

004 Protecting

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On last week's episode of *The Bravely Curious Podcast*, the topic of Reclaiming and Redefining was covered. It discussed how change in the landscape based on societal shift, damage in built environments, and how a global pandemic is important to consider when redefining and reclaiming a landscape.

Hello everyone! My name is Ryan Ortiz, and I would like to welcome you all to our fourth episode of the Bravely Curious Podcast. In this episode we will be immersing ourselves into the importance of protecting and preserving our public and private landscape. But first we must define the differences between Preservation and Protection in the landscape. *To preserve* is to protect, to keep, to maintain the condition of; while *to protect* is to keep safe, to defend, to guard; against harmful human activities that have disrupted culture, climate and biodiversity of plant and animals. With that in mind we have separated our discussion into three parts. The first topic will cover indigenous cultures, followed by the second topic on the biodiversity of animals, plants, and the environment. And lastly, the topic of addressing the issues of climate change within the landscape.

Now that it is known on what we are going to discuss, let's begin the first topic of indigenous cultures.

Indigenous cultures have faced many hardships throughout history from discrimination to theft. One recent example of this problem revolves around the construction of a wall to visually separate the United States and Mexico border. There are two perspectives of this story, and to begin this conversation we should dive into what the border wall represents. The wall represents a political and physical division between the United States and Mexico but for indigenous people it represents a cultural division of their land and people.

From a political standpoint, a proponent towards the building of the wall believes that the government is planning for a physical split from Mexico. The creation of the wall will strengthen the economy by creating more jobs, and politicians claim the wall will provide safety from Mexican-related crime. From the article, “5 Reasons Why the Border Wall IS a Moral Issue”, Senior military analyst at the American Center for Law and Justice, Wesley Smith, claims, “while some drug smugglers are caught trying to enter at a port of entry, many simply walk or drive across where there is no barrier” ([Smith, 2018](#)). Ideally the wall will serve as a physical barrier that will make it impossible for dangerous criminal activity to cross to US soil.

From a cultural standpoint, the border wall is built on sacred land for many tribes. The sacred land belonging to these tribes contains not only the property for where they can live and perform their ceremonies and rituals, but it also contains historical sites and artifacts, burial sites, and paths that these tribes use to cross to Mexico and the United States. You can find many stories of tribes fighting to protect and preserve their land, and one example would be the Kumeyaay tribe of California. The tribe is fighting back for sacred land that crosses over into Mexico. The tribe states the location where officials are constructing is sacred burial grounds.

Every day the tribe is protesting for their land on both sides of the border and will not give up. They host ceremonies and prayer circles, and they are getting scolded by officials and an example where this is shown is in an article by *DAME Magazine* and it says, “A Border Patrol agent places his hand on one of the Kumeyaay woman leaders in the middle of prayer. In Kumeyaay tradition interrupting prayer is a sign of disrespect” ([Bard, 2020](#)). This action from the border patrol agent sounds like it would be against freedom of religion to be interrupting a ceremony.

If these prayers by the Kumeyaay tribe are being stopped for construction, this appears like the government is trying to diminish the importance of their religious practices. There are other instances where they would stop the tribe from having ceremonies so construction can continue. In August of 2020, The U.S. News published that the Kumeyaay tribe filed a lawsuit against the Trump administration and the lawsuit states “Defendants are currently constructing the border wall directly through Kumeyaay burial sites and sacred lands, causing irreversible and easily avoidable damage to Kumeyaay remains, cultural items, history, and religious practices” ([Watson, 2020](#)). If the Border wall continues to be constructed the history and cultural items that are located on this border can be lost forever. There can be thousands of undiscovered artifacts that this tribe may never uncover or learn about.

This is just the story of one tribe. Now I’m going to talk about two other tribes: the Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe of Texas and the Tohono O’odham tribe of Arizona. Just like the Kumeyaay tribe dealing with their battle, the Carrizo/Comecrudo and the Tohono O’odham tribes are also facing a similar battle with the border wall being constructed through their land. The Tohono O’odham tribe, which is a state away, is also going to be divided if the border wall continues to be constructed. The tribe has a gate they use that allows them to cross over each side

for different purposes, in the article “A border tribe, and the wall that will divide it” author Dianna M. Nájuez said, “Today, it connects family members who live on both sides of the border. It is used by tribal members who travel for sacred pilgrimages and ceremonies in Mexico, as well as those living in Mexico who travel to the U.S. for tribal services, to sell or buy goods, or to visit the hospital in Sells, which is the capital of the Tohono O’odham Nation” ([Nájuez, 2017](#)). Without this gate, the tribe won't be able to see their family or help the other tribes across the border economically. Their tribes land needs to be protected because the wall can drastically destroy it over time.

The Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe of Texas, which is two states away from the Tohono O’odham tribe, isn’t considered a formal tribe by the federal government. The process in order to be granted federal recognition stated in the *National Conference of State Legislatures* says, “Federal recognition is long—it can take decades—complicated and requires specific historical and identity requirements. Federal recognition gives tribes legal status and requires the federal government to provide certain benefits. Federally recognized tribes have a government-to-government relationship with the United States” ([Salazar, 2016](#)). With the tribe not being formally recognized, they have a harder time trying to get their land protected because they don’t fall under some of the protection laws for indigenous people.

Stated in the article “Trump’s border wall construction threatens sacred lands of Carrizo/Comecrudo,” the border wall will also destroy artifacts and other religious items that are important to the Native culture ([Hopper, 2019](#)). Even if they are not considered a formal tribe the land still has sacred meaning and history to them and should be protected. The Carrizo/Comecrudo tribe isn't just fighting for themselves but also others who are in need because of the repercussions of the border wall. All these tribes could potentially lose their

history, artifacts, and sacred land because of the border wall, so protecting and preserving their landscape is protecting their culture.

The Kumeyaay culture and those of other tribes are not the only things hurt by the intrusion of the wall. There are thousands of plant and animal species that will be negatively affected if the wall intervenes with the natural order. There would be consequences on the ecosystems located at the border. Wildlife habitats, biodiversity, and conservation efforts are now compromised as the border dissects the geographic ranges of 1,506 native terrestrial and freshwater animal and plant species; sixty-two of these listed as “Critically Endangered,” “Endangered,” or “Vulnerable” by the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.

One of the areas at risk is the National Butterfly Center in Mission, Texas, designed for 400 varieties of butterflies and birds and 12,000 rare grasses and endangered wildflowers. The border wall will take the place of approximately 70% of this private preserve. Why is it more appealing to build a structure that obstructs and secludes rather than preserving the environment? You might think, “it can’t be that bad if there aren’t any laws against it,” but what does it say of us when we disregard that federal officials are waiving 28 critical environmental laws to facilitate it ([Burke, 2018](#)) such as the Clean Air, Water, and Endangered Species acts, as acknowledged by Cathy Burke in a *Newsmax Media* article. We are already struggling to preserve our environment, yet it seems as if more and more obstacles arise and impede our progress. It’s not common knowledge that 36% of the remaining intact forest ecosystems are either managed or owned by indigenous peoples; this was brought to our attention by John C. Cannon of *Mongabay Environmental News* ([Cannon, 2020](#)). Evidently, there are communities who go out of their way to sustain the environment. Now, we need to expand those efforts to a global level.

The responsibility extends past human convenience. A critical aspect of sustainability is maintaining biodiversity and adequate balance amongst our environment.

Our relationship with the environment has raised some concerns. It is no longer about codependence. The benefits humans receive from nature are underappreciated and it comes at the cost of biodiversity, as well as our own well-being. As humans, we have prioritized our desires regardless of the consequences. Molly Hennessy-Fiske of the *Los Angeles Times* raises the concern about how we look the other way when there are dozens of saguaro cacti being uprooted on behalf of clearing way for a wall ([Hennessy-Fiske, 2020](#)). There's no argument when Congress disregards the Endangered Species Act despite putting at risk "some of the continent's most biologically diverse regions," according to John Schwartz in a 2019 *New York Times* article ([Schwartz, 2019](#)). We comply with the demand for wood products, though it is our cultural heritage to have unlogged forested areas. At least that is what the public land is said to be for. Why are we unknowingly selling it to the logging corporations? We already have seen that they do not replace what they took, in terms of variety and diversity. Andre Rodrigues de Aquino, a member of the Global Environment Facility, refers to our national parks as our nation's inheritance and treasure, not a commodity ([Rodrigues de Aquino, 2015](#)). Humans have managed to simultaneously overestimate and underestimate their power. It is well past due for us to open our eyes and fight for environmental justice.

Human exploitation of natural resources has led to deep scars within the landscape. There is one scar that is being hidden from us and it is the one that needs the most attention. That scar that needs attention is within our oceans and the COVID pandemic has shown us that its swept through our borders and has slipped through the border between our land and sea. As it was stated in The Guardian the discovery of "dozens of gloves, masks and bottles of hand sanitizer

beneath the waves of the Mediterranean, mixed in with the usual litter of disposable cups and aluminum cans” ([Kassam,2020](#)) . The pollution of our ocean is all man-made and damages our marine ecosystems. One direct result would be the Deepwater Horizon’s oil spill: the oil’s reach was 30 percent larger than that estimate, the new study, covered by the Washington Post stated. “Oil in these concentrations for surface water extended beyond the satellite footprint and fishery closures, potentially exterminating a vast amount of planktonic marine organisms across the domain” ([Fears, 2020](#))

With society's relentless reliance on fossil fuels and what seems to be almost irreparable damage to our planet, we need to protect our oceans and land environment from human-made pollution that threatens these ecosystems that we desperately need to survive. On the other hand, the reliance of fossil fuels for energy such as oil refineries are emitting toxic pollutants into our atmosphere increasing are chances of climate change among other carbon emissions. We also have societies toxic trait of throwing and dumping into our oceans. Human developments and advancement have led to decisions towards “progress” without knowing the damages that may occur to our planet.

As cities continue to develop—as well as societies reliance on them—fossil fuels and oils will increase in demand. The implementation of factories and oil refinery's is a great idea since it will satisfy the demand and brings jobs to communities. The American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers state, “The fuel and petrochemical industries contribute nearly \$600 billion to the U.S. economy. We also create the jobs that employ over three million Americans in 33 states” ([Economic Impact,2020](#)).

The ocean—which is the key contributor in providing oxygen for us and offsets the devastating amount of carbon emissions—needs protecting. The air we breathe, “The ocean

produces over half of the world's oxygen and absorbs 50 times more carbon dioxide than our atmosphere” as stated from the US Department of Commerce ([US Department of Commerce](#)). It seems that since many of us do not physically see the ocean that we believe it to be pristine and clean. Spoiler many of the reefs are not colorful and full of life, they are almost all dead. We are said to believe they are pretty because we don't see the ocean and it receives more of an “out of sight out of mind” type connotation.

More significantly within the ocean are coral reefs. In an article published by the Smithsonian and written by The Ocean Portal Team it states that these coral reefs, “cover just a tiny fraction (less than one percent) of the earth's surface,” and, “about 25 percent of all marine species are found in, on, and around coral reefs.”([Knowlton,2020](#)). They are important because coral reefs serve more than just containing the most diverse ecosystems on the planet because according to the article “Importance of Coral Reefs - Biodiscovery and the Great Barrier Reef” states that coral reefs also, “protect coastlines from the damaging effects of wave action and tropical storm... provide habitats and shelter for many marine organisms.”([Bauer](#)). Many of the reefs provide refuge for island nations who depend on them as well as sustain intricate marine life. It's a combination that's needed between humans and nature. This balance has been on the edge recently and these reefs show the current health of the ocean.

In an article by CNN “Climate change could kill all of Earth's coral reefs by 2100, scientists warn,” and that it is theorized that “about 70-90% of all existing coral reefs are expected to disappear in the next 20 years due to warming oceans, acidic water and pollution” ([Yeung,2020](#)) according to scientists from the University of Hawaii Manoa. This is in part by the way society has relentlessly polluted for so long while being unchecked environmentally. The type of pollution consists of, “381 million tons of plastic (Which was) produced in 2017. And yet

only 9% of all the worlds plastic has ever been recycled. One million marine animals are killed annually due to entanglement and ingestion and now reports are saying that 70% of all fish have ingested plastic...and we ingest fish... we're slowly poisoning ourselves and our future.” as stated by the *Save the Reef* coalition ([Save the Reef,2019](#)).

Along with our ocean that need protection is our land. For decades, the use of fossil fuels has destroyed our atmosphere/planet and, most importantly, our health. Sadly, minorities pay the price more than their white counterparts. As it was discussed in an article from the New York Times, A 150-year-old refinery owned by Philadelphia Energy Solution in the community of Grays Ferry (Black community). Responsible of majority of toxic pollution since it was out of compliance with the Clean Air Act from 2014-2019. With the invention of car and the Industrial Revolution the demand of oil increased. Pollutants from the factories cause cancer, asthma, lung disease, heart disease, and damage the atmosphere in the area. Later, the refinery caught flames, releasing more toxic waste into the atmosphere ([Villarosa,2020](#)). This happens again and again in many ethnic communities where polluters will settle next to these neighborhoods promoting jobs and other incentives, but it is all a façade. In truth these “incentives” cause much more harm than good. In retrospect the main culprits of climate change would be our reliance of fossil fuels. More specifically the, “burning of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas for electricity, heat, and transportation is the primary source of human-generated emissions,” says Mellissa Denchak of *NRDC* ([Denchak,2020](#)). These demands for fossil fuels that society consumes are only predicted to increase as times go on. The scarring of our landscape in terms of deforestation also contributes to climate change.

The second major source of human generated emissions is deforestation, “which releases sequestered carbon into the air. It’s estimated that logging, clear-cutting, fires, and other forms of

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forest degradation contribute up to 20 percent of global carbon emissions,” according to Denchak of *NRDC* ([Denchak,2020](#)). With all the negatives just said on how polluting our most vital resource for survival—such as the ocean—will impact our future in reversing climate change. This is the reason why we need to protect and preserve it. The ocean provides habitat for our most diverse marine life and produces over half the air we breathe while offsetting harmful emissions. Without that we are doomed. In addition to the ocean, we must also prevent our fossil fuel consumption and deforestation efforts. These harmful emissions are only making the situation towards climate change much more dire. We need to protect the landscape by curbing these emissions as it is leaving a devastating toll on our health and the soil we stand on, which is why it also needs protection.

When discussing the topics of preserving and protecting, it’s important to consider both perspectives of them and to find ways to create solutions. We will be discussing the same topics that were mentioned in this podcast: culture, biodiversity and climate.

Let's discuss solutions for culture that have been implemented and some we can create. A solution that was made for the safety of the United States was the Real ID Act of 2005. Molly Hennessy-Fiske points out in an *LA Times* article that the act would allow the government to build barriers and go around environmental laws without a hassle ([Hennessy-Fiske, 2020](#)). We can see exactly how this is related to the border wall construction because of the Real ID Act. The Trump administration didn’t need congressional approval for construction. The wall is hurting indigenous people and being built even if there are environmental or cultural laws that are intended to protect the land. We need to protect the cultural aspect of the land.

A solution that could be implemented is if the government works together with these indigenous tribes to help create a better border wall that doesn’t destroy their sacred lands.

Moving onto solutions for biodiversity, there are several ways to tackle this from multiple angles when it comes to individual and moral responsibility. But, for significant change, this is yet another issue in which we need to get political. Yes, we have existing laws that are meant to avert further damage.

As mentioned earlier, laws are easily waived and disregarded to accommodate politicians' agendas. If a stronger demand is voiced, it can encourage the nation to enforce regulations. With the same instinct that sparks the question "how will this affect our economy?" we need to be accustomed to asking, "how will this affect the environment?" Starting off at the local level is a good first step; reaching out to your city council and insinuate neighboring cities to do the same. In regard to land use, there are alternative redefining design ideas such as micro apartments and tiny homes, like the ones Leanna Garfield presents in *Business Insider* ([Garfield, 2016](#)). These strategic designs use space in a unique manner, rather than manipulate the environment.

The third solution to protect our oceans would be to implement regulations similar to the United States around the world on what gets discharged into the ocean. Having a set standard across the globe such as following a stricter set of EPA's environmental laws may help ensure that "untreated sewage, garbage, fertilizers, pesticides, industrial chemicals, plastics" ([WFF, 2020](#)) don't end up in the sea, as the *World Wide Fund for Nature* brings to our attention.

One solution to protecting our landscape from further immersing into the cataclysmic effects of climate change would be to curve our emissions immediately. Rejoining the *Paris Climate Agreement* would be a great step towards reducing our global emissions. Another solution would be the implementation of sustainable or renewable sources of energy. In addition to refineries, combustion engines are very common now and are one of the leading sources

contributing to carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Implementing greener alternatives modes of energy, such as electric energy, can greatly reduce those emissions.

In conclusion, the protection and preservation of the landscape is a very important aspect to be reflected upon. There are other countless reasons for protecting and preserving, including culture, biodiversity, and climate. With the cultural aspect of protecting and preserving, we discussed the border wall: why it is a good idea for the country's safety, but there are consequences from the construction that affect indigenous people. Yes, the wall will provide a new type of protection, but it is going to destroy many indigenous cultures and historical land. The land that belongs to them is now being constructed on for the border wall, but protecting their culture should be of utmost importance. How we protect a single group within the environment influences our protection efforts for others. Considering the variety of environments which rely on one another, we should aim to protect and preserve every aspect.

It is not as simple as recycling your water bottles. It goes beyond what we do as individuals. Rather, the issue deals how we behave as a community and where biodiversity falls into our values. Biodiversity is essential when it comes to quality of life in every environment around the globe. Along with biodiversity, the ocean is one of the most important features on our planet. It houses some of the most diverse species in the world, including plants and animals. These ecosystems within the sea exist together to help provide the oxygen we breathe and offset our global deadly emissions. Our ocean is suffering and in need of saving as human generated pollution is ending up in our sea, destroying it. Without the ocean, we will be in a dire situation from the disastrous effects of climate change. Furthermore, we need to focus on what we are doing on the land we inhabit. Society's reliance on fossil fuels has left dangerous levels of carbon dioxide and other gasses in the atmosphere. We need to center in on the landscape by curving

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these emissions as their continued use is leaving a devastating toll on our health and the soil, we stand on which is why it also needs protection.

In the next episode of *The Bravely Curious Podcast*, we will move into the sensitive topic of DACA, which isn't discussed enough. We are going to bring more attention to the topic by hearing a first-hand experience from a recipient in the DACA program and their experiences dealing with it. We will explore the challenges Dreamers face in the current political environment.

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