

# Environmental Justice for All

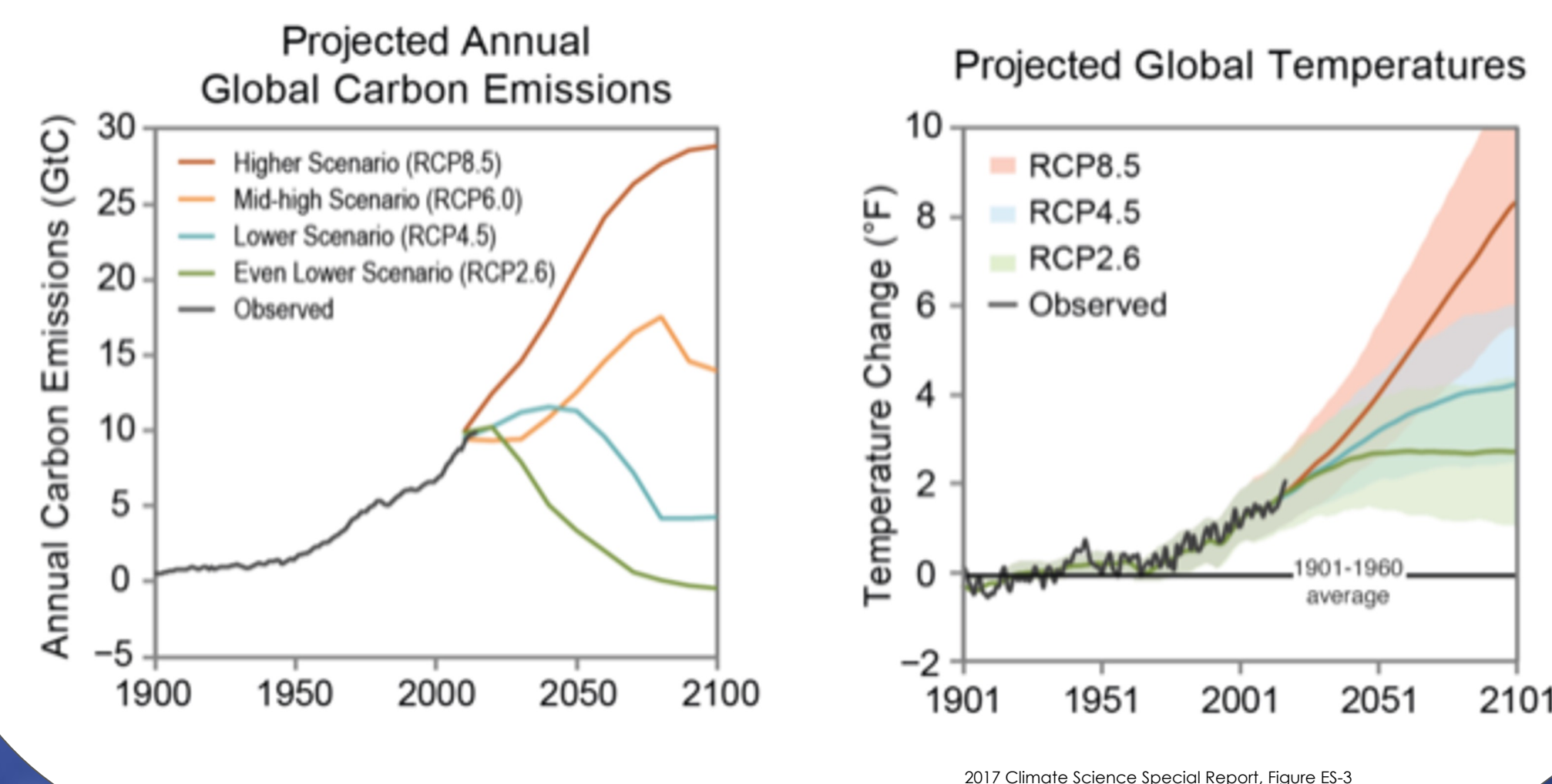


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## Introduction

Young people across the globe are worried about their future, and rightfully so. The effects of climate change displaced an estimated 25 million people in 2019 alone. Nearly half of Americans can expect to experience a decline of environmental quality in their lifetimes. While some countries are working toward lowering carbon emissions and slowing the effects of climate change, it is not enough. Projected global temperatures will continue to rise parallel to global carbon emissions. The environmental and structural violence caused by global warming disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable globally and within the city of Charlotte, where rising temperatures and extreme weather events are likely to increase the divide between residents of high and low socioeconomic status. Educators must make space for difficult, courageous conversations in their classrooms to equip students with the tools and conviction to create change.

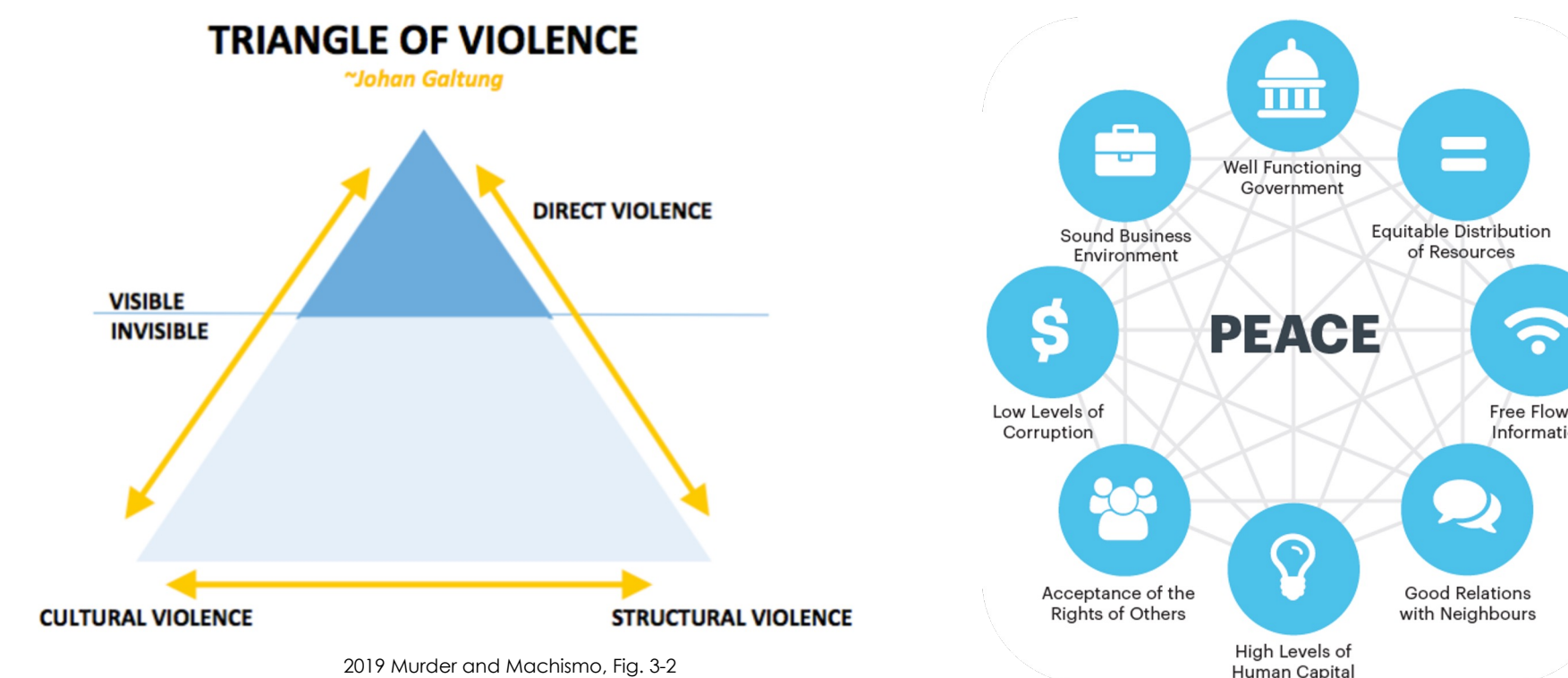


## Learning Outcomes

Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to work through it. Within the increasingly combative "argument culture" of the United States, it is difficult to imagine rational conversations about uncomfortable topics. Learning to research, analyze sources, and listen actively will benefit students in and out of the classroom. Peacebuilding should be taught in schools because it is the most proactive way to prevent violence and navigate conflict. Students need the skills and knowledge learned through the My Peacebuilder Foundations course, but most of all they need to see themselves agents of change. There are actions that we, as individuals, can take to slow rising temperatures. We can also push our governments to prioritize the health of the earth. No matter our country, everyone has to live on this one world, and our wellbeing is inextricably linked to the planet and each other. What we do affects others around the globe and future generations.

**YOUTH PEACE ACTION<sup>SM</sup>**

## Research



A nation's ranking on the Positive Peace Index correlates with its resilience after natural disasters. For example, Japan is ranked 12th on the index and was able to recover from a tsunami while Haiti, ranked 148th, is still suffering the effects of hurricanes. Cities also rely on peaceful attitudes and structures to successfully navigate the consequences of global warming. Charlotte has pursued a number of preventative measures to slow the impact of climate change, yet working families lack equitable access. Such structural violence perpetuates inequality, no matter how many support systems are put in place. Despite the efforts made by Charlotte and the UN to make peace with nature, change is not happening quickly enough. By teaching peace in schools, we may inspire the innovators and early adopters that tip the scale through awareness, service, advocacy, and philanthropy. A change in attitude can lead to structural change.



## Nature of Student Inquiry

Cochrane Collegiate Academy is a Title I middle school in East Charlotte. CMS is trying to close the achievement gap between students of high and low socioeconomic status, but Charlotte still has one of the lowest levels of social mobility among US cities. Students at Title I schools like Cochrane are likely to feel the consequences of climate change sooner and more severely than their counterparts in other schools.



North Carolina schools teach science through inquiry. Students actively participate in collecting evidence and drawing conclusions using the scientific method. The reasoning and problem solving skills gained in science are useful beyond the lab. Critical thinking allows students to practice peacebuilding and master science standards such as 7.E.1.6 Conclude that the good health of humans requires: monitoring the atmosphere, maintaining air quality and stewardship.

## Classroom Implementation



Through the study of rights, peacebuilding, and the ecological sphere of peace, students will be able to explain both how and why young people should promote environmental justice. In addition to gathering background information on different types of peace and violence from the My Peacebuilders Foundations course, students will apply their knowledge to build classroom culture during the first two weeks of school. For instance, the "Where do you stand?" activity will help students understand rights, practice navigating difficult conversations, and create their own set of classroom rules. Students will also explore the differences between their perceptions and reality in the "Index Card Guessing Game". Leading with facts is important in both peacebuilding and the scientific process as scientists are open to repeated experiments and new information. While studying weather and climate, students will use the Footprint app to reduce their carbon footprint. Data from the Footprint app and Peacebuilder certifications can be used to measure the efficacy of this endeavor.

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