

Title

Pioneers of U.S. Ecofeminism and Environmental Justice

Susan A. Mann

Author

From the late-nineteenth through the early decades of the twentieth century, women in the United States played important roles in the conservation and preservation of wildlife, as well as in environmental activism that fostered clean air, water, and food in our nation's urban centers. This article examines the contributions of women of different classes and races to these environmental struggles. It not only synthesizes the findings of previous environmental histories, but also focuses more attention on the ways environmental contamination affected the lives of women of color and their struggles against environmental racism. In this way, an environmental justice lens is used to excavate and reclaim the history of our ecofeminist predecessors to better ensure that the visions and voices of marginalized peoples do not remain hidden from history.

Keywords: ecofeminism / environmental history / environmental justice

Ecofeminism refers to the diverse range of women's efforts to save the Earth, as well as to the transformations in feminist thought that have resulted in new conceptualizations of the relationship between women and nature (Diamond and Orenstein 1990, ix). Although this concept was not coined until the 1970s, there were a number of discourses on women and nature in earlier eras that both fostered and emerged from women's participation in environmental activism and their appreciation for nature.¹ For the period from the late-nineteenth through the early decades of the twentieth century, this article examines how women played important roles in the conservation and preservation of wildlife, as well as in activities that fostered clean air, water, and food in our nation's urban centers. In particular, it highlights the contributions of women who were both women's rights activists and environmentalists as precursors to ecofeminism.

Journal

©2011 Feminist Formations, Vol. 23 No. 2 (Summer) pp. 1-25

Pages

Date

Volume/
Issue