

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

CLIMATE JUSTICE SIMULATIONS EXPERIENCE

A role playing exercise designed to help us understand some concerns of an environmentally-degraded community.

INDIGENOUS LAND ZONE FORUM



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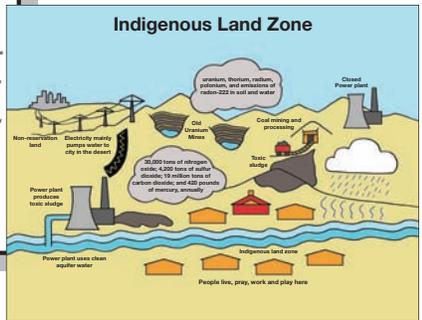
THE CONTEXT Indigenous Land Zone

Historically, mining on and near tribal lands occurred with minimal input from tribes. Starting in 1993, Congress passed a law that gave 12 percent of the land in the region to the tribe. About 500 indigenous people from the community are employed by the industry. The coal is processed and burned to generate electricity in the power plant located on the tribal lands. This electricity is then used to pump billions of gallons of water a day from a nearby river to the power plant. The tribe is concerned about pollution on their land due to the coal mine and power plant. The mine and the power plant release many pollutants which are known to cause health problems and contribute to climate change. Allowing climate change will only further exacerbate the region's water scarcity by increasing the severity and frequency of droughts. If it were to shut down, then the price of water in these other areas would increase.

COAL MINE AND POWER PLANT: This indigenous nation's ecology has been affected by a coal mining company. The mine gives 12 percent of the land to the tribe. About 500 indigenous people from the community are employed by the industry. The coal is processed and burned to generate electricity in the power plant located on the tribal lands. This electricity is then used to pump billions of gallons of water a day from a nearby river to the power plant. The tribe is concerned about pollution on their land due to the coal mine and power plant. The mine and the power plant release many pollutants which are known to cause health problems and contribute to climate change. Allowing climate change will only further exacerbate the region's water scarcity by increasing the severity and frequency of droughts. If it were to shut down, then the price of water in these other areas would increase.

POWER PLANT LEASE: The lease on the power plant ends in four years. Currently, the United States Bureau of Reclamation is conducting an Environmental Impact Study on the power plant. The results will determine if the lease should be renewed or not. The current plan is to renew the power plant's lease so that it expires in 2024, as well as to begin a nearby flood-down mine and combine it with this current coal mine.

EMISSIONS CONTROLS: The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is currently requiring Best Available Control Technology (BACT) to be installed at the Heavy Coking Station (HCS) in order to reduce nitric oxide emissions. A group of stakeholders has proposed an alternative to BACT that will cost less money. Currently, the public can submit comments to the EPA before a decision is made.



MOUNTAINTOP REMOVAL ZONE FORUM



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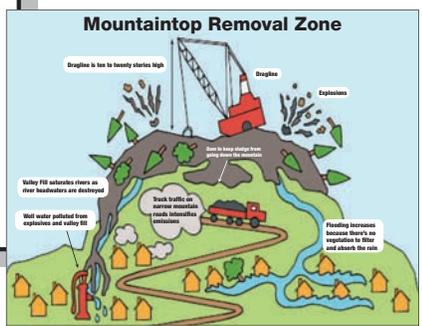
THE CONTEXT Mountaintop Removal Zone

The Appalachian region is known not only for its incredibly beautiful mountains and hills, but for its culture, its crafts, folklore, music, its flowers in the spring and its fall brilliance, and the region's distinct dialect all make it unique. Yet, as the demand for coal grows in the neighborhood, mining teams for coal and iron ore began to increase. Companies would bring in whole groups of miners who set up camps in the mountains. The Appalachian Mountains began to be seen as a boner for coal, not one for logging. Mountaintop removal (MTR) is a methodology that has been used to excavate coal from more than 500 mountains. It has been—and continues to be—a deep environmental concern.

MTR is a method of coal extraction, and here in the United States, it is practiced in the Appalachian region. The process is as follows: All the forest and brush is cleared from the top of a mountain and pushed down the side into adjacent valleys. Although there are some regulations around the "leveling" going into streams, the regulations are not always enforced. Explosives are used to remove the top layers of the mountain so that the coal seams are exposed. These large machines, sometimes loaded onto high "cater" "draglines", scoop up the coal. When all the coal has been removed, the site is usually abandoned. There is little reforestation, sometimes, companies will "re-vegetate" by filling in with soil. The soil is unstable, usually erodes, and non-point runoff is usually planned in the area. The runoff from the "leveling" that is the cause of the environmental damage. The runoff from the "leveling" and sometimes the headwaters of streams are diverted. In that stream, coal is used to produce energy but in the production of electricity, sends carbon dioxide and other gases which contribute to climate change. Because large areas of forestland are destroyed by MTR, there are fewer plants to pull carbon out of the atmosphere, thus, even a greater contribution to climate change.

The mining companies may be profiting, but generally, the people are not. Even though MTR has increased over the past few decades, the number of coal mining jobs has decreased. And the jobs the industry does provide are temporary. Once the coal is gone, so are the jobs.

The runoff from the mining contaminates the streams, groundwater, and drinking water with toxic metals that cause health problems. The risk for cancer, birth defects, and mortality are higher in these mountaintop-removal communities than in non-mining communities.



INDUSTRIAL ZONE IN A MAJOR CITY FORUM



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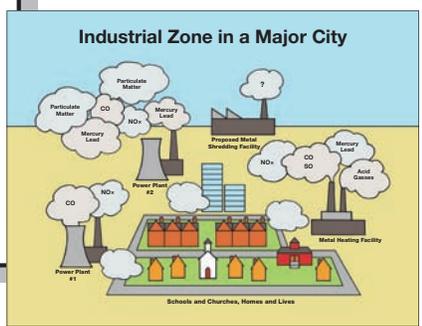
THE CONTEXT Industrial Zone in a Major City

It is the injection of Latino culture that gives the neighborhood its vibrant and distinct character. In fact, the neighborhood is called "Mexico" by many of its residents. Every year, the neighborhood celebrates Mexican independence day with a great festival that attracts thousands of spectators who look in the neighborhood to show pride in their heritage. This neighborhood has a wealth of Mexican food, music and dance schools that also help to reinforce the community's cultural ties. However, this many immigrant neighborhoods which have been legally zoned for industry, this community is plagued with environmental threats.

POWER PLANTS: There are two power plants in your neighborhood. They were built before the Clean Air Act came into effect in the 1970's, so they were "grandfathered" into the law and did not have to upgrade to stricter emission standards. Recent studies have found that these power plants cause premature deaths, asthma, heart attacks, and increased emergency room visits, all in addition to contributing to climate change. Finding pollution controls on the facilities is costly and not in the long run, it is less expensive than the economic consequences of illness, pollution, and death caused by pollution.

METAL HEATING FACILITY: There is a metal heating facility in your neighborhood. The EPA found that air around this facility is in violation of lead pollution standards. Lead can cause disastrous health effects.

PROPOSED METAL SHREDDING FACILITY: There is a proposal to put a new metal shredding facility across from a local high school. Metal shredding facilities have frequent fires and explosions, noise and vibrations, and bring in more truck traffic which only adds to local pollution.



The UMW staff is available to help you with your planning and can offer assistance to your conference leadership. Please contact Sophony Lamour via email: slamour@unitedmethodistwomen.org or contact the office of Economic and Environmental Justice 212-878-7814

