



University of the Virgin Islands

Dr. James Maddirala, Director

Creative Leadership for Innovation and Change, Ph.D. Program
invites you to the Public

Dissertation *Defense*

for

Chinwe O. Osaze

Monday, April 22, 2024

2:00 PM AST

Join via Zoom

<https://uvi-edu.zoom.us/j/94816752414?pwd=bEdtOWJTcEZaZERoYogad2JUZXdQUTo9>

Meeting ID: 948 1675 2414

Passcode: 918601

TOPIC

“Exploring the lived experiences of 18-24 year-olds living adjacent to the oil refinery on St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands: An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis Case Study ”

ABSTRACT

Environmental justice issues transcend geographical boundaries, exerting a pervasive influence on communities worldwide, with the Caribbean region being no exception. Within this context, marginalized communities, often comprising individuals of color or low socioeconomic status, shoulder the disproportionate burden of environmental pollution. This interpretive phenomenological case study, grounded in phenomenology, environmental justice, and critical pedagogy, examines the lived experiences of young adults grappling with the effects of airborne oil emissions in frontline communities proximate to an oil refinery on the Caribbean island of St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. The research inquiry will investigate how formal and informal platforms for learning cultivate youth agency and activism in response to local environmental justice concerns. By employing an analytical framework encompassing the interpretation of artifacts, interviews, and focus group discussions, the study aims to unearth the intricate interplay between acquiring knowledge relevant to their

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specific environmental circumstance and their ensuing propensity for agency and activism. The foundation of the research rests upon an examination of the scholarly works within the domain of environmental justice and injustice, exploring their effects on individuals in frontline communities as well as the engagement of youth within such communities. Additionally, the study aims to discern the importance of education and community engagement, delving deeply into relevant literature encompassing critical pedagogy and phenomenological research. Despite the global significance of environmental justice, the experiential insights of individuals living in frontline communities remain largely uncharted. This study will contribute to the body of Caribbean specific environmental justice literature, mainly focused on the USVI, thereby contributing significantly to the broader international dialogue on environmental justice. By amplifying the voices of this generation, the research will illuminate the overarching implications of industrial pollution on marginalized

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communities. Beyond its local significance, this inquiry will extend its relevance to the global discourse on environmental justice, accentuating the urgency for sustainable resolutions.

Keywords: environmental justice, environmental injustice, lived experiences, oil refinery emissions, youth agency, youth activism, St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands

Dissertation Committee

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