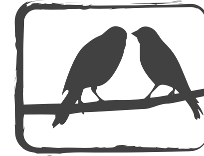

Sacrifice Zones

A Genealogy and Analysis of an Environmental Justice Concept

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Abstract This article provides a genealogy and analysis of the concept of a sacrifice zone. Drawing on archival and ethnographic research, the article traces the origins and transformation of sacrifice zones from (1) a livestock and land management concept into (2) a critical energy concept during the 1970s, (3) an Indigenous political ecology concept in the 1980s, and, finally, (4) an environmental justice concept in the 1990s and beyond. The article identifies the concept's core content and argues in favor of calling sites of concentrated environmental injustice sacrifice zones, over alternatives such as "fenceline communities" or "dumping grounds," in part because the concept of sacrifice, derived from the Latin "to make sacred," is polysemous, signifying both violent victimization and sacred life. This explains why some activists have employed the sacrifice zone concept to generate a positive vision for transforming sacrifice zones into sacred zones. This analysis of the concept's development through time, social friction, and geographic mobility advances efforts to broaden environmental justice theory from a focus on distributive justice to critical and constructive engagement with culture and religion. The article pursues one implication of this study by suggesting an amendment to the concept of "slow violence": environmental injustice is better theorized as "slow sacrifice"—a political ecology of life and death, the goal of which is to concentrate death in some places so that other places might experience full, sustainable life. Such a theory makes visible a wider set of existing cultural and religious responses to environmental injustices.

Keywords environmental justice, sacrifice zones, theology, religion, slow violence

I was in Birmingham, Alabama, conducting fieldwork when a conversation with environmental justice (EJ) activist Sarah piqued my interest in the concept of a sacrifice zone. A Latina from East Tennessee, Sarah had recently moved to Birmingham to lead a stalled citizen science initiative meant to study the health costs of operating coal plants in residential neighborhoods. While a student at a Baptist college, Sarah had participated in a series of similar projects organized by the evangelical environmental organization Restoring Eden in parts of Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia where people lived near encroaching mountaintop removal (MTR) coal mines. Restoring Eden's efforts helped

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produce the first household-level data on MTR's community health toll. They had discovered in citizen science a way to meld their love of God, neighbors, and creation by quantifying what they called "the true costs of coal" to equip residents and activists with empirical knowledge to challenge MTR. After her first spring break as a volunteer surveyor with Restoring Eden in Appalachia, Sarah became a trainer of new volunteers, eventually assuming leadership over the organization's citizen science project in North Birmingham a few years later. "Why did you come here?" I asked.

"I'm from Tennessee," she replied. "I've worked in Appalachia. I've been to Ecuador and Guatemala. I've heard stories about India and China and Australia. Environmental injustice is everywhere. . . . It's about being called and treated as expendable people, as sacrificeable communities. It's about sacrificing people for a greater good. They're treated as sacrificeable communities, but they're not expendable people!"[1] Recalling the sermon we had heard preached in a Black Baptist church a stone's throw from a coal plant earlier that morning, she then spoke about Jesus dying on the cross to give life to those the world deemed expendable. Sarah was reasoning with the concept of a sacrifice zone in a manner of critique that was also creative and generative. Where did this concept of a sacrifice zone come from? Was Sarah doing something new with it? What does it mean to call the environs of MTR and coal plants sacrifice zones?

Searching for answers in the scholarly literature, I was disappointed. Though "sacrifice zone" is a frequently used EJ concept, scholars tend to either cite short and often conflicting accounts of its origin and meaning or they simply use it without defining it. In what follows I provide a critical genealogy of this concept that is built on archival research and analysis of reports, news media, and scholarship. This genealogy illuminates the background of Sarah's language by describing the material history of a concept that was forged at a particular historical moment, developed through social friction and cooperation in diverse geopolitical contexts, and eventually became a critical EJ concept in the United States and—increasingly—abroad. My task is to document how the concept of a sacrifice zone emerged, developed, and was enriched through encounters with diverse populations in various contexts over time, and then show how analysis of this concept enriches environmental thought by bringing EJ theory, which has primarily assumed a distributive justice framework, into critical and constructive engagement with culture and religion.

This study, while rooted in my ethnographic research, is aimed at the more general goal of explaining what this concept's emergence and development reveals about the diverse places that activists, residents, and scholars today call sacrifice zones. I identify four phases in the concept's development and then analyze its meaning and features. I argue that the concept is a better way to theorize the places that disproportionately bear the environmental harms our economies produce than its alternatives, such as "fenceline communities" or "dumping grounds," because of its potential as simultaneously a critical and a constructive concept with cultural and religious import. Sacrifice language is a

1. Personal interview, March 14, 2019.

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site of contestation between competing logics and practices of life and death. As I will argue, so are sacrifice zones: they are sites of conflict between competing conceptions of sacrifice, love, and life. Exploring one entailment of this study, I conclude by offering an amendment to Rob Nixon's influential theory of "slow violence": "slow sacrifice," a process in which the securing of one's own life and satisfying one's own desires produces death and harms that are disproportionately borne by other people and places.

Sacrifice Areas—from Livestock to Energy

The sacrifice zone concept originated in livestock management, where it concerned techniques for balancing economic and ecological costs and benefits. Its current range of meanings in environmental thought emerged in its transference from this realm, where it was a conservation concept, to that of energy and environmental issues, where, in the aftermath of the 1973 oil crisis, it became a critical concept for opposing the human and environmental costs of abstract collective projects like development, consumerism, and militarism.

By the early 1970s land managers and animal agriculturalists in the United States and the United Kingdom referred to places destroyed by livestock as "sacrifice areas." For instance, observing that the vegetation around water sources was often destroyed by heavy grazing, trampling, or dusting over, bureaucratic land managers in the American West called these places "sacrifice areas" in a 1970 report.[2] Lacking vegetation, during rainy periods these areas turned to mud; during droughts to dust. Yet because successful livestock operations required green pastures, the sacrifice area concept developed to index different practices for different plots of land: some pastureland should be permanently destroyed to allow other pastureland to remain verdant over the long term. For instance, one Bureau of Indian Affairs report on the resource potential of the Standing Rock Reservation in 1973 specified that sacrifice areas "reflect[ed] a conservation concept, not a maximum utilization concept."[3] The goal was not to try to eliminate sacrifices but to concentrate them into as small an area as possible and so conserve the rest of the pasture.

Observations about sacrifice zones were often paired with technological or managerial solutions to concentrate the damage in small areas or, as in the case of animal waste, send it elsewhere. In 1970, for instance, a scholar in a British farm journal defined a "sacrifice area" as a "geographic location" for concentrating waste, where farmers disposed of effluent.[4] Like many conservation principles, the concept of a sacrifice area thus originated in nature management with the goal of sustaining long-term economic productivity.

2. *Proposed Livestock Grazing*, 3–17.

3. *Standing Rock Reservation*, 62.

4. Collier, "Liabilities of Liquids," 19. The factors making on-site sacrifice areas a challenge are identified as increasingly intensive agricultural practices, worsening river pollution, and closer proximity of farms to human settlements.

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The concept retains this meaning in livestock management today. Farmers and ranchers use the phrases *sacrifice area*, *sacrifice lot*, and *sacrifice paddock* interchangeably to refer to a small area of land, usually a fenced-in paddock, for concentrating ecological damage from weather, waste, trampling, or overgrazing, thus protecting the rest of the pasture. According to one organization that promotes science-informed farming, "Sacrifice areas protect pastures. . . . It is called a sacrifice area because you are giving up land that could be used as a pasture in order to protect the remaining pasture area, which is saved."[5] Some land is destroyed to save other lands.

In short, a sacrifice area was originally a concept and practice for scientifically managing land and animals to balance economic productivity and ecological sustainability. Because animals are incapable of regulating their own behavior, managers and farmers intervene with fences and other techniques to separate protected lands from sacrificed lands and therefore ensure the long-term good of the whole enterprise.

This livestock concept became an energy concept in 1973, when an oil crisis exacerbated a complex confluence of forces summarized by the rallying cry "Don't Appalachianize the West."[6] By that time, the United States had become dependent on foreign, largely Middle Eastern oil to meet its rising national energy demand. Within weeks of the oil embargo in October 1973, President Richard Nixon announced "Project Independence," an initiative that entailed expanding nuclear plants and coal strip mines into western areas largely inhabited by ranchers, agriculturalists, and Native Americans. Coal and nuclear companies took their industrial technologies to states like Colorado, Montana, and Wyoming, where ranchers, Native Americans, and environmentalists discovered common cause in rejecting their "Appalachianization." "Don't Appalachianize the West" became "a rallying cry that [sought] to prevent the energy companies from ravaging with strip mines such coal-rich states as Montana and Wyoming," writing them off as "national sacrifice areas" where "little of the vast mineral wealth [is] returned to the citizens."[7]

A National Research Council report entitled *Rehabilitation Potential of Western Coal Lands* was the first document to make sacrifice areas an energy concept. The study committee began its work in January 1973, before the oil crisis, and published its report a year later, after the oil embargo had been launched. It acknowledged that with the westward movement of surface mining methods, there was a need for "rehabilitation techniques" to "prevent a repetition of the Appalachian experience in the western coal lands."[8] The authors foregrounded the matter of land rehabilitation after the life cycle of a strip-mining operation: Could land, after it was mined, be rehabilitated and reused for other productive purposes? Or would surface mining permanently waste the land

5. Livestock and Poultry Environmental Learning Community, "Exercise or Sacrifice Lots."
6. McCarthy, "Who's Who in Appalachia," 69.
7. McCarthy, "Who's Who in Appalachia," 69.
8. National Research Council, *Rehabilitation Potential*, 1, 7.

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beyond the possibility of any subsequent productive use? In an Orwellian turn of phrase, the report stated that if the goal was for post-mined lands to become "National Sacrifice Areas (Abandon the Spoils)," then there was a high probability of success: "If surface mined lands are declared national sacrifice areas, all ecological zones have a high probability of being successfully rehabilitated."[9] Translation: the most probable outcome of surface mining would be a permanent loss of the land's productivity. Though the report did not provide a rationale for using the sacrifice areas concept, it is likely that the study committee transferred it from livestock to energy. In the very same lands where bureaucrats promoted the use of sacrifice areas in livestock and pasture management, the authors adapted the concept to understand the effects of coal strip-mining.

Though mentioned only twice in the report, spokespersons for both the Environmental Defense Fund and the National Coal Association referred to the controversial concept in their official comments on the report. The former affirmed the need for a deliberative federal policy for rehabilitation to prevent western lands from being turned into a "national sacrifice area."[10] He also showed the concept's transferability beyond coal when, less than a month later, he used it in a hearing on nuclear matters before the Atomic Energy Commission.[11] The coal spokesman, by contrast, contested the concept. In his judgment, the report "overplays repeatedly the idea of 'national sacrifice areas,' which are fuzzily defined . . . as areas where nothing would be done to the land after mining—the spoils would be abandoned and revegetation left to the wind and bird droppings." He argued that even if this accurately described Appalachia's experience, it was not likely to happen in the West. In fact, he argued, the use of this "spurious theme" and "false concept" cast doubt on the entire report. "It raises a suspicion that scientific objectivity, which is so essential to a meaningful dialogue, is somewhat lacking."[12] The environmentalist's use of the concept and the coal industry spokesman's critique of it are evidence that it was, at its very moment of transference from livestock to energy, meant to circumscribe the coal industry's license to operate in the region.

The way one Wyoming journalist combined energy independence and coal's westward expansion in testimony before Congress in 1974 displays how the concept also communicated moral and theological connotations from its very moment of transference from livestock to energy. Journalist Bruce Hamilton welcomed the change from a "laissez-faire energy policy" that "left Appalachia in economic and ecological ruin" to a coordinated, national energy policy. However, he concluded, Project Independence would merely exacerbate laissez-faire's negative impacts: it would "condemn future generations of Americans to live with deadly radioactive wastes, unreclaimable coal strip

9. National Research Council, *Rehabilitation Potential*, 85–86. *Rehabilitated* here actually means the opposite. The report says that if the "rehabilitation" goal is to sacrifice the land and abandon any hope of rehabilitating it for a subsequent use, then strip-mining would be successful in achieving that goal.

10. National Research Council, *Rehabilitation Potential*, 183.

11. Atomic Energy Commission, *Report on Energy Research*.

12. National Research Council, *Rehabilitation Potential*, 160, 163.

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mines, mountains of oil shale tailings, and other national sacrifice areas; sacrifices to our greed and the god of conspicuous consumption."[13] Individuals like Hamilton who resisted the industrial colonization of western lands thus converted a conservationist management concept into a morally infused, critical energy concept that inseparably bound together the fates of both land and people: sacrificing particular lands for the nation is tantamount to sacrificing the people who dwell in them. A *Washington Post* journalist flagged the concept's explosive connotations in a 1975 article:

> The panel that issued the cautious and scholarly National Academy of Sciences report unwittingly touched off a verbal bombshell. Certain sites, it said, must be given up as impossible to reclaim or even rehabilitate, and for these hopeless areas ("Abandon the Spoils"), it coined the term "National Sacrifice Area." The words exploded in the Western press overnight. Seized upon by a people who felt themselves being served up as "national sacrifices," they became a watchword and a rallying cry and the impression they left was supported by an unfortunate official utterance.[14]

Did this "unfortunate official utterance" explode across the West because it better represented what was at stake than a more objective term? A few months later, for instance, Colorado's governor addressed an op-ed in the *New York Times* to the high energy consuming coastal elites who exercised disproportionate influence over federal energy policy. His message: Do not sacrifice us, our water, and our agricultural economy for your energy consumption during a time of crisis. He implied that the federal government, which owned large swaths of the West, was like a livestock manager who divides their land between verdant pasture and sacrifice lots. But, he pleaded, "The West, understandably, doesn't want to become a 'national sacrifice area.'" At a time when the federal government faced "a terrible temptation to override the interests of the states" for a quick fix to its crisis, "someone or some areas" were going to "pay too heavy a price." Already familiar with the boom-and-bust cycles of extractive enterprises, the West knew the costs of refashioning entire economies around fickle international markets, and they refused to become victims of an "energy hurricane."[15]

As the concept continued to move across social borders and geographic space, it was enriched. By 1976, Appalachian residents described Appalachia itself as a sacrifice area, and the Appalachian Alliance's 1979 pamphlet *National Sacrifice Area* prefigured the concept's expansion.[16] Indigenous leaders in the West adapted the sacrifice area concept

13. *Federal Coal Leasing Program*, pt. 2, *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Minerals, Materials, and Fuels of the Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs*, 93rd Cong., second session (April 18, 1974) (statement of Bruce Hamilton).

14. Huntington-Smith, "Wringing of the West."

15. Lamm, "Energy Development."

16. McCarthy, "Who's Who in Appalachia?," 69; Appalachian Alliance, *National Sacrifice Area*. The Appalachian Alliance prefigured the EJ movement's expansion of the concept from a narrow focus on energy to a broader engagement with the environment and the economy.

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amid another oil crisis, in 1979, and another push, in the name of energy independence, to exploit western states' resources.[17] It was thought that approximately 60 percent of the United States' energy resources—coal, uranium, and shale oil—were located on reservations. In that new situation, Native leaders vigorously debated what to do. Should they use the instruments of white culture to exploit their energy resources and thus gain the economic power necessary to achieve Tribal sovereignty and self-determination? Or, should they eschew settler-colonial extractive capitalism and preserve the integrity of their Indigenous lifeways, traditions, and values?[18]

Navajo activist John Redhouse, representing the latter, anti-extractive view, argued that "In a generation, the resource will be played out and you'll have a few Native American sheiks and an impoverished mass." In his view, the government and energy companies simply used Tribal self-determination to legitimize their plans to turn the western reservations into "national sacrifice areas."[19] The concept thus attained a tragic socio-ecological dimension: within a context of severe constraint and injustice, is the pursuit of survival and liberation best served by sacrificing Indigenous land and values or prolonging Indigenous poverty and marginality?

During the 1980s Indigenous thinkers centered the sacrifice area concept around uranium and nuclear issues (though coal and oil were never far from view) to critically assess the ways genocide and ecocide were intertwined: both were rooted in white settler-colonial culture. One consequence of nuclear's unfathomable temporalities was its potent symbolism; places destroyed for nuclear development were gone forever. The Four Corners region in the Southwest, inhabited largely by Navajo and Hopi, was a critical site of the concept's development during this period. Soon after an Exxon chair suggested in 1980 that the government declare the area "a national energy zone," where the "normal rules" governing environmental protection would not apply, a documentary film was released titled *The Four Corners: A National Sacrifice Area?*[20] It claimed that there were more cancers, birth defects, miscarriages, and infant deaths in communities near radioactive waste sites. According to one reviewer, the film "raise[d] an important question: whether the hidden costs of uranium mining, coal strip-mining and oil-shale projects on the Colorado Plateau outweigh the short-term gains."[21]

American Indian Movement leader Russell Means theoretically enriched the concept by linking it to the sacrifice of entire peoples. A close observer of Indigenous sovereignty movements, Means fought against an Indigenous alliance with Marxists, because Marxism, like capitalism, promoted industrialization. Though both were called "revolutions," he argued, they are better understood as "continuations" of European culture.[22]

17. The 1979 oil crisis was catalyzed by the Iranian Revolution.

18. Dina Gilio-Whitaker examines this Indigenous industrial dilemma in a chapter entitled "The Complicated Legacy of Western Expansion and the Industrial Revolution," in *As Long as Grass Grows*, 53–72.

19. Raines, "American Indians Struggling."

20. Berry, "Gearing Up in the West"; McLeod, *Four Corners*.

21. Corry, "TV."

22. Means, "Same Old Song," 26.

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As evidence, he pointed to the USSR, China, and Vietnam, where Marxists justified sacrificing Indigenous peoples in the name of industrialization. Industrial societies' need for abundant energy sources would render places like his Pine Ridge "uninhabitable forever. This is considered by industry, and the white society which created this industry, to be an 'acceptable' price to pay for energy resource development." However, he continued, "we are resisting being turned into a national sacrifice area. We're resisting being turned into a national sacrifice people. The costs of this industrial process are not acceptable to us. It is genocide to dig the uranium here and to drain the water-table."[23] In short, he said, capitalism is not "really responsible for the situation in which we have been declared a national sacrifice. No, it is the European tradition; European culture itself is responsible. Marxism is just the latest continuation of this tradition" that "declare[s] us an acceptable 'cost.'"[24] Other influential Indigenous thinkers, including Winona LaDuke, Ward Churchill, and George Tinker, embraced the sacrifice area concept as Means theorized it.[25] Intensifying its critical thrust, they made it a critical political-ecological concept that cast doubt on the entire enterprise of Euro-American culture for its tendency to instrumentalize and waste lands and peoples to feed its own development. Osage scholar Tinker theorized the issue in theological terms when he juxtaposed theologies that construct American Indian territories as sacrifice zones with Indigenous rituals of self-sacrifice intended to reciprocate and restore the creation community after violent ruptures.[26] In Tinker's account, two contrasting logics of sacrifice constitute rival political ecologies. Traci Voyles's more recent book *Wastelanding* continues this tradition of thought by arguing that wastelands, or "sacrifice zones," are the "other" through which modern industrialism is established.[27]

Environmental Justice and Sacrifice

The concept's next major development phase occurred in the 1990s with the rise of the EJ movement, which began in the South in the early 1980s to counter the siting of toxic land uses in economically poor and racially minoritized communities. Nurtured by the Black church, the EJ movement emerged from the civil rights and Black Power movements through friction with mainstream environmentalism. In majority–African American Warren County, North Carolina, the EJ movement coalesced in opposition to the state's decision to solve a statewide toxic PCB problem by collecting and dumping the PCBs in one place. Robert Bullard, the movement's leading scholar, led the United Church of Christ's study that documented similar cases across the country. That study concluded

23. Means, "Same Old Song," 25.

24. Means, "Same Old Song," 28.

25. See Churchill and LaDuke, "Native America"; Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*; Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*.

26. Tinker, *American Indian Liberation*, 58, 68–70. As an example of a violent rupture that requires rituals of self-sacrifice to restore creation community, Tinker points to hunting.

27. Voyles, *Wastelanding*, 9–10. The first chapter's title is "Sacrificial Land."

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the problem was systemic: toxic dumps and other "locally unwanted land uses" were routinely sited in economically poor communities and communities of color. In conversation with Indigenous leaders at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, Bullard adapted the sacrifice area concept, which he eventually referred to as "environmental sacrifice zones," to describe environmental disparities in places, like Warren County, that disproportionately bear the burdens of pollution, chemical exposure, and toxic waste.[28]

In addition to carrying the sacrifice zone concept eastward and southward, the EJ movement expanded it in two consequential ways that facilitated its national and global expansion. First, EJ scholars and activists used it to name any geographical area that bore a disproportionate amount of industrial pollution, toxic chemical exposure, or other environmental harms associated with industry or national security. In short, it became synonymous with Bullard's concept of a "dumping ground."[29] Steve Lerner stabilized the concept for EJ scholars: "sacrifice zones," he argued, are "semi-industrial areas—largely populated by African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and low-income whites—where a dangerous and sometimes lethal brand of racial and economic discrimination persists."[30] He argued that in spite of the concept's origin in nuclear development (which my genealogy suggests is only partly accurate) "the 'sacrifice zones' designation should be expanded to include a broader array of fenceline communities or hot spots of chemical pollution where residents live immediately adjacent to heavily polluting industries or military bases."[31] After canvassing various labels for these places, including "fenceline communities," he settled on *sacrifice zones* "because it dramatizes the fact that low-income and minority populations . . . are required to make disproportionate health and economic sacrifices that more affluent people can avoid." And this "pattern of unequal exposures constitutes a form of environmental racism that is being played out on a large scale across the nation."[32] The concept thus named for the EJ movement a much larger phenomenon than energy production and consumption. It named the intertwined environmental and human costs of national and economic development in general; those costs seem to make a preferential option for the poor.

Second, as the concept was transferred from livestock management to energy and environmental justice, the fence imagery came full circle with the naming of "fenceline

28. Bullard, "Overcoming Racism," 43. In the rest of this article I refer to the 1991 National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit as "the summit." A review of the summit's proceedings shows that the concept of a sacrifice area was being discussed and adapted in the context of a wider exchange of ideas and experiences that took place at the event. For instance, after Indigenous Hawaiian Mililani Trask used and explained the concept in her formal presentation, an African American representative from Louisiana's "Cancer Corridor" directly referenced and adapted Trask's usage when in open discussion she said, "I come from an area . . . [that] has been targeted as a national sacrifice area, to use the terminology that I heard earlier" (Lee, *Proceedings*, 42).

29. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie*.

30. Lerner, *Sacrifice Zones*, 2.

31. Lerner, *Sacrifice Zones*, 3.

32. Lerner, *Sacrifice Zones*, 3.

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communities." Whereas the original fence helped livestock managers contain the ecological damage animals might do to pastureland, the fence that separated industrial (or military) sites from residential areas upheld only the appearance of containment; unlike livestock, toxins flowed, carried by wind, water, and soil, beyond the (actual and metaphorical) fences intended to separate one land use (industrial) from another (residential). Though theorized as a general phenomenon by the EJ movement, this inability to contain damage was already present in Indigenous thought. "The ecological effects of radioactive colonization know no boundaries," wrote Ward Churchill. Toxic particles, he continued,

> do not know they are intended to stop when they reach non-Indian territory. Contaminated water does not know it is supposed to pool itself only under Indian wells. Irradiated flora and fauna are unaware they are meant only for consumption by indigenous "expendables." The effects of such things are just as fatal to non-Indians as they are to Indians. . . . Neither genocide nor ecocide can be "contained" when accomplished by nuclear means. The radioactive colonization of Native North America therefore threatens not only Indians, but the survival of the human species itself.[33]

Sacrifice zones thus became for Indigenous and EJ theorists a way to conceptualize the human inability to manage and contain the damages unleashed by industrial production. This is to say that political borders are porous to ecological flows. "Like it or not," wrote Churchill, "we are all—Indian and non-Indian alike—finally in the same boat."[34] For him, though those who live along the fencelines are the first line of sacrifice, their experience signals the telos of a particular form of life that renders ecologies and communities expendable in the name of an abstract greater good. Later discourses about climate change and the Anthropocene would name similar dynamics at the planetary scale.[35]

Just as Indigenous thinkers and libertarian ranchers in the West incorporated the sacrifice area concept within thick worlds of symbolic meaning and practice, EJ scholars and activists also thickened the concept of a sacrifice zone with racial, class, and gender analysis. Bullard wrapped it into critiques of institutional and systemic racism upheld by market and state entities. "Environmental racism," he argued, "combines with public policies and industry practices to provide *benefits* for whites while shifting *costs* to people of color."[36] Though rarely does an individual agent orchestrate this sacrificial pattern, the

33. Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 279.

34. Churchill, *Struggle for the Land*, 279.

35. See, for example, Broswimmer, *Ecocide*, especially chapter 4, "The Planet as a Sacrifice Zone." I would argue that this approach to interpreting the current planetary predicament—as the expansion and proliferation of sacrifice zones outward from local places to global scales—stands in tension with some climate change frameworks that draw attention first to changes in the atmosphere and then to instantiations of those changes in local places; as these interpretations of the problem differ, so do the sites and forms of responsible action they foreground.

36. Bullard, "Threat of Environmental Racism," 23.

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pattern itself implicates entities at every level, from local zoning boards and federal agencies to industry personnel, mainstream environmental organizations, and research institutions. Bullard and others drew on civil rights and Black Power strategies to make policy, legal, and political interventions to counteract the systemic forces that created unequal environments.

The exchange of ideas and experiences that took place between Indigenous, African American, and other environmental leaders at the summit in 1991 also enriched the sacrifice zone concept's religious meaning for the emerging pluralistic EJ movement. For instance, at the summit Indigenous presenter Mililani Trask refused to "allow desecration of sacred lands" that were slated to be set aside for the military "as a national sacrifice area."[37] Trask's juxtaposition between sacred and sacrificed land resonated with the African American organizers whose interpretations of the landmark document "Principles of Environmental Justice," produced at the summit, were published as part of its official proceedings. For them, the moral foundation for resisting the "sacrifice" of human communities and natural environments for "material greed" lay in affirming "the moral imperative underlying the created order"—that is, "that all life is sacred."[38] As it was used by diverse activists in the emerging EJ movement, the sacrifice zone concept was often juxtaposed with notions of sacred life and land in ways that invested with religious meaning their refusal to cede the power over life and death to unjust structures, systems, and institutions managed by people who claim for themselves the role of stewarding the common good.

Since the first decade of the twenty-first century diverse groups beyond North America have adapted the concept to critique local and global dynamics related to resource extractivism. For example, "Mothers of the Sacrifice Zone in Resistance" in Chile adapted the concept in response to local experiences with extractive industries.[39] According to Maristella Svampa, a leading Latin American theorist of extractivism, the proliferation of sacrifice zones under leftist regimes across Latin America points to a problem she calls the "Commodities Consensus"—a transideological consensus that natural resource exploitation and industrialization is the pathway to progress.[40] At a global level, Naomi Klein's theorization of the concept in relation to climate change and extractivism popularized it among scholars of planetary environmental change.[41] For Klein, the proliferation of sacrifice zones reveals the impoverishment of a "colonial mind" that fuses progress and fossil fuels with a destructive vision of freedom. Echoing Svampa and Klein, the French report *No More Sacrifice Zones* critiqued our global

37. Lee, *Proceedings*, 36.

38. Lee, *Proceedings*, 53–54.

39. Bolados García et al., "Ecofeminizar el Territorio," 81–86.

40. Svampa and Viale, *Maldesarrollo*, 81–128. Svampa even applies the concept to industrial agriculture in Argentina, arguing that its sacrifice zones are evidence that it has more in common with mining than with agriculture.

41. Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 161–87.

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extractivist economy and envisioned a global commons beyond extractivism.[42] As used by scholars and activists beyond the United States, the concept retains the Native critique of extractivist colonial cultures, the EJ movement's application of it beyond energy production, and both movements' dual critique of market and state entities, which have often worked in tandem to produce bifurcated geographies of sacrifice and abundance. Though it has become a largely leftist critical concept, it nevertheless includes within it a critique of both capitalist and socialist models of resource-intensive progress.[43]

The evidence suggests that the sacrifice zone concept signifies more than empirical description. Scholars, activists, and journalists appear to prefer the concept of a sacrifice zone to other descriptive concepts because others fail to accurately name the phenomenon's existential significance to those who live and assemble in the places it describes.[44] It at once names a phenomenon in material history, judges and critiques it, and demands resistance, often with reference to an account of idolatry, ideology, justice, or the sacred.

Sacrifice Zones and the Sacrificial

After the earlier anti-strip-mining movement referred to Appalachia as a national sacrifice area in the late 1970s, the concept disappeared altogether from the region until it was revived by the anti-MTR movement in the late 1990s. In a 1997 article on the revival of activism in West Virginia, a journalist quoted a law professor saying that MTR is turning the state into "a national sacrifice area."[45] Shortly thereafter, sociologist Julia Fox published a pivotal journal article titled "Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia: An Environmental Sacrifice Zone." Using Marxist analysis, Fox theorized MTR, arguing that because reformist and regulatory responses were inadequate, more fundamental changes in the character of social and environmental relations were necessary.[46] Fox thus set the stage for the anti-MTR movement's subsequent use of the concept.

While the concept still largely retained its negative connotation, its complexity grew in Appalachia. In her 2009 article "Speak Your Piece: Making a 'Sacred Zone,'" Robyn Kincaid, a white West Virginia radio host and activist with Coal River Mountain Watch, theorized the concept's generative polysemy.[47] A close examination of her argument

42. Richomme, Veber, and Bauer, *No More Sacrifice Zones*.

43. My genealogy of the concept of a sacrifice zone can be brought into fruitful conversation with Karl Polanyi's theory that we have witnessed in recent centuries a disembedding of markets from the social relations and natural systems that sustain human life and freedom and ought to place limits on the market forces that commodify life, land, and money. The market ideology treats people (labor) and nature (land) as commodities, but this is out of step with reality and the basis of freedom. The consequences of commodifying things that cannot be commodified ("fictitious commodities") are disastrous. The sacrifice zone concept is one way to identify the consequences of the commodification of people and nature. See Polanyi, *Great Transformation*.

44. Other terms include *fenceline communities*, *dumping grounds*, and *environmental high-impact areas*.

45. Hodel, "Activists Want to Revitalize Movement."

46. Fox, "Mountaintop Removal in West Virginia."

47. Kincaid, "Speak Your Piece."

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suggests that sacrifice zones should be theorized as sites of tension between rival political ecologies of sacrifice.[48]

Kincaid opened with a line from Martin Luther King Jr.'s final speech: "When people get caught up with that which is right and they are willing to sacrifice for it, there is no stopping point short of victory." Residents of Fayette County, West Virginia, Kincaid observed, were under attack by "a coal company willing to sacrifice us for a load of coal." It was the same pattern of sacrifice she saw repeated across the region. Echoing King, she argued that it was time for preachers to pair talk of the New Jerusalem with that of a "New Appalachia." The sacrifices made by anti-MTR activists were, like King's, made in the name of an eschatological vision of social and economic justice derived from the biblical image of creation's healing and renewal.[49] Then she reflected on the words of Black Appalachian visionary Van Jones, who said, "'We're going to turn Appalachia from a Sacrifice Zone to a Sacred Zone.'" Kincaid held that a community-led wind farm proposal was

> a lamp to Appalachia in Mountain Removal's endless night. It refutes Big Coal's insulting premise that Appalachian people are good for nothing more than destroying their own homes and communities. . . . Part of making Appalachia a "Sacred Zone" lies in making Appalachia whole. That would require us to fix the land that has already been stripped. We can keep people working by doing the reclamation work the scofflaw coal companies evade once they've extracted the coal and the profit from these hills. In the meantime, while we're putting Mountain Removal's wrongs to right, we can be installing the components of the new, green economy in Appalachia.[50]

For her, making Appalachia a "sacred zone" would involve reclaiming the land for a new economy in a New Appalachia. That vision could only be achieved if Appalachian people participated in a different kind of sacrifice that would sustain their "sacred heritage" and transform their relationship to Appalachia's "precious, well-watered soil." She closed sounding this same note: "Generations of Appalachian folk have survived in nigh unsurvivable circumstances"; their "sacred energy of community . . . will be the foundation of the New Appalachia, and our anguished sacrifices will finally give way to victory."

Kincaid creatively adapted a theological distinction present within ancient Jewish and Christian conceptions of sacrifice, where the alternatives are not between sacrifice and no sacrifice but between false and true sacrifice. On the one hand, death-dealing sacrifice was being imposed by largely external agents on Appalachia through a combination of money power, state power, and false—though powerful—public narratives. On

48. Crucial to my analysis is that the word *sacrifice* comes from the Latin *sacra* (sacred or holy) and *facere* (to make); to sacrifice something is to make it sacred.

49. For King, the "beloved community" was a historically possible state of affairs rooted in the kind of eschatological vision of justice manifested in his concept of a moral arc in the universe that bends toward justice.

50. Kincaid, "Speak Your Piece."

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the other hand, Appalachian traditions of sacrifice could narrate its people and lands within an eschatological, future-oriented vision of a just and life-giving new creation, even if doing so might put individuals at risk. In other words, the falsely sacrificed should draw on their heritage of responding to false sacrifices with truer sacrifices to make Appalachia a "sacred zone."

The Concept's Meaning and Features

The foregoing genealogy demonstrates that while the concept of sacrifice zones has been adapted to different contexts, its semantic range is nevertheless stable enough to identify several meanings and features that derive from its historical usage. First, it is fundamentally a geographical concept about the production of space: environmental harms are concentrated in some places in order to protect the environmental health and sustainability of other places.[51] Geographies of environmental sacrifice have been the necessary corollary of geographies of environmental abundance. The latter depend on and are constituted by the former. This is the fundamental meaning that made the concept transferable from livestock and land management to energy and environmental justice.

Second, the geographic differentiation that the concept names is inextricably linked to an abstract conception of the "greater good." While its earliest usage referred to sacrifices made for the greater good of livestock production or energy independence, it has included economic growth, national security, social progress, white cultural expansion, and historical-material development. The flexibility of the greater good against which particular lands and people are rendered an acceptable sacrifice may be the element that has allowed the concept to stick to very different social groups and contexts. The greater good is conceived as something abstract; it is an idealized vision that is so powerful that it does not require the consent of those who would bear the bulk of its costs.

Third, it locates and dislocates conceptions of agency. Even though the sacrifice zone concept is fluid with regard to the locus of agency, it nevertheless implies that there is an agent (individual, collective, or institutional) that intervenes with material, social, or conceptual tools (fences, regulations, laissez-faire policies) to enact a separation between lands slated for sacrifice and lands destined for abundance. The sacrifice, in other words, is a human production; it is not natural. The concept denaturalizes the phenomenon it names, thus rendering it a contingent, changeable matter of human history.

Fourth, as the concept was transferred from livestock to energy to the environment, it was inverted. What had been a managerial, conservationist concept paired with a material technology—a fence—instead became a concept to name the human inability to contain sacrifices within human-drawn borders designed to differentiate land uses. In effect, it shifted from a conservationist concept about containing sacrifices to a critical concept about unleashing uncontainable sacrifices. The critique is that if certain forms of

51. For an account of the social production of space, see Smith, *Uneven Development*.

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ecological harm cannot justly be distributed or metabolized—if, in other words, contemporary lifestyles require sacrifice zones—then the systems that produce them either should not exist at all or, more realistically, they should be changed in order to democratize both costs and benefits.[52]

Fifth, the concept can carry implicit or explicit religious and theological connotations, interpreting social ecologies in terms of religious practices and beliefs. The sacrifice concept sometimes signals a generative polysemy associated with notions of the sacred, as in Kincaid's distinction between a "sacrifice zone" and a "sacred zone," a polysemy derived from *sacrifice*'s Latin roots (*sacra*, meaning "holy" or "sacred," and *facere*, meaning "to make"). Indigenous theorists, and those like Klein who use Indigenous concepts to counter a colonial mindset, often juxtapose sacrifice zones with some notion of sacred lands, bodies, or ecologies. More often, however, the theological and religious connotations of the concept remain implicit, seemingly meant to provoke an affective response rather than suggest a precise theory of sacrificial rituals and beliefs. The kind of sacrifice that takes place in sacrifice zones is what Johannes Zachhuber has identified as sacrifice's objective, victim-oriented dimension that is often understood in modern theory as scapegoating or victimization.[53]

Sixth, the sacrifice zone concept is fundamentally relational: it is intended to reveal that (inhabited) places of extraction, production, consumption, and waste are linked together by relationships of a particular character that can be observed, analyzed, and evaluated. It both makes these relationships visible and morally ties together consumers with the lands and peoples with whom they are connected through chains of supply and disposal. As such, it is intended to reveal the human and ecological costs that are often unnoticed, hidden, or even intentionally concealed by market mechanisms: the market price of a thing, such as coal, does not reflect its full costs.[54] As a concept that reveals these hidden costs, it can be used in various ways to promote a more moral, equitable economy.

Seventh, the concept draws together a fluid and diverse array of groups who simultaneously identify as an object of sacrifice even as they refuse to be sacrificed without resistance. In the 1970s the concept drew together agriculturalists, ranchers, and environmentalists into a story about the nonindustrial American West versus elite, cosmopolitan, coastal consumers.[55] In the late 1970s and 1980s the concept helped the

52. This is encapsulated in the distinction early EJ activists drew between a Not-in-My-Backyard (NIMBY) ethic, which they saw at the root of environmental racism, and an ethic that was variously called Not-in-Our-Backyard or Not-in-Anybody's-Backyard.

53. Zachhuber, "Modern Discourse on Sacrifice and Its Theological Background." The victim dimension has been the focus of René Girard's examination of sacrifice and violence in religion and culture. For Girard's development of his thinking on this topic, see Girard, *The Girard Reader*.

54. The political-ecological concept of a sacrifice zone has many similarities to the economic concept of externalities.

55. For an in-depth analysis of unlikely alliances that developed, in part, to resist being turned into a national sacrifice zone, see Z. Grossman, *Unlikely Alliances*, especially 139.

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American Indian Movement develop a shared identity as "Indians," rather than as members of particular Tribal councils, in opposition to settler-colonial culture. The concept similarly allowed the EJ movement to draw together racially minoritized groups into the politically powerful concept of "people of color" who share common experiences of environmental racism in rural and urban areas. It also wrapped into the pool of shared experiences other groups, including suburban white mothers and Appalachia's rural coalfield residents. In short, the sacrifice zone concept signals a "we" who are singled out by some criteria as an acceptable sacrifice and "they" who use the powers of state, market, and mindset to do both the rationalizing and the sacrificing. Nevertheless, the lines between "us" and "them" are also blurred, especially when considering that, for instance, "we" who use or sell coal-sourced electricity might also be the "we" who are sacrificed for coal.[56]

Finally, the sacrifice zone concept is a "boundary object" moving between the different social worlds of activists, scholars, politicians, and managers.[57] It remains a concept that is used as much by activists as by scholars. Even though scholars like Lerner have attempted to fix its definition, scholars have had no final authority over the concept or its usage, which remains responsive to the contexts to which various groups adopt and adapt it.[58]

Theorizing a Polysemous Concept

To elucidate what the foregoing genealogy and analysis contribute to EJ theory, I return to my initial purpose, which was to understand the material and conceptual background history of Sarah's movement from Appalachia to Birmingham. Of particular significance in Sarah's southward movement is that while central Appalachia has been integral to the concept's genealogy from the beginning, Birmingham has had no direct role in its development.[59] Even today, residents and activists rarely refer to North Birmingham as a sacrifice zone. Why, then, did Sarah, an outsider to North Birmingham, name it as such?

56. This blurred element has become a potent source of tension in Appalachia, for instance, where people on different sides of the MTR issue recognize that coal mining has been both a blessing and a curse.

57. Boundary objects are objects or ideas that can be interpreted differently across different communities while nevertheless maintaining enough shared content to keep them relatively intact.

58. This entails that while I have sought to name particular meanings and features based on how the sacrifice zone concept has been used, the account offered here cannot be considered final.

59. One could argue that while Birmingham played no direct role in developing the concept of a sacrifice zone, it nevertheless played an indirect role. The United Church of Christ's Commission for Racial Justice, which is known for its historic role in commissioning and publishing the report "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States" in 1987, was founded in 1963 partly in response to the church bombings in Birmingham during the civil rights movement. See K. Grossman, "From Toxic Racism to Environmental Justice." While reflecting back on his early years, Robert Bullard did refer to Birmingham as a sacrifice zone, saying, "North Birmingham has historically served as a dumping ground for polluting facilities. The neighborhood was an environmental 'sacrifice zone' when I did my student teaching at a high school in the area way back in 1968" (Mock, "Fifty Years after Selma, a Search for Environmental Justice").

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When Sarah used the concept to explain her reasons for moving from Appalachia to Birmingham, she reflected its usage by the anti-MTR movement. Though Restoring Eden, the group she worked with, never explicitly used the concept, the residents, organizations, and scientists they partnered with certainly did.[60] Sarah drew on the anti-MTR movement's concept of a sacrifice zone to reframe the projects as a response to unjust sacrifice, and her usage echoed the complexity manifested by Kincaid's distinction between sacrifice zones and sacred zones.

When Sarah called both Appalachians and Birminghamians "sacrificeable communities," she indicted a utilitarian moral logic—*x* number of premature deaths and degraded lives in some places are acceptable so long as the aggregate number of lives saved and sustained (usually in other places) is greater than *x*—which, for her, was plainly false; that is, it was counter to the logic manifested in Christ's life-giving actions toward those society renders vulnerable and expendable. For Sarah—echoing Kincaid and King—that utilitarian logic went against the grain of Jesus's cross. Located "outside the gate" separating the dirt and defilement from the life of the city, its logic is "My life to enliven the dead and make the defiled sacred."[61] For her, the economy of Jesus refuses to justify or naturalize routinized, premature death by appealing to some "greater good."

When I asked Sarah one afternoon why she was so committed to the health studies amid seemingly insurmountable opposition, she referred me to a sermon by the pastor of a small Black Baptist church in the North Birmingham sacrifice zone. "Jesus had no throne but the cross," the pastor had preached that morning. Turning, then, to reflect on the two thieves crucified beside Jesus, he pointed out that one's heart was softened and the other's hardened. "Which one really encountered Jesus?" he asked. For

60. Spokespersons for Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, Coal River Mountain Watch, and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition described Appalachia as a sacrifice zone; see Ward, "Environmental Groups to Protest Bush"; Carroll, "U.S. Proposes New Rules"; Kuykendall, "Coal Activist." It is also pertinent to note that Sarah did a summer internship with the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition. Even the lead scientist who published the findings from the Restoring Eden health studies said the affected "mining communities are America's sacrifice zone"; see Wapner, "Cancer Epidemic."

61. "Outside the gate" is how the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes the place of the crucifixion in Hebrews 13:12, English Standard Version. Using the meaning of a sacrifice zone derived from the genealogy, one might gloss this place outside the gate as "on the other side of the fence" or "in the sacrifice area." Theologian Orlando Costas's commentary on this passage in Hebrews is instructive for illuminating the logic Sarah and the Baptist pastor see manifested when Jesus draws places of false sacrifice into the economy of salvation:

> With Jesus there came a fundamental shift in the location of salvation. . . . The unclean and defiled territory became holy ground as he took upon himself the function of the temple. . . . Jesus died to "sanctify the people," that is, to set them apart for ministry. . . . Jesus died "outside the gate." . . . [But this] periphery, the wilderness, the world of sin and evil, of suffering and injustice, is not seen as a permanent dwelling. Service therein is a checkpoint on the way to the new Jerusalem, symbol of the new creation: the definitive transformation of the world by the power of God. (Costas, *Christ outside the Gate*, 189–93)

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Sarah, that message spoke to her struggle to manage the health study. She had every reason to harden her heart: the project was underfunded and she was up against the most powerful interests in Alabama. However, "the best sermon you could ever preach is how you live your life," said the pastor. The pastor's call to identify with the unique character of Jesus's sacrifice strengthened Sarah in her commitment to citizen science and environmental justice as a way to love her neighbor as Jesus loved her. Though they are ultimately irreconcilable, both ecologics of sacrifice—the utilitarian logic of "their lives for ours" and the Christo-logic of "my life for the dead, defiled, and expendable"—were operating in and upon North Birmingham and central Appalachia. Sarah went from one sacrifice zone to another because she believed that was where Jesus was; his love had taken him to a sacrifice zone outside the city gate, where his power of life defeated the hold of death. That was the ecology she inhabited.

In short, sacrifice zones are places where rival political ecologies of sacrifice conflict with one another over the meaning and practices of life and death.

Conclusion: Slow Sacrifices

This study affirms Steve Lerner's conclusion that the places where environmental harms are disproportionately concentrated vis-à-vis environmental benefits should be called sacrifice zones. For Lerner, this is because the sacrifice zone concept makes visible the political-economic relations between places of environmental harm and environmental benefit. I have given additional reasons. Chief among them is that in addition to accurately describing the material realities that comprise sacrifice zones and the political-ecological forces that produce them, the concept also draws attention to the moral and religious—even theological—meaning of our political ecologies.[62] It suggests that even more fundamental than an inequitable distribution of harms and benefits, the social relations that produce sacrifice zones are the material embodiment of a largely implicit sacrificial theology that is deeply embedded in and productive of contemporary societies. This sacrificial ecopolitical theology binds some lives and lands to ecologies of death in sacrifice zones to free other lives and lands to sustain themselves and flourish in greener pastures: some must die to save others.[63] This study also suggests that the concept of a sacrifice zone contains a seed of transformation. Sarah,

62. An analogous argument has been made with respect to an Indigenous approach to environmental justice. See, for example, Gilio-Whitaker, *As Long as Grass Grows*, especially 21–33. In contrast to the distributive justice framework that largely underlies EJ theory, Gilio-Whitaker argues that "Indigenous peoples' pursuit of environmental justice (EJ) requires the use of a different lens," one that accommodates settler-colonial history and embraces how Indigenous peoples view land and nature, and "this includes an ability to acknowledge sacred sites as an issue of environmental justice" (12). For Gilio-Whitaker, "indigenizing environmental justice . . . goes beyond a distributive model of justice" (149).

63. Implied here is that even some logics and practices of sustainability ("Your sacrifice for our sustainability" or "Your sacrifice for the sustainability of the whole") will prolong false political ecologies of sacrifice that intensify and multiply sacrifice zones; growing research on the ecological impacts of provisioning the resources needed for the energy transition is a particularly salient example. This article thus lends support to the question

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Tinker, Kincaid, and Van Jones, in rejecting one logic of sacrifice, embraced another. They converged on receiving a life-affirming logic of sacrifice as a call to make sacred—to love and seek abundant life for—that which has been slated for a false kind of sacrifice.

What stands to be gained from theorizing environmental injustice as an ecopolitical theology of false sacrifice? Most immediately, it exposes as inadequate interpretations that propose education and evolving ecological values as the primary responses to environmental injustices. Without denying a need to dispel ignorance with education and promote ecological values, the necessary changes go deeper than cognition and values; they must reach to the level of desire—that is, to questions about what we love and pursue with our lives. It suggests that the primary problems to be addressed are desire, the attraction of idols—good things pursued as if they were the highest good, the source and substance of life—and the very powerful temptation to naturalize and rationalize ecologies of death while securing what we perceive as our own life's good. In short, it suggests that responses must go to the heart: What, who, and how do we love? It calls for a conversion of the heart, which, as Sarah's story suggests, might involve discovering with those who live in sacrifice zones what costs are acceptable or not in pursuit of a good life.

Sacrifice zones therefore also demand we interrogate the conceptions and practices of "life" that are implicated in the intensification, expansion, and proliferation of sacrifice zones. This is where Rob Nixon's generative concept of "slow violence" might be amended.[64] Nixon's theory suggests that environmental injustice is primarily analogous to doing violence to one's enemies, as in warfare or terrorism. Nixon's genius is to conceptualize the dynamics of incremental, slow-developing environmental injustices and crystallize the challenge of representing them with an urgency that demands a swift and resolute response. However, my study suggests that the dynamics that create and intensify sacrifice zones do not have primarily to do with a personal hatred of enemies but with a pursuit of life—sustainability and flourishing—for one's people and land. Mundane and often life-giving habits—decorating children's birthday parties with single-use plastics, eating mangoes year-round, illuminating and heating classrooms, visiting friends in the hospital and powering their ventilators—make sacrifice zones. Sacrifice zones reveal that in a political ecology of false sacrifice our very practices of life (oftentimes unintentionally) produce unspeakable death, (usually intentionally) kept out of view. Drawing on theological conceptions of sin and idolatry, it could be said that even once unjust environmental sacrifices are made visible and we become aware of our complicity in them, we are experts at learning how to rationalize, normalize, and naturalize them, to make them appear to be the very source and basis of a good and full life. Perhaps more than "slow violence," the dynamics that produce environmental injustices

environmental and climate justice advocates often ask: What should be sustained and what changed? The implication is that not all visions of sustainability should be pursued.

64. Nixon, *Slow Violence*.

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are better theorized as "slow sacrifice." If so, an adequate response would seek not so much a cessation of hostilities as a transformation of what it means to be fully alive and who, how, and what we love.

The counter-sacrifices of those who seek to transform sacrifice zones into sacred zones point in this direction. For Sarah, the model was Jesus Christ's saving work on the cross. For Peter, Restoring Eden's founder, it was "If you love the Creator, take care of creation."[65] For the Reverend Malcom, one of the Birmingham study's coorganizers, it was a prophetic responsibility to seek racial justice. For the lead scientist overseeing the study design and analysis, it was a Stoic-like commitment to purifying scientific knowledge of the pollution of powerful interests. Though these examples emerged from my fieldwork, an ecopolitical theology of sacrifice need not be restricted to any of the commitments just named. Effectively responding to the desires and political-economic forces that produce and intensify sacrifice zones will require many different sacrificial practices of life and death that find common cause in rejecting a political ecology of false sacrifice that seeks to consign and divert death to your side of the fence in order to sustain and enjoy life on my side.

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65. This is one of Restoring Eden's most popular bumper stickers.

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