

Anushka Saraswat
Master of Environmental Studies
Statement of Purpose

Knowledge stems from exploration, from the continual process of eager, hopeful, and ongoing inquiry human beings engage within the world, with the world, and in connection with each other. Hopeful inquiry is something I have embodied since I was little. This questioning nature has manifested in my passion for investigating environmental and societal problems. Moving from city to city, country to country, and then continent to continent, I had the privilege of intellectualizing my experiences into knowledge through people, culture, and educational provisions. As a result, this instilled a foundation of change and learning in me, leading me to pursue a graduate degree and move to a new place again.

I have not always been clear about my academic path as I entered college with an undecided major, simply knowing I wanted to pursue my passion for environmental stewardship. During this journey, discovering the concept of Environmental Justice provided a holistic outlook on all the intersections and identities I was passionate about and allowed me to follow a specific path. I believe that an interdisciplinary approach to address the environmental turmoil we live in is fundamental. As an international student of color in the States, studying courses like *Environmental Policy and Law*, *Environmental Justice Beyond Borders*, and *Environmental Education* strengthened my commitment to investigating how environmental issues disproportionately affect marginalized groups in societies across the globe.

Throughout the design of my undergraduate degree, I focused on building skills that would create meaningful and effective environmental and social change. This involved excellent writing, verbal communication and public speaking skills, ecological understanding, scientific literacy, advocacy, activism, and community organizing while also developing an understanding

of the history of global oppressive structures and the social movements incepted to combat the disparities created. Upon completing my major with a Senior Year Research Project titled *The Causes and Aftermath of Global Immigration with a Focus on Vermont*, I focused on key areas and fields that affected my marginalized backgrounds. Interconnected environmental degradation and social inequality issues were studied by exploring how race, migration, human rights, xenophobia, education, and the environment intersect. I recognized how the ingrained relationship between humans and the environment was at the forefront of understanding environmental complexities.

With the onset of my professional career, I helped co-design project planning initiatives and events to kickstart the first-ever Environmental Justice network in Vermont. I participated in outreach work to fully understand the environmental justice issues people of color and low-income communities were facing in the state, paving the way for ethical research in communities facing multiple ecological issues based on their race and ethnicity. I initiated discourse on climate and economic justice, keeping community participation in mind for a bottom-up approach to organizing and research. This work allowed me to build community-specific plans based on research and community membership that outlined approaches, strategies, and tools, converting my theoretical knowledge and skills into practical implementations and direct action for environmental change.

In the coming years, I worked as the Events Organizer and Union Steward for Rabble-Rouser in Vermont, whose mission entailed *tasteful social change*. Yet another intersection was explored as I gained experience dealing with food justice issues and their intersections with race and culture, finding and bringing ethically sourced cultural foods to a predominantly white state. Whether it was finding ingredients from grassroots companies

practicing sustainability and fair trade or organizing workshops on local ecological literacy, this period allowed me to gain a broader understanding of balancing managing a small business while also caring for the environment. This experience deepened my interest in analysis and research, and I realized that my love of observation and inspection was far from over.

Fittingly, Graduate school seems to be on the horizon as I defrost my appetite for knowledge that seems to be never-ending. I wish to further my skill sets and expertise by pursuing MES at a school that empowers you to explore, and helps shape a unique path in this interdisciplinary field. The remarkable mentorship and flexibility strengthened my pursuit of this program, making it an ideal fit. The immersive learning and interdisciplinary curriculum at Evergreen will provide me with the tools necessary to deepen and narrow down my path in environmental studies, especially utilizing the final thesis design in the program. Evergreen's small yet supportive community, which passionately cares about creating a more sustainable and just world, would provide a nurturing ecosystem for fulfilling my educational goals and career aspirations. Ultimately, I hope to bring my perspectives forward by utilizing Evergreen's abundant resources to expand my capabilities and develop practical approaches to eliminating environmental barriers and continuing my ongoing inquiry of the world with the world.