

# Environmental Justice and the Common Good

## Conference Summary

On May 2-3 2019, over 250 students, faculty, staff, visiting academics, and representatives of community-based organizations participated in Santa Clara University's "[Environmental Justice & the Common Good Conference](#)." The conference focused on community-university partnerships for research, learning and social change on environmental justice (EJ) issues. After two days of panels, dialogue, and workshops, the organizing committee identified a shared commitment among participants to:

- Help Jesuit, Catholic, and other universities to partner with regional and global networks for research and teaching about EJ and integral ecology.
- Draw on exemplary projects to share lessons about how university and community partners can work together well.
- Incubate new collaborative projects with community-based organizations and strengthen regional networking in Northern California.

The conference was organized by an [interdisciplinary team](#) of Santa Clara University (SCU) faculty initially convened by SCU's Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, including Chris Bacon and Iris Stewart-Frey (Environmental Studies and Sciences), Ed Maurer (Engineering), Chad Raphael (Communication), and Tseming Yang (Law).

In his opening remarks to the conference, SCU's outgoing president, Fr. Michael Engh S.J., recalled the challenge he gave us in his inaugural address a decade ago to "champion environmental justice, and to do so explicitly for the sake of and alongside the poorest in our world." Pope Francis expanded on this challenge in his landmark 2015 encyclical, *Laudato Si'*.

Conference participants included Jesuit educational leaders, including Secretary for Higher Education for the Society of Jesus, Fr. Michael Garanzini, S.J., as well as leaders of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU) [Integral Ecology Affinity Group](#) (Nancy Tuchman of Loyola University Chicago and Rev. John Braverman, S.J. of St. Joseph's University), and Fr. Pedro Walpole, S.J. of the global publication [EcoJesuit](#). Catholic social justice leaders also participated, including Cecilia Calvo of the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States [Office of Justice and Ecology](#) and Elvira Ramirez of Catholic Charities of the Dioceses of Stockton.

In the spirit of building bridges, the conference also engaged a broad range of speakers from higher education, community-based groups, secular organizations, and government agencies in a vigorous dialogue.

Panels reviewed the state of environmental justice (EJ) today, successful university-community research partnerships, and how these partners can work together well. Keynote speakers included Rachel Morello-Frosch (UC Berkeley), Patrice Simms (Earthjustice), and Gustavo

Aguirre (Center on Race Poverty and the Environment), as well as contributions from Martha Matsuoka (Occidental College), Veronica Eady (California Air Resources Board), Helen Kang (Golden Gate University), Marianne Engelman-Lado (Yale University), Raúl Díaz (ASDENIC, Nicaragua), Ryan Jensen (Community Water Center) and SCU faculty and staff.

In breakout groups, participants explored potential partnerships on issues such as food, water, and climate justice, toxics, the personal dimensions of social change, and more. Professor Chad Raphael circulated a [guide to conducting engaged research for EJ](#), written for the conference. Students and faculty also presented examples of community-engaged research on EJ at a poster session.

AJCU participants committed to strengthening the [Integral Ecology Affinity Group](#) by incubating new collaborative projects that:

- Advance the Jesuits' [apostolic preferences](#).
- Integrate university and community partners.
- Cross borders.
- Address the institutional obstacles to community-engaged research.
- And build long-term authentic partnerships.

The SCU organizers pledged to convene follow-up workshops that share best practices and strengthen regional and global Jesuit networks for EJ. Nancy Tuchman announced that Loyola University Chicago's [next climate change conference](#) in March 2020, which will highlight youth leadership on climate change, will dedicate a day to building on the SCU conference's focus on community-engaged research. She invited the SCU organizers to help plan the program. The goals will be to expand Jesuit schools' capacity to partner on EJ work in their communities and to strengthen their global connections through the AJCU, International Association of Jesuit Universities ([IAJU](#)), and [Ecojesuit](#).

