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Bioregional Field Studies: the Duwamish River

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Before I came to America I did not like red, now I drive a red car and have painted the outside of my little fixer cottage red. This is a direct result of being suddenly surrounded by so much green; red is its complimentary color and lies opposite it on color wheel, balancing it out. Color influences how we feel and by creating a balance of color around us we can feel more centered and at peace within, a sustainable environment needs that to. My house is a minority though, and sits out of sight within a lush, green, affluent neighborhood connected by horse and bike trails and beige Mac-Mansions. The power of our neighborhood housing association has kept our hillside of the river valley green and the Hi-ways and sewer pipes out, unlike the hillside on the other side of the river that is covered with a patchwork of more affordable housing. On our side of the river the people look healthy and predominantly white and are very worried about the building of a sewage treatment plant on their doorstep. Environmental pollution is the concern; there is no need for environmental justice. But if we don't have the sewage treatment plant, where is the needed facility to go? Renton all ready has one and smells so bad anyway, why not put it there? The residents are already unhealthy, they don't eat right or exercise, and their property values are already low so won't be impacted. Hey they might not even notice and certainly don't have any power to object if they do!!!! How long can we continue to think like this? Our environment and our own lives are like a balancing scale, a zip code balancing act within each county. By continuing to dump all our environmental pollutants on top of our poorest (mostly minority race) communities on the one side, making it lower, we get to fly higher where the air is clearer and sun brighter. In the bigger picture we are living our rich green lives across from our complimentary poor red neighbors; their loss has sustained our gains. However, we have dumped so much stuff on the red side it is almost void of any oxygenated green and decaying, resulting in bad health, death of people, wildlife and river systems. On the green side we may be feeling great now, but we can not sustain life up here. The looming death of the red side threatens us and our planet on a larger scale, we all need a balance on each side of the river that separates us if we are to survive. Thankfully groups like ACE (Alternatives for Community Environment) in Boston are working towards "just sustainability" that combines environmental sustainability and environmental justice to provide a balance that will benefit us all, giving us all colorful long lives full of diversity. Red has to sit next to green in every teeth zip of earth's canvas.