Chapter 2

Environmental Justice Timeline—Milestones
1987-2007*

Introduction

It has now been two decades since Toxic Wastes and Race was published in 1987. Over the past twenty years, environmental justice and environmental racism have become household words. Out of the small and seemingly isolated environmental struggles emerged a potent grassroots community-driven movement. Many of the on-the-ground environmental struggles in the 1980s, 1990s and through the early years of the new millennium have seen the quest for environmental and economic justice become a unifying theme across race, class, gender, age and geographic lines.

After two decades of intense study, targeted research, public hearings, grassroots organizing, networking and movement building, environmental justice struggles have taken center stage. Yet, all communities are still not created equal. Some neighborhoods, communities and regions are still the dumping grounds for all kinds of toxins. Low-income and people of color populations are still left behind before and after natural and man-made disasters strike—as graphically demonstrated on August 29, 2005 when Hurricane Katrina made landfall and the levee breach flooded New Orleans, creating the “worst environmental disaster” in U.S. history.

People of color who have been fighting for decades know that the lethargic government response to environmental emergencies in their communities is no exception, but the general rule. They have come to understand that waiting for the government to respond can be hazardous to their health and the health of their communities. Many EJ groups are not waiting, but are mobilizing to force government to do the right thing—and do it in a timely manner.

While communities all across the nation celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Toxic Wastes and Race, they know all too well that there is still much work to be done before we achieve the goal of environmental justice for all. Much progress has been made in mainstreaming environmental protection as a civil rights and social justice issue. The key is getting government to enforce the laws and regulations equally across the board—without regard to race, color or national origin.

A dozen environmental justice networks exist today that were not around in 1987. The last decade has seen some positive change in the way groups relate to each other. We now see an increasing number of community based groups, environmental justice networks, environmental and conservation groups, legal groups, faith-based groups, labor, academic institutions and youth organizations teaming up on environmental and health issues that differentially impact poor people and people of color. Environmental racism and environmental justice panels have become “hot” topics at national conferences and forums sponsored by law schools, bar associations, public health groups, scientific societies, professional meetings and university lecture series.

In just a short time, environmental justice advocates have had a profound impact on public policy, industry practices, national conferences, private foundation funding, research and curriculum development. Environmental justice courses and curricula can be found at nearly every university in the country. Groups have been successful in blocking numerous permits for new polluting facilities and forced government and private industry buyout and relocation of several communities impacted by Superfund sites and industrial pollution.

* The principal author of this chapter is Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Ware Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University.
Environmental justice has trickled up to the federal government and the White House with the signing of Executive Order 12989 in 1994. Activists and academicians were key actors who convinced the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (under the first Bush Administration) to create an Office on Environmental Equity. Many of the policies, programs and initiatives that were begun under the first Bush administration were continued and expanded under the Clinton Administration. However, environmental justice stalled and was met with intense resistance inside the EPA beginning in 2000 and continues to the present day with proposed budget and program cuts.

About the Timeline—Milestones

The entries in this timeline—milestones report were derived from a national call to grassroots groups, community-based organizations, networks, academic centers, legal clinics, practitioners, analysts, foundations, labor, faith-based groups, government officials and others who have been involved in the environmental justice movement. The response was tremendous. No doubt some events and activities may have been inadvertently left out. The timeline is a work in progress and will be updated throughout 2007. If there are items you feel should be included, please send them to the Environmental Justice Resource Center, ejrc@cau.edu, and they will be incorporated in an updated version to be posted along with the Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty report on the UCC Web site at http://www.ucc.org/justice/environment.htm.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TIMELINE—MILESTONES

1987

United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice issues the famous Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States report, the first national study to correlate waste facility siting and race.

Texas Southern University sociologist Robert D. Bullard publishes Invisible Houston: The Black Experience in Boom and Bust (Texas A&M University Press, 1987) that chronicles the social, economic, political, educational, land use and environmental quality of Black Houston neighborhoods as the “dumping grounds.”

1988

Revielletown buyout and relocation by Georgia Pacific (now Georgia Gulf).

Britain’s Black Environment Network was formed (http://www.ben-network.org.uk/).

The Alston/Bannerman Fellowship Program was begun in 1988 to advance progressive social change by helping to sustain longtime activists of color. The program honors those who have devoted their lives to helping their communities organize for racial, social, economic and environmental justice. The program provides resources for organizers to take time out for reflection and renewal. Fellows receive a $25,000 award to take sabbaticals of three months or more. Since 1988, there have been 181 Fellows. They’ve worked on a broad range of issues from environmental justice to fair wages, from immigrant rights to native sovereignty, from political empowerment to economic revitalization. They are from 32 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and Guam.

Latino grassroots group Mothers of East L.A. defeats the construction of a huge toxic waste incinerator in their community.
In Dilkon, Arizona, a small group of Navajo community activists spearhead a successful effort to block siting of a $40 million toxic waste incinerator.

The Great Louisiana Toxics March led by the Gulf Coast Tenants and communities in “Cancer Alley” (corridor between Baton Rouge and New Orleans). The march brought public attention to their toxic living conditions in Louisiana’s “Cancer Alley” – the 85-mile stretch from Baton Rouge to New Orleans.

1989

Morrisonville, Louisiana, relocation (Dow Chemical Company buyout).

Paul Mohai and Bunyan Bryant are appointed Faculty Investigators of the University of Michigan’s 1990 Detroit Area Study (DAS) and begin the first comprehensive examination of environmental inequality in the Detroit metropolitan area.

In 1989, Indigenous communities, organizations, traditional societies and tribal nations begin meeting together on environmental and natural resource extraction issues. This leads to national meetings in 1990 on the Dine’ (Navajo) territory and in 1991, near the sacred Bear Butte in South Dakota. The 1989 meeting ultimately led to the formation of the Indigenous Environmental Network in 1990.

President Commission on the Outdoors held a conference focusing on People of Color and the Environment. The conference, organized by the Conservation Leadership Project, was held in Seattle, Washington, in August.

1990

Under the leadership of Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai, the Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards was convened at the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment in January 1990, bringing together academics and activists to discuss the evidence and policy solutions bearing on disproportionate environmental burdens. The “Michigan Coalition” (an ad hoc group formed during the conference) wrote letters and met with William Reilly (EPA) and Michael Deland (CEQ) in September 1990.

The Bush EPA administrator William Reilly established the Environmental Equity Work Group.

Robert D. Bullard publishes Dumping-Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality, the first textbook on environmental justice.

The Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ) was established.

The Proceedings of the Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards are published in September 1990 and delivered to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

First of four meetings on Environmental Justice was held between environmental justice leaders, also known as the “Michigan Coalition,” and EPA Administrator William Reilly.

In January 1990, nine activists of color wrote a letter to the “Group of 10” national environmental organizations calling on them to dialogue with activists of color on the environmental crisis impacting communities of color and to hire people of color on their staffs and boards of directors.

In early April 1990, the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP) convened over 80 representatives from 32 organizations working on environmental and economic justice issues in the southwest. From these efforts, the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) was established as a
grassroots-led Indigenous voice in regional, national and international forums on environmental and economic justice issues.

A second letter was sent to the Big 10, this time signed by 103 activists of color representing grassroots, labor, youth, church, civil rights, and social justice advocates and coalitions in the Southwest. The letter challenged and reinforced the first letter challenging mainstream environmentalists on issues of environmental racism and lack of accountability toward Third World Communities in the Southwest.

Paul Mohai publishes "Black Environmentalism" in the journal Social Science Quarterly, the first national-level study to dispel the myth that African Americans are less concerned about the environment than white Americans.

1991

December 30, El Pueblo para el Aire y Agua Limpio v. County of Kings, judge rules that permit process for toxic waste incinerator was flawed because failure to translate documents into Spanish meant affected public was not "meaningfully involved" in the environmental review, in a case brought by Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment.

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry convenes the National Minority Environmental Health Conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

In October, The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D.C., attracting more than 1,000 participants. The Seventeen Principles of Environmental Justice were developed at the four-day event.


The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Accountability Campaign was initiated by SNEEJ, their grassroots members, and joined by other Networks and their grassroots affiliates to ensure equitable treatment of communities of color by the EPA.

1992

First edition of the *People of Color Environmental Groups Directory* published by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

The “*Environmental Justice Act of 1992*” was introduced into Congress by Congressman John Lewis (D-GA) and Senator Albert Gore (D-TN).

First Title VI administrative complaint filed with U.S. EPA by St Francis Prayer Center in Flint, Michigan, against Genessee Power. This complaint was lost by EPA and not found, and accepted for investigation, until 1994 (it is still under review).

The **Deep South Center for Environmental Justice** was founded at Xavier University of Louisiana (later moved to Dillard University in September 2005) in New Orleans, Louisiana.


Governmental Accountability Campaign persuades the U.S. EPA and the Agency for Toxics Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) to clean up waste sites and support sustainable economic development efforts, enforce laws and regulation in communities.

Environmental justice delegation participates in the **United Nations Conference on Environment & Development** (UNCED) or Earth Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

*National Law* journal publishes a special issue on *Unequal Environmental Protection* that chronicles the double standards and differential treatment of people of color and whites.

In 1992, after mounting scientific evidence and much prodding from environmental justice advocates, the EPA produced its own study, *Environmental Equity: Reducing Risks for All Communities*, finally acknowledging the fact that some populations shoulder greater environmental health risks than others. This was one of the first comprehensive government reports to examine environmental justice.

The Environmental Justice and Labor Conference, follow-up to the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit and spearheaded by SOC, was held at Xavier University in New Orleans with more than 2,000 in attendance.

The EPA, ATSDR and NIEHS jointly sponsor the “**Equity in Environmental Health: Research Issues and Needs**” Workshop in Research Triangle Park, NC; papers from the workshop were later published in a 1993 special issue of *Toxicology and Industrial Health* journal.

The *EPA Journal* devotes its entire Volume 18, No. 1 (March/April) issue to environmental justice.

WE ACT, with the assistance of NRDC and the law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, sued the City of New York for operating the North River plant as a public nuisance to the people of the West Harlem Community. WE ACT settled its lawsuit with the City of New York and was awarded a $1 million dollar settlement, and the City of New York agreed to set aside $55 million in capital funds to repair the air pollution and engineering design problems at the North River Waste Water Treatment facility.

Two environmental justice leaders, Rev. Benjamin Chavis and Robert D. Bullard, were appointed to the Clinton-Gore Presidential Transition Team in the Natural Resources Cluster.
Deeohn Ferris coordinates national campaign for drafting of the “Environmental Justice Position Paper” for submission to the Clinton-Gore Transition Team.

Rigoberta Menchú Tum wins the Nobel Peace Prize. Rigoberta Menchú is a (Quiche) Mayan Indian from Guatemala who fought for indigenous and women’s rights, ethno-cultural reconciliation as well as land reform in her country.

EPA publishes Tribes at Risk: The Wisconsin Comparative Risk Project, which documents that the Ojibwe and other Native nations in northern Wisconsin suffer a disproportionate environmental risk of illness and other health problems from eating fish, deer and other wildlife contaminated with industrial pollutants like airborne polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), mercury and other toxins deposited on land and water.

The World Uranium Hearing is convened in Salzburg, Austria. At this historic gathering indigenous people from all continents gave testimony about the daily deadly impact of uranium mining, atomic weapons testing and radioactive waste storage. The proceedings are published as Poison Fire, Sacred Earth.

1993

The Environmental Justice Act was redrafted and reintroduced in 1993 by Congressman Lewis (D-GA) and Senator Max Baucus (D-MT).

SOC worked with Communities at Risk and coordinated participation of Region IV Task Force Members to a Superfund Reauthorization Roundtable.

EPA established the 25-member National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC).

Local community leaders and their allies defeated the Formosa Plastics Plant from locating in Wallace, Louisiana.

The first two EPA Title VI (Civil Rights Act) administrative complaints were filed against the MS Dept of Environmental Quality and LA Department of Environmental Quality. Other network members follow and file administrative Title VI complaints against state agencies and the EPA.

The Second Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards Conference held at the School of Natural Resources, University of Michigan.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) forms in 1993 to inject an Asian Pacific Islander perspective into the environmental justice movement and to build an environmental justice framework and principles into work in API communities.

West Harlem Environmental Action (WEACT) leads fight over the North River Sewage Treatment Plant drawing in activists across 12 northeastern states. This initial gathering catalyzes the formation of a multi-state regional network: the Northeast Environmental Justice Network (NEJN).

The Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice (FNEEJ) was formed to support the struggle of more than 50,000 workers in nine independent farmworker organizations.

First wave of Title VI administrative complaints filed with EPA, by Tulane Environmental Law Clinic and Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund in New Orleans, on behalf of groups in Louisiana and Mississippi. More than 100 such complaints have since been filed.

Ken Sexton and Yolanda Banks Anderson serve as guest editors of Toxicology and Industrial Health Special issue on “Equity in Environmental Health: Research Issues and Needs,” volume 9, number 5 (September/October).
The “Toxic Racism” documentary produced for WGBH Boston aired on PBS.

Predominantly Latino residents of Kettleman City, California, succeed in preventing siting of a toxic waste facility in their community.

Environmental justice courses approved at the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment—setting the stage for the schools’ Environmental Justice Program (http://www.snre.umich.edu/degree_programs_environmental_justice.php)—the nation’s first and only academic program to offer bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees in environmental justice.

1994

The Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University was formed in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Environmental Justice Resource Center publishes 2nd edition of the People of Color Environmental Groups Directory that lists more than 600 groups in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada and Mexico.

The Environmental Law and Justice Center was formed at Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law in Houston, Texas.

The Washington Office on Environmental Justice (WOEJ) opens in Washington, D.C.

Environmental justice delegates participate in the International Conference on Population & Development, Cairo, Egypt. Environmental justice leaders meet with Dr. Kenneth Olden, director of the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), to begin dialogue.

In February, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, along with six other federal agencies, hold the “Symposium on Health and Health Research Needs to Ensure Environmental Justice,” Washington, D.C.

On February 11, 1994, environmental justice reached the White House when President William J. Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. The Order mandated federal agencies to incorporate environmental justice into all their work and programs.

EPA’s Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice established.

Center for Policy Alternatives issues Toxic Waste Revisited. The updated report strengthens the association between race and siting of waste facilities.

Women of Color Environmental Justice Conference held at the University of Michigan in March.

University of Massachusetts issues study, funded by Waste Management Inc. challenging siting demographics. This study triggers the first wave of attacks on environmental justice.

The Title IV lawsuit Labor/Community Strategy Center, Bus Riders Union, et al. v. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority was filed. The lawsuit charged that the MTA operated separate and unequal bus and rail systems that discriminated against the poor minority bus riders of Los Angeles.
The Playas de Tijuana community after a great deal of organizing was able to defeat the Waste Management Incinerator, with help from the organization El Pueblo y Agua Limpia from Kettleman City, California, Environmental Health Coalition and SNEEJ.

The Mole Lake Sokaogon Chippewa became the first Wisconsin tribe granted independent authority under the federal Clean Water Act by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate water quality on their reservation. Tribal regulatory authority would affect all upstream industrial and municipal facilities, including Exxon's proposed Crandon mine. The state of Wisconsin immediately files suit against the EPA in federal court, demanding that the federal government reverse its decision to let Indian tribes establish their own water quality standards. www.wrpc.net.

1995

In January, the First Interagency Public Hearing on Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 was held at Clark Atlanta University in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Environmental Justice Resource Center holds the Environmental Justice and Transportation: Building Model Partnerships at Clark Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.

Dine’ CARE was the first native community group to get the Department of Interior (BIA) to produce an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and a 10-year Forest Management Plan (FMP) for a federally recognized tribe (Navajo Nation). Before this, EIS were produced by Peabody Coal Company and other corporations rubberstamping EIS on Indian lands.

Environmental justice delegates participate in the 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing, China.

Laotian Organizing Project started as APEN’s first organizing project in Richmond, CA, to organize the Laotian refugee community as a new voice in the EJ movement. LOP also forms Asian Youth Advocates (AYA) as a youth leadership development and organizing arm for high-school aged Laotian young women. AYA’s formation marks APEN’s push to include a gender, race and class framework into the EJ movement while committing to the development of a generation of new leaders.
The Environmental Justice Fund was founded by six networks to promote the creation of alternative funding strategies to support the grassroots EJ organizing. The six networks include: Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, Indigenous Environmental Network, Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice, Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice and the Northeast Environmental Justice Network.

Region IV Environmental Justice Task Force supports Communities at Risk Platform for Superfund Reauthorization.

The National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences established the Minority Worker Training Program in September 1995 to provide a series of national pilot programs to test a range of strategies for the recruitment and training of young persons who live near hazardous waste sites or in the community at risk of exposure to contaminated properties, with the specific focus to obtain work in the environmental field.

1996


The Environmental Justice Resource Center and CAU-TV co-produce the “Just Transportation” documentary.

Indigenous Anti-Nuclear Summit 1996, Albuquerque, New Mexico. Under sponsorship of the Seventh Generation Fund, with IEN and affiliate support, brought together a network of Indigenous peoples from North America and the Pacific negatively affected by the nuclear chain. A Declaration was developed that established the mandate of work on nuclear issues.

In July, a ten-person environmental delegation visits South Africa and meets with diverse community, labor, health, youth and other leaders who were struggling to throw off the shackles of apartheid.

Jean Sindab, an environmental justice trailblazer with the National Council of Churches, expires.

EPA Superfund Relocation Roundtable Meeting, Pensacola, Florida. Because of the hard work of Margaret Williams and local grassroots leaders, EPA decided to relocate the entire community of 358 African American and low-income households living next to the Escambia Wood Treatment Plant in Pensacola, Florida.

People of Color Disenfranchised Communities Environmental Health Network established. The Network addresses Department of Energy and Department of Defense federal facilities. Due to the Network’s work, EPA formed the Federal Facilities Work Group in December.

ATSDR conducts the Community Tribal Forum.

Environmental Justice Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Round Table, was held in Texas, sponsored by the NEJAC Enforcement Committee and Region IX.

The African American Environmental Justice Action Network (AAEJAN) was established.

Institute of Medicine sponsored a Toxic Tour of “Cancer Alley” as part of its fact-finding mission and preparation for its report on health and environmental justice.
1997

Ingram Barge Spill of Toluene and Benzene at Southern University site in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

The Environmental Justice Resource Center’s Healthy and Sustainable Communities Conference brought several hundred EJ leaders from across the country to explore environmental justice and sustainable development strategies.

Community Tribal Advisory Board for the ATSDR Board of Scientific Counselors was established and Network members were appointed to this Board.

African American farmers bring a lawsuit against the USDA charging it with discrimination in denying them access to loans and subsidies.

The Just Transportation: Dismantling Race and Class Barriers to Mobility (edited by Robert D. Bullard and Glenn S. Johnson) is published. The book chronicles transportation racism cases across the United States.

Chattanooga Make the Link: Health and Environmental Justice major meeting.

President Clinton issues Executive Order 13045 protecting Children from Environmental Health and Safety Risks.

Citizens Against Nuclear Trash (CANT) and residents in Homer win a major victory over Louisiana Energy Services (LES) on Earth Day.

Citizens Against Nuclear Trash (CANT) stop the Louisiana Energy Services from building a uranium enrichment plant in the midst of Forest Grove and Center Springs, LA, 1997 (Photo by EJRC)

Waste Management Division of Region IV U.S. EPA and SOC hold Environmental Justice Summit.

Second Environmental Justice Enforcement Round Table sponsored by the NEJAC Enforcement Committee and Region IV Environmental Accountability Office.

Environmental Justice Action Group organized a regional environmental justice conference in Portland, Oregon, in October. The conference, attended by about 150 people, explored the formation of a Pacific Northwest environmental justice alliance.

Tennessee Legislature passes a resolution for Superfund sites, due to the work of the Defense Depot Memphis TN Concerned Citizens Committee. The resolution requires posting of warning signs at all Superfund sites.
EPA establishes the National Advisory Council on Policy and Technology (NACEPT), Title VI Implementation, to examine facility permitting.

In 1997 the community of El Florido in Baja California, Mexico, won a victory with the clean up of the 60,000 metric tons of lead waste from the Alco Pacifico Lead Smelter Site. This company had abandoned a major Superfund site complex in West Dallas, Texas. Organization from West Dallas also played a crucial role, along with Environmental Health Coalition and SNEEJ.

1998

EPA issues Interim Guidance for Investigating Title VI Administrative Complaints Challenging Permits.


Japanese-owned Shintech suspends its effort to build PVC plant in Convent, Louisiana.

In 1998, the Conference of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), the nation's oldest and largest independent black labor organization, initiated its Community Action and Response Against Toxics (CARAT) Team Program in an effort to address the fact that low-income and minority communities are more likely than other communities to suffer from exposure to poor quality air, polluted water sources and toxic hazards.


The First International Agricultural Worker Forum was held in 1998. The purpose of the Forum was to create a space for workers to present their problems and encourage leadership development through future training programs. More than 60 delegates attended.

IEN facilitated for the participation of Native grassroots, tribal traditional leadership and elders in the Native Peoples/Native Homelands Climate Change Workshop held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This led to the development of the "Albuquerque Declaration" that was sent to the UN Fourth Conference of the Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. From this point on, IEN has participated in climate change meetings at the local, regional, national and international levels.

EPA denies the Title VI Select Steel complaint, its first administrative decision under Title VI.

“Justice for All: Racial Equity and Environmental Well-being” conference attended by several hundred participants held at the University of Colorado – Boulder (September). This conference focused on diversity in the environmental institutions as well as access to open space for people of color and the poor.

The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJ) grew out of the 1st Annual NC Environmental Justice Summit held in 1998 at the Historical Franklinton Center at Bricks.

Florida Legislature passes the 1998 Environmental Equity and Justice Act.
The Center for Environmental Equity and Justice is created at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida.

The U.S. Supreme Court dismisses the Chester, Pennsylvania, case because the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) revoked the Permit at issue.

More than a dozen Bishops and church leaders in the Council of Black Churches participate in “Toxic Tour of Cancer Alley.” The church leaders on the tour represent more than 17 million African Americans.

The Wisconsin Mining Moratorium Law is passed by the legislature after a major grassroots lobbying campaign by Indian Tribes, environmental and sport-fishing groups. The law prohibits the state from issuing a permit for metallic sulfide mining unless an applicant can provide at least one example from the United States or Canada where a metallic sulfide mine has operated for 10 years without pollution and been closed for 10 years without pollution.


1999

UN Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF) Experts meeting in Costa Rica.

National Emergency Meeting of Blacks in the United States, New Orleans, Louisiana. Groups came from 37 states. This and subsequent meetings laid the foundation for the creation of the National Black Environmental Justice Network (NBEJN).

IEN established a Native POPs campaign office in Alaska in partnership with Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT).

The Black farmer’s discrimination case against the USDA settles for a reported $400 million to more than $2 billion.

Asian Youth Advocates (AYA) wins a campaign victory at Richmond High School in Richmond, California, that increases advisory and guidance services to students. AYA broadens the notion of environmental justice to recognize school environments as a key arena for youth.

Third Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization (WTO) was held in Seattle, Washington, (SNEEJ, SWU, IEN and IITC).

Congressional Black Caucus Chair James Clyburn (D-SC) convenes “Environmental Justice: Strengthening the Bridge between Economic Development and Sustainable Communities” at Hilton Head, South Carolina.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) publishes Toward Environmental Justice: Research, Education and Health Policy Needs (National Academy Press).

Dana Alston, a heroine of the Environmental Justice Movement, best known for her famous speech at the 1991 First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, and We Speak for Ourselves booklet, expires.

U.S. Representative Hilda Solis, then a senator in the California legislature, introduces landmark environmental justice legislation in California establishing a working definition and requiring the California EPA to develop a mission, policy and guidance on environmental justice.

“America’s Parks, America’s People: A Mosaic in Motion” conference held in San Francisco in January. Hundreds of activists and government representatives attended this conference (Mosaic I) which focused on diversity and access to open space for people of color and the poor.
2000

Dursban – the most dangerous and widely used insecticide in the country – is taken off the market for indoor use thanks to a concerted national advocacy campaign focused on protecting children’s health.

Environmental Justice Resource Center publishes 3rd edition of the People of Color Environmental Groups Directory that lists more than 1,000 environmental justice groups in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Canada and Mexico.


Dine’ CARE also spearheaded a national organizing effort with a multi-racial and multi-state coalition to amend the Radiation Exposure Compensation Act (RECA) legislation.

IEN developed a training partnership with Project Underground to hire and train a Native mining campaigner to address mining issues. This launched the Indigenous Mining Campaign Project as a response to address unsustainable mining and oil development in Native lands.

Hundreds of environmental justice leaders participate in the Climate Justice Summit in The Hague, Netherlands.

In December 2000, the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) Environmental Justice Braintrust forms National Environmental Policy Commission (NEPC).

The North Carolina General Assembly released $7 million in appropriations to begin the detoxification of the Warren County PCB Landfill.

Macon County Citizens for a Clean Environment successfully wage a major fight to stop the siting of a mega landfill near historic Tuskegee University campus.

NBEJN holds National Press Conference on “End Toxic Terror in Black Communities,” Washington, D.C.

NBEJN coordinates Congressional Black Caucus Hearing on environmental justice, Washington, D.C.

The Fort Ord Environmental Justice Network hosted first EJ Forum in Monterey County, California, at California State University Monterey Bay.

2001

National Black Environmental Justice Network lends its support and expertise to the African/African Descent Caucus. The goal is to get the African/African Descendent declared a Major Group in the United Nations.

Jesus People Against Pollution founder Charlotte Keys wins the Robert Wood Johnson Health Leadership Award for her work in Columbia, Mississippi.

The “Trade Secrets” documentary airs on PBS.

The “Celebrity Tour of Cancer Alley Louisiana” held. This event sparked some celebrities, including writer Alice Walker and Congresswoman Maxine Waters, to revisit and work with some of the impacted communities located along the Mississippi River chemical corridor.

EPA clean-up at Agriculture Street Landfill neighborhood begins (completed 2001).
Judge Orlofsky rules in *South Camden Citizens in Action v. NJ Dept of Environmental Protection* that compliance with environmental laws does not equal compliance with civil rights laws, and determines that NJ has violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the first EJ case to prevail under this theory. Decision later overturned by Third Circuit on grounds that plaintiffs do not have the right to enforce EPA’s disparate impact regulations.

On April 25, 2001, residents of Anniston, Alabama, Sweet Valley/Cobb Town Environmental Task Force won a **$42.8 million settlement** against Monsanto chemical company. The community had to be relocated because of PCB contamination.

Environmental justice leaders participate in *World Conference against Racism* (WCAR) held in Durban, South Africa.

Warren County, North Carolina, PCB landfill community secures state and federal resources to detoxify the PCB landfill and build strategy for community-driven economic development.

Environmental justice leaders participate in the Environmental Justice and Labor Conference held at the University of Niteroi, Niteroi, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The university and nongovernmental organizations are interested in starting a community-university center.

Native American activists and their allies succeed in preventing siting of a nuclear waste dump in Ward Valley, California, after 10 years of struggle.

In April 2001, U.N. Commission on Human Rights lists **living free of pollution** as a basic human right.

2002

California voters pass **Proposition 40**, the largest resource bond in United States history, which provided $2.6 billion for parks, clean water and clean air, with an unprecedented level of support among communities of color and low-income communities.

The National Black Environmental Justice Network formed a partnership with the South African Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF) to host a week-long pre-WSSD side events, workshops and site tours.
Environmental justice delegates participate in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Rio +10 Earth Summit, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Norco, Louisiana’s Diamond Community secures full relocation and buyout by the Shell Chemical Refinery.


The First North American Indigenous Mining Summit was held that formed working groups to develop action plans to address coal, uranium and metallic mining activities in Native lands. In 2002, a Native oil campaigner was hired.

**Project Return to Sender** (a coalition of Haitian, Haitian American, and U.S. and European EJ and environmental groups) succeeds in returning a load of incinerator ash to the U.S., which was dumped on a beach at Gonaives, Haiti, 15 years earlier in 1987.

Paul Mohai and David Kershner publish “Race and Environmental Voting in the U.S. Congress” in the journal *Social Science Quarterly*, demonstrating that members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) have consistently voted more pro-environmentally than Republican or Democratic Congressional colleagues over a two decade period.
Power in Asians Organizing (PAO) founded as APEN’s second organizing project in Oakland, California, to organize a multi-ethnic Asian constituency for environmental justice. PAO and LOP work together and choose housing as its next campaign, looking at housing affordability and community displacement as issues to broaden the EJ movement.

The New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance is formed with 40 member organizations from local community groups, traditional environmental groups, civil rights organizations, labor unions and other groups.


Latinos and the Environment Conference organized by the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment’s Environmental Justice Initiative.

Women of color honored at the EJ Summit II, Washington, DC, 2002 (Photo by EJRC)

The Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit or EJ Summit II was convened on October 24-27, 2002 in Washington, D.C. The event attracted more than 1,400 attendees.

2003

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation adopts a new policy requiring environmental justice reviews before the issuance of permits.

In a 2003 report, Not in My Backyard: Executive Order 12,898 and Title VI as Tools for Achieving Environmental Justice, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights concluded that "Minority and low-income communities are most often exposed to multiple pollutants and from multiple sources. . . . There is no presumption of adverse health risk from multiple exposures, and no policy on cumulative risk assessment that considers the roles of social, economic and behavioral factors when assessing risk."
The U.S. Navy was forced to close down Camp García, the firing zone in Vieques, Puerto Rico on May 1, 2003, after using the area for target practice since the 1940s.

In September, Peggy M. Shepard received the Heinz Award for the Environment for her courageous advocacy and determined leadership in combating environmental injustice within urban America. She is the co-founder and executive director of West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT), a platform from which she has helped do battle locally against environmental hazards as well as serve nationally as a model for grassroots activism and coalition building. An environmental crusader and tireless champion for ecological equality on behalf of inner cities, she raised her voice – and later a veritable army – against a systemic form of racism that threatens to sacrifice the environmental health of poor urban areas.

University of California Sociology Professor David N. Pellow’s Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago was named winner of the American Sociological Association C. Wright Mills Award in 2003.

Paul Mohai publishes “Dispelling Old Myths: African American Concern for the Environment” in the journal Environment and provides a comprehensive examination of African American concern for the environment over a three-decade period. The evidence shows that African Americans care as much about the environment as white Americans, often surpassing their concerns.

The Minority Environmental Leadership Development Initiative (MELDI) launched at the University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment in January. MELDI’s goal is to provide resources to enhance career and leadership development opportunities for people of color interested in environmental professions.

Cleanup of the Warren County, North Carolina, PCB Landfill was completed at a cost of $17.1 million. And plans for the "Justice Park" on the site by Warren County Government began.
The American Bar Association Special Committee on Environmental Justice *Environmental Justice For All: A Fifty-State Survey Of Legislation, Policies, and Initiatives (2004)* report identifies the statutes, policies, initiatives or other commitments that states have undertaken to give force of law and/or tangible meaning to the goal of environmental justice. Importantly, the report finds that from the first policy issued in 1993 to 2004 more than 30 states have expressly addressed environmental justice, demonstrating increased attention to the issue at a political level. The wide range and variety of policy strategies and approaches used by states, however, suggests that the issue will continue to mature over the coming years.

New Jersey Gov. James McGreevey signs the state’s first *Environmental Justice Executive Order*. The Ex. Order requires all executive bodies (depts., etc.) that are involved in decisions that "may affect environmental quality and public health" to provide meaningful opportunities for public input; the periodic review of government programs intended to protect human health and the environment to see if they "meet the needs" of communities of color and low-income communities and to see if they "seek to address disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards;" the creation of a multi-department state EJ Task Force and the recommissioning of the EJ Advisory Council to the NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection; and requires a process whereby any community and workers can file a petition with the EJ Task Force to address claims of disproportionate exposure to environmental health risks and/or disparities in the implementation of laws affecting public health and/or the environment.

The Los Angeles, California, Harbor Hispanic Environmental Justice organization the Coalition for a Safe Environment and San Pedro residents win a victory when the California South Coast Air Quality Management District Arbitration Board finds San Pedro Kinder Morgan Fuel Storage Tank
Facility guilty of not negotiating in good faith and cancels their permit to conduct future business permanently.

A March 2004 Office of Inspector General (OIG) report, **EPA Needs to Consistently Implement the Intent of the Executive Order on Environmental Justice**, summed up the treatment of environmental justice under the Bush administration. After a decade, EPA "has not developed a clear vision or a comprehensive strategic plan, and has not established values, goals, expectations and performance measurements" for integrating environmental justice into its day-to-day operations.

On April 19, 2004, **Margie Eugene Richard** made history by becoming the first African American to win the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize, the award begun in 1990. The Goldman Environmental Prize is the world's largest award for grassroots environmentalism and carries a cash award of $125,000 for each winner. The awards ceremony, attended by 3,000 guests, was presented in San Francisco. Margie is a retired schoolteacher, a grandmother and an ardent environmental justice activist from the tiny African American Diamond community in Norco, Louisiana. She follows in the footsteps of other black leaders who refused to give in to racial injustice.

In October 2004, **Wangari Muta Maathai**, a professor and environmental justice activist from Kenya, became the first African woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. Professor Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement where, for nearly thirty years, she has mobilized poor women to plant some 30 million trees. Click on link for Nobel Peace Prize presentation and photographs.

The University of Michigan’s School of Natural Resources and Environment’s Environmental Justice Initiative organized an international **Climate Change Conference**.

### 2005


The **NJ Work Environment Council** organized a successful campaign that led to the adoption of an Administrative Order by the NJDEP that allows workers and union representatives to participate in investigations of facilities that use extremely hazardous chemicals. This is the first agreement of its kind in the nation and will help protect workers and fenceline communities from toxic dangers.

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation named **Majora Carter** a 2005 MacArthur Fellow. Carter, who holds an M.F.A. in creative writing from NYU, will receive $500,000 in support over the next five years for her work as executive director of Sustainable South Bronx, which she founded in 2001. A native of Hunts Point, Carter seeks to address the disproportionate environmental and public health burdens experienced by residents of the South Bronx. Her organization works in partnership with local government, businesses and neighborhood organizations to create new opportunities for transportation, fitness and recreation, nutrition and economic development.

Congress passes an amendment to the EPA's appropriations bill directing the agency not to spend any congressionally appropriated funds in a manner that contravenes Executive Order 12898 or delays its implementation.

In July 2005, the EPA was met with a firestorm of public resistance when it proposed dropping race from its draft Environmental Justice Strategic Plan as a factor in identifying and prioritizing populations that may be disadvantaged by the agency's policies. The proposal was described as a giant step backward and "a road map for other federal agencies to do nothing." A letter from more than 45 environmental justice and mainstream environmental groups opposed the EPA's plan.

Twenty-five Democrats in the Senate and House send a letter to the EPA for its failure to apply the Executive Order 12898 in its flawed "strategic plan for environmental justice."

The General Accounting Office (now the U.S. Government Accountability Office) releases a report finding that the EPA generally devoted little attention to environmental justice issues while drafting three significant clean air rules on gasoline, diesel and ozone between fiscal years 2000 and 2004.

In August 2005, the Minority Environmental Leadership Diversity Initiative (MELDI) held a National Diversity Summit at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The conference was attended by 230 participants from federal agencies, mainstream environmental NGOs, environmental justice organizations, academics, students, environmental grantmakers, and race-relations and diversity experts. The MELDI published and distributed The Paths We Tread, a book of profiles of more than 70 people of color who have had outstanding careers in the environmental field.

The California EPA - Air Resources Board selects the Hispanic community of Wilmington for a two-year Children's Environmental Risk Reduction Program and Cumulative Impact Assessment. The Cumulative Impact Assessment when completed in 2007 will be the most comprehensive assessment, identification and mapping of toxic industries and sites in an Environmental Justice community in California and U.S. history. The Coalition for a Safe Environment is the lead community organization participant.

Hurricane Katrina hits New Orleans, tearing the lid off and exacerbating decades of environmental injustices in the Deep South and New Orleans. In the wake of the storms, authorities receive reports of 575 oil and toxic chemical spills. Of these, ten major oil spills result in a total volume approaching 8 million gallons. The spills affect residential communities. The hurricanes also generated more than 100 million cubic yards of debris – enough to cover 1,000 football fields with a six-story high mountain of trash. The massive amounts of debris result in hastily permitted urban landfills near people of color residential areas.

Summit 2005: Diverse Partners for Environmental Progress was held in October 2005 where approximately 85 leaders, supporters and funders representing diverse segments of the environmental, environmental justice, civil rights, environmental health, faith and conservation communities came together in Wakefield, Virginia.

A December 2005 study from the Associated Press finds More Blacks Live with Pollution. The AP found that black Americans are 79 percent more likely than whites to live in neighborhoods where industrial pollution is suspected of posing the greatest health danger.

2006

The Concerned Citizens of Agriculture Landfill, after thirteen years of litigation, wins their class-action lawsuit to be relocated and bought out from their contaminated community. Although Hurricane Katrina created a forced relocation, in January 2006, five months after Katrina, Seventh District Court Judge Nadine Ramsey ruled in favor of the residents. Judge Ramsey described the plaintiffs as overwhelmingly poor minority citizens who "were promised the American dream of first-time home ownership. The dream turned out to be a nightmare."
Plans for the "Justice Park" on the site of the Warren County’s PBC Landfill by Warren County (North Carolina) Government began.

**A Green Los Angeles.** Recommendations to the City of Los Angeles from Green LA, a working group for a just and sustainable future. More than 50 Environmental, Environmental Justice Organizations, Unions and Academic Institutions participated for over a year to release the abstract of the top 18 recommendations in six environmental categories.

Environmental justice scholars Manuel Pastor, Robert D. Bullard, James K. Boyce, Alice Fothergill, Rachel Morella-Frosch and Beverly Wright publish *In the Wake of the Storm: Environment, Disaster, and Race After Katrina* (Russell Sage Foundation, May 15, 2006).

Paul Mohai and Robin Saha publish "Reassessing Racial and Socioeconomic Disparities in Environmental Justice Research" in the journal *Demography*, demonstrating that newer methods that better match where people live and hazardous sites are located reveal far greater racial disparities around hazardous waste sites than previously reported.

On September 18, 2006, the EPA’s Office of Inspector General (IG) issued another study, *EPA Needs to Conduct Environmental Reviews of Its Program, Policies, and Activities*, chastising the agency for falling down on the job when it comes to implementing environmental justice.

In September 2006, Dr. Beverly Wright, Director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard University, was honored with the Special Gulf Coast Award for outstanding leadership in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina by the Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership Program (CHLP).

The Oakland based Pacific Institute releases a Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative Report titled *Paying with Our Health – The Real Cost of Freight Transport in California*. The report presents new data and insight from an Environmental Justice perspective and includes 14 EJ Community organizations and a union.

The environmental justice organizations Communities for a Better Environment, the Coalition for a Safe Environment and California Environmental Rights Alliance lead a campaign in which the California South Coast Air Quality Management District Board votes unanimously to adopt the most stringent oil refinery anti-flaring rules in California and U.S. history.

The 32-acre Los Angeles State Historic Park at the Cornfield opened in September 2006 after the community stopped a proposal to build warehouses there by the City of Los Angeles and wealthy developers in the last vast open space in downtown Los Angeles.

Beginning on Sunday, September 24, 2006, a coalition of more than 70 environmental justice, social justice, public health, human rights and workers’ rights groups launched the National Environmental Justice for All Tour to highlight the devastating impact of toxic contamination on people of color and in poor communities across the United States.

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) at Dillard University held the Race, Place and the Environment after Katrina: Looking Back to Look Forward Symposium held in New Orleans, October 19-21, 2006. More than 250 people attended the three-day symposium.

In December 2006, EPA announced its decision to finalize gutting changes to the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) program. Changes announced by the EPA will exempt nearly 3,000 facilities that release up to 2,000 pounds of toxic chemicals from issuing detailed reports and also will exempt companies that manage up to 500 pounds of the most dangerous substances, including mercury and lead.
In December 2006, the Indigenous World Uranium Summit (individuals, tribes and organizations from Indigenous Nations and from Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, the United States and Vanuatu) drafted and approved a Declaration calling for a ban on uranium mining, processing, enrichment, fuel use, weapons testing and deployment, and nuclear waste dumping on Indigenous Lands. The ban is justified on the basis of the extensive record of “disproportional impacts” of the nuclear fuel chain on the health, natural resources and cultures of Indigenous Peoples. The Declaration calls attention to “intensifying nuclear threats to Mother Earth and all life,” and asserts that nuclear power — the primary use for uranium — is not a solution to global warming.

2007

On January 24, 2007 Congressman Alcee Hastings (D-FL) and the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation held an Environmental Justice Policy Forum in Washington, D.C., to examine: What challenges hinder the implementation of the EJ Executive Order 12898? What resources would empower community organizers to assist federal agencies in this effort?

The two-square-mile Baldwin Hills Park, in the historic African American heart of Los Angeles is the largest urban park designed in the U.S. in over a century. Community efforts defeated efforts to site a power plant and garbage dump there.