Introduction

Speakers: Becky Hunter & Grayson Peters[*]

Becky Hunter: All right, we're going to get started. Good morning, everyone. Thank you so much for coming to what we're sure is going to be an incredible event today. First, we take a moment to recognize that Berkeley sits on the territory of Xučyun, the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the historic and sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band.

We recognize that every member of the Berkeley community benefits from the use and occupation of this land since the institution's founding in 1868. Consistent with our values of community and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to native peoples. By offering this land acknowledgment, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold the University of California, Berkeley more accountable to the needs of American Indians and Indigenous peoples.

Grayson Peters: Of course, as important as it is to acknowledge the land we're on, that, in itself, is not all that we can do. We would encourage anyone in this room today to do more to come to grips with the history of dispossession that native peoples have endured. In particular, we have postcards on the back table from Sogorea Te' Land Trust, which is a local Bay Area Indigenous-led organization for land back. We encourage you to check out those postcards and learn more.

One option to help out is to pay a Shuumi, or voluntary annual tax for non-Native residents, to help them fund land acquisition. We encourage you to check out those postcards when you have a moment. With that, hi, everybody. My name is Grayson Peters.

Becky: My name is Becky Hunter. We are this year's editors-in-chief of *Ecology Law Quarterly.* Most of you in this room know about *ELQ*. For those of you who don't, I'll give a bit of background. At over fifty years old, *Ecology Law Quarterly* is among the oldest and most prominent environmental law journals in the country. Since 1971, when the conservation biology movement was gaining popularity in America, our student editors have published four issues a year. They're composed of scholarship by academics, practitioners, and students on topics of energy, land, air, and water, among others.

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In recent years, *Ecology Law Quarterly* is proud to have evolved along with the field of environmental law, expanding our focus on environmental justice and the intersections between environmental concerns and social issues. *ELQ*'s annual symposium typically explores the complexities of law and policy. We feature lawyers and experts from non-legal fields whose work challenges the status quo or sheds new light on deep-seated environmental problems.

In recent years, our symposia have been organized around the themes of wildfires in California, the just transition to a decarbonized economy, and rural lawyering. Our great symposium director, Natalie Friedberg, organized this year's event entitled "Reframing Conservation, Ecology, and Environmental Justice."

Grayson: Today's symposium aims to bridge the gap between two ideas that had been traditionally thought of as separate. Our pitch today, and Natalie's pitch, is that they should not be thought of as separate. Those two ideas are conservation and environmental justice. That's what we want to bring together today. I think a lot of us in this room are familiar with the role that attorneys can play in the environmental justice movement when it comes to classic environmental justice issues like air pollution and hazardous waste sites, which disproportionately affect the health and well-being of low-income communities and communities of color.

Our pitch today is that environmental justice is a broad and foundational perspective that should go beyond that. It should underpin every aspect of environmental work, whether that's advocating against pesticides that are harmful to agricultural workers or protecting endangered species that are of special significance to marginalized groups. Environmental justice is actually particularly important in conservation because, in America's conservation system, public lands—including our national, state, and local parks—grew from the dark history of ethnic cleansing and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

The founders of the mainstream American conservation movement, like John Muir, envisioned nature as an untamed wilderness, a space for the rugged, white individual to test his mettle against the elements. This, of course, ignores the fact that people had actually been living there for thousands of years and that those Indigenous peoples in those areas had cultivated their own traditions of land stewardship and deep ecological knowledge. That history is important to how we think about conservation today.

Unfortunately, the exclusionary legacy of the early conservationists continues. Just one piece of evidence: Visitors to national parks remain disproportionately white. The many benefits of access to the outdoors are not equitably distributed across socioeconomic groups, even today, which will be the topic of discussion throughout today's symposium. Many of you in the room will soon be environmental attorneys. We encourage you all to learn from and ask questions of our guest speakers, all of whom are engaged in exciting work at the intersection of conservation and social justice.

The morning sessions will focus on equity and access to areas that we, as a society, have decided to conserve. In the afternoon, we'll focus on advocacy for conservation and how we can align it with environmental justice values and goals. We're going to have some great speakers and then discussion groups later on for more small group discussion.

Becky: Throughout the day, we hope that this symposium raises questions like, "What is nature? What does it mean to conserve our natural resources? What does it mean to do conservation in a manner that's consistent with the principles of racial, economic, and social justice?"