

The Deep Ecology Education Program is an effort to bring back to Richmond, Virginia, decades of organizing and cultural experience developed through direct partnerships with Indigenous communities of the Americas. In our work, we have partnered with dynamic community leaders and academics, developing innovative models of transformational development, community organizing, and social entrepreneurship.

DEEP's mission is to transform the Central Virginia region through sustainable education. The challenges presented by climate change and globalization require significant behavioral modification to engender the necessary cooperation and innovation for resilient adaptation. Furthermore, the disparity in educational funding and opportunities for communities disproportionately impacted by environmental injustices limit access to passion acquisition pathways for sustainable careers.

Vallerand et al. (2003) define passion as a strong inclination toward an activity that people like and find meaningful. According to social psychology and identity theory (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000), all identities begin as social roles. These roles embody the behaviors and meanings attached to specific social categories like "entrepreneur" (or "doctor," "father," "teacher," etc.). Paul A. O'Keefe (2020) has presented research demonstrating that passion is typically developed through exploring interest, modeling behavior by figures of authority. Passions are not necessarily inherent, waiting to be found, but instead, they are cultivated. A vital goal of this program is to develop the passion for sustainable careers and entrepreneurship by exposing students to opportunities that exist outside of their current frame of reference.

The program's vision is to contribute to global efforts to produce cultural changes that our current technology requires to ensure the survival of human life with dignity on this planet. Specifically, we seek to target the dominant belief system that prioritizes individualism, competition, and an anthropocentric worldview through activities that promotes relationships, diversity, collaboration, and emotional connections with the cosmos.

A significant body of social work literature demonstrates a positive relationship between green spaces and engagement with nature (Richard Thompson, 2018). Current research published by the EPA reflects a correlation between communities green spaces and the physical and psychological well-being of the population.

HSP's work for over twenty years has been grounded in empowerment theory to develop individual agency and organizational power. A central aspect of this work is developing effective coping mechanisms through an understanding of stress process theory. Carol S. Aneshensel (1992) differentiates between ineffective coping strategies that enable individuals or communities to avoid or cope with greater stress levels and methods that identify and address psychological stressors.

In our work with communities that have experienced significant levels of historical trauma, we have witnessed the validation of Marc Zimmerman's (1991) empowerment theory. Developing individual agency begins with an understanding from expectancy theory in social psychology

that states that an individual that does not have a sense of control over their own lives will demonstrate either despondency or anger. Despondency can manifest in magical thinking, such as believing that a supernatural being or a political leader will solve a problem, stress avoidance behavior such as drug addiction, or status-seeking. Anger can manifest as spousal abuse, racist attacks, or voting for an authoritarian government promising punitive actions against an outside group. The critical aspect of these coping mechanisms does not identify the source of stress nor assist individuals or communities in gaining a sense of control over their own lives. Numerous psychological studies demonstrate improvements in behavioral health through participation in social networks and obtaining some level of involvement in decision-making. As Zimmerman has famously written, it does not matter if it is a knitting circle; the act of participation and planning has demonstrable positive results for individual and community empowerment.

Therefore, the envisioned programming activities are focused on developing the direct engagement of Central Virginians in developing critical environmental consciousness and participating in decision making and planning activities to address potential threats and transform the region.

The first step in developing the programming activities is the creation of a regional ecological *MILPA*. We learned this model of organizing from our MesoAmerican partners. Milpa both refers to a system of agriculture as well as a system of philosophy. Milpa agriculture is a form of bio-intensive agriculture where corn, beans, squash, flowers, and numerous other crops are grown together. The system solves corn's nitrogen problem. Corn takes nitrogen from the soil. The beans use the corn to grow vertically, where it absorbs the nitrogen from the air and fixes it into the soil through its roots. The squash protects the topsoil from heavy rains and heat while keeping the soil moist through osmosis. The lesson from this system is the power of diversity and the importance of organizing, specializing in a particular role, and engaging collaboratively with other organizations to create a result greater than the individual parts.

The purpose of DEEP's programming is to develop community partnerships capable of addressing environmental justice issues and improving the quality of life through a methodology that provides individuals with opportunities for leadership, participation, and social capital formation.

DEEP envisions four programming components: 1: A structured and supervised after-school program targeting two Richmond Public School communities, 2: Curriculum enhancements that develop creative and critical thinking skills, 3: Intercultural service engagements, 4: A Youth Conservation Corps program for young adults.

The structured after-school program corresponds to an expressed need by migrant mothers in the region. We have interviewed 35 adolescent females who attend Richmond or Chesterfield schools that report being isolated in trailers while their parents work long hours. We aspire to develop a structure of DEEP drop-in centers beginning with a pilot program for the Pace Community Center in Richmond. The centers would function as organizing academies and local

for college students and community partners to research, plan and implement direct service or advocacy projects.

An example of a proposed project would be to address the heat islands of Richmond. Students would learn the basics of GIS mapping and develop content for advocacy and planning. One projected outcome would be creating a community-based mutual aid plan to prepare for a heat emergency in the City of Richmond, including recruiting and training institutions such as public libraries, schools, and churches to provide cooling centers and check-in with elders.

We model the curriculum enhancement modular on our MAP programming in Guatemala that improves creative and critical thinking skills and supports cultural integrity. The program entails studying the state and locally mandated curriculum and outcomes with service engagement activities.

We will develop the curriculum enhancement activities to include one of our program's four transformational organizing principles: 1) Gender Equity, 2) Environmental Stewardship, 3) Pluralculturality, 4) Civic Participation.

An example of the enhancement activities would be installing a Milpa on school grounds corresponding with Earth Science teaching objectives of natural compounds and plant life. This teaching objective would be broadened to include the scientific contributions of Indigenous cultures of the Americas, the Indigenous teaching concerning the importance of collaboration for sustaining life, and soil science concerning the negative impacts of monocropping, chemical agricultural, and vertically integrated food systems.

Another proposed activity would be planting pollinator gardens and a corresponding advocacy program to promote participation throughout the community. In conjunction with our Internship program, a campaign to engage faith communities in a reflection on the semiotics of English landscaping tradition and the need for ontological and epistemological transformation to address the critical ecological crisis through behavioral modifications such as prioritizing health of pollinators and migratory birds.

The third programming cluster involves organizing intercultural service engagements between different communities around environmental sustainability. An example of this activity would be to bring together members of a suburban Rotary Club and an inner-city parents organization to develop pollinator gardens with students. Engaging high school students from public and private schools in removing invasive species with a reflection activity on the value of civic participation.

The fourth programming cluster concerns summer paid internships for young adults in a Youth Conservation Corps. The organizing efforts would include networking with public and private organizations for contracts to engage with sustainable landscaping and conservation. The program would consist of engagements on activist scholarship, advocacy, and program planning.

The primary goal of DEEP is to serve as a bridge between scholarship on cultural adaptations required for our species to survive climate change. Developing sustainable political and commercial responses requires sufficient popular support that it becomes a priority for policymakers. The heart of this program is a community organizing endeavor to build a collective base for increasing regional resiliency and generate transformational dynamics leading to increased equality of opportunity and quality of life.