that can be very direct challenges to this hegemonic capitalism as well.

HNB

I love that kind of touches on our next question, which is breaking these colonial logics and this like state codified and bolstering of human centered frameworks of life commonly known as the Anthropocene. What sort of systems and networks we can be forming, like we are today to sustain not only a spirit of resistance, but of self-determination that can have a real felt impact on the empire.

Dr. Deondre Smiles

So in what we call the Anthropocene or really what I think scholars are more appropriately calling the capitalocene nowadays, it's not only human focus, but it's very individual focus where it's it's it's very personal centered view about how we go through the world and how we interact and how we consume things. One of the first steps is to really think about accountability is to the communities that we're a part of, right? Not just our political communities, but even communities like family and friends and networks of comradeship and activism, because collective bonds are really important for breaking down that form of hegemonic kind of control. Because when you start to think about the collective as a whole and you start thinking about just yourself, you think more about really generative activities that can benefit everybody, right? I mean, we see this just, you know, when we think about generosity in basic care work and influences of that nature. So that's one step on the other. The next step. It can take many different forms. I can only really speak for my own people's viewpoints. Our world view is that we have deep accountabilities to what I would call our more than human relatives; plants, animals, the water, the broader environments of our creation story talks about this.

Our creation story, as I always tell it, every time I give any kind of at the beginning of a class that I teach on the environment or any guest lecturer I do on the environment and one of the most important things. And you know, obviously if we time preclude three from reading the entire story here. But one of the most important things is that I point out that I don't talk about humans anywhere in the story. Like, I point that out. I say, I tell this beautiful story about the creation of Turtle Island, and I say, you notice I didn't mention humans, and I ask them, Well, why might that be? And of course, like the students or audience members will generally, unless they're Ojibwe, they're probably not going to know the answer. And I say that's because in our worldview, humans are the least important part of the ecosystem, right? And I don't mean that in some kind of what sometimes gets co-opted like a neo-malthusian kind of way where it's like,

Oh, well, humans need to be depopulated, but it's it's more like because if we are the least important part of the ecosystem that places are more than human relatives on a higher plane of accountability, riots where we recognize that really are more than human relatives are the are the framework are the bedrock of what holds the world together and that we need to protect them and we need to defend them just like we would defend our own human relatives. And I think

when you take a look at it from that kind of viewpoint, they're actually quite easy, right? I mean, we would all I won't assume listeners family dynamics, right? But I think many people will have, you know, they'd have a family member that's like they're ride or die right. The people that like they would that they would they would they would gladly protect. And it's like, Well, if you view the water like that, if you view the plants and trees and flowers like that, if you view animals like that, it becomes a lot easier to be able to, you know, reconcile yourself with that kind of framework about what can I do that is best for them in the long run, not just myself.

HNB

My next question draws on some of the themes that you've been teaching on, which is how can settlers draw from indigenous knowledge systems in a way so that the newly built or modified systems and networks are coming up and being fostered in a way and that are non domineering and not only intent, but in effect as well, while respecting the ever expanding cultural sovereignty and autonomy of the individuals and communities involved with such growth models?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

I think probably the most important thing is to not center oneself in these sorts of dynamics. In the modern environmental movement, in the historical environmental movements, we see these kind of parallel trends where settlers all of a sudden discover, Oh, hey, where we are fucking up the environment right? And therefore we need to do something about it. And then it turns into these problematic things where it becomes I'm dictating to other people how to go about being in relation with the environment. And a lot of times when indigenous knowledge is consumed by settlers, it becomes something where they make it about themselves. And I really, really urge people to not do that. I urge people to listen to, you know, to do the internal work that they need to do to work through these things on on their own, that they know to draw indigenous peoples into this position where they need to be teaching settlers all these things and expanding a bunch of labor to do so and really to, you know, internalize these things and apply it to their own kind of personal context. Right? That that's one of the things that sometimes has happened in indigenous environmental movements as settlers will come in and. To learn these things, and they're like, OK, this is great. So I, you know, I learn these things, and now I'm going to take this kind of leadership role because I've gone through this process of self transformation and therefore, I'm going to help you to do the sorts of things in indigenous nations and indigenous movements don't need help right there. They're generally going to be pretty savvy about what it is that they need to do. They don't need, they don't need leaders because they're leading themselves. That they need people to do is to be there on the ground with them and to listen and know when to take a

step back and when to use their privilege in ways that can really assist these movements in ways that they may not be able to break through on their own.

HNB

Thank you so much. Mm-Hmm. This has been such a gift to be able to interview with you. We just have one last question about the show. So the title of the show is hot and bothered, cultivating sustainable resistance, and we were just wondering if you could reflect on that a little bit. What do you take away from that? What are your reflections on cultivating sustainable resistance?

Dr. Deondre Smiles

I really like to think about it in terms of how one can take care of oneself and nourish themselves in this sort of thing. So a number of years ago, Winona LaDuke, who is a hero of mine and somebody I look up to very immensely, came to Ohio State and gave a talk. And she said, You know, if you didn't get arrested at Standing Rock, come up to northern Minnesota and you can get a chance to be on the front lines with us and get arrested. And I thought that was really, really cool at first. And then after a while. I kind of took a step back and I'm like, Well, what if folks can't be out there on the front lines, right? What if it could be potentially harmful for them to do so? And that's a question that my students would often ask me. They'd say, Well, you know, I can't, I can't go up in protest. What can I do? And I start to point out, you know, there's other ways that you can engage in activism in ways that are not on the front lines or like donating time and money and other sorts of things, but also for anybody that's involved in these movements, not only on the front lines but also in, you know, behind the front lines, doing the support work, you've got to take care of yourself. This work is really that work is really heavy. It can take a lot out of you and you are not going to be any good to anybody. If you're not nourishing yourself and not doing the work that you need to do to make sure that you are approaching it with all of your mind and body and spirit. So it sounds kind of weird, right? Because I think people would be like, Oh, what can I do? Like when they asked for advice on how to sustain their activism. You know, it's not just, oh, donate x amount of money or take off a month to go up to a protest camp and do this. It's also like make sure you're getting sleep, make sure that you're taking care of yourself. Make sure you're eating. Make sure that you have somebody that you can talk to to debrief and like, you know, process things because, you know, it's not, you know, the individual. You know, I just got done talking about the ways that we need to think about the collective. Individual self-care is really, really important in this kind of work, too. You don't want to build a movement that will just self-destruct because everybody's burnt out, right? You want to make sure that people are able to sustain it for the long run, and you can't do that without taking care of yourself.

HNB

If you would like to follow Deondre's work, you can visit his website Deondresmiles.com, and follow him on Twitter at Deondre Smiles. OK, so we're here at the end of the show time for our call to action. How appropriate would it be for this show for us to focus our call to action on pipelines

CALLTOACTION

- Mvp can be supported through their page appalachian against pipelines on facebook, twitter and instagram
- Line 3&5 information can be found at stopline3.org resistline3.org and updates can be found on the migizi will fly accounts of instagram and facebook, talongside reports in the resistline 3 twitter account
- Fairy creek- old growth forest facing logging on indigenous land can find more information at rainbow flying squad on instagram or their website with updates posted on their faircreek blockade accounts on instagram and facebook.
- Thacker pass sugar bush crew, natives have been facing evictions for lithium mine man camp and BIA used to enforce
 - Enbridge encroachment on to Karankawa land held space in february against the proposed enbridge project, more information can be found on the pages of the Indigenous people of the coastal bend on instagram [@indigenous_peoples_361](https://www.instagram.com/indigenous_peoples_361)

So in reference to the ArcGIS map that Deondre mentioned earlier in the interview, it would also be important for listeners to familiarize themselves with the pipelines surrounding your own neighborhood. Before the interview I was actually going to just encourage people to look it up but now I'm like, really excited that there is already a tool that exists that can help people discover the existence of pipelines in their close vicinity so everyone should go check that out.

Shout out to specifically Dr. Deondre Smile's, Dr. Laura Pulido, who we mentioned Dr. Kelly Crenshaw, Dr. Nick Estes and Horatio Trujillo for inspiring and contributing their knowledge, I guess in an indirect way to the production of

the show.