Environmental Justice in the Rio Grande Valley: Lessons Using Alt Media

As a single parent, a member of the disabled and neurodivergent community, poet, and activist and drawing from my deep connection to the Rio Grande Valley with a profound concern for the environment and our community., this has been personal endeavor that has been in the works since 2019, but the seeds of this project were planted much earlier when Starbase arrived in our community back in 2015.

Over the years, my journey has been marked by significant personal challenges. I experienced the devastating loss of my mom, followed by a battle with COVID-19 in the year after we lost our mom. Little did we know the extent of the virus's impact back then. In 2022, I faced more grief when we lost our dad. Though they are no longer physically present, their memories and spirit are intertwined with the places I visit here. I have invested my time and love into this region, and it has become a home where their collective stories came to rest.

The Rio Grande Valley, with its breathtaking landscapes and vibrant communities, holds a special place in my heart. It is a place where people from different motherlands make community. Together, we have made this place our home. From its lush greenery and winding rivers to the diverse wildlife and cultural richness of the people from this region, it is an enchantment and magical experience. I once could not get enough of exploring the resacas, looking at the exquisite birds and hearing their calls, getting lost going to el Sal del Rey, and attending the various events that celebrated the valley's beauty and her people. But the lingering effects of COVID-19 have left me with respiratory issues, I am unable to really cherish these activities.

These profound experiences have reshaped my perspective and instilled within me an even deeper sense of purpose in contributing to sharing whatever skills I may know, if they would, could, be of use. They also serve as a constant reminder of the urgent need to address environmental justice. It is with this understanding and personal investment that I present this, as always, rooted in revolutionary love.

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Notes on the Guidebook

I am a poet, not a scientist, so I do not have all the answers or solutions. This guidebook is the result of a long and ongoing effort to bring attention to the environmental impact of SpaceX's operations in Brownsville and the surrounding areas. It is a personal endeavor, born out of my love for this community and my belief that we can do better.

While I do not have all the answers, I am committed to raising awareness and bringing about positive change.

For those who may question my qualifications or intentions, I am a disabled writer and poet who has dedicated my life to creative expression and activism, and a passionate lover of the RGV and its people and land. I have a background in history and writing, but most importantly, I am a member of this community, and I care deeply about the well-being of my neighbors and our environment.

In this guidebook, you will find alternative media projects, research assignments, and other resources that can help us understand the impact of SpaceX's operations and work towards environmental justice. It is my hope that these tools will inspire you, us, to take action and become advocates for positive change in our community.

This guidebook is a labor of love and an effort to create a space for critical thinking, creativity, and activism in the community. As a disabled writer and single parent who is deeply passionate about the Rio Grande Valley, I have poured my heart and soul into this project. However, I recognize that there are certain choices I have made in the language and presentation of this guidebook that may raise questions or concerns for readers.

One such choice is my use of the term "marginalized" instead of more specific terms like "immigrant," "Mexican," "Latinx," "Indigenous," "poor," or "disabled." I understand that these terms may be more accurate in certain contexts, but I have chosen to use "marginalized" as a broader and more inclusive term that encompasses a range of experiences and identities. I acknowledge that this may not be the most precise language, and I am open to feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Another area where this guidebook may differ from traditional academic works is the absence of an appendix or work cited section, the use of first person and a few personal interjections. This is not because I do not value the importance of citing sources, but rather due to a lack of resources, ongoing health and disability issues, and a desire to prioritize the content of the guidebook over formatting and citation conventions. I apologize for any information that may be missing or incomplete, and I ask for your forgiveness if any errors or misspellings have slipped by. I am only human, and I have done my best to present this information in a way that is clear, concise, and accessible.

Thank you for your understanding and your commitment to creating a more just and sustainable world.

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Introduction
Main Assignment: Zine

For the first main assignment of this guidebook, you will have the opportunity to create a zine that explores the environmental impact of SpaceX's operations in Brownsville, Texas, located in South Texas just 25 miles from the US-Mexico border, and its surrounding areas, specifically the facility known as Starbase.

The Rio Grande Valley is a region with a long history of colonization, displacement, and resistance, where Mexican, Mexican-American, and indigenous communities have faced environmental degradation and injustice. Over the years, these communities have organized and fought for environmental justice, and their struggles continue today.

This assignment encourages you to think creatively about how you can use alternative forms of media to raise awareness about the impact of environmental degradation and environmental racism in the Rio Grande Valley community.

Please note that the environmental impact of SpaceX's operations is a complex and evolving issue, and as such, it is important to conduct thorough and reliable research using credible sources.

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MOVING FORWARD
To complete this assignment, you will need to:

1. Research the environmental impact of SpaceX's operations in Brownsville and the surrounding areas, including the facility known as Starbase. Use reliable sources to gather information about the ways in which SpaceX's operations have affected the local environment and contributed to environmental racism and pollution in the region. Consider the impact on air quality, water resources, and local ecosystems.

2. Explore the concept of environmental racism and how it relates to SpaceX's operations in South Texas. Consider the ways in which marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental pollution, and how this is part of a larger system of oppression and colonization. Consider the history of environmental degradation struggles in the RGV and how they are related to the current situation with SpaceX.

3. Compare the colonization of the American West to the current colonization of the RGV through SpaceX's operations. Consider the ways in which both processes involve the exploitation of natural resources, the displacement of indigenous and marginalized communities, and the environmental damage that has occurred.

4. Plan the layout of your zine. Think about how you want to present your information and what images or illustrations you want to include. You can use a program like Microsoft Word or Adobe InDesign to layout your pages, or cut and paste.

5. Write and create the content for your zine. Use your research to create text, images, and illustrations for your zine. Don't worry if you're not an artist - zines can be made with text, photos, drawings, or a combination of all three.

6. Assemble your zine. Use basic bookbinding techniques to put your zine together. You can use staples, glue, or a sewing machine to bind your zine. Some zines are sewn into a quilt or held together with pins.

7. Share your zine. Sell your zine at a zine fair or distribute it to friends and family through the mail. You could also consider donating copies to a local library or community organization.

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The Purpose and Impact of this Assignment

Your zine has the potential[will be !] a powerful tool in promoting environmental justice and raising awareness about the impact of SpaceX's operations in the Rio Grande Valley. By highlighting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized communities, who are often not in the discussions about environmental degradation, pollution and racism.

Your zine can also [will also!] inspire action towards a more equitable and sustainable future. By educating your readers about the impact of SpaceX's operations, you can [you will!]encourage them to take steps towards reducing their own environmental footprint, and to advocate for policy changes that prioritize the health and well-being of all communities.

Remember that environmental justice is an ongoing struggle, and that there is still much work to be done in addressing the complex and intersecting issues of race, class, and the environment. However, by using alt forms of media like zines, we can help to create a more inclusive and accessible conversation about these important issues, and work towards a more just and sustainable world.

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Topics to Consider in Understanding the Impact of SpaceX's Operations in the Rio Grande Valley

Key Environmental Justice Issues in the Rio Grande Valley and SpaceX's Operations

Introduction

This section will explore the key environmental justice issues in the Rio Grande Valley and how they relate to SpaceX's operations. These issues will be presented in a concise and focused manner to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of SpaceX's activities on the environment, the people, and the surrounding communities.

Environmental Racism and Colonization:

* The history of environmental justice struggles in the Rio Grande Valley, including the stories of individuals and communities who have been impacted by environmental degradation and colonization.
* Comparison of the Rio Grande Valley borderlands with other occupied territories such as Palestine, the Dakota Access Pipeline and Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Puerto Rico, Guam, and other locations around the world.
* Compare the current colonization of the Rio Grande Valley to the colonization of the American West and identify the similarities that connect both processes.

Impacts on Air and Water Quality:

* The impact of SpaceX's operations on air quality in the region and the health effects on local communities, including how air pollution affects people with respiratory issues.
* The impact of SpaceX's operations on water resources in the region, including the use of groundwater and the potential for contamination, and the ways in which this impacts the daily lives of local residents.

Indigenous Communities and Environmental Protection:

* The role of indigenous communities in protecting the environment and fighting against environmental racism in the Rio Grande Valley, including the traditional ecological knowledge and practices of these communities.
* What activities were employed by the Starbase to colonize the borderlands, and how have these efforts impacted Indigenous people? How does this reflect similar historical patterns?

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Economic Impacts:

* The economic impacts of SpaceX's operations in the region, including the benefits and costs to local communities, and how these impacts vary for different groups of people.

Ecosystem and Wildlife Impacts:

* The impact of SpaceX's operations on local ecosystems, including the potential impacts on wildlife and habitats, and the ways in which these impacts affect the local community.

Grassroots Advocacy and Alternative Approaches:

* The role of local grassroots organizations in advocating for environmental justice and holding SpaceX accountable for its impacts on the region, including the strategies and tactics used by these organizations.
* Possibilities exist for more equitable, eco-friendly space exploration methods that take into account accessibility and justice.
* The potential for alternative approaches to space exploration that prioritize environmental sustainability and justice, including examples of successful alternatives and the ways in which they differ from traditional approaches to space exploration.

So many more, I narrowed and combined these from a list of about 40 for space. #IDEAS!

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