



Nyeema Johnson

THE COMMUNITY RESTORATION PROJECT

Educating youth to change to make environmentally conscious decisions one week at a time.





WHAT OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS

My first two weeks as a Be the Neighbor intern were focused on environmental justice in Denver, CO. With the churches that came that week, we discussed several environmental issues and challenges that the world faces on a daily basis. From lack of clean air and food, to wasted water to power toxic AI power plants, the city of Denver is the most polluted zipcode in the nation with and faces many challenges even though many believe it to be a green state. This raised a question that myself and many others were thinking: If it's like this in Denver, what's it like for us back home?

Each group worked/volunteered at several sights those two weeks learning about clean air and water, how to be more sustainable in everyday life, and how to take what they learned with them and apply it to their everyday life to prevent more zipcodes from becoming like Denver's. At the end of the week, these groups created videos centered around what they learned from that week to apply for the Lily Grant Foundation. These groups identified that their communities need cleaner water, resources, and electric powered transport for their cities.



Be the Neighbor





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SOLUTION #1: CLEAN WATER & AIR ACTS



CLEAN WATER

These two groups were from Ohio and Long Island where they are both familiar with far from clean drinking water. Many proposed filtered water fountains in their church for guests as well as potentially adding these to their schools which is where they spend much of their time.



CLEAN AIR

With the new spike in AI Power plants across the nation, the group from Ohio has seen what its effects do to neighboring cities. Although it's pretty far fetched, many would like to at least bring things issue to the attention of the local mayors as well as reduce gas usage to prevent more chemicals being breathed in.



SOLUTION #2: SUSTAINABILITY

During both weeks, I lead my own activity which consisted of half the group receiving clean ice water and the other half receiving salt water to represent unclean water. These groups were identified as the wealthy group (clean water) and minority group (unclean water). They then received a list of rules, budgets, and connections depending on their group (Ex. Wealthy group had \$3000 budget and connection to the state governor. Minority group had \$300 and no working phone or vehicle). They had to work in their teams to find solutions to fight for cleaner water and many other environmental injustices.

After this activity, we discussed ways that we know we can intentionally be unsustainable. things such as burning gas in the car, leaving the water running while brushing teeth, using plastic bags for lunch, and many other things. In an act to be sustainable, we used only real dishes for the week to eat dinner and biodegradable bags. For long-term goals, both groups also mentioned motion sensor lights to reduce energy waste. We also composted and discussed ways to prevent food waste.



VOLUNTEER WORK



DENVER AUDUBON

Denver Audubon is a nature preserves right next to the green mountains that works to provide green space within the larger city. We assisted them with weeding out invasive plants and eventually went bird watching to see more of the park.



EKAR FARM

This is a small Jewish farm that works hard to provide fresh vegetables for those within the community that need it. We also weeded invasive plants as well as harvested some for the following day to get picked up by locals.



CSU SPUR

CSU Spur is a unique branch off of CSU's main campus in boulder, which educated people on clean water within cities, plant/ agriculture education, and animal assistance. We got to watch a live animal surgery which is very cost friendly for people.



CONNECTION & IMPACT



I struggled to connect well with the groups i've worked with all summer. Not only do I not look like most of them, my interests and passions were different too. But one way that I was able to connect was through sharing real life stories that connected with the groups and tied into what the discussion was about.

I like to consider myself a Memphis native since i've lived here pretty much my whole life. I know the city very well and the people within it. When we got hit with the news of the XAI power plant, it was devastating because by that time, the damage was already done. The plan was in motion, and there wasn'tt much that people could do about it. Not only did they place it in a city know for having some of the best water, but they put it in a predominately black neighborhood, one that my mom taught kids in and had to deal with sick children in because they were breathing in dangerous chemicals.

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WHERE I SAW GOD

Truly being apart of this Be the Neighbor cohort has been the greatest blessing this summer. Meeting new people, traveling to new places, and teaching those around me has been an amazing way to connect with God and this ministry. I saw God when I was out in St. Louis working my Anti- Racism week. We volunteered at a community garden and I was in awe of how beautiful and well that garden was doing. From the beautiful peach trees and grape vines, down to the huge cucumbers and onions, I took a moment to look around and appreciate God for giving us all that we need to survive. I aspire to have a local community garden within my neighborhood one day, one that nourishes the people around me and gives us the strength to go through our days better.





THANK YOU