

The NJSOC remembers Dr. Noel J. Brown during
Black History Month

The New Jersey School of Conservation has been fortunate over its 75 plus year history to have hosted many distinguished environmental education professionals and leaders from across the world. With its operating principle of One World, the NJSOC has been involved in programs and initiatives generated by the United Nations Environment Programme.

It was during the period of the 1970s through the 1990s that Dr. John J. Kirk, fifth director of the NJSOC met and became colleagues and friends with an influential global thought leader and program innovator - Dr. Noel J. Brown.

Dr. Brown is the former Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, North American Regional office. For several decades, Dr. Brown represented the United Nations Environment Program at a number of the major international conferences and negotiations on environment and development issues and on international law, including the historic Earth Summit in Rio, 1992.

Dr. Kirk worked with Dr. Brown as a member of the North American Committee of The Belgrade Charter and many other international education initiatives. This partnership developed into a friendship and led to an invitation in 1979 for Dr. Brown to be a panelist at the 30th Anniversary celebration of the NJSOC. His presentation entitled, *The Global Dimensions of Environmental Education*, spoke about how consideration of human activity and its impact on the environment was integral to our survival as a species.

“We need new dimensions of thought and learning; we need new approaches to understanding phenomena that will enable us to discern the endearing continuity which links the actions of today with the consequences of tomorrow. This would seem to be the central challenge of environmental education which is now generally agreed to be an integrated process dealing with man's interrelationships with the natural and manmade surroundings, including the relationships of population growth, pollution, resource allocation and depletion, conservation technology and urban and rural planning to the total environment.”

Following the 30th Anniversary celebration, the NJSOC and Dr. Brown continued to collaborate and work on environmental topics through the UNEP. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Dr. Brown conceived of a program to reach another vital audience - organized religion. In keeping with efforts to address the moral dimension of the environmental crisis, Dr. Brown introduced the Environmental Sabbath Programme to the United Nations. This program has been celebrated worldwide by thousands of congregations in connection with World Environment Day. This year World Environment Day falls on June 5.

Two publications resulted from the establishment of the Environmental Sabbath which provided world religious leaders with suggestions and guidance on actions they could take within their religious community to be better stewards of the earth as well as suggestions for celebrations they could hold using their own ceremonies, rituals and prayers.

In his letter to Religious and Spiritual Leaders in the publication *Only One Earth*, Dr. Brown said, “Clearly, this is a vital and auspicious moment for humanity to reassert our compassion, care and respect of the Earth. Thanks to the perspective provided from space, we are now able to conceive the Planet as a whole – and ourselves as a global species, with a shared inheritance and common responsibility.”

Dr. Brown is responsible for raising awareness that caring for the earth is a moral and existential imperative. His message of stewardship over the many decades of work in a variety of capacities and institutions has inspired generations of students and young people to pursue environmental professions and to be more aware and responsible for caring for the earth. The New Jersey School of Conservation is proud to have been a partner of Dr. Brown’s and to have worked with him in his effort to educate the public, students and religious organizations on the importance of conservation and environmental stewardship.

To read his full address to participants at the NJSOC 30th Anniversary, please visit: (read the full text of the presentation here): [file:///C:/Users/KerryKirkPflugh/Downloads/Dr.%20Noel%20Brown%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/KerryKirkPflugh/Downloads/Dr.%20Noel%20Brown%20(1).pdf)

Read more about the Environmental Sabbath here:

https://digitallibrary.un.org/nanna/record/147669/files/UNEP%2802%29_055.pdf?withWatermark=0&withMetadata=0

<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/earth-and-faith-book-reflection-action>

To read more about Dr. Brown, please visit:

<https://www.pace.edu/sites/default/files/files/commencement/hdr-2003-dr-noel-j-brown.pdf>