

# ENV @MU

Newsletter from the Misericordia University  
Environmental Studies Program



*A scene from An American Ascent which will be shown on February 9th at 6pm in the Library's McGowan Room.*

## Hello from the Program Director

By Linda Auken, Ph.D., C.S.E.



Dear reader,

Welcome back to a new semester and the launch of our Environmental Studies courses. All of our current students in the program are taking the newly designed Environment and Society course and I am quite excited about what they are learning!

In this issue, we are also focusing on the contributions that Black Americans have made as pioneers, activists, and voices in Environmental Justice and reform initiatives. Take the time to learn about these amazing individuals and the many, many others that continue to strive to make the Earth a safe and healthy place for everyone who lives here.

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### Events for Spring 2022

ENV@MU is sponsoring several documentary screenings this semester. Read on to find out what's coming up this month.

#### What's Happening in the Classrooms this Month

Want to know what topics are discussed in ENV courses and electives? Our faculty share what they've been discussing in the classroom.

#### Black Leaders of the Environmental Movement

This February, we celebrate Black leaders from the past and present. Learn more about Dr. Robert Bullard's work and environmental justice grassroots activists.

## What's Happening in the Classrooms?

**Environment and Society (ENV 100)**, is taught by Dr. Cosima Wiese (Biology) and Dr. Brian Carson (History). Recently they've been surveying literature by authors such as Hemingway, Carson, Steinbeck, and Bill McKibben, to explore how the concept of nature has changed over time and its role as a place for healing, regeneration, peace, and revival of the human spirit.

**Environmental Philosophy (PHL 202)**, is taught by Dr. Melanie Shepherd (Philosophy). They are currently doing a unit on Environmental Ethics in which they consider if the suffering in factory farming and certain kinds of animal research is ethically justifiable.

**Earth Science (PHY 142)**, taught by Dr. Michael Orleski (Physics), has been reviewing how fracking works and its contribution to events such as earthquakes and groundwater contamination.

**Invasive Species (BIO 315)**, taught by Dr. Linda Auker (Biology), is discussing Charles Elton's 1958 popular science book *Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants*.

## Upcoming Event in February

Film: *An American Ascent*

Wednesday, February 9, 6pm  
McGowan Room of the Library

AN AMERICAN ASCENT documents the first African-American expedition to tackle Denali (aka Mt. McKinley, North America's highest peak), while shedding light on the complex relationship many African-Americans have with the outdoors.

## Black Leaders of the Environmental Movement

Saving the environment means more than turning off a light switch or recycling a can (although these are good to do, too!). It also means ensuring that everyone, regardless of race and socioeconomic status has access to healthy food, clean water, and a safe environment in which to live and work. How do you ensure such an environment exists in places socioeconomic class and race can be predictors for pollution? **Meet Dr. Robert Bullard**, the author of 18 books including *Environmental Health and Racial Equity in the United States* and *Race, Place, and Environmental Justice after Hurricane Katrina*. Dr. Bullard, deemed the "Father of Environmental Justice," is now Distinguished Professor of Urban Planning and Environmental Policy at Texas Southern University, as well as the Director of the Bullard Center for Environmental and Climate Justice. His work centers on topics such as land use, suburban sprawl, climate justice, housing, and food security. Dr. Bullard's efforts bridge equity in voting with climate justice. [In an interview with The Guardian](#), he stated, "If we strive to eliminate racism and classism, as well as pollution and environmental degradation, then we are doing what we can to make sure communities are sustainable and livable. It takes a lot of work; it's not a sprint. But it's achievable if we view it as important." To learn more about Dr. Bullard, check out his website at <https://drobertbullard.com/>.

Environmental justice movements often start as grassroots efforts by communities of color. In Warren County, North Carolina, the people – predominantly poor, rural, and Black – protested against the dumping of PCB-contaminated hazardous waste in a landfill in Afton, NC in 1982. Civil rights leaders - **Rev. Ben Chavis, Rev. Joseph Lowery, and Rev. Leon White - and then-chair of the Congressional Black Caucus Walter Fauntroy** showed up to the protests, and brought attention to the patterns of pollution increasing in areas where its citizens were poor and primarily people of color. This event brought attention to a very real problem, and several efforts to combat environmental racism have been fought throughout the United States. For more information, check out the National Resource Defense Council's article on the Environmental Justice Movement at <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>.