

Carla D. Walker

Accomplished leader in environmental equity, climate justice, and sustainable governance with more than 20 years of experience advancing community-centered climate policy and research. As U.S. Director for Environmental Justice and Equity at the World Resources Institute, Carla leads national initiatives that embed procedural and distributional equity into federal, state, and local climate strategies, including co-development of WRI's People-Centered Transitions Team and U.S. Equity & Governance workstream. Her work has strengthened climate governance across the Midwest and the nation through leadership roles as Chief of Staff to the Mayor of Cincinnati, Climate Advisor for Cincinnati under the American Cities Climate Challenge, and Founder of think BIG strategies, a consultancy dedicated to advancing inclusive governance and equitable development.

SELECTED ACHIEVEMENTS

- Developed equitable strategy and framework for Cincinnati's EV charging infrastructure.
- Led campaign to secure Cincinnati's commitment to 100% Clean Energy.
- Strategic Lead and Facilitator of 15+ stakeholder sessions to develop Cincinnati's 2018 climate, resilience, and sustainability plan.

EXPERTISE

- Environmental & Climate Justice
- Equitable Governance & Policy Design
- Climate Adaptation and Resilience Planning
- Stakeholder Engagement and Coalition Management
- Community-Centered Research and Public Engagement
- Program Strategy, Implementation & Evaluation
- Sustainable Development and Green Infrastructure
- Local, State, and Federal Government Relations

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

World Resources Institute, Washington DC

2021 to present

US DIRECTOR, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE & EQUITY

Lead national strategy and research on equity, environmental justice, and just transition for the U.S. Program.

- Launched WRI's U.S. Equity and Governance Program to advance equitable, community-centered climate governance.
- Co-led development of WRI-US People-Centered Transition research and program portfolio to address environmental justice, equity, and just transition in climate policy at the federal, state, and local levels.
- Design and lead execution of equity strategies for the Electric School Bus Initiative, a 5-year \$30 million project to jumpstart the equitable transition of the US school bus fleet to electric.

Natural Resources Defense Council, Cincinnati OH

2019 to 2021

CLIMATE ADVISOR, CITY OF CINCINNATI

Advanced Cincinnati's emission reduction, energy equity, and sustainable transportation goals through the American Cities Climate Challenge. Led initiatives in clean mobility and racial equity to meet Green Cincinnati Plan targets.

- Designed and managed energy-efficiency programs for low-income renters and multifamily housing owners, reducing energy burden citywide.
- Negotiated MOU with Duke Energy Ohio to create a \$1.5M energy efficiency fund for Cincinnati renters.
- Designed Cincinnati EV Ambassador Program, training community advocates to promote EV adoption.

think BIG strategies, llc, Cincinnati, OH

2010 to 2019

FOUNDER & CEO

Established a strategic consultancy integrating advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and communications to advance environmental equity and sustainable urban development.

- Directed equitable planning processes for regional and municipal agencies, including community engagement design for the Southwest Ohio Regional Transit Authority's "Reinventing Metro" plan.
- Advised regional environmental coalitions, integrating equity principles into the Great Lakes Restoration advocacy network.
- Led and managed multi-cultural team for ONE Campaign Africa to deliver 'Poverty is Sexist' policy asks at Africa Union Summit, World Economic Forum-Africa, Finance for Development Conference, and UN General Assembly.

Office of the Mayor, Cincinnati, OH

2005 to 2010

CHIEF OF STAFF

Led transition of new Administration and delivered Mayor's vision to transform the city with large-scale initiatives enhancing City's image, atmosphere for business development and connection to global networks. Oversaw day-to-day operations and management of Communications, Constituent Outreach, Legislative, and Administration staff.

- Secured the City's signing of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and served on the Climate Protection Steering Committee, establishing the inaugural Green Cincinnati Action Plan.
- Reconstituted the City's Office of Environmental Quality and Planning Department, restoring essential infrastructure for environmental governance.

ONE.org, Washington, DC

2003 to 2005

US DEPUTY CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

Led national advocacy strategy resulting in the largest Congressional increase in U.S. global development assistance in 40 years. Built partnerships with 35 organizations and expanded grassroots support from 100,000 to 2 million in 8 months.

- Organized coalition of Field representatives to coordinate campaign activities for 35 nonprofit organizations.
- Designed and oversaw execution of monthly themed events to mobilize public on US G8 and US Live8.
- Organized and led delegation of 100 volunteer advocates to participate in 2005 G8 Summit. Directed actions for coalition partners who advocated global leaders to support historical G8 agreement.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

Master of Public Administration, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard, Boston, MA

Master of Science, Environmental Engineering Science, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL

Bachelor of Science, Biology, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH

ARTICLES AND PUBLICATIONS

- Curran, A., Walker, C., & Compton, M. *How Tribal Nations Are Charging Ahead with Electric School Buses*. (2025)
- Walker, C., Gabrielse, L., & Hyman, G. *From the Ground Up: How Community-Based Organizations Can Build an Equitable and Clean Energy Future*. (2025)
- Leslie-Bole, H., Walker, C., Scafidi, A., Hosansky, B., & Melo Ribeiro, C. *Rethinking Biofuels in the U.S. Midwest*. (2025)
- Walker, C., & Jeanty, J. *Two Years of Justice40: Integrating Environmental Justice into U.S. Climate Policy*. (2023)
- Walker, C., Shaver, L., & Macomber, C. *How Prepared Are U.S. Cities to Implement the Justice40 Initiative?* (2022)
- Heath, T., Merrifield, L., Brown, K., Heim, K., Walker, C., & Salazar, K. *Building an Equitable and Just Green Infrastructure Strategy in the North Central Region*. University of Illinois Extension. (2020)

CIVIC and VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Board of Directors, Cincinnati Zoo and Botanical Garden (2024-present)
- Board of Directors, Ohio Citizens Action Board of Directors (2017-present); Board President (2024-present)
- Board of Directors, Cincinnati-Nancy France Sister City Association (2015-present)
- Board of Directors, Lloyd Science Library (2019-2025)
- Board of Directors, Green Umbrella Board of Directors (2019-2022)