

INCLUSIVE CULTURAL ECOSYSTEMS: HOW TO DETERMINE YOUR ROLE IN SUPPORTING DIVERSITY IN THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

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Diversity is an essential element of any ecosystem's overall health and stability. The more diverse a population, the more opportunities there are for new growth, new mutations, and advancement that lead to a self-sustaining future. The same theory also applies to human communities, and our social and cultural diversity – the wider the array of viewpoints and experience; the more creative our solutions will be to complex problems. Why then, is there such a lack of diversity in the environmental field? If the environmental community is not diverse, then how will we be able to integrate the needs and ideas of stakeholders that have not been given a seat at the decision-making table? The focus of my capstone research is an ethnographic study exploring solutions-based ideas for improving the state of diversity in the environmental field. Through in-person interviews I collected qualitative data from leaders in various sectors including government, NGO's, academia and the business community in order to gain insights from a variety of perspectives. I discovered that creating a culture of inclusion begins with the individual, and it is each individual's duty to identify how they fit into the advancement of diversity goals. Our lines of privilege and/or minoritizations directly affect how we approach the world, and we can use this knowledge to develop the best course of action in difficult situations, as well as creating long-term goals. Our positionality, ways of knowing, and systemic structures are the most important factors in analyzing and improving personal and institutional diversity.