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New Documentary Series Seeks to Amplify the Voices of Black, Indigenous People of Color and Their Fight for Environmental Justice in California

First episodes of "Sowing Seeds" highlights leaders in Humboldt County

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Eureka, California - The new docuseries; "Sowing Seeds: Racial Justice and The Environmental Movement" is now available on YouTube. Sowing Seeds is part of a new educational campaign which aims to highlight local scientists, educators and activists of color. The series aims to raise awareness, and provide guidance, from professionals as it relates to watershed restoration, policy plans and proposals for clean water, healthy ecosystems and justice. The series aims to highlight the communities most plagued by Climate Change and water injustice.

The series was produced and hosted by Aerin Monroe of Save California Salmon; a senior Environmental Studies major at Cal Poly Humboldt, with a background in horticulture, regenerative land management, and climate/social justice. It was filmed and edited by Valentina Dimas; Social Media Content Creator for Save California Salmon.

"Sowing Seeds is about raising awareness and providing guidance. It delves into watershed restoration, policy, and proposals for clean water and healthy ecosystems for all." explained Aerin Monroe. *"This is important. Nearly a million people in our state don't have access to healthy drinking water solely based on the color of their skin or the geography of their homes."*

Monroe said scientists, educators, activists, and community members from all over California discuss issues ranging from water rights and land back, traditional ecological knowledge, and water policy and infrastructure as part of the docuseries

For instance in episode 4, Brook Thompson, a Yurok, and Karuk Native Ph.D. student of civil/environmental engineering, described what got them involved in their work as a water activist and

scientist. *“In large part, it was the 2002 fish kill on the Klamath River; I was seven years old when I saw 60,000 dead salmon along the Klamath, lining the rocky shoreline. Eventually, I got into water resource engineering; I saw the changes happening upriver affect me downriver, and I knew the dams were there, and they needed to be taken out.”*

As the series unfolds, viewers can learn firsthand about the Environmental movement through the lens Black and Indigenous people regarding water rights, protection for our salmon, rivers, and watersheds, and action plans supporting Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK).

In episode 2, Environmental Scientist and Coordinator at the Indian Natural Resource, Science and Engineering Program (INRSEP), Lonyx Landry, talks about the significance of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and the fight against capitalism while touching on his cultural history as a Black and Indigenous Native. *“This idea that profits exceed the values of people, exceed the values of flora and fauna...that has been catastrophic for us as a nation, as a world. Our landscapes aren't supporting what they used to, and that's sad, but also, in a way, a call to action.”*

In episode 3, Douglas Smith, Master Gardener and former coordinator at the Umoja Center for Pan African Student Excellence at Cal Poly Humboldt, discusses foodways and knowledge as some of the lessons taught by Native peoples in California to African Americans who fled the South during Jim Crow and then the great migration, combining their own ancestral African farming techniques with Indigenous foodways of the region.

“We run a program designed to do away with the apathy towards the natural environment that black students may feel due to historical trauma. In that same way, we also can't separate our connections as Black and Indigenous people in this country. The divide and conquer trope is real. The social institutions, economic, and political systems that have created the environments where Black and Indigenous communities are struggling.”

Landry echoed this sentiment in Episode 2 when he said *“all lives matter, and all lives don't matter until Black lives matter; all lives don't matter until Indigenous lives matter as well. We have to flip the script and place people, flora, and fauna before profits.”*

This statement is again resounded in Episode 1, when Christa Rose Unger, environmental scientist for Caltrans, takes viewers through the Ma-le'l Dunes.

“Look at the health of the ecosystems around us and within us; one does not thrive without the other. The landscape is not bothered by our socio-political state. They're going to bloom, set fruit, and they're going

to do their thing. And there is something about that that takes me out of this human-focused cycle. We're a part of something bigger." Watch at: <https://www.youtube.com/@SaveCaliforniaSalmon>.

Sowing Seeds Racial Justice and The Environmental Movement Series Schedule:

Episode 1: Christa Rose Unger at Ma-le'l Dunes

Episode 2: Lonyx Landry at Sequoia Park

Episode 3: Douglas Smith at Bayside Park Farm

Episode 4: Brook Thompson at Mad River Pump Station