

# Environmental Justice and Health Equity: Can Cumulative Impact Laws Help Address Environmental Health Disparities?

## Speaker Biographies

**Mustafa Santiago Ali** is a renowned thought leader, international speaker, policy maker, community liaison, trainer, and facilitator, and serves as the Executive Vice President for the National Wildlife Federation. He is also the founder of Revitalization Strategies, a business focused on moving our most vulnerable communities from “surviving to thriving.” Before joining the National Wildlife Federation, Mustafa was the senior vice president for the Hip Hop Caucus, a national non-profit and non-partisan organization that connects the hip-hop community to the civic process to build power and create positive change. In his role, he led the strategic direction, expansion, and operation of the Hip Hop Caucus’ portfolio on climate, environmental justice, and community revitalization. Prior to joining the Hip Hop Caucus, Mustafa worked for 24 years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He began working on social justice issues at the age of 16 and joined the EPA as a student, becoming a founding member of the EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ). He most recently served as senior advisor for environmental justice and community revitalization and assistant associate administrator, working to elevate environmental justice issues and strengthening environmental justice policies, programs, and initiatives. Mustafa worked for EPA administrators beginning with William Riley and ending with Scott Pruitt. Mustafa uses a holistic approach to revitalizing vulnerable communities, and has worked with more than 500 domestic and international communities to secure environmental, health, and economic justice. Throughout his career, Mustafa has conducted more than 1,000 presentations across the country, including speeches, training, and guest lectures at over 100 colleges and universities. He is a former instructor at West Virginia University and Stanford University. Mustafa currently serves as a board member for Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Union of Concerned Scientists, Rodenberry Foundation, TREE, and Climate Hawks Vote. He is frequently seen on television, including appearances on MSNBC, CNN, VICE, BET, *Full Frontal with Samantha Bee*, and *Democracy NOW!* Mustafa is also a regular guest on WURD radio, *Roland Martin Unfiltered*, *The Dean Obeidallah Show*, and many others, and is the former co-host of the live radio show and podcast *Think 100%: The Coolest Show on Climate Change* with Grammy-nominated singer and actress Antonique Smith and civil rights icon Rev Lennox Yearwood.

**Vicki Arroyo** is a Professor from Practice at Georgetown University Law Center where she teaches courses on climate change, policy advocacy, land use and more to Georgetown Law and McCourt Public Policy School students. From January 2021 through November 2024, she served as Associate Administrator for Policy at the US Environmental Protection Agency, overseeing EPA’s work on rulemaking, economic analysis, NEPA, community revitalization, climate adaptation and more. For the first 18 months of her term, EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice was also under her leadership. From 2008 – 2021, she served as the first Executive Director of the Georgetown Climate Center, supporting leading states and cities in their efforts to address and prepare for climate change. Arroyo served at the Pew Center on Global Climate Change as Vice President for Policy Analysis and General Counsel where she directed Pew’s policy analysis, science, adaptation, economics, and U.S. policy programs for a decade and was Managing Editor of the Center’s book, *Climate Change: Science, Strategies and Solutions*. Arroyo served as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Transportation Research Board of the National Academies from 2019-20, and served on

numerous boards and committees advising the National Science Foundation, the National Center for Atmospheric Research, the U.S. Energy Information Administration, and the California Air Resources Board, where she advised the state on the design of its leading cap-and-trade program. She developed air quality standards at US EPA in Washington, DC and served as Policy Director for the Louisiana Dept. of Environmental Quality and as Environmental Advisor to Gov. Buddy Roemer. Arroyo was elected as a member of the American Law Institute in 2025 and of the American College of Environmental Lawyers in 2018. In 2023, she was selected “Woman of the Year” by the Women’s Council on Energy and the Environment.

**Yael Zakai Cannon** is a Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center, where she directs the Health Justice Alliance Law Clinic, which partners with a pediatric mobile serving low-income families to remove legal barriers to child and family health. Law and medical students represent patient families in advocacy related to housing, disability, public benefits, and education laws, and engage in legislative and policy advocacy to promote family health equity. Her research focuses on the role of law and justice in promoting health equity and well-being for children and families. She is the author of chapters in the textbook *Special Education Advocacy*, a chapter in the treatise *AIDS and the Law*, and the book *Centering Families of Color: Identifying Systemic Inequalities and Social Change Leadership*. Professor Cannon has written numerous articles in law, medical, and public health journals. Professor Cannon was a Georgetown University Center for Social Justice Faculty Research Fellow and was recognized as a 2022 American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics Health Law Scholar. She served as Chair of the American Association of Law Schools Poverty Law Section and as a member of the Executive Committee of the Section on Law, Medicine & Health Care. Professor Cannon previously taught as an Associate Professor at the University of New Mexico School of Law and as a Practitioner-in-Residence and Acting Director of the Disability Rights Law Clinic at American University Washington College of Law. Prior to joining the legal academy, she was an attorney with the Children’s Law Center’s medical-legal partnership. Professor Cannon graduated with distinction from Stanford Law School and *summa cum laude* from the University of Maryland.

**Charles Lee** is widely recognized as a true environmental justice (EJ) pioneer, thought leader, and a founder of the EJ movement in the U.S. He was the principal author of the landmark 1987 report, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*, organized the historic 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, and helped spearhead the emergence of federal EJ policy. He has served in multiple capacities, including creating the United Church of Christ’s EJ program and directing EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice. Mr. Lee is currently a Visiting Scholar at the Howard University School of Law and an advisory board member for WE ACT for Environmental Justice. He recently left his position as the Senior Policy Advisor for Environmental Justice at EPA’s newly created national program office on environmental justice and external civil rights. He has served on the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council, as a charter member, National Academy of Science/Institute of Medicine Committee on Environmental Justice, and numerous other panels. In these capacities, he has led efforts to incorporate EJ into EPA’s programs and policies, develop models for collaborative problem-solving, transform brownfields redevelopment into a community revitalization paradigm, advance EJ at the state level, and better consider and address cumulative impacts. Beside authoring numerous reports and peer reviewed journal articles, Mr. Lee has been the recipient of many awards and honors, including the recent 2026 William K. Reilly Award for Environmental Leadership. His work has been featured at the Smithsonian Institution and other museums, along with the archival of his professional papers at the Library of Congress.

**Sheila R. Foster** is Professor of Climate at Columbia University and an Affiliated Faculty Member at Columbia Law School. Previously, she was the Scott K. Ginsburg Professor of Urban Law and Policy at Georgetown University and before that a Distinguished University Professor and Albert A. Walsh Professor of Real Estate, Land Use, and Property Law at Fordham University. Foster is well known for her articles and books on environmental and climate justice, land use and innovative resource governance regimes, local government, and urban policy. She has been recognized by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s Academy of Environmental Law, with its 2018 Senior Scholarship Award, elected as a fellow by the American College of Environmental Lawyers (ACOEL), and chosen as a fellow of the American Bar Foundation. Foster is co-chair of the New York City Panel on Climate Change, a member of the city's Environmental Justice Advisory, and the editor in chief of the *Journal of Climate Resilience & Climate Justice* (MIT Press).

**Brian D. Smedley** is a senior fellow in the Health Policy Division and a former equity scholar at the Urban Institute, where he conducts research and policy analysis to address structural and institutional forms of racism that affect the health and well-being of people of color. Previously, Smedley was chief of psychology in the public interest at the American Psychological Association, where he led the organization's efforts to apply the science and practice of psychology to the fundamental problems of human welfare and social justice. Among his other prior positions are cofounder and executive director of the National Collaborative for Health Equity, codirector of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Leaders program, and vice president and director of the Health Policy Institute of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies. He also was a senior program officer at the Institute of Medicine (IOM), where he served as study director for the IOM report *Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care*, among other reports on diversity in the health professions and minority health policy. Smedley has been honored by the American Public Health Association, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, and the American Psychological Association. Smedley is the treasurer and a member of the board for the Poverty & Race Research Action Council, the chair of the advisory committee to the Maryland Office of Minority Health and Health Disparities, and a member of and consultant to the Institute for Healing Justice and Equity at Saint Louis University.