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I do not live on Walden Pond. I am not a transcendental philosopher and could not in any way be considered wholly self-reliant.

I work and live in Greater Cincinnati, in the beautiful state of Kentucky, in what I personally consider to be the most gorgeous tract of terra firma in the Northern Hemisphere. It's pretty. It's picturesque. It's got its problems, just like any other region in the US. And that's why I'm madly in love with the concept of environmental justice.

Environmental justice. It sounds rather delicious, those two words nestled against one another. It's an idea that has recently gained a lot of appeal to me because it speaks to the needs of everyone to have a decent outdoor environment, regardless of race, social status or income.

For the longest time, it wasn't an issue that I thought was a problem here in the idyllic tri-state. It was only important to the rural towns in Kentucky fighting the effects of strip-mining or to the villages in Africa that have become dumping grounds for hazardous wastes. But northern Kentucky? Cincinnati? Nah.

And then I read an article in *CityBeat* last year. "Lower Price Hill, Spring Grove Village and other low-income, predominantly minority neighborhoods, count many businesses as their neighbors," writes Margo Pierce in her piece "Equal Environmental Rights." She continues, "The explanation given by many activists is that poor people and minorities don't have the money or power to fight back, and regulatory officials turn a blind eye, so polluting businesses concentrate in these areas. This means a few communities have a disproportionate amount of toxins in their neighborhoods when others don't have a single polluting business."

What concerns me in our region and across the planet is that poorer people have to deal with a dirtier environment. Obviously, this is not always the case - low air quality in the Ohio River Basin affects us all - but it seems that those of us with the fewest resources end up with the most ecological problems.

So how does money play a role in our interaction with the environment? Besides the fact that the more affluent among us have greater resources to fight against local polluters, so often I see communities offer up their long-term environmental health and safety in return for short-term economic gain. And while I usually find myself on the side of ecology rather than economy, I can see the value of finding a balance. After all, money means nothing when your environment is unlivable but like I said, I'm no Thoreau.

So where does this leave we eco-geeks?

I'm a firm believer that a healthy environment is a human right. It's hard to exercise life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness when you're up to your eyeballs in garbage. So I'm hoping environmental justice is a movement that will sweep through our beautiful region and make that right more attainable for everyone, from traditional farmers to transcendental philosophers.

Visit <http://kyecogeek.blogspot.com/> to find out more and to get the scoop on BCSW's spring programs including free garbage disposal during the Spring Cleanup, April 28-May4!

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|         | Yes, recycle it!                                                                                                                  | Not allowed!                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Anything else?                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Plastic | Bottles with #1 or #2 on them, including:<br>Soda bottles<br>Detergent jugs<br>Milk jugs<br>Vitamin containers<br>Shampoo bottles | To be recyclable, plastic must have a spout, or an opening that is smaller than the rest of the container. Because of this, we can't allow items like:<br>Butter/yogurt tubs<br>Buckets<br>Food trays<br>Also, no oil jugs. They're gross. | Please take off the lids. They're a different and not recyclable type of plastic.<br><br>Oh, and if you get a chance, rinse containers out and squash them flat. |
| Glass   | Any color glass bottle or food jar                                                                                                | Widow glass and drinking glass aren't good, nor is broken glass. We've got to help look out for the guys who pick up our recycling.                                                                                                        | Once again, no lids! No corks, either!<br>And rinse out the bottle!                                                                                              |
| Paper   | Oh man. We take all kinds of paper.                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Metal   |                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                  |