



CENTER ON RACE, POVERTY & THE ENVIRONMENT  
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## Environmental Justice 101

- Environmental Justice principles affirm the rights of **all people to access clean healthy living spaces**.
- Environmental **injustice** refers to situations where environmental “goods” – like clean air and water” and environmental “bads” – like garbage dumps and factory dairies – are **unequally distributed along lines of race and income**.
- At CRPE, we seek to understand how and why people are denied the right to environmental justice. We work with and learn from communities, **collaborating to fight for safe and healthy environments**.

### **Is there environmental injustice in the San Joaquin Valley?**

**YES.** Residents of the San Joaquin Valley (SJV) face serious environmental burdens, these include: **air pollution, water contamination and pesticide use**. The following quote from *Gasping for Air*, a 2003 report by the Women’s Foundation of California, explains the unique challenges we face:

The Central Valley supplies one-quarter of the food America eats. A substantial portion of California’s population of 35 million ingests Central Valley food and breathes air filled with dangerous particulates and ozone from heavy-industry farming. The closer you get, the more dangerous the levels of contamination: 5 million residents of the Central Valley eat chemically affected food – and also breathe particulate-laden air and drink water contaminated by agricultural practices. Even more directly, 800,000 Central Valley farm workers eat this food, inhale this air, drink this water and breathe the chemicals sprayed on crops where they work and near their homes.

The Central Valley faces unique *year-round pollution*: In **winter**, ammonia from cow manure is trapped in the thick tule fog. Pesticides sprayed heavily in **spring** create ozone pollution with gases and nitrogen oxides. Every day of the **summer** irrigation pumps (fueled by diesel) emit particulate pollution 24 hours a day, while cotton fields are soaked with pesticides. Plowing fields stirs up particulate matter, in addition to truck traffic on unpaved roads in the **fall** (*Gasping for Air*, 2003).

### **What Can I Do?**

There are many active environmental justice organizations in the Central Valley. We collaborate on **fighting polluters** and **promoting green economic development** in our communities. Please contact us and join the environmental justice movement now!

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