

Sustainability and Equity

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What are we sustaining, exactly?

∞ Climate change and the problem of
shifting baselines

What is a forest?




Where do species live?




When does spring begin?





With so much at stake,
is it the wrong time

to think critically about the environmental movement's past?






Or the right time

to think about strategies that might broaden support and shape an environmental agenda for the future..

(If everything might be up for grabs, why not environmentalism too?)



Aspen: The narrative of a pristine landscape



- ☞ Mining town reborn as ski resort
- ☞ Amenity, service, and recreation based economy
- ☞ Longstanding commitments to preservation; recent commitments to green business and climate change mitigation
- ☞ Externalization of costs, many imposed on low-income service workers

Black Mesa: The narrative of an empty landscape

- ☞ Homeland of Navajo and Hopi people
- ☞ Described and used as an empty landscape, ideal to serve as raw material
- ☞ Benefits of resource extraction and power generation for Los Angeles, Phoenix, Las Vegas
- ☞ Harms to land, water, and air born by local Navajo and Hopi people
- ☞ The dilemma for tribal governments



Sustaining communities capable of caring for a damaged planet

∞ Strategies

∞ Think livelihood first

∞ Seek bottom-up and top-down support

∞ Legal tools: Environmental Law Plus?

∞ Employment law; Conservation easements; Community economic development plans

∞ Rhetorical shifts:

∞ From saving the planet from people to putting people at the center of saving the planet