

Environmental Justice for Indigenous Communities in the Americas

Hosts of the Webinar

This webinar is brought to you by RCE Salisbury.. RCE Salisbury, housed in the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution, is acknowledged by the United Nations University and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Directors of RCE Salisbury are Dr. Brittany Foutz and Dr. Brian Polkinghorn. The Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution is a nonprofit located in Salisbury, Maryland (USA) and the mission of the organization is to promote a systems-based approach to the effective analysis and practical resolution of social conflict. The Center utilizes a teaching hospital model whereby faculty and staff practitioners. Thank you to the Executive Director of the Bosserman Center, Dr. Brian Polkinghorn, for allowing this opportunity.

RCE Salisbury has also partnered with the United Nations Human Rights Council to exhibit this webinar.

Webinar Preface

RCE Salisbury invites you to participate in the webinar on environmental justice for Indigenous communities in the Americas. The webinar will be presented by a variety of academics, practitioners of conflict resolution. The authors will provide an overview of the climate and social justice issues that Indigenous communities struggle with and then moves onto specific examples across the Americas. The webinar aims to demonstrate many of the crucially harmful factors that impact indigenous communities and some movements to help remedy the longstanding detrimental effects. This webinar would be useful for those interested in an introductory sense of the Indigenous groups in the Americas and their struggles with environmental justice.

Who Maintains the Indigenous Communities

The United Nations recognizes the indigenous communities as gatekeepers, inheritors, and practitioners of unique cultures that co-exist with the environments and maintain distinctive characteristics, including cultural, social, political, and economic, that shape their daily lives (Department of Economic and Social Affairs & Indigenous Peoples, 2015). The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, stated that Indigenous communities and individuals have

“historical continuity or association with a given region or part of a given region prior to colonization or annexation; identify themselves as Indigenous and be accepted as members by their community; have strong links to territories, surrounding natural resources and ecosystems; maintain at least in part, distinct social, economic and political systems; maintain, at least in part, distinct languages, cultures, beliefs and knowledge systems; are resolved to maintain and further develop their identity and distinct social, economic, cultural and political institutions as distinct peoples and communities; and often form non-dominant sectors of society.” (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020).

Acknowledging the cultural identities directly connected to the land and traditional techniques and rituals through the use of natural resources is a key component to understanding how indigenous communities have been perpetrated and negatively impacted through the destructive of natural resources. Internationally, Indigenous peoples are disadvantaged and marginalized, which is perpetuated through the lack of protection for their rights to maintain their traditional distinct cultures and connect to the land (Department of Economic and Social Affairs & Indigenous Peoples, 2015). The destruction of nature endangers indigenous communities and their long-established practical manner to incorporate the resources into daily practice with “water, fertile soil, food, shelter and medicine”. (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020).

Usefulness of Analysis

Globally, there are an estimated “370 million Indigenous peoples occupying 20 percent of the earth’s territory” and embody over 4,000 unique cultures of the 6,000 total cultures worldwide and seventy-five percent of the world’s 6,000 languages (United Nations, 2015). Although indigenous communities represent

the minority of the global population, they paradoxically also constitute the majority of cultural diversity. Additionally, some of the most biologically diverse regions of the world are inhabited by Indigenous communities; the Biological 17 is a grouping of seventeen nations that contain more than sixty-five percent of the world's resources and are populated by Indigenous peoples. These countries in the Biological seventeen include "Australia, Brazil, China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Papua New Guinea, the United States of America, and Venezuela" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). Many of the Indigenous populations throughout Central and South America occupy rainforest areas, where there is also a large number of plants and animal species that are distinctive to the regions (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

Subsequently, the Indigenous communities rely on their traditional link between the environment and their culture, which sustains a "spiritual, cultural, social and economic relationship with their traditional lands" (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.), and creates a continued responsibility to preserve the lands for future generations. Communities are reliant on the protection of their land and resources to continue to the survival of their physical and cultural existence (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The lands that Indigenous peoples inhabit account for over a quarter of the global world land area, but UN representatives state that environmental risks are leading to a climate apartheid that could risk communities with "overheating, hunger and conflict" and less socio-economically advanced classes will be the ones to suffer from the impact of ecosystem changes and quickly degrading local livelihoods because of climate change (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020). The symbiotic relationship between Indigenous communities and the environment stands in danger from international, transnational, national, and local levels of resource destruction and threatens many communities' dependency on the resources provided by the ecosystems (Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities, 2018).

Constituent Issues that Indigenous Communities Face

Land Rights Ignorance

Although Indigenous communities reside on lands that have traditionally been passed down for generations, many groups, locally, nationally, and internationally, have failed to recognize the land rights of the people and instead used the land to their benefit without the approval, consultation, or consent of the communities, at their expense (United Nations, 2015). These communities physically and legally maintain residence of this land, and contain legal deeds of proof to this ownership, but higher authorities have leased out the lands for business affairs, such as mining and logging (United Nations, 2015). These legal obstacles have been perpetuated through political policies and delays in changes due to procedural impediments, and continues to exacerbate the lack of security that Indigenous tribes can count on while trying to maintain their homes and life (United Nations, 2015). Forced removals and evictions from land has caused a loss of traditional and sacred sites for Indigenous communities, as development projects continue to displace the residence, endanger the flora and fauna, and disrupt the natural ecosystem that sustains the life in the regions (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

Technology Changes

As companies gain new processes and machinery to improve their businesses, it further impedes the consistent residency of indigenous tribes, as many are forced to resettle. Innovation such as "improved seeds, chemical fertilizers and pesticides, the introduction of cash-crop cultivation and large plantation schemes have caused environmental degradation and destroyed self-sustaining ecosystems" (United Nations, 2015), which indigenous peoples depend upon. The implementation of the business regimes on the legally owned indigenous lands builds as new equipment is manufactured and influences the expansion of agricultural business on new lands. As the development projects expand, the detrimental impacts on pollution, extinction, and destruction increase. Ecosystems change as commercial plant varieties take over the local regions for industrialized farming methods and minimize the traditional farming systems (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

Similarly, the building of dams and mines have forced resettlement of numerous families and communities, who received inadequate compensation for the loss of their land and livelihood means and

culminates in displacement and poverty for many (United Nations, 2015). As multinational corporations construct new products on the properties, it threatens the already fragile ecosystems and endangers the welfare of Indigenous peoples (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). As Indigenous peoples have tried to speak out against these movements that force their resettlement and loss of lands, it has been met with “physical abuse, imprisonment, torture and even death” (United Nations, 2015).

Climate Change Direct Impacts

The environmental climate change issues present current and very real issues for Indigenous populations, ultimately branching out to impact community issues including “poverty eradication, child mortality, combating malaria and other diseases” (United Nations, 2015) that increase human rights inequalities. Many of these climate issues partially stem from the violations to the environmental resources by companies and extractive industries, which continuously endanger the lives of communities and their resources through hazardous waste, pollution, and long term and short term impacts from environmental damage (UN Environment Stands up for Indigenous People in Their Fight for Environmental Justice, 2018). The survival of these communities are constantly threatened by “environmental degradation, large scale industrial activities, toxic waste, conflicts and forced migration, as well as by land-use and land-cover changes” (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020). Although Indigenous communities are most prone to facing the harmful impacts of climate change, they are not large contributors to it; these community members hold onto crucial knowledge about the regional environment they inhabit and can serve as useful figures to contribute to research for adaptation and mitigation regarding the environmental sector (Mekosh, 2019).

Job Reduction and Impact On Women

The changing patterns of land treatment leading to forced evictions and dispossessions of lands has caused a draining and damaging of natural resources that then negatively impact the socio-economic stability of communities. Women in particular suffer from this instability as they “must walk long distances to find alternative sources of water or fuel wood, or are driven out of income-earning productive activities and into a situation of economic dependence on men” (United Nations, 2015).

The United Nations and Programs Working Towards Environmental Justice

Earth Summit

A key conference to examine for looking at the development of Indigenous communities inclusion and their rights regarding environmental justice is the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development that took place in 1992 in Brazil (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). This conference involved NGOs to share concerns about the environmental damage, but also recognized the importance of traditional knowledge and practices and demonstrating international groups committing to the protections of rights for indigeous peoples and their practices (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The Earth Summit led to the formation of the Kari-Oca Declaration and the Indigenous Peoples’ Earth Charter, which acknowledged the unique and distinct relationship that indigeous peoples maintain with the earth and the adoption of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which recognized “the close dependence of many Indigenous communities on biological resources and the desirability of sharing the benefits that come from using traditional knowledge, innovations and practices to conserve biological diversity, including species diversity” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). As the CBD is an international treaty and acts as a legally binding document, this allows for maintenance of cooperation over the management, conservation, and fostering of global biological resources, especially in areas with “inland waters, marine and coastal areas, forests, dry-land ecosystems, and agricultural lands that are vital to human well-being and the global environment” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The goals of the CBD include: 1) conservation of biological diversity 2) promotion of sustainable use of nature, and 3) promotion for the fair and equitable sharing of of the resources and its benefits, and regulate through government sectors of domestic legislation and amendments of constitutions (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

The UNEP is one of the focal programs that the UN leads to help focus on environmental action among governments, UN agencies, and NGOs, and works to promote the sharing of projects implemented, support a sustainable development agenda, and promote the social, economic, and environmental development of projects (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). This group is comprised of 58 member states globally that are elected through the UN General Assembly and work to ensure that States across the world “recognize and foster the traditional methods and knowledge of Indigenous peoples, and for ensuring that Indigenous peoples share in the economic and commercial benefits that accrue from the use of those traditional methods and knowledge” (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.). The committee recognizes that Indigenous peoples hold valuable traditional knowledge about sustaining the ecosystem management and sustainable production and consumption of natural resources that can help to mitigate climate change and land destructions (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020). Subsequently, UNEP involves Indigenous groups in the policy-making and decision-making processes through accredited representatives of the Indigenous Peoples Major Group facilitating to help create a holistic and integrated approach to development (Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities, 2018). Additionally, UNEP is collaborating with the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues to address this key knowledge about ecosystem “restoration and resilience” to culminate in a project called the UN Decade for Ecosystems Restoration (2021-2030) (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020). In addition to enacting initiatives to help strengthen Indigenous communities’ efforts to preserve land and traditional methods, they also work on a national and local level to reduce the marginalization and resulting violence that these environmental defenders often face, and the committee stands to “denounce attacks, torture, intimidation and murder of environmental defenders; advocate for better protection of environmental rights and the people standing up for them; support responsible management of natural resources; and request accountability for events in which environmental defenders have been affected” (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020).

A Collection of Initiatives

Working Group on Indigenous Populations conducted research in 1997 that confirmed that Indigenous peoples rely on access to resources and land for their survival, and that there is a strong need to recognize and secure their land rights through the continued consultation and collaboration in management of land and resources with the Indigenous communities (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.) Globally, many countries have begun efforts, treaties, and initiatives to work with Indigenous communities on environmental justice movements. The United Nations created the Agenda 2030 plan to help in achieving sustainable development goals through recognizing customary and tenure rights of Indigenous communities to their land in order to assist in securing equal and stable land access (United Nations, 2015). The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has also been working to develop policies, such as the Indigenous Peoples Policy, to ensure that Indigenous peoples have their rights safeguarded in a manner that fosters and respects their traditional cultural lifestyles and needs (United Nations, 2015).

Recent Initiatives and Work

2018 marked an important year of policies for Indigenous peoples as the UN congregated to shape legal policies that guaranteed the participation of Indigenous peoples in the law-making process. A historic agreement implemented by the UN Environment called the Latin American and Caribbean Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters reaches across Central and Latin America and was enacted in 2018 to support the connections of Indigenous peoples’ networks across the region (UN Environment Stands up for Indigenous People in Their Fight for Environmental Justice, 2018). Also begun in 2018 was the Policy on Promoting Greater Protection for Environmental Defenders, which aimed to protect Indigenous peoples and their international human rights as they work to protect their lands (UN Environment Stands up for Indigenous People in Their Fight for Environmental Justice, 2018). In order to ensure that Indigenous communities are included fairly and equally in the decision-making and policy production, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People states that there is a requirement that “free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous peoples be obtained in matters of fundamental importance for their rights, survival, dignity, and well-being” and promotes consultation with communities for creating a structure of justice within local governance to avoid coercion and threat to Indigenous peoples (United Nations Environmental Programme, 2020). As a product of Indigenous community inclusion, the Indigenous Peoples’ and Community Conserved Territories and Areas

(ICCAs) and indigenous individuals have worked to create an interactive Registry for ICCAs worldwide and generate a global map of territories to help with conservation efforts and policy discussions, which can be found at <https://www.iccaregistry.org/> (Indigenous Peoples and Their Communities, 2018).

UN Environment Organizations and Processes

- UN environment organizations and processes
- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention)
- UNESCO Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention)
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)
- UN Declaration on Environment and Development (the “Rio Declaration”) and Agenda 21
- UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)
- Inter-governmental Forum on Forests
- United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

(Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d.)

Initiatives and Treaties

- Agenda 2030
- Green Climate Fund’s Indigenous Peoples Policy (GCF)
- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
- Policy on Promoting Greater Protection for Environmental Defenders
- International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change (IIPFCC)
- Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Webinar Synopsis

In the Americas, humanity and nature are under pressure like never before. The increasing extraction of natural resources, such as wood, oil and minerals, as well as the expansion of soy, palm and other agro-commodity plantations, and of road, river and hydroelectric infrastructure projects, put significant pressure on the forest and the people who depend on it. Indigenous peoples and local communities have been guardians of their land. These people and their knowledge are key to sustainably protect forest forests from deforestation and the degradation of ecosystems. The authors of this webinar have investigated content on the different threats and vulnerabilities faced by Indigenous peoples and local communities in the Americas. The purpose of this webinar is to make visible the efforts of Indigenous peoples and local communities in the Americas to defend their territorial rights; raise public awareness about the violation of Indigenous and local land rights, deforestation and the degradation of ecosystems; and encourage research that promotes environmental and social awareness through data collection and analysis that show the importance of nature conservation and the necessary response to the effects of climate change.

Webinar Outline

This webinar will focus on:

- Global Reach of Indigenous Communities
- Consistent Issues Regarding Environmental Degradation
 - Land Rights
 - New Technologies
 - Unsustainable Land Development
 - Climate Change

- Harmful Impact On Work and Women
- North America:
 - Maryland and the Eastern Shore: Piscataway and Accohannock
 - Alaska: The Gwich'in in Alaska
 - Arizona: San Carlos Apache
 - Haida Gwaii:: the Haida People
- Central America:
 - Costa Rica: Brörán
 - Nicaragua: Miskito
 - Honduras: Lenca
- South America:
 - Colombia: Huitotan, Arhaucos, etc.
 - Brazil: Mundurukú
 - Ecuador: Quechua
- UN Led Initiatives
- General Initiatives and Treaties
 - Agenda 2030
 - Green Climate Fund's Indigenous Peoples Policy

Webinar Synopsis

Bios of the authors

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Mr. Devin Neil, B.A.

Ms. Cassandra Duncan

Ms. Sandra Zelaya

Dr. Brittany Foutz

Brittany Foutz, M.A., Ph.D. is a Visiting Professor of the Department of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution at Salisbury University and is a Co-Director of Salisbury Regional Centre of Expertise, a location acknowledged by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and United Nations University. This United Nations location focuses on conflict prevention and creative problem-solving. Dr. Foutz has been elected to be on the United Nations Americas Governance Committee and United Nations Americas Strategic Planning Support Committee, and Leader of the United Nations Americas Task Force on Education. Dr. Foutz has her Ph.D. in International Conflict Management from Kennesaw State University. She has served for two years as the Program Manager for the United Nations International Training Centre for Authorities and Leaders (CIFAL).

Dr. Brian Polkinghorn

Brian Polkinghorn, M.S., M.A., Ph.D. is a Distinguished Professor of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution. He was a founding faculty member in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Nova Southeastern University (1994-2000). Since 2000 he has been the Program Director and founding faculty member in the Department of Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution and Executive Director of the Bosserman Center for Conflict Resolution, a United Nations Regional Center of Expertise at Salisbury University. He has worked in the conflict intervention field since 1985 as a mediator, arbitrator, facilitator, trainer, researcher, academic program developer, conflict coach, dispute systems designer and ombudsman. His primary research and publications are in the areas of environmental disputes, graduate program design and development, post

conflict development projects, ADR court program assessment and the evaluation of major federal and state government ADR programs. He has published 50+ articles, book chapters and books and has been the principal investigator or recipient of more than 70 research and service grants. He has worked in scores of countries primarily in the areas of environmental policy dispute intervention, cross-border cooperative enterprises, support of peace talks and civil society training. He is currently facilitating dialogues between Palestinian, Jordanian and Israeli parties on water rights/usage, waste to energy and collaborative agricultural in the Jordan River Basin and Negev Desert. He has also worked on the implementation of the peace process in Nepal. Brian is an alum of the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (SCAR), George Mason University and serves on their Board of Advisors and the Program on the Analysis and Resolution of Conflicts (PARC), Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University. He was also a Fellow with the Program on Negotiation, Harvard University Law School (1991-1992), a National Fellow with the US Environmental Protection Agency (1991-1993), a United States Presidential Fellow (1991), the University System of Maryland Wilson Elkins Professor and a Senior American Fulbright Scholar with the Evens Program in International Conflict Resolution and Mediation at Tel Aviv University (2010). Brian is currently a Fulbright Alumni Ambassador with the Institute of International Education and the Council for International Exchange of Scholars.

Dr. Chris Kwaja

Dr Chris Kwaja is currently a Senior Lecturer and Researcher at the Centre for Peace and Security Studies, Modibbo Adama University of Technology, Yola, Adamawa State, Nigeria. He was previously the Chair-Person Rappertour of the United Nations Working Group on Mercenaries, which he currently represents Africa as a member. He holds a PhD in International Relations and Strategic Studies, with research interests in the politics of identity in Africa, security sector reforms in transition societies, as well as conflict, peace and security analysis.

Ms. Iye Ogbe, M.S.

Iye Ogbe, M.S., is from Nigeria. She is a graduate from Kennesaw State University's Conflict Management and Peacebuilding master's program. She has spent the last 6 years in academia and in service to her community with the end goal of devoting time to her community and trying to build on her knowledge of the marginalized populations in society. During the final year of her undergraduate study, she interned at the Cobb County Superior Court where she volunteered her time with a non-profit organization (LiveSafe Resources) focused on providing protection for victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse. To further develop her interests for law studies and in service to foreign nationals like herself, she spent a year working for a renowned law firm; Hall Booth Smith, helping out an immigration attorney as a legal assistant. Iye's research interests include human rights and the rule of law, international law, and international relations.

Using her passion for helping people, Iye intends to change the trajectory of the Nigerian history by spending her time with the United Nations to bring awareness to the sustainability issues in Nigeria. Following her graduate studies, Iye intends to pursue a postgraduate degree in International relations, specifically, in the areas of international development and international negotiation and conflict resolution.

Ms. Brittany Bursa, B.A.

Brittany Bursa, B.A. began her pursuit of educational reform as she graduated from the Salisbury University Honors College with a BA in English Secondary Education, winning the John and Mary-Claire Roth Honors Thesis Prize in Spring of 2017 for her work on limiting educational disparities in the USA. Subsequently, she completed a TOEFL certification course, then worked with pre-service university students in Brazil for two years while on a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Fellowship and volunteered with organizations such as EdUSA, the Regional English Office, the US Embassy, and the Access Program. Determined to gain a broader expanse of global knowledge, she began to intern for the United Nations Institute for Training and Research where she created desk reviews focusing on the African continent and topics ranging from cyber-mercenaries to police insecurities. Additionally, she regularly discussed social activism and current world dilemmas in a think tank manner with an international cohort as an Effective Altruism Fellow. She continues to dig into the issues of knowledge, power, and politics as she currently completes her Masters of Philosophy in Education at the University of Cambridge.

Ms. Gwyn Browning, B.A.

Gwyn Browning graduated from Bates College with a B.A. in environmental studies with a focus in chemistry, minoring in Japanese and field research. During her college years, Gwyn interned at an environmental consulting firm and subsequently worked as a sediment profile image analyst. After graduating, she moved to Shiga, Japan to work as an English teacher on the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme. In the four years she filled this post, Gwyn worked at six senior high schools, teaching English as a second language and science, while coaching debate after school. The following year, Gwyn was invited to join an International Baccalaureate Programme implementation committee at a local high school, where she was tasked with designing an environmental systems and societies curriculum over the course of a year. Currently, Gwyn is deepening her pedagogical practice by completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Education at the University of Cambridge in science with chemistry as her main focus. She aims to incorporate multicultural perspectives into science education and inspire the future stewards of our Earth.

Ms. Cassandra Duncan

Cassandra Duncan is currently a senior at Salisbury University, completing an Environmental Studies major, Deaf Studies minor, and Outdoor Education Leadership Minor. Cassandra has also completed the United Nations Millennium Fellowship and will continue her project throughout her undergraduate career. She is also a member of the Green Team for the City of Salisbury.

Ms. Sandra Zelaya

Sandra Zelaya is an undergraduate student at Salisbury University studying Psychology and Conflict Analysis and Dispute Resolution. She has interests in social science research and communication. On campus, Sandra has been involved as a student worker, research assistant, and social media contributor for multiple student groups. She has recently participated in the United Nations Millennium Fellowship and hopes to continue social impact work. Sandra enjoys exploring different cultures and is passionate about connecting through music, media, and art.

Mr. Devin Neil, B.A.

He graduated from Salisbury University with Dual Degrees in Environmental Studies and Political Science and currently works as a Policy Fellow with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo), aiding the organization in articulating the needs of Maryland 23 counties and Baltimore City to the Maryland General Assembly. He has worked in government at the local, state, and federal levels, including with U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen. He served as the Student Government Association President at Salisbury University from 2018 to 2020. He helped to facilitate a Grassroots Activism Organization Training on campus for students in 2018 and as an undergraduate studied abroad in Costa Rica, analyzing how ecotourism, biodiversity, and culture intersect. He plans to continue his career in public policy and his policy areas of interest include environment, education, and economic development. He is passionate about ensuring every individual has a healthy and sustainable community to thrive in.

Juan Arango Millan, B.A.

He graduated from Salisbury University with B.A. in Spanish and is currently pursuing a Masters in Teaching at Salisbury University. He is a current Americorps service member and has previously volunteered with community organizations such as Rebirth Inc, City of Salisbury Vulnerable population task Force, and the LatinX task force. He is also founder and host of radio show Hora Latina Radio, where he tackles language barriers and misinformation by educating and informing the LatinX community. He is the President and founder of Salisbury LULAC Council, (League of Latin American Citizens), where he has fought to advance the economic condition, educational attainment, political influence, housing, health, and civil rights of Hispanic community. He is also the President of the International Academy of Kindness in the Americas, where he works with distinguished Russian Artist Gregory Potosky in building peace through art and establishing relations. He works with the government at the local and federal levels, including working at the Maryland General Assembly with Delegate Mike Rogers and in the William J. Perry Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies at the National Defense University (NDU) where he worked with high ranking civilians and military officials on defense and security issues affecting the Americas.

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