

In the following essay, Jennifer Oladipo argues that minorities need to become more involved. As a member of a minority group herself, she uses her personal experience both as an entrance into the essay and a source of evidence.

**Directions: As you read through the essay, annotate for where you see the personal experience. Comment on why it is effective evidence in supporting her argument. Additionally, annotate for other types of evidence and tone.**

*Why Can't Environmentalism Be Colorblind?*

Jennifer Oladipo

In nearly two years of volunteering and working at an urban nature preserve, I have never seen another face like mine come through our doors. At least, I've not seen another black woman come for a morning hike or native-wildlife program. The few I do encounter are teachers and chaperones with school groups, or aides assisting people with disabilities. When I commute by bus to the preserve, located in the middle of Louisville, Kentucky, I disembark with blacks and other minorities. Yet none of them ever seems to make it to the trails.

I might have assumed they simply weren't interested, but then I saw that none of the center's newsletters were mailed to predominantly minority areas of town, nor did any press releases go to popular minority radio stations or newspapers. Not ever, as far as I could tell. Although the nature center seeks a stronger community presence and feels the same budget pinch as other small nonprofits, it has missed large swaths of the community with its message.

The terms *environmentalist* and *minority* conjure two distinct images in most people's minds—a false dichotomy that seriously threatens any chance of pulling the planet out of its current ecological tailspin. Some people think this country is on the precipice of a societal shift that will make environmental stewardship an integral part of our collective moral code. But that is not going to happen as long as we as a nation continue to think and act as if “green” automatically means “white.”

Assumptions about who is amenable to conservation values cost the environmental movement numbers and dollars. Religion, capitalism, and even militarism learned ages ago to reach actively across the racial spectrum. In terms of winning over minorities, they have left environmentalism in the dust. Not until I joined an environmental-journalism organization was my mailbox flooded with information about serious environmental issues—even though I have been volunteering in organic gardens, hiking, and camping for years. I had received solicitations for credit cards and political parties, fast food coupons, and a few Books of Mormon—but I had to seek out environmental groups.

Minorities make up one-third of the population, and we are growing as an economic and financial force as our numbers increase. We are a key to maintaining the energy that environmentalism has gained as a result of intense mainstream attention. That momentum will peter out without more people to act on the present sense of urgency. Imagine the power of 100 million Asians, African Americans, Latinos, and Native Americans invested in sustainable living, joining green organizations, voting for politicians and laws that protect the environment.

Nobody benefits from the perception that enjoying and caring for the environment is an exclusively white lifestyle. The truth is that brown, yellow, red, and black people like to go backpacking, too. Those of us with the means are buying organic, local, and hybrid. If environmentalism continues to appear mostly white and well-off, it will continue to be mostly white and well-off, even as racial and economic demographics change. The environmental movement will continue to overlook the nuances, found in diversity of experience, that reveal multiple facets of environmental problems—and their solutions.

Sooner or later, even global warming will be pushed off magazine covers, television screens, and the Congressional floor. Before that time, we need to have in place something even more impressive: a

racially diverse, numerically astounding mass of environmentalists ready to pick up the ball and run with it.

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In the following excerpt from an op-ed piece, Fabiola Santiago argues against the policy that children born in the United States to immigrants, including those who are undocumented, must be treated as nonresidents when it comes to receiving state services.

**Directions: As you read, annotate for the anecdote Santiago utilizes for evidence. Comment on why it is effective in supporting her argument. How does the anecdote serve to typify a common problem?**

In College, These American Citizens Are Not Created Equal  
Fabiola Santiago

“I lift my lamp beside the golden door!” – Lady Liberty

On Saturday, the day after its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration, the Statue of Liberty will close its doors for a year-long, \$27 million renovation of the monument’s interior. One could only hope that the nation’s soul will undergo some transformation as well. Emma Lazarus, the descendant of Sephardic Jews expelled from Spain who wrote in 1883 “The New Colossus,” the moving sonnet at the base of the statue in New York harbor, would shed mournful tears at the lack of compassion for immigrants these days. She would weep at the ease with which words of disdain are spoken by some who lead and aspire to lead, and at the underhanded way in which ill-willed actions are taken against immigrants and their children. Lady Liberty’s “golden door” is not only jammed, slammed shut, or slightly ajar depending on where you come from, but we’ve fallen so low on the scale of our founding values that in the United States of America today not all U.S. citizens are created equal. There are state like Florida, Alabama, and Arizona where politicians and bureaucrats use the system to discriminate, to create classes of Americans, to disenfranchise some of the most deserving among us. The latest low blow was unveiled by a class-action lawsuit and bill filed in the Florida legislature last week. Under rules established by the state’s Department of Education and the university system’s Board of Governors, students like Wendy Ruiz – born and raised in Miami – have to pay out-of-state tuition at rates that are more than three times what other Florida residents pay for their education. Ruiz has lived in the state all her life. She has a Florida birth certificate, a Florida driver’s license, and is registered to vote in Florida. But while other Miami Dade College students pay about \$1,266 per term in tuition, she must pay \$4,524 because the state considers her a dependent of nonresidents. Here’s an institution that is supposed to defend education punishing a young American for the sins of her parents, who are undocumented immigrants. Be we should all aspire to have neighbors like the Ruizes, who raised a daughter like Wendy, willing to work three part-time jobs to pay her tuition while maintaining a 3.7 grade-point average. “I know that I will be successful because I have never wanted something so bad in my life like I want this,” Ruiz said of her education. Who knows what more Wendy Ruiz might accomplish, what more she could become if she were able to pay all of her attention to her education without an unfair financial burden of paying extravagantly unfair fees.