

Hi everyone, I'm Jessica Roff, Director of Advocacy and Engagement at Riverkeeper, fourth generation from so-called Brooklyn, which as we've just heard, is occupied Lenape territory. I want to thank Chief Perry for welcoming us here on this land.

In 1966, a group of fishermen came together to protect and work to clean up the Hudson River - calling themselves the Hudson River Fishermen's Association, which is now Riverkeeper, and which led to the Waterkeeper Alliance. The Hudson was highly polluted, poisoning fish, threatening drinking water supplies, and ruining swimming and boating all from decades of unchecked development and industrialization. Much like the Jordan River, the Hudson essentially became the regional industrial sewer and its impacts in New York and New Jersey were vast.

The Hudson River Fishermen's Association's first act to protect the river used a decades-old law and science around the effects of pollution on the fish. And Riverkeeper continues to work for a living river teeming with life, with engaged communities boating, fishing and swimming throughout its watershed, and to protect the drinking water of more than 9 million people. Often our work to protect specific marine life in turn benefits much bigger swaths of the Hudson and the surrounding land and communities. There is still a lot more to do, but living river continues to improve though our work to improve water quality, enhance marine life, and the ever more important promoting coastal resilience and we are heartened by NYS's recent public commitment to the same, as well as the work of our many allies and partners.

We continue to work to make sure the government cleans up PCBs, safely shuts down the aging and failing Indian Point Nuclear Power Plant, that we build out green infrastructure, and remove obsolete dam, and properly address wastewater and sewage, that fossil fuels are not transported along the river, and toxic materials aren't stored on its shores. And that's just a sampling of the threats and issues that we address every day. Because of course the pollution and the problems didn't end in the 60s.

Although the Hudson is sacred to the Native nations in this area, and many people have spiritual connections to the Hudson and other rivers, as a whole, as Europeans colonized and developed and built, they weren't paying attention to the spiritual when it came to the water and the land and the people, even as most of their religious traditions involved water and ritual cleansing. The Europeans, and then the Americans, viewed and continue to view everything as their resources without fully addressing the impacts of their exploitations.

And as we all know, the impacts of those exploitations and developments are wreaking havoc on our climate and environment, which in turn are wreaking havoc across the world, usually with the most devastating impacts on black and brown and lower socioeconomic communities - who have also contributed the least to these problems.

In Judaism - originally in the mystic tradition - there is a concept known as Tikkun Olam - it means repairing the world. The idea is that when the world was created some holes were left

open and it's incumbent upon us to work to fix them, to make the world better. This is the concept that's always driven my work around social justice, and I think it's particularly relevant to environmental and climate work.

Through our lack of connection to the land and the water and our drive to take and build and exploit, we, from the colonial settler culture, have ripped so many literal and figurative holes in the world - from drilling fracking wells across the country, to tunneling pipelines under rivers, to allowing poisons in people's drinking water, to damming rivers, to blasting giant quarries and then storing toxic materials in them, we have a lot to repair.

It has become clear as all across the world we face worsening and more frequent impacts of climate change that no single solution, no one way of analyzing things will fix the problems. We have to bring different ways of thinking and different kinds of people together to come up with the best steps forward, and we're all in this together. Two things activists and organizers talk about all the time are employing a diversity of tactics to reach your goal, and meeting people where they are. In this case it's clear we need a diversity of tactics to wage the most successful fight to protect the water, the planet, and all the species that live here. And we need to incorporate multiple traditions and motivations for environmental stewardship as we work together. Like the Jordan Riverkeeper and Ecopeace Middle East are doing.

The traditional environmental movement is shifting to keep up with the changing world and working together with faith-based organizations, following the lead of communities and organizations of people of color, and generally widening the lens through which we see things and frame our work is the right way to work together to combat the myriad risks and threats of the climate crisis that we all face.

So we all need to figure out where we fit in this fight and how to build bridges and strengthen our connections. As it is written in Pirkei Avot, the book of ethics in Jewish law, "If I am only for myself, who am I?" and "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."