

Chapter 5

Impact of *Toxic Wastes and Race* on the EJ Movement: Speaking for Ourselves

In the real world, all communities are not created equal. Government and industry are major perpetrators of environmental injustice. Today, millions of Americans are concerned about the threat of exposure to chemical and biological agents. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 (terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, the Pentagon in Washington and the plane crash in Pennsylvania) and the Anthrax scare heightened concern and worry. However, toxic chemical assaults are not new for many people of color who are forced to live next to and often on the fence line with chemical industries that spew their poisons into the air, water and ground. These residents experience a form of “toxic terror” twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. When chemical accidents occur, government and industry officials tell residents to “shelter in place.” In reality, locked doors and closed windows do not block the chemical assault by polluting industries on the nearby communities.

Approximately 80,000 different chemicals are now in commercial use with nearly six trillion pounds produced annually in the United States. More than 80 percent of these chemicals have never been screened to learn whether they cause cancer, much less tested to see if they harm the nervous system, the immune system, the endocrine system or the reproductive system. The current U.S. approach also is not based on real-life exposures since people and animals are not exposed to one chemical in isolation, but rather are exposed to an array of toxic chemicals.

This chapter includes short quotes, statements and essays written by an interdisciplinary group of civil rights activists, academics, policy analysts, scientists, elected officials, lawyers, educators and health professionals who share their views on the “impact” of the 1987 *Toxic Wastes and Race* report on environmental justice in the United States and abroad. The authors include “first-generation” (individuals whose environmentalism work and activism predate the report) and “second-generation” (individuals who became active after the report was published) environmental justice leaders from around the country. In the true spirit of the late Dana Alston’s *We Speak for Ourselves*, written three years after *Toxic Wastes and Race*, the “people’s voices must be heard and their views must be respected.”

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING

Quotes from Activists, Academics, Political Leaders and Practitioners

"On the 20th anniversary of its groundbreaking report *Toxic Wastes and Race*, I commend the United Church of Christ for its continued dedication to peace, justice, and equality. Through its work, communities without a voice have been empowered to join in the fight to protect their communities, their health and their future. Unfortunately, Latinos and other communities of color continue to struggle. As our communities continue to grow in number so should the sound of our voice and power of our vote. It is time to renew the call for real and lasting justice, a goal which we must achieve and can achieve by working together." -- [Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis, D-CA](#)

"As the first comprehensive national report to truly document the link between race and the location of hazardous waste sites, *Toxic Wastes and Race* catapulted the concern of environmental racism to national prominence. This keystone document established the foundation for the development of the environmental justice movement. Twenty years after the original release of this report, we are at a critical juncture in which we must assess whether state and federal agencies have heeded the call to action presented in this report and the obligation implicit in that call to protect the health of our nation's most vulnerable communities." -- [Congressman Alcee L. Hastings, D-FL](#)

"The report made Native Action feel part of a community of folks fighting for environmental justice....we were not all alone on this isolated Indian Reservation that is being surrounded by the largest coal strip mine in this country. The report helps to document the contemporary reality of our people's struggle. Our data never gets told--unless we tell it ourselves. It gives us strength when people stand in solidarity with us. Together, we have stood our ground and confronted powerful corporate and political interests who would have made our communities an industrial wasteland." -- *Gail Small, Executive Director, Native Action, Northern Cheyenne Indian Reservation, Lama Deer, Montana*

"The *Toxic Wastes and Race* report laid the factual scientific foundation to illustrate Environmental Racism as a fact of daily life for people of color, and not a figment of our imagination." -- *Dr. Henry Clark, West County Toxics Coalition, Richmond, CA*

"I find that using the 1987 UCC report on *Toxic Wastes and Race* to establish a clear and factual history with organizations and people that want to organize around an environmental injustice they are faced with is essential. I also have used the UCC report with government officials and other non-believers; after hearing about this report or reading it they have been quickly put in check with the evidence of Environmental Racism in this landmark report." -- *Jose T. Bravo, Executive Director, Just Transition Alliance*

"The 1987 report was truly a clarion call to Communities for a Better Environment and to all our movement to step forward and provide our best leadership -- in the realm of the environment -- to the struggle of oppressed people of color in the U.S. for equality, freedom, self-determination and justice." -- *Bill Gallegos, Executive Director, Communities for a Better Environment*

"The report was groundbreaking because it documented and validated the experiences that low-income communities of color were facing all over the country. Twenty years later race continues to be a determining factor in the siting of pollutants, the allocation of resources and investment, and the responsiveness of decision makers." -- *Juliet Ellis, Executive Director, Urban Habitat*

"The UCC report was a perfect description of my community. I live in Altgeld Gardens, a mostly black Southside Chicago neighborhood. My community is a 'toxic doughnut' because it is surrounded by hazardous waste sites and polluting industries. We live waste and race 24/7." -- *Hazel Johnson, founder of People for Community Recovery (PCR), a grassroots environmental justice group located on the Southside of Chicago*

"The 1987 report is as relevant today as it was twenty years ago. My city and county placed a toxic waste dump just 54 feet from my family's 150-acre homestead. And for four decades, we drank well water poisoned by the Dickson County (Tennessee) Landfill. We are all sick and the government seems to be waiting for us to die." -- *Sheila Holt-Orsted grew up in the Eno Road community in Dickson County, Tennessee*

"Many of my residents and I lived *Toxic Wastes and Race* in our New Orleans Agricultural Street community. My neighborhood was built on a toxic waste dump in the early 1980s. The EPA refused to declare the site eligible for the Superfund program in 1986, but later added it to the National Priorities List as a Superfund site in 1994. In 2001, EPA did a cleanup of the landfill site that was more akin to a cover-up. We were fighting an environmental justice struggle to get relocated before Katrina floodwaters drowned my city. None of us knew when we bought our homes that they were built on a toxic dump. We sued the city. We won our court case in January 2006. It was a long and hard struggle, but we won. It's a bitter-sweet victory because we lost our community to environmental racism before Katrina." -- *Elodia Blanco is a Hurricane Katrina survivor and member of New Orleans Concerned Citizen of Agricultural Street Landfill community*

"The report had a profound impact on the fledgling Environmental Justice Movement. It showed in vivid detail what we had already understood experientially and empirically--that a polluting capitalism would not reduce its emissions or toxic waste, but instead would site the most deadly waste on low-income Black, Latino, Indigenous and Asian/Pacific Islander communities. More than a document, it was a collective

organizer, giving a visual picture of a U.S. in which the Black Belt and the Chicano Southwest in particular were targets of chemical abuse from multi-national corporations. Wilmington, California, in the harbor area of LA where we have organized, is a low-income Latino immigrant community surrounded by oil refineries. The residents suffer profound incidents of asthma, respiratory disease and cancer. *Toxic Wastes and Race* was a document that lived, and lives, a critical intervention that helped spark an entire new social movement.” -- [Eric Mann, author of LA's Lethal Air, and Director, Labor/Community Strategy Center](#)

“At the age of 19 when the UCC published *Toxic Wastes and Race*, I was completely unaware of this study and the significant role it would have in my advocacy work nearly 10 years later. Without the report, the voices of each polluted community of color, where I provide legal advocacy assistance, would be muted. The extensive documentation of environmental racism in *Toxic Wastes & Race* speaks truth to power -- governmental and corporate institutions that subject communities of color to massive amounts of toxic pollution -- and continues to vindicate the growing demand for environmental justice.” -- [Monique Harden, Co-Director & Attorney, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights, New Orleans, LA](#)

“In the twenty years since this landmark study made clear to everyone what many already realized -- that communities of color were targeted as dumping grounds for hazardous waste -- we have seen much greater awareness and even acknowledgement of environmental racism. But while various experts have discussed and debated the basis for this discrimination and how best to address it, very little has changed on the ground during this time in places like Camden, NJ, an impoverished African-American and Latino community that contains a disproportionate share of waste disposal facilities, polluting industries, Superfund sites and brownfields. Even though regulatory agencies may pay more attention to Camden and improve some of their practices, the lack of clear and enforceable laws and regulations that prohibit environmental discrimination, and the unwillingness to change the economic and political dynamics that make ‘dumping’ in places like Camden City easy and profitable, means that Camden residents continue to live in unsafe conditions amid smokestacks and diesel traffic, and experience high rates of cancer and asthma. Much more needs to be done to translate awareness of environmental injustice into action.” -- [Olga Pomar, Attorney, South Jersey Legal Services, and Counsel for South Camden Citizens in Action and South Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance](#)

"*Toxic Wastes and Race* was undoubtedly the seminal scientific validation of environmental injustice in America. It ultimately forced the world to realize that EJ is a global race and class issue." -- [Grover G. Hankins, Attorney at Law, Houston, Texas](#)

"It is THE seminal report on the issue of inequities associated with the siting of regulated and unregulated land uses in this country. It revealed, with hard numbers and thorough analysis, that despite the rhetoric of equal protection, there is truly a racial and economic divide in America as it pertains to the most basic of rights--a healthy, clean environment." -- [Martina E. Cartwright, Executive Director, Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall Law School EJ Clinic](#)

"The landmark *Toxic Wastes and Race* changed the face of ethics forever. The only question is why everyone is not following it." -- [Kristin Shrader-Frechette, O'Neill Family Professor, Department of Biological Sciences and Department of Philosophy, University of Notre Dame; Director, Center for Environmental Justice and Children's Health](#)

"The scope and scale of the study pioneered an entirely new area of investigation. All subsequent research about equity in the distribution of environmental risk was a response to the UCC's methodology or conclusion. Its contribution to the movement's identity and strategy was unprecedented." -- [Eileen McGurty, Ph.D., Associate Chair, Environmental Sciences and Policy, Johns Hopkins University](#)

"A basic tenet of *doing* public policy is acknowledging that a problem exists. The 1987 *Toxic Wastes and Race* report made clear the problems of environmental injustice, gave legitimacy, validity and credibility to a movement and, most important, did not allow decision makers to hide behind a curtain of ignorance and deniability. There is no other document as important as the 1987 report to *doing* environmental policy. No other document has promoted human rights and justice in environmental policy as the 1987 *Toxic Wastes*

and Race report." -- [David E. Camacho, Ph.D., Special Assistant to the President, Northern Arizona University](#)

"Building on momentum accelerated by the 1987 *Toxic Wastes and Race* report, California first addressed environmental justice in its 1994 comparative risk project. The project's environmental justice committee reported widespread disproportionate impacts by race and class and suggested new tools for mitigating these impacts. In 1999, California adopted legislation making the achievement of environmental justice state policy. While embracing the term environmental justice, the legislation emphasizes fairness rather than the elimination of disproportionate burdens." -- [Alan Ramo, professor and co-founder of the Environmental Law & Justice Clinic at Golden Gate University in San Francisco](#)

"The landmark study had significant implications for environmental research and policy and created an opportunity for local community-based organizations to use the framework to shine light on issues beyond locally unwanted land uses (LULUs). The West End Revitalization Association is a prime example of a local organization using the framework to address inequities in planning, zoning and development in neighborhoods of color in Mebane, North Carolina." -- [Sacoby Wilson is a Robert Wood Johnson Health & Society Scholar in the Center for Social Epidemiology and Population Health at the University of Michigan](#)

"The 1987 report takes its rightful place in history as a key moment in the environmental justice movement. It confirmed what so many community residents knew, if only anecdotally. The UCC report also should be remembered as an enterprising union between community, science and faith. Concomitant to Ida B Wells' anti-lynching editorials that influenced Congressional action and Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* that catalyzed the anti-toxics movement - the *Toxic Wastes and Race* report takes its place among illustrious examples of works that spurred social action." -- [K. Animashaun Ducre, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of African American Studies, Syracuse University](#)

"The watershed report opened a floodgate of scholarship that has sought to elucidate how the dynamics of institutional discrimination, racism and environmental inequality leads to the persistence of environmental health disparities in the United States." -- [Rachel Morello-Frosch, Assistant Professor, Center for Environmental Studies & Department of Community Health, School of Medicine, Brown University](#)

"By validating the occurrence of environmental racism, the Commission for Racial Justice introduced Environmental Justice as a new human right that inspired a second-generation Civil Rights movement. EJ helped both describe and explain patterns of modern victimization. With the help of President Clinton's Executive Order and some successful case law, EJ gained traction as a codified and protected right, for which adverse impacts are to be anticipated and avoided. While EJ initially competed with and then subsumed the grassroots environmental movement that had long advocated for toxic victims, it then broadened its focus further to advocate for a new sustainability paradigm that promotes health and decries victimization associated with the entire underside of globalization. The long-term impact is a diverse global movement of victims and those who refuse to be victimized who demand environmental justice for all, including unborn generations to come, whose rights are being compromised before they are even conceived." -- [Michael R. Edelstein, psychology professor at Ramapo College of New Jersey and author of Contaminated Communities, Coping with Residential Toxic Exposure \(Westview, 2004\).](#)

IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

Twenty Years Old and Counting

Vernice D. Miller-Travis

Simply put, the publication of *Toxics Wastes and Race* report changed my life. I'm not sure there are many who could say that the report had as major an impact on their life as it did on mine. In September 1986, I went to work at the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, as a Research

Assistant for the Special Project on Toxic Injustice. I went to work for Charles Lee, then the Director of Research at the Commission, after years of begging Rev. Ben Chavis to hire me in any capacity at the Commission.

I went in to meet Charles (at Ben's suggestion) in July 1986, and by September he had found the money to hire me. My salary was \$1,000 per month. But looking back on what this position did for me I now know I would have worked on this project for free. Charles at the time was receiving reams of data from Public Data Access, the company he had hired to begin the process of aggregating the many data sets that formed the basis of *Toxic Wastes and Race's* findings.

Some of my duties included combing through the data sets and mapping the number of hazardous wastes sites that existed in communities of color across the country, figuring out how to draw and present the maps that appeared in the report and creating the map that appears on the cover of the report, to name a few. The cover map was hand-colored by me and reproduced by a graphic artist, because this was long before the advent of GIS. That alone took me six months to complete.

My fondest memory though of helping to write and produce *Toxic Wastes and Race* was sitting in Charles Lee's office one day as we were doing our usual back-and-forth about every word and sentence that was being written. I said to Charles that the one overriding thing we could say about the significant statistical correlation we were finding between race and the location of hazardous wastes sites was that the location of these sites was not a random act.

The day the reports were delivered to us from the printer in April 1987, prior to the national publication on April 17th at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., I remember I couldn't get home to Harlem soon enough that evening to share the report with Peggy Shepard and Chuck Sutton. Peggy and Chuck were building and leading an effort in the West Harlem community to fight the disproportionate siting of municipal waste facilities in our community. A year after the publication of *Toxic Wastes and Race*, Peggy, Chuck and I would launch West Harlem Environmental Action. For me the publication of *Toxic Wastes and Race* was the seminal thing that set me on the path of what would be my life's work, the struggle to bring about environmental justice.

Vernice Miller-Travis is the Executive Director of GroundWorks USA and founding member of West Harlem Environmental Action Inc. (WE ACT).

WE ACT's Work in Harlem

Peggy M. Shepard

In New York City, the first cry of environmental racism was heard in 1985 in Harlem, an urban community of color -- one with a storied past and an uncertain future. The eight-year Harlem struggle began as a "typical" siting case. Injustice catalyzed neighborhood activists, and the newly published 1987 *Toxic Wastes and Race* report mobilized our political will.

The UCC report presented data and an analysis that allowed my community to understand that it was not alone or unique in its challenge to the disproportionate burden of pollution borne by low-income and communities of color, a burden that, 20 years later, continues to contribute to egregious disparities in health by race, ethnicity and social class. At that time, the history of disinvestment in Northern Manhattan was legendary, and it was clear to me that my new neighborhood had become elite Manhattan's dumping ground, where 25 percent of Harlem's children have an asthma diagnosis, and 620,000 mostly low-income African-American and Latino residents live among six depots housing one-third of the city's 4,200 dirty diesel buses.

Through fate or perhaps an interesting convergence of events, I was introduced to Vernice D. Miller, a research assistant on the *Toxic Wastes and Race* report, a Harlem native who lived in the neighborhood, joined the North River campaign and infused our work with passion and a racial analysis of environmental decision making that formed the basis of the report. Armed with the report and with the help of many volunteers, we achieved the objectives we set in the '80s by developing strategies that relied on data collection and analysis, the use of community-based participatory research to link community-level environmental exposures with outcomes, and evidence-based organizing campaigns that move policymakers and empower residents.

WE ACT believes that science, technology and research are indispensable tools for uplifting community struggles and creating a safe and sustainable environment. We realized that the lack of scientific literacy, information, data and context was a serious void that contributed to the systemic exclusion of communities of color from decision making. By engaging in Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR), WE ACT has made environmental data and research accessible and relevant to community residents through campaigns that translate relevant findings into practice and policy, and an Environmental Health and Justice Leadership Training that provides the scientific and regulatory foundation of environmental issues for community residents.

Toxic Wastes and Race taught me that communities must “take back” science and document our model case studies of community action. To communicate innovative community research in action, WE ACT and Urban Habitat co-published *Race, Poverty and the Environment, Burden of Proof: Using Research for EJ*, in winter 2004-5. As Azibuikwe Akaba comments in his essay from that issue, our organizations “have taken the tools of research and technology and turned these into weapons and strategies that serve to defend our communities.” *Toxic Wastes and Race* has left a legacy that continues to be an important model and tool for the national Environmental Justice Movement.

Peggy M. Shepard is Executive Director and co-founder of We Act for Environmental Justice based in West Harlem, New York, and the 2003 recipient of the Heinz Award in Environment.

How Toxic Wastes and Race Saved Our Souls

Michel Gelobter

We were in the waning years of Ronald Reagan and a decade into the second Reconstruction that people of color in the United States have had to endure -- the second bright lie of justice turned false and sour. By 1976, the legal trappings of civil rights had already started to fall. By 1987, we were too busy dodging bullets, crack vials, and the police to claim our newfound freedom.

But somewhere near Harlem, there was the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, and there Reverend Ben Chavis and Charles Lee, intern Vernice Miller, and a few others struck a spark for justice that may one day burn for all humankind.

Until 1987, the fight for racial and economic justice had been a story of oppressive institutions and personal prejudice. Civil rights had become a narrow competition for resources among groups – the right to take a fair firefighter’s exam, to get into medical school, to be charged the same rent as everyone else. We had moved from Martin Luther King’s sublime dream of brotherhood on the Red Hills of Georgia to sibling rivalry over scraps on a table in a courtroom.

At a time when the crowds were silenced, *Toxic Wastes and Race* said that the rocks and stones themselves could sing of justice and of injustice. That even when “the man” wasn’t troubling our doorstep, the rough tumble of racism could as soon come at us on the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the land we stand on.

When we can hear the earth's cry for justice, how much more carefully do we hear our own! The deep and clear teaching of environmental justice in 1987 as today is that these cries are one and the same. When you see a river that is polluted, you see a community that is oppressed. When you see young people incarcerated, you find their parks and yards contaminated. When the people are brown, all too often, so is the air. In short, environmental justice reminds us, in language for our times, that an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere, an injustice to anything is an injustice to every thing, and every being.

The UCC report helped prepare us for the times of war and economic hardship that we face today. Environmental justice made it clear that from the oil beneath the Middle East to the grape orchards of Northern California, mastery over nature is inextricably tied to mastery over people. The environmental justice movement showed once and for all that justice means not fragmentation but connection, not individualism but community, not smokestacks but ecosystems.

These insights are the foundation for a road to peace, justice, and planetary prosperity. Two words, together, tell the story of our survival and of our deepest contentment: environmental justice. If we can achieve environmental justice, if we can live right with the earth and with each other, then we will have achieved the dreams of so many before us and made possible those of so many who come after.

Toxic Wastes and Race and the movement it has sparked make the solution so plain: justice will not be reduced to a courtroom and a written proof. Rather, it will be prosecuted in the air and on the ground, for people and for the earth, and, as has been true since long before 1987, environmental justice will set us free.

Michel Gelobter is the President of Redefining Progress, the country's leading policy institute for smart economics—policies that help people protect the environment.

Inspired by History

Bunyan I. Bryant

To speak of the personal impact of *Toxic Wastes and Race in United States* requires me to construct the historical context that brought me to this area of teaching and scientific inquiry. In 1972, I was hired as a faculty member in the School of Natural Resources and Environment (SNRE) to help build an Environmental Advocacy Program that was started by a group of progressive students and faculty. These students and faculty were motivated by three events that took place in 1970: 1) the Black Action Movement, which closed down the University of Michigan for eighteen days after which the University administration agreed to increase the enrollment of black students, 2) the Ecology Teach-in, which raised the environmental consciousness of students and thus tripled the enrollment in SNRE and 3) the Spurr Committee Report that called for strategic planning for SNRE.

As students enrolled in SNRE they demanded new courses and programs. From the time I entered the School, I, along with my colleague James Crowfoot, taught courses in the Environmental Advocacy Program that made the connection between social and environmental problems and those least served by the geo-political system. In our courses we taught students to view race and class as social constructions that undergird an accumulation system that left communities in detestable social and environmental conditions. We also focused our teaching on student empowerment, student liberation and using knowledge for purposes of advocacy and intentional social change.

In 1976 two of our Advocacy students worked for UAW and a coalition of organizations to plan a national conference titled: *Working for Environmental and Economic Justice and Jobs*. More than 350 people--black, white, environmentalists, workers, farmers, men and women--spent five days together at the Walter and May Reuther Family Educational Center near Onaway, Michigan, to talk about jobs, the environment,

civil rights, racism and environmental blackmail. Then eleven years later I became a board member of an organization called Prairie Fire that dedicated itself to saving family farms from foreclosure.

I, along with its Executive Director Dave Ostendorf, attended a meeting at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives in Emelle, Alabama, to forge a working coalition of white family farmers of the Midwest with black farmers of the Federation in order to enhance family farm survival. It was on this trip that we were able to visit the largest landfill in the nation, located not too far from the Federation, and I was given a copy of the United Church of Christ Report by community activist Wendell Paris. For me the report was timely and refreshing because it affirmed the work that I had been doing over the last fifteen years. It was on this trip that I took myself back in history as Dave and I retraced the steps of the March 21, 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery. In Selma when we stopped to pause at the beginning of the Edmund Pettus Bridge, I thought about the violence of the earlier march.

On March 7, 1965 the march from Selma to Montgomery was disrupted as civil rights activists were beaten, clubbed, tear gassed and driven back to Selma. This came to be known as *Bloody Sunday*. As I stood there at the bridge it was as if I could hear the cry of pain from the distant past. I tried to imagine what it was like as chaos erupted and people were impaired by the tear gas and beaten with billy clubs. Images of violence haunted me throughout this trip. Our journey ended at Dexter Avenue Church in Montgomery, where Martin Luther King was once the pastor. This was a powerful experience that took me back to the time when I was the chairman of the local Ann Arbor chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), a direct-action non-violent civil rights organization.

Although my experiences in CORE could not be compared to the Selma-Montgomery march, I felt the bond of nonviolence connected me to that moment in time. When I returned to the School, I was inspired because I felt I had been connected to a brief moment in history. I was inspired by all the years of work I had done to date. And I was inspired by the United Church of Christ *Toxic Wastes and Race* report because there were others working on the issues I deeply cared about. I shared the report with my colleague Paul Mohai. This report played a major role in motivating us to organize the 1990 conference on *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards* held at the University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment. The results of this conference and the report played a major role in putting environmental justice on the agenda of the United States Environmental Protection Agency.

Bunyan Bryant is a professor in the School of Natural Resources and Environment at the University of Michigan and co-editor with Paul Mohai of *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards* (Westview Press, 1992).

Toxic Wastes and Race and Me

Luke Cole

Toxic Wastes and Race was transformative for me, for the communities I work with and for the Environmental Justice Movement nationally. The United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice's work has had a long-lasting effect, goading and inspiring us even today.

Personally, *Toxic Wastes and Race* was the first national study of the disproportionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color I found when I began my research in this field in 1988. Robert Bullard had written path-breaking studies of such impact in Houston's siting of garbage dumps, Melia Franklin had done inspiring but anecdotal work for the Center on Third World Organizing, the General Accounting Office had published its four-site survey of toxic waste dumps in the southeast. But *Toxic Wastes and Race* was national, and as such it documented in a compelling way the disparate impact of toxic waste dumps on people of color.

Toxic Wastes and Race confirmed what many already knew intuitively – that in environmental policy, as in housing, education, the workplace, healthcare and other social arenas, racial discrimination was unfortunately both present and leading to predictable, racist outcomes. *Toxic Wastes and Race* helped set me on the path in my nascent career as a lawyer for the Environmental Justice Movement. (Incidentally, *Toxic Wastes and Race* also documented the failure of our nation’s regulatory system for toxics: Although people of color bore a disparate impact of such sites, the report showed that more than half of *whites* also were exposed to uncontrolled hazardous waste sites.)

Toxic Wastes and Race also led me to civil rights law, where Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the regulations enacted to implement it guaranteed the right to be free from discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin. The regulations explicitly barred the disparate impact *Toxic Wastes and Race* documented, and so we at the Center on Race, Poverty and the Environment began using Title VI and the Title VI regulations beginning in the early 1990s.

Toxic Wastes and Race transformed the client communities with which I worked in early environmental justice struggles, as well. In Kettleman City, California, where local Latino farm workers successfully fought a proposal by the world’s largest toxic waste dumper, Chemical Waste Management, to build California’s first toxic waste incinerator, it led to a critical conceptual break-through. “I thought it was just



Activists block a planned hazardous waste incinerator in Kettleman City, CA, 1993
(Photo by EJRC)

us until I began to hear about the United Church of Christ study,” says Mary Lou Mares, one of the sparks that lit and sustained the Kettleman struggle. “Then I realized we were part of a national pattern.” *Toxic Wastes and Race* deepened Ms. Mares’ personal understanding of the impact she was facing, and provoked her into becoming a leader in the Environmental Justice Movement.

Toxic Wastes and Race affected the debate in other communities, as well, transforming the national movement. In Warren County, North Carolina – the iconic struggle that many consider the birth of the Environmental

Justice Movement. When the PCB dump for the county was first proposed, many residents learned of another potential disposal site, Chemical Waste Management’s Emelle, Alabama, dump. As Warren County residents sought to prevent the PCB dump in the poorest, most African American county of North Carolina, their demand was that the waste be taken to Emelle. Years later, after the dump was sited in North Carolina, local residents in Warren County learned of Emelle’s demographics from the GAO study and from *Toxic Wastes and Race*. They understood that they, too, were part of the same pattern that put such dumps in poor, African American communities like Emelle. When it came time to clean up the Warren County dump, in 1994, and state officials proposed removing the PCB waste for off-site disposal, community residents demanded that it be remediated in place, and *not* taken to Emelle. Warren County activist Dollie Burwell reports that this radical conceptual shift was directly influenced by *Toxic Wastes and Race*.

Despite the bright light shone on the problem by *Toxic Wastes and Race*, the disparate siting of toxic waste facilities has not abated. Indeed, the follow-up study a decade later – *Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited* – found the problem had become worse in the intervening years.

Not only has the problem gotten worse, but the range of tools available to affected communities also has been dramatically shrunk by a Supreme Court hostile to civil rights. In 2001, Justice Scalia completed the evisceration of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – an evisceration and slow demise begun back in the 1970s with a series of decisions limiting civil rights – when in *Alexander v. Sandoval* he wrote that the public does not have the right to sue to enforce the disparate impact regulations enacted by every federal agency under Title VI. As the Court had previously held that (contrary to Congressional intent in 1964) civil rights plaintiffs must prove intentional discrimination to sue under Title VI, such plaintiffs had relied on the agencies' Title VI regulations, which uniformly codify the disparate impact standard. With the ability to sue under such a standard taken away, enforcement of the civil rights regulations is left up to the federal agencies themselves, which means there is no enforcement, period. This lack of protection has sparked a national call for a Civil Rights Restoration Act to re-enshrine the disparate impact standard within Title VI itself. The passage of such a law in the coming Congress would be a fitting tribute to *Toxic Wastes and Race*, which opened our eyes to the disparate impact in the first place.

Luke Cole is the Executive Director of the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment, which he and Ralph Abascal founded in 1989.

Mobilizing to Fight “Toxic Terror” in Black Communities

Donele Wilkins

I became aware of *Toxic Wastes and Race* at the famed 1991 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit where copies were distributed. Delegates representing Detroit returned home with new passion for reform and a heightened commitment address toxic dumping in our neighborhoods. For us, *Toxic Wastes and Race* set in motion a new course for community revitalization and health. For many of us, we



The National Black Environmental Justice Network convenes emergency meeting against “toxic terror,” New Orleans, La., 1999 (Photo by EJRC)

took serious the mandate to start a movement for environmental justice. Thus, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice (DWEJ) was born by 1994 with a mandate to provoke change on multiple levels, and the Michigan Environmental Justice Coalition was organized to be a voice in shaping public policy in the state in 1995.

Since its inception, DWEJ has made environmental justice a household phrase, not only in the city but also throughout the state of Michigan. We have shut down incinerators, added a grassroots voice to transportation decisions, engaged in decisions for the revitalization of brownfields sites, instigated challenges for

policy reform at the state and local level, participated in community-based participatory research to address air quality and public health impacts and much more. Today, citizens across many spectrums of age and ethnicity recognize the importance of being engaged in decisions that affect them

environmentally. As we look toward the future, DWEJ is leading the pack in redefining development practices that incorporate the tenants of sustainability. People of color and the poor have joined the ranks to stand for a quality of life that embodies a vision for health and quality of life.

Our motto "Take a Stand for the Land in the Hood" continues to motivate us. We are committed to fighting until everyone in our community is able to breathe clean air, live in healthy homes, play on pollution-free playgrounds, learn in healthy buildings and experience creation in its fullest grandeur.

The 1987 report was also a major impetus in the formation of the National Black Environmental Justice Network (NBEJN), a national preventive health and environmental/economic justice network with affiliates in 33 states and the District of Columbia. In December 1999, because so many African American communities continued to be toxic "wastelands," the late Damu Smith and a core group of black EJ leaders organized an emergency gathering of nearly 300 grassroots, environmental and economic justice activists.

The gathering included youth, labor, health, religious organizations, attorneys, academicians and a host of other professional groups. Our theme, "End Toxic Terror in Black Communities," was adopted several years before the infamous September 11, 2001 terrorist attack.

We came together in New Orleans, Louisiana, to map out strategies to address environmental and health disparities in the African American community. Since its inception, NBEJN has pursued a proactive strategy for organizing a broad-based Black community to meet the environmental and health threats that disproportionately affect African Americans and other people of color. When Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent levee breach flooded New Orleans, NBEJN again reaffirmed its commitment to "fight" for a fair, just and equitable cleanup and restoration of New Orleans' vulnerable people of color and poor communities devastated by the "worst environmental disaster in U.S. history." We also recommitted ourselves to work with our local NBEJN partners to end racially discriminatory environmental decision making by raising broader awareness within the Black community of the connection between pollution and poor health, and promoting sustainable communities by advancing clean production technologies, pollution strategies and economic alternatives.

NBEJN's organizing strategy encourages active participation by individuals and organizations across spatial location (urban, suburban and rural), disciplines, economic strata and generations with the goal of promoting a healthy, just and sustainable future. We seek to raise awareness of environmental issues among African Americans and African Descent populations around the world that are impacted by environmental racism. NBEJN has undertaken a four-point strategy to combat environmental racism that focuses on (1) safe and healthy communities; (2) sustainable development, climate justice and clean production; (3) civil rights and equal protection laws and policies; and (4) international human rights protection.

NBEJN members include some of the nation's leading African American grassroots environmental justice activists, community organizers, researchers, lawyers, public health specialists, technical experts and authors addressing the intersection of public health, environmental hazards and economic development within Black communities.

DWEJ and NBEJN affiliate organizations continue to grow, mature and build their network of organizations and individuals to address critical environmental and economic justice and health issues affecting African Americans and persons of African descent around the world.

Donele Wilkins is the Executive Director, Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice and founding Board Member of the National Black Environmental Justice Network (NBEJN) based in Detroit, Michigan.

Environmental Injustice in “Indian Country”

Tom B.K. Goldtooth

The environmental injustice in “Indian Country” includes the accumulative social, economic and cultural impacts and historical trauma of colonialism, imperialism, and militarization, violation of treaties and taking of indigenous peoples land by the European-white immigrants that settled this country. Untold millions of indigenous peoples that once lived in what is now called the U.S. were killed and enslaved, cultures violently attacked by church and State and ways of life changed forever.

Toxic Wastes and Race described the extent of environmental racism and the consequences of people of color and indigenous communities disproportionately affected by polluted environments. For American Indians and Alaska Natives, the report was timely. Prior to 1987, American Indians and Alaska Natives were already experiencing disproportionate toxic exposures and emission releases from United States industrial facilities, the mineral extractive industry, coal plants, oil and gas industry, and toxic and radioactive wastes sites. From the St. Lawrence River corridor within the Mohawk tribal nation in New York to the Inupiat people in Point Hope, Alaska, indigenous peoples were experiencing the affects of environmental racism.

During the 1960s, the U.S. government allowed radioactive contaminated soil from nuclear waste fallout in Nevada to be buried near the subsistence hunting grounds of the Point Hope Inupiat village. It went unmarked for 30 years. In 1992, declassified documents revealed the presence of these wastes. The people wondered why they had such a high cancer rate.

In the Southwest and West, indigenous and non-indigenous peoples living downwind and downstream from nuclear weapons testing and uranium mining suffered immensely during the Nuclear Age. From Navajo uranium miners to the Jackpile uranium mine on Laguna Pueblo tribal lands, indigenous tribal communities have borne the brunt of both the front and back ends of the nuclear fuel cycle.

The Mohawk nation lies adjacent to the St. Lawrence River within the Great Lakes water basin. The waters that drain from Lake Ontario to the St. Lawrence River carry a myriad of wastes discharged from U.S. and Canadian industries and municipalities located within the Great Lakes including airborne contaminants from throughout the world transported and deposited into the basin. These waste materials have contaminated the waters and aquatic organisms traditionally used by indigenous peoples for food and ceremonial purposes forcing changes in life styles and traditions. These changes have occurred within a relatively short period and can be directly linked to the rapid industrialization that occurred during the post-war period of the 1940s.

The environment around a particular section of the St. Lawrence River has been contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from a General Motors aluminum transmission casing operation on the river. PCB contamination has affected the health and well being of the Mohawk. A study determined that young Mohawk mother's breast milk contained elevated concentrations of PCBs and these compounds were being transferred to their nursing infants. It wasn't until recent years that progress on the cleanup goals have been made on soils, groundwater and river sediments.

From the late 1980's to the mid-1990's, hundreds of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments had been approached by the toxic and nuclear waste industry and the U.S. government searching for new dumping grounds for unwanted toxic, nuclear and other wastes. Taking advantage of poverty, high unemployment rates and the sovereignty status of indigenous lands, the private waste industry aggressively pursued tribal lands to site incinerators, landfills and the siting of other polluting industries. The majority of these efforts were framed as economic development projects with developers telling concerned tribal citizens to trust the landfill and incinerator technology as state-of-the-art, and that it would be safe and environmentally friendly.

The U.S. government with its commercial nuclear power industry partners, targeted indigenous lands for high-level radioactive waste dumps for many years. In 1987, the U.S. Congress created the Office of the Nuclear Waste Negotiator in an effort to open a federal "monitored retrievable storage site" for high-level

nuclear waste. In the early 1990's the Negotiator sent letters to every federally recognized tribe in the country, offering up to millions of dollars to American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments for first considering and then ultimately hosting the construction of a nuclear dump on their lands. Out of the hundreds of tribes approached, the Negotiator eventually courted about two dozen tribal councils in particular.

One by one, these proposed toxic and nuclear waste dump proposals failed. They failed by a groundswell of grassroots resistance of tribal members organizing, training themselves and forming local, regional and national coalitions and networks to provide a voice of solidarity demanding environmental justice in Indian Country. The Indigenous Environmental Network was formed as a mechanism to provide a tribal community-based and grassroots voice to national policy-making on environmental, public health, natural resource conservation and the protection of sacred sites. It has been said that without the activism of these tribal grassroots organizations, there would be commercial toxic waste landfills, sewage sludge facilities and incinerators operating on indigenous lands. The UCC report and the 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit helped launch the environmental justice movement, of which American Indians and Alaska Natives continue to be an integral part.

Tom B.K. Goldtooth is Executive Director, Indigenous Environmental Network based in Bemidji, Minnesota.

Impact on a Young Scholar's Career

Glenn S. Johnson

In 1987, I was a 21-year-old graduate student in the in the department of sociology at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. The first time I heard of *Toxic Wastes and Race* was when I was taking a sociology class with Professor Robert Bullard. He stressed to the class that reducing and eliminating hazardous waste in Black, Latino and poor white communities should be a priority for local, state and federal governments. As his research assistant for Bullard's 1990 *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality* book, the UCC report complemented this first environmental justice book while assisting me in fully understanding the nexus between equity, fairness and struggle for justice by black, poor and politically disenfranchised communities.

The report crystallized my theoretical thinking for my master's thesis which provided an analysis of how issues of compensations/incentives and perceived risks affect the mobilization of protest groups and the mobilization of community elites. The report challenged me to conduct an in-depth community study for my Ph.D. dissertation which was to document and describe the "voices" of the Hollywood residents in Memphis, Tennessee, who were impacted by a toxic landfill in their backyard. The residents were not allowed to be equal political participants in the Hollywood Dump issue. The residents lacked a strong collective resistance to influence local, state and federal officials to respond to this community problem. The report expanded my foundation of the environmental justice framework such that it allowed me to merge my theoretical, practical and policy interests in race and ethnicity, political economy, poverty and inequality, race and the environment, class analysis, stratification, social movements, urban studies and environmental policy.

The report has had a profound impact on my research, writing and teaching pedagogy as a professional. Upon being recruited and hired as a research associate at the Environmental Justice Resource Center (EJRC) at Clark Atlanta University I have been afforded the opportunity to contribute to the analytical studies on the relationship between race and the location of hazardous wastes sites in politically powerless communities. The conclusions and recommendations from the report were used in my culturally sensitive and user-friendly curriculum development through the EJRC and Department of Sociology as well as in my research activities over the last ten years, which include transportation equity, urban sprawl, smart growth, public involvement, facility siting, toxics, superfund, brownfields

redevelopment, sustainable communities and regional equity. Even in the environmental justice workshops that I have conducted over the last decade, the report was used in some capacity to explain the magnitude of the problem of hazardous wastes in communities of color in the United States.

The report energized me to compile and retrieve environmental justice literature to disseminate via the EJRC Web site to community stakeholders across the United States to keep them updated on current environmental justice issues. It sharpened my community-driven policy research (i.e., pollution prevention, health disparities, children environmental health, youth leadership development, gentrification and community impact assessment) by assisting me in developing “action policies” that can be undertaken by government agencies to protect all Americans from environmental hazards.

Finally, the report has encouraged me to strengthen my commitment to mentor, recruit, offer internships and train African American undergraduate and graduate students in the Atlanta University Center (AUC) to pursue environmental and environmental justice careers to assist the veteran environmental justice advocates in providing equal protection for communities of color in the United States and abroad. The environmental justice movement (EJM) is an extension of the civil rights and human rights movements, which is a daily struggle for justice.

Glenn S. Johnson is Research Associate in the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University and an Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice. He is co-editor of *Highway Robbery: Transportation Racism and New Routes to Equity* (South End Press, 2004).

Learning About Toxic Wastes and Race

Carl Anthony

I had recently closed my privately owned professional architecture and planning office, Anthony/ Fleming and Associates, when, in 1988, I first heard of the publication *Toxic Wastes and Race*. Our office had been working on several large-scale urban development projects in California. We had been trying to find ways to shape and evaluate the impacts of such projects on communities of color.

Among the projects were a 170-acre waterfront plan for the City of Berkeley, and a 300-acre plan for San Francisco's new Mission Bay development, involving construction of 8,500 new residences and 4 million square feet of office space. Both projects represented potential threats, but also potential opportunities for the African American community. At the time, the City of Berkeley was 20% black, had an African American Mayor and City Manager, and the San Francisco Mission Bay project was right next door to the African American community of Mission Bay. In spite of extensive citizen participation, there was no significant involvement by African Americans or other people of color in either project.

I was searching for a way to build multicultural participation in shaping such projects and we established the Urban Habitat Program in the San Francisco Bay Area for this purpose. *Toxic Waste and Race* came like a bolt of lightning to our group. It provided a whole new way of researching and organizing around environmental issues. New development projects had almost never benefited communities of color and, more often than not, created new burdens. No wonder our communities were skeptical of new development schemes and were suspicious of participating in planning processes for them. *Toxic Wastes and Race* provided a way to explain this to our communities.

In October 1989, the Loma Prieta Earthquake hit the San Francisco Bay Area, with huge negative impacts on the predominantly African American Community of West Oakland. Hundreds of commuters were trapped on the Cypress Freeway and rescued. Chappelle Hayes, a close friend, subsequently deceased, proposed a clean air alternative to rebuilding the freeway, and organizing for his initiative strengthened awareness of environmental justice issues in the area.

In March 1990 I met Luke Cole at the Public Law Conference on Land, Air and Water in Eugene, Oregon. A thousand environmental lawyers participated in this event, but beside myself, there were no people of color. As a follow-up of the conference, Luke and I began publishing the *Race, Poverty and the Environment Journal* (RPE), spreading the word about *Toxic Wastes and Race*, and adapting its insights to many different environmental policy areas. RPE is still being published today.

Carl Anthony is Ford Foundation Senior Fellow at U.C. Berkeley Department of Geography, writing a book about regional equity and environmental justice. Prior to serving in this role, he was Acting Director of the Ford Foundation's Community and Resource Unit.

Setting the Standard for a New Generation

Manual Pastor

Toxic Wastes and Race set the standard for a generation of work on documenting environmental disparities. What is perhaps most remarkable is how well the research has stood up over time – while it was criticized by some academics on methodological grounds shortly after its release, subsequent research has verified many of its central hypotheses and a recent reworking of the research by Bob Bullard, Paul Mohai, Robin Saha, and Beverly Wright has demonstrated that many of the choices made by the original researchers were, in fact, consistent with the most sophisticated methods now available.

The research debate that its release triggered had a profound impact on my own career and political trajectory. In the late 1980s, I was working actively in Los Angeles with communities of color who were generally seeking new economic development. Environmental issues were clearly important in this regard but were not at the top of my research agenda. Yet building community concern about the location of incinerators and prisons, and a few students who were deeply engaged and motivated to research the issue led a colleague, Jim Sadd, and I to launch a study of environmental disparities in Los Angeles County.

It wasn't clear what we would find. On the one hand, our gut told us that low-income communities of color were saturated with facilities, mobile sources, and other emitters. On the other hand, some in the research world were attacking the very notion of environmental inequity, using fancy statistical methods as part of their arsenal. What we discovered was that fancy could sometime mean overwrought – with careful documentation, better data, and more transparent statistical methods, we discovered a pattern of disparity by race and income that was troubling.

While we were completing the study, a reporter from the Los Angeles Times called, and then wrote up a story. It is the story that launched a thousand collaborations. Carlos Porras, who was organizing for Communities for a Better Environment (CBE) in South L.A., called and suggested that we might put together a collaboration. That grew into deeper relationships with CBE and other environmental justice groups as well as the addition to our research team of Rachel Morello-Frosch, a public health scientist with a Ph.D. from UC Berkeley. We have since produced a slew of studies of both Southern and Northern California, and collaborated with groups across the state.

It is among the most meaningful and high-quality work I have done. Meaningful because we know that the issues are important and that groups will be able to put them to use; high-quality because we know that since our results will be used for organizing and policy change, accuracy, as with the original 1987 study, is of paramount importance. And it is in this too that *Toxic Wastes and Race* set an example: the idea that one could root scientific work in relationship with concerned communities and meet the highest standards of scientific rigor and policy relevance along the way.

The authors of *Toxic Wastes and Race* did that twenty years ago, and many of us are still trying to catch up. Let's hope that our efforts continue to expand both the research and the momentum for a more sustainable and fairer society.

Manuel Pastor is Professor of Latin American and Latino Studies and Director of the Center for Justice, Tolerance and Community, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Protecting Our Children

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon

Work hard, get good grades and follow your dreams toward success. This is the prospective relayed to our children every day in this country. Yet, the hard reality is that while some progress has been made in the protection of our children's health, twenty years after the release of *Toxic Wastes and Race* we still have a great amount of work to do within the field of children's environmental health. This monumental report provided the basis for the health disparities related to environmental hazard exposures that were evident decades ago.

However, now fast-forwarding to 2007, what can we say looking into the eyes of our beautiful children today? Can we tell them that we have paved a way for their futures to be as bright as expected and deserved? Can we say that among the many other challenges they face each and every day that they will no longer have to place as much worry upon the unknown hazards causing them short- and long-term harm within their homes, schools and daycares? Unfortunately, while many of us would hope our message to our future leaders and caregivers would be more positive, the reality of the unfortunate positions we have our children in remain quite disturbing.

The current and future health status of African American, Hispanic and Native American children in particular continues to fare poorly compared to the rest of the population. Due to the fact that children are so vulnerable to harm, without a political voice and not large players within the world economy, they have historically been swept under the rug and almost forgotten about when it comes to true public health protection.

Children's environmental health has witnessed notable successes. The historical recognition that paint was a large source of lead poisoning in children first occurred in Australia during 1904. Much later in 1978, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency banned lead from interior house paint and the phase-out of lead content within all gasoline was to be completed by January 1, 1996. Due in large part to these reduction strategies, children's blood lead levels had dropped by 94% by 1997. Yet, older housing stock in cities all over the country, containing lead paint, is allowing children to still become lead poisoned today. With all the research behind the very preventive exposure to lead poisoning, this area is considered the cornerstone example for how to learn from our past mistakes and act in a preventive manner.

Beyond home, K-12 aged children generally spend 80% of their time in school. Yet, there is still no entity responsible for children's health in the school environment. Asthma severity remains higher among African American and Hispanic children, resulting in significant reduced quality of life and potentially early death. Another unfortunate epidemic on the rise is childhood overweight/obesity and all the negative health implications that come along with it. Built environment discussions and related research are increasingly making the logical connections to this epidemic, especially among our children.

Where are the protective measures in place for children at the federal level? In 1997, President Clinton issued the Executive Order on Children's Environmental Health and Safety. Under this order all federal agencies are directed to take into account the special risks and disproportionate impact that standards and safeguards have on children. Through this order, the Office of Child Health Protection was

established at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Yet, in 2007 there is still no form of national legislation in the United States that comprehensively considers the vulnerabilities and susceptibilities that children have to environmental hazards. The Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA), signed into law in 1996, is the first and only form of federal legislation (with the exception of legislation on lead) that specifically requires that children's vulnerabilities be explicitly incorporated into setting pesticide standards.

Within the school environment, Congress unanimously passed the Healthy and High Performance Schools Act of 2001, but six years later, lack of appropriated funds and the fact that this bill never became a law, halted the baseline environmental assessment of targeted public school buildings this legislation requires.

All children, regardless of race and social economic status, deserve the basic right to clean air, water, food supply and safe environments to thrive in. *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States* unveiled an ugly reality of the disproportionate burden that communities of color have been faced with for decades.

What we now see is that our children have been and continue to carry the heaviest of loads when it comes to environmental injustice. Let's utilize this time of reflection to acknowledge and appreciate the many positive steps that have been made in the right direction but also recommit ourselves to fighting for the health, safety and overall well being of our children for years to come.

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Environmental Justice and Pollution Prevention (EJ-P2)

Bailus Walker Jr.

The UCC *Toxic Wastes and Race* analysis spawned the development of academic centers with primary focus on environmental justices. And new textbooks in environmental and occupational health devoted significant sections to the topic, generating classroom discussions and research agendas. In the aftermath of the report, there were other developments. The issue of pollution prevention was one of the more prominent, the primary focus of the remaining sections of this paper. In 1994 President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, *Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations*. It required federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their daily operations. The next year, the President established Green Chemistry Challenge (PGCC) to promote prevention of pollution. This executive action illuminated the importance of the Pollution Prevention Act of 1990 in reducing exposure of minority and low-income populations to environmental pollutants.

The Pollution Prevention Act was the first piece of legislation to focus on preventing the formation of pollutants, with an eye toward eventual elimination of the need for abatement. Indeed, the Act clearly recognized, as did the President, that laws and regulations are not enough to solve environmental justice problems. Significantly, as the environmental justice issue evolved, pollution prevention became an important component of a new paradigm along with other elements such as a more interactive approach with stakeholders and the community at large, more flexible problem-solving strategies and a holistic approach to environmental problems.

This paradigm shift brought attention to the fact that pollution prevention, if effectively implemented, represents an important opportunity to get more economic growth, which should benefit racial and ethnic minorities, with less pollution and in the process: 1) prevent the disproportionate pollutant burden on racial and ethnic minorities in their residential and occupational locations and 2) reduce environmental risks factors for disease and premature deaths. Although the application and enforcement are not homogeneous, many states have passed pollution prevention laws since the 1987 report findings.

This U.S emphasis on pollution prevention and the world demand for more benign materials also inspired the chemical industry to do a number of promising things to reduce human exposure to disease-producing chemicals. They include: a) devise technologies and manufacturing processes that avoid the formation and use of hazardous substances; b) develop reaction conditions for chemical synthesis that eliminate risk to human health. That is, use agricultural and biological feedstock or starting material rather than petrochemicals; and c) design new compounds that are less toxic but have the same desirable properties as an existing compound (e.g. a new pesticide that is toxic only to target pests and biodegrades to harmless substances). These developments are within the so-called green chemistry matrix. Green chemistry is the use of chemical principles and concepts for source reduction, the most desirable approach to pollution prevention. Green chemistry incorporates pollution prevention practices in the manufacturing of chemicals and seeks to minimize negative environmental and human health effects.

A review of developments since 1987 indicate that the principles that guide pollution prevention now seem to be more ingrained in day-to-day industrial/business operations and are being incorporated into empiric research carried out at universities and national laboratories. Many of these developments have been described or exhibited at the Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards conference held annually, since 1996, at the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. An elaborate discussion of these events is beyond the boundary of this paper. But these initiatives can be grouped into three categories: 1) *In-process recycling*. By in-process recycling of waste products back into the production processes companies can reduce pollution. Millions of pounds of solvents are being recycled, reducing the amount of waste requiring disposal; 2) *Process modification*. An array of activities is under way, or proposed, to modify production processes to use fewer chemicals, and less solvents, many of which are neurotoxins; and 3) *Input substitution*. Using less hazardous input or starting materials in manufacturing can reduce disease-producing environmental exposures; the development of crop-based natural plastics will provide a range of agriculturally derived products as alternatives to petrochemical plastics. For instance, cellulose, an abundant and inexpensive renewable material, is being studied as a replacement for synthetic polymers in select applications. To reduce exposure to cancer causing-chemicals, chemists have developed a biosynthetic method that eliminates the use of benzene—a petrochemical that causes leukemia—from the manufacture of plasticizers and other products.

So far the results of pollution prevention and the application of green chemistry principles and methods have been noteworthy: Together they have prevented an average 140 million pounds of hazardous substances from being produced each year and prevented more than 50 million pounds of carbon monoxide annually. On the energy-auto-emissions front, pollution prevention efforts through the use of alternative fuels such as biodiesel holds enormous potential for the future. Their use can reduce pollutants, such as volatile organic compounds and other toxic pollutants.

Since 1987, when the Church of Christ released its report on toxic waste and race, a great deal has been learned about the scientific, social and economic issues that contribute to the disproportionate pollution burden borne by racial and ethnic minorities. At the same time giant steps have been taken toward raising the awareness of environmental justice issues. In this setting, there are grounds for optimism because out of this has come a new paradigm that can enhance efforts to protect human health from environmental stressors. On the technical side, pollution prevention, which can reduce the pollution burden on minority communities, has been given far more attention in industrial planning and community development than in the past, as corporate leaders, investors and policymakers have come to realize that pollution is waste and waste means costs. Moreover, globalization has elevated into stark relief the recognition that prevention of pollution and global economic competitiveness go hand in hand. This has spurred significant progress in developing manufacturing processes that produce less hazardous waste and emit fewer pollutants. But despite this progress other residual environmental justice issues remain and must be high on the domestic agenda in this decade.

Bailus Walker is Professor of Environmental and Occupational Medicine at Howard University College of Medicine, Washington, D.C., and former chairman of the Committee on Toxicology, National Academy of Sciences.

Living on the Fence Line

Steve Lerner

I revisit the path by which I came to write about environmental justice issues and fence line stories because every journalist has moments in his or her work when the door opens to a new field of investigation. For decades I had been writing about chemical contamination, international sustainability efforts, cutting-edge efforts to solve environmental problems, prison reform and a host of other subjects that touched on social justice issues. During these journalistic expeditions it became clear to me that many of the most intense contamination problems were located in poor and largely minority neighborhoods. But, at the time, I had no hard statistical evidence to back up my impression that the distribution of environmental hazards fell most heavily on poor African American, Latino and Native American communities.

With the publication of *Toxic Wastes and Race* in 1987, the news about the disproportionate exposure of poor and heavily minority community residents to contamination from adjacent hazardous waste facilities became an established fact, which journalists could use as a hook on which to hang other stories of environmental injustice. Much quoted was CRJ's finding that there was a strong association between race and the location of hazardous waste landfills. Race was by far the most prominent factor in the location of the commercial hazardous waste landfills, more prominent than household income or home values. Here was the smoking gun that permitted the environmental justice movement to point a finger at the clearly unfair (racist) siting of hazardous waste facilities. It was this fact that launched me on a series of investigations of fence line communities where poor, minority populations lived adjacent to hazardous waste sites and heavily polluting industries.

My first major journalistic foray into documenting what life is like in these "sacrifice zones" came when I wrote *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*. To do the research for the book I went down to Norco, Louisiana, a small town 25 miles west of New Orleans located on the banks of the Mississippi River. Norco is an all-white refinery town that grew up around a huge Shell Oil refinery and chemical plant. Across a ditch from Norco is the all-black subdivision of Diamond, Louisiana, which predates the company town.

The African American residents of Diamond have roots that go back to slave days, and many Diamond residents have ancestors who worked as slaves on the Diamond (formerly Trepagnier) plantation. It is also the epicenter of one of the largest slave revolts in the history of the United States. After the Civil War, the slaves took over the plantation and their descendants lived on and farmed the land. Then Shell Oil came ashore and built a tank oil storage facility in the early 1900s, which subsequently was expanded into a vast refinery. In the early 1950s, the refinery spawned an adjacent chemical plant that was used to transform petroleum waste into saleable by-products such as chemical fertilizers and feedstocks for plastics. In 1954 residents of Diamond were pushed off their land, to which few of them had any written title, and relocated on the fence line with the expanded Shell facilities, wedged between the refinery and the chemical plant.

Industrial accidents in 1973 and 1988 killed two residents of Diamond and eight Shell workers and caused widespread property damage. Pollution from the plants became so intense that residents began to organize to demand that Shell relocate them to safer ground. After a twenty-year struggle, the Concerned Citizens of Norco, led by a local schoolteacher named Margie Richard, won their relocation struggle and all the residents of Diamond moved out. Help from the growing national and New Orleans-based environmental justice community of activists made the victory possible. But it was a bittersweet victory in that the centuries-old, African American community of Diamond was torn apart so the residents could move to safety.

Recently, I began a new book on “fence line communities” around the United States that face pollution problems similar to those endured by Diamond residents. I am writing this follow-up book, which will tell some 20 stories about sacrifice zones around the nation, because I believe this widespread pattern of environmental injustice has been ignored too long. The relocation of Diamond residents was a seminal victory for the environmental justice movement but it remains the case that there are thousands of other communities where residents face a disproportionate exposure to contamination because of their proximity to sources of pollution. Residents in these pollution hotspots are often (but not always) poor people of color.

The pioneering work of the environmental justice activists who documented the disproportionate pattern by which poor and minority residents were exposed to toxics, opened the door for journalists to write about the numerous injustices being committed in fence line communities around the nation.

Steve Lerner is the research director for Commonweal and the author of *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor*. Fence line articles can be located on the Collaborative on Health and the Environment Web site at www.commonweal.org.

Understanding Urban Environments

Robert Collin and Robin Morris Collin

Without the groundwork laid out by the United Church of Christ *Toxic Wastes and Race* report it is unlikely U.S. urban environmentalism would exist. Without Urban Environmentalism the U.S. environmental movement stagnates and U.S. environmental policy remains ineffective in the face of accumulating chemical emissions and broadening exposure vectors to all parts of the U.S. population. The large difference by race in waste facilities was, and is, indisputable despite scores of attempts to prove otherwise. By focusing on the actual place of the waste, and by letting those communities around the waste “speak for themselves,” a whole new dynamic of urban environmental policy began. Prior to the report it was difficult to assess any demographic characteristic with any type of environmental impacts. U.S. environmentalism is distinctly anti-urban. However, cities are where most of the pollution is and where most people of color live, work and play.

The report laid the basis for countless syllabuses, state and federal legislation and rules, and many other reports. One big implication for the UCC report and the need to speak for ourselves was an explosion of different methodologies. Every time Geographic Information Systems (GIS) evolve in technological refinement and are applied to environmental decisions there is only greater evidence of disproportionate impacts, usually by race. When the Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) was made public not only data about amount and kind of chemicals was made available, data on which communities were getting it also was available. Data, information and truth are EJ's friend. Old ways of making public policy relying on slow, inaccurate and incomplete case study methodologies are directly challenged by technology, better environmental data and the need to know the environmental truth of any one place. As environmental impacts accumulate and public concern for sustainability rises, place-study methodologies develop for application in urban areas.

The traditional methodology of “case study” as applied to environmental problems stumbles because it relies on generalization made from one case, or place, to another case or place. The term “place study” should be used instead of case study to recognize the individual uniqueness of the ecology of place and of the culture and history of the people in that place. Unlike case studies, these results may not be generalized from one place to another. U.S. environmental policy intervention is so new in many EJ communities that any generalization about a place may not be accurate enough to compare to another place. The pioneering nature of U.S. urban environmentalism, the unknown dimensions of resource needs for clean-up and public health, and respect for communities speaking for themselves all make “place study” a more accurate term.

This term was used in the Unintended Impacts Workgroup Report - *Unintended Impacts of Redevelopment and Revitalization Efforts in Five Environmental Justice Communities* and reported to the EPA's National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (NEJAC) Subcommittee on Waste and Facility Siting. They reported it out to the NEJAC Executive Committee in June 2006 and recommended EPA publish it, which it has done. It includes a template for communities to begin capacity building around self-determination of cultural and environmental impacts.

The UCC report has been a staple in every EJ class for the last 14 years. The fury unleashed by the report by those against EJ only underscored the strength and depth of the institutional racism that permeates U.S. environmental decision making. Over and over again, *Toxic Wastes and Race* was challenged and revisited. Environmental Justice, like any other kind of justice, relies on truth. Unlike abstract forms of justice, the environment provides solemn testimony to past and present injustices. By analyzing the depth of environmental degradation in every community the environmental reparations necessary for a sustainable community can be decided.

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Brownfields and Sustainable Community Development

Deeohn Ferris

There are an estimated 450,000 brownfields scattered throughout the United States. Generally, brownfields are defined as abandoned or underused industrial or commercial properties where redevelopment is complicated by actual or perceived environmental contamination. Many of these sites are located in or near low-income, working class and people of color communities. Revitalizing and redeveloping abandoned, often contaminated properties demonstrates the convergence of complex environmental, social and economic issues. For example, compared to their numbers in the general population, many of these properties are in minority and low-income neighborhoods. Thus, equity, race and class discrimination, the diminished tax base in municipalities and suburban sprawl are inseparable from the blight and marginalized communities that accompany brownfields.

In the past decade, a coherent holistic vision has emerged, which addresses the relationship of these issues to the health and vitality of a community. Commonly referred to as sustainable communities, this vision recognizes the significance of meeting community needs and aspirations, and positions those who live within it as integral partners in decision making. The sustainable communities approach is the junction of equity, economics and the environment. It's focused on building the capacity of communities to participate in decisions, creating partnerships with other stakeholders, mobilizing resources and producing sustainable results.

The following *10 Principles of Community Engagement in Brownfields and Vacant Properties Redevelopment* provide a philosophy or framework that, if carried forward into the redevelopment process, will establish a threshold which prepares public and private sector stakeholders to advance collaborative decision making. A collaborative process will help position communities as full partners in revitalizing abandoned, idled or under-used commercial and industrial sites and vacant properties.

Principal #1: Adopt a policy of inclusion.

People living in communities and small businesses already located in areas where brownfields and vacant properties are prevalent have been most affected by conditions in their neighborhoods and will be most affected by changes in those conditions. It's democratic, they have the most at stake and their inclusion in decisions should be fundamental.

Principal #2: Recognize that community engagement involves multi-stakeholder readiness. Engagement necessarily means helping communities become prepared to engage in the brownfields and economic development dialogue.

Capacity building that educates, trains, helps create a common language among stakeholders and leaves no one at a communications or understanding disadvantage is imperative.

Principal #3: Honor communities and neighborhoods as whole places not solely as environmentally degraded or socially and economically disadvantaged.

Honor communities as places where people want to live, learn, worship, work and play.

Principal #4: Honor diversity.

Respect diversity of races and cultures, viewpoints and perspectives. Be responsive to viewpoints that just might challenge the mainstream. A community's contributions can test and improve redevelopment plans and make for a more thorough, informed process.

Principal #5: The foundation of community redevelopment and revitalization is equitable beneficial land use.

Land reuse can either replicate the economic and environmental consequences resulting in brownfields and vacant properties or lead to changes in these circumstances that benefit all stakeholders. Further, race, class and concentrated poverty issues are intricately intertwined with the history of land use and under-investments in certain communities. The impacts of this history must be factored into decision making intended to benefit affected neighborhoods.

Principal #6: There shall be no forced displacement as a result of gentrification.

Neither tax increases, nor elevating property values nor rising rents shall force long-term residents, workers and small businesses to unwillingly flee their neighborhoods.

Principal #7: Economic and environmental advantages that are the consequence of community redevelopment must directly benefit the communities, which have suffered and survived through the years of blight, degradation and under-investment by the public and private sectors.

Principal #8: Environmental Justice communities believe that the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution entitles everyone to equal protection under law, including equal environmental protection.

Overwhelmingly, the states have passed laws on liability releases and investment tax incentives which should not obscure a cardinal point: Health and environment must be considered on par with the importance of the real estate development deal.

Principal #9: Recognize the intersection of the 3 E's: Equity, Economics and Environment; it's the pathway to sustainable redevelopment.

Principal #10: Invest resources at levels sufficient to accomplish the community engagement objective.

Typically, this is an area where the public and private sectors expend the fewest resources and expect to get the most bang for the buck. Community engagement is not public relations and it's more than public participation. At its most productive, it's resource intensive relationship building that is sensitive, pursued

over the long term and concentrated on parity in preparing communities to engage in the redevelopment process.

Deeohn Ferris is a founding member of the Sustainable Community Development Group Inc., a not-for-profit corporation working with the public, private and community sectors to advance environmental sustainability, equitable development and global smart growth.

Biodiversity Meets Environmental Justice

Ivette Perfecto

In 1990, I was just starting as a young Assistant Professor at the University of Michigan's School of Natural Resources and Environment. That same year, inspired by the publication of *Toxic Wastes and Race* three years earlier, Dr. Bunyan Bryant and Dr. Paul Mohai organized the "Michigan Conference on Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards." Bunyan and Paul invited me to participate in the conference and write a chapter on the impacts of pesticides on farm workers and their international dimensions. Being an agroecologist and a conservation biologist trained as an ecologist, the topic of the chapter fell somewhat outside my area of expertise. However, I took on the challenge and for the next six months immersed myself in the topic of pesticides and environmental justice. *Toxic Wastes and Race* and the Michigan Conference had an immense impact on my future career as a scholar. From the conference I emerged energized and decided to examine the connections between the discipline of ecology and environmental justice. Almost twenty years have passed, and this year I participated with my partner John Vandermeer in the first Environmental Justice Symposium at the Annual Meeting of the Ecological Society of America (ESA).

Among the myriad political issues that are of concern to ESA three stand out as not only important in their own right, but together take on a particular urgency: environmental justice, globalization and tropical conservation. The environmental justice movement has focused on the urgent contemporary task of documenting and struggling against political and economic decisions that place underprivileged groups at environmental risk. For example, Memphis, site of the 2007 ESA meetings, has communities of mainly African Americans who remain subject to the environmental hazards that originally stemmed from the production of chlordane by the Velsicol Company (the same chemical and same company, by the way, that was so active in attempting to block the publication of *Silent Spring*). Even though the use of chlordane was banned in the U.S. in 1988, residues remain in soil and sediments throughout the Memphis area, especially in areas populated by low-income families and people of color. This was one of the topics of my paper at the Michigan Conference.

Chlordane itself provides a bridge to the next political issue we identify as critical, the political debate associated with recent trends of globalization. When chlordane was banned for use in the U.S., as so frequently happens, Velsicol simply changed marketing strategies and began shipping its now acknowledged dangerous chemical to unwitting Third World farmers. The globalized economy certainly aided Velsicol at a time when it faced a clear under-consumption crisis (no market for a product it was geared up to produce in large quantities). The small farmers and farm workers in Latin America, Africa and Asia thus became victims of an environmental injustice that had a clear ecological connection to the African American community in Memphis. In most recent times those small farmers and farm workers of the Global South have not been sitting idly by as the contemporary globalization trend sends a tide that threatens them, but they have been major participants in one of the largest grassroots movements in the history of the world, the movement commonly referred to as the "anti-globalization" movement.

Those small farmers sit in the midst of what is, for non-human nature, one of the most important places in the world – the agroecosystems that surround the remaining patches of natural habitat in the vast majority of the world's tropical terrestrial ecosystems. What we now know about the functioning of tropical ecosystems convinces us that the environmental injustice faced by these small farmers and farm workers,

so similar in its political overtones to that faced by minority communities throughout the Developed World, has an inevitable connection to the political issue that probably inspires members of the ESA more than any other, that of the conservation of tropical biodiversity.

These three political movements are intrinsically interconnected and should not be viewed in isolation. Our argument is founded not on a bed of political thought, but rather emerges from what contemporary ecology tells us about the organization of biodiversity.

Conservationists in the past have focused on the purchase and protection of large tracts of land. From what we now know about how biodiversity is structured ecologically, this is a doomed strategy. While there is no rational need to convert any more forests to agriculture, and we join in with others who seek to preserve whatever remaining natural habitat exists in the world, they are in fact being converted and the future almost certainly will present us with mainly fragmented landscapes. It is in those fragmented landscapes that the world's biodiversity will be located. A long-term plan for biodiversity conservation needs to acknowledge that fact and work at the landscape level to not only preserve the patches of native vegetation that remain, but also to construct a landscape that is "migration friendly." That landscape is most likely to emerge from the application of agroecological principles. Those principles are most likely to be enacted by small farmers with land titles, who are a consequence of grassroots social movements. Indeed, it would be only slight exaggeration to suggest that these social movements in fact hold the key to real biodiversity conservation.

If we allow ourselves to be constrained to the ever shrinking area of formally protected areas, we accede to the enemies of biodiversity conservation the millions of fragments of natural habitat that today probably contain most of the world's biodiversity. Joining the struggle of the millions of small farmers all over the world is as much part of the environmental justice movement as joining the struggle of African Americans in Memphis for a cleaner environment. Seeing the connections between these struggles is a sign of the maturity of the Environmental Justice Movement.

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Toxic Prisons

Gopal Dayaneni, Michael Starkey and Aaron Shuman

In 1987, few organizations had made connections between environmental issues, racism and class disparities. Although a handful of people had written or spoken about the topic, it had failed to attract widespread attention. With the publication of the groundbreaking *Toxic Wastes and Race* report, the United Church of Christ made the connections visible and provided a framework for understanding and fighting against the disproportionate burden of polluting activities on poor communities and communities of color. Among the impacts of the study are lessons about the importance of empirical data, linking research to activism and articulating the inherent interrelatedness of social concerns that, until then, had been seen as distant and distinct issues, specifically race, class, labor and the environment.

The *framework* of Environmental Justice, when applied to toxic prison work programs, allows us to examine the mutually reinforcing *structural inequalities* of racism, environmental devastation, mass incarceration and the capital-driven global economic race to the bottom and to premature death. Our work to end the poisoning and exploitation of poor people and people of color in prison builds upon *Toxic Wastes and Race* and the work of grassroots Environmental Justice organizations over the past two decades.

The fight to stop the poisoning of people in prison who labor in toxic industries such as recycling electronic waste (e-waste) builds upon these lessons and identifies people in prison as an environmental

justice community of concern. E-waste recycling also has emerged as a growing industry inside U.S. federal prisons, in programs run by U.S. Federal Prison Industries (FPI, also known as UNICOR). These government sweatshops are the only domestic form of “recycling” that can compete with the dismal wages and dire working conditions in poor communities around the world. The extreme exploitation of people in prison, overwhelmingly poor people of color, combined with inadequate health and safety protections, mark UNICOR’s prison recycling program as a clear case of environmental injustice.

In 2002, Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition launched a campaign against UNICOR Recycling. In an unpublished paper, Equal Justice Works Fellow Virginia Hamner chose this campaign as the case study in her effort to define prisoners as a unique environmental justice community of concern who “exist in an essential void of regulations, are subject to compulsory labor and subject to live in the environments the prison system provides.”

This collaboration produced the October 2006 report *Toxic Sweatshops: How UNICOR Prison Recycling Harms Workers, Communities, the Environment and the Recycling Industry*. The report documents the concerns raised by prisoners, and cites the Principles of Environmental Justice which state that impacted people have the right “to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality healthcare” and considers “governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.”

Gopal Dayaneni has been fighting for economic, environmental and racial justice since the late 1980s, previously working as a campaigner for Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition and Project Underground, and now stays at home with his two children and cramming political projects in on the side.

Aaron Shuman coordinates the Prisoner Solidarity Project at the Prison Activist Resource Center, is a member of the organization of formerly incarcerated people All of Us or None and a former prisoner of conscience for School of the Americas Watch.

Michael Starkey is a projects coordinator for Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition, manager of the West Oakland Food Pantry at the Prescott-Joseph Center in Oakland, California, and was previously a Senior Research Associate at Redefining Progress.

Funding Environmental Justice Work

Michelle DePass

When the seminal *Toxic Wastes and Race* was released in 1987, I was a senior in college. I would not read the publication until four years later, when I was attending law school and awarded a clinical position at the Environmental Protection Agency, Region II (EPA). The reverberations of the report were lasting and deep at the EPA. The lawyers in the Superfund unit were holding brown bag lunches to discuss what this report meant to their work and to the environmental community at large. It was new news to most of the staff. It had been well documented that the United States corporations were exporting their waste products to other countries, creating a two-tiered system of waste disposal; but here in our country, where equal protection was supposed to be a bedrock of our nation, we were actively making decisions and preferably locating facilities that were toxic and harmful in communities of color. I made my decision then and there to focus my environmental legal career on these civil rights issues in order to help my community.

I accepted a position with the New York City Environmental Justice Alliance soon after graduation from law school. Immediately, *Toxic Wastes and Race* became the most important piece of literature for the work. The facts, statistics and figures were critical to the advocacy and community organizing for the work locally, regionally and nationally. The report presented a basis from which to begin with work with constituents, partners and the funding world.

As Executive Director, I saw what impact the UCC report had on the funding world as well. Foundations with program officers such as Dana Allston at the Public Welfare Foundation, Vic De Luca at the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, Stacey Cumberbatch at the Joyce Mertz Gilmore Foundation and Anita Nager at the New York Community Trust were compensating for the dearth of funding for issues of environment and race and class. They funded the Environmental Justice Movement and provided support above and beyond financial resources.

Today, these foundations are still funding environmental justice as are several others, including the Ford Foundation—which established its Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities portfolio in 2000. However, the amount of foundation support for environmental justice research, advocacy and organizing is shrinking. Fewer and fewer organizations are able to find the type of sustainable funding to support their being a catalyst for systemic change in the environmental world. If we are ever to reverse the statistics of *Toxic Wastes and Race*, communities, environmentalists and workers must join forces to combat the root causes of pollution and environmental degradation in our communities. We also must provide financial resources and support for the innovative and creative initiatives that enhance the building of healthy, sustainable and just communities. Continued philanthropic support for community-based organizations and academic research and training centers working in the organizing and policy arena also is critical to this equation.

Michelle DePass is currently a Program Officer in the Community and Resource Development Unit of the Ford Foundation where she leads the Foundation's work in the area of Environmental Justice and Healthy Communities.

IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ABROAD GLOBAL IMPACTS

Environmental Justice in Great Britain

Julian Agyeman

In 1987, I was working as an environmental policy advisor in the environmental health department in an inner London borough. While there was no discourse of environmental justice in Britain at the time, it was obvious to me and a growing number of other activists of color that the poorest residents of urban Britain, many of whom were minorities, lived in the poorest areas in terms of large roads, poor/unaffordable housing, disinvestment, lack of green and play spaces, and pollution. Although our evidence was anecdotal (and remained so until Friends of the Earth's *Pollution Injustice* report in 2000), it gave me my mantra, which I still believe to this day: *There will never be environmental quality until there is human equality.*

But this was Thatcher's Britain. Mainstream environmentalism was marginalized, and minority environmentalism wasn't even a blip on the public policy radar. I'd read about the growing environmental justice movement in the U.S. and had been in touch with folks about such issues. One of my first contacts was Mencer Donahue Edwards, then with The Panos Institute in D.C. He was very interested in developments in Britain regarding minority environmental activism. He sent me a whole pack of reports, including *Toxic Wastes and Race*. Bob Bullard, then at UC Riverside, passed on my letter to (then) postdoctoral researcher Dorceta Taylor who would later research minority environmental activism while at University College, London. I was beginning to network both inside and outside Britain.

In 1987, minority activism took a large leap forward. The National Council for Voluntary Organizations in Britain, through their Policy and Promotions Department, asked me to chair a committee that would fund minority environmental projects. It was European Year of the Environment, and the scheme was to be

called *EMAS, the Ethnic Minorities Award Scheme*. Allocated five thousand pounds (\$9,000) to distribute, the committee began inviting applications. We funded 25 applications that fell into one of two types. One type was for trips to the British countryside, a typically "white" space which "invokes a sense of fear, of dread" for black and minority ethnic populations. This fear and dread had a cause. In 1992 it was given the name "rural racism."

To us in Britain, rural racism became our environmental justice-rallying cry, as "environmental racism" did in the U.S. We had coverage in the mainstream media: *The BBC, The Guardian, The Daily Telegraph and The Independent*. By 1992 the Commission for Racial Equality, Britain's race watchdog, and local race equality councils were beginning to engage with the concept of rural racism as evidenced by two key reports *Keep Them in Birmingham* and *Not in Norfolk: Tackling the Invisibility of Racism*. The National Alliance of Women's Organizations (NAWO) took a gendered perspective in *Staring at Invisible Women: Black and Minority Ethnic Women in Rural Areas*. I argued that these reports "represented a new challenge to policy makers in the UK, because developing anti-racist messages and policies in multiracial cities where there was at least some support was one thing, but to develop them in white rural areas was quite another." These reports were to become influential in securing racism as an issue on rural service delivery agendas

The second type of application related to innovative urban gardening and nature-based projects. The creative nature of these projects was that minority communities wanted to use nature to reflect their cultural origins; they wanted to grow plants from home. In urban Britain, the heat island effect often facilitated the growth of some plants from the tropics. These projects gave birth to the idea of cultural gardening or cultural ecology: creating a little bit of home over here.

EMAS and the types of projects it spawned sowed the seed in our minds, which germinated into Britain's first environmental justice-type organization. That happened on September 30, 1988 when *Ethnic Minorities and the Environment: A One Day Conference to Discuss Positive Action* was held at the University of London Union. It was organized by Friends of the Earth and the London Wildlife Trust at my request and I chaired the planning group. An outcome of the conference was the Black Environment Network (BEN), which still exists today. Out of more than 100 delegates, a group of minority delegates including myself, Ingrid Pollard, Vijay Krishnarayan, Swantee Toocaram, Roland de la Mothe and Judy Ling Wong decided to establish BEN to take forward the minority environmental agenda. As the conference evaluation quaintly reads, "The black participants expressed great enthusiasm for the unique opportunity to meet in an all-black workshop, and were extremely positive about the setting up of the Black Environment Network."

In many ways, my contacts with U.S. environmental justice activists and scholars, and reading *Toxic Wastes and Race* played a pivotal role in *inspiring me, thereby galvanizing an environmental justice agenda in Britain*. While we didn't have the same issues as those so starkly revealed in *Toxic Wastes and Race*, we clearly had environmental justice issues! Over the past 20 years, but especially in the last five, *environmental injustice* has been shown to be happening in many different ways in Britain, from disproportionate pollution loadings in low-income communities to fuel poverty, from transportation inequities to lack of countryside access because of rural racism. The response calls for greater *environmental justice* have become louder such that they are now a growing concern for many academics, NGOs and some politicians, such as Michael Meacher MP, former Minister for the Environment. There is now a discourse around environmental justice or *just sustainability* in Britain. Friends of the Earth Scotland use as their strapline: *The Campaign for Environmental Justice*. However, a U.S. style environmental justice movement is as yet elusive.

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Toxic Waste Trade Around the World

David Naguib Pellow

Clearly, 1987 was a watershed year. The United Church of Christ report was the punctuation needed to elevate the voices and struggles of ordinary people confronting environmental racism in their own backyards in the U.S. and globally. As a result of this report, people had a new language and context they could draw from in order to organize opposition to environmental injustices.

The year 1987 was a critical point in environmental justice history because it marked the beginning of the global waste trade—the practice of exporting tons of the most hazardous waste generated within global North communities to the global South. One of the first such incidents that put this issue on the public agenda occurred when, in December 1987, a ship carrying incinerator ash from the city of Philadelphia dumped several tons of that toxic cargo on a beach at Gonaives, Haiti. Since Haiti was the poorest nation in the western hemisphere with a majority population of African descended peoples, and the U.S. being the wealthiest nation in the world, this was a clear case of environmental racism. Soon afterward, Haitian and Haitian American organizations such as the Haiti Communications Project and the Collective for the Protection of the Environment and an Alternative Development (COHPEDA) teamed up with groups in the global North, including Greenpeace, Global Response and Witness for Peace to create an international coalition called Project Return to Sender. The coalition's name signaled its goal and a new movement tactic that centered on the logic of accountability: Those nations that produced the waste should have to take it back and manage it responsibly.

In 2002, after a decade and a half of international activist campaign work, the waste was finally returned to the U.S. Over the years, activists involved in this effort were able to draw on the discourse of environmental justice and use the growing body of research on environmental racism as a critical resource, repeatedly referencing the work of the UCC. The campaign itself was framed around the language and goals of the environmental justice movement, which would have been impossible without the *Toxic Wastes and Race* study. The Philadelphia/Haiti case was arguably the first major conflict that announced the presence of a burgeoning global movement for environmental justice—a series of interconnected transnational activist networks that today provide support and solidarity when communities are threatened with trans-boundary waste dumping. Since the Project Return to Sender coalition formed around the Philadelphia waste case, sophisticated protest campaigns by global environmental justice networks have persuaded Italy to retrieve toxic waste from Lebanon and Nigeria; Germany from Albania and Romania; South Korea from China; the U.S. from Bangladesh and India; and Japan from the Philippines, to name only a few other examples.

Today, numerous groups count themselves as inheritors of the legacy of the work began by Project Return to Sender activists. For example, the International Campaign for Responsible Technology, the Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives and the Basel Action Network now operate on the models and examples set by Project Return to Sender.

The global movement for environmental justice articulates a vision of worldwide social change that entails building and supporting sustainable and equitable communities and challenging industry and government to work for the good of the disenfranchised majority. These trans-national environmental justice activists view the global political economy as shifting risks and hazards from North to South, from rich nations to poor communities between and within nations, and from racially privileged communities to racially despised communities. They challenge the sources of power in the global political economy—governments, trans-national corporations, international financial institutions, environmental groups and the ideologies of racism and classism. Activists challenge these targets with the aim of creating a more just trans-national political space, and this movement builds directly on the work and findings of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.

The world also has changed since 1987 as a result of the rise of international terrorist activities directed at global North nations like the U.S. Of course, many communities of color in the U.S. and globally experienced what activists have called 'toxic terrorism' long before September 11, 2001. One can hope

that the recent increase in the sense of vulnerability to terrorism among privileged communities might lead to a deeper sense of interdependence and accountability for political and economic policies abroad. As many scholars have noted, terrorism is often the result of “blowback”—unintended consequences of foreign policy decisions.

In the U.S. and other global North nations, we also are experiencing an *ecological* blowback—or what has been called the “boomerang effect” of pollution, a circle of poison that returns to haunt those who produced and benefited from their manufacture and sale. The toxicity of everyday life reveals this problem, as food, water, air, land, and human bodies in the North suffer from rising levels of chemical burdens. A twenty-first century foreign policy and environmental justice framework should recognize that government and corporate actions have long-term consequences for us all. In other words, environmental racism may have immediate impacts on communities of color, but the broader effects reveal that no one is immune to the spread of chemical poisons and the toxicity of racism itself. That is perhaps the most important lesson we can learn from the *Toxic Wastes and Race* report.

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Toxics and Indigenous Peoples

Al Gedicks

Native peoples are under assault on every continent because their lands contain a wide variety of valuable resources. It is estimated that in the next 20 years, about half of all gold and copper mined will come from territories used or claimed by indigenous people. Dramatic increases in the price of gold and copper provided major incentives for new mining investments. In 1980, gold hit an all-time high of \$850 an ounce. Over \$90 billion was invested in the mining sector from 1990-2001, mostly in gold and copper. Most gold is not used for essential needs. In 1995, 85 percent of newly mined gold was used to make jewelry.

In 1995 Philippine president Fidel Ramos signed into law a new mining code, drafted by multinational mining companies, that effectively gave away a quarter of the country to multinational corporations. The new code also lowers environmental standards by permitting increased open pit mining, for example, and gives companies the right to evict villagers from houses, farms, or other “obstacles” to their operations. All these measures have been promoted as part of the Structural Adjustments Program imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to stabilize the Philippine economy by encouraging mineral exports and reducing the country’s \$39 billion debt.

Since its passage, 70 mining applications have been filed covering 16.5 million acres or 23 percent of the country’s total land area. The 1991 International Mining Annual Review reports that in terms of mineable minerals per acre the Philippines ranks second in the world for gold and third for copper. Unsurprisingly, despite the fact that most of the land proposed for mining forms part of their ancestral territories, the country’s 8 million tribal peoples were never consulted when the law was being drafted. Tribal peoples, who make up about 12 percent of the population and occupy 20 percent of the country’s land area, were especially offended at the swift passage of the law while they have been lobbying for almost ten years for an Ancestral Domain Law that would recognize ownership and management rights to their land, as promised in the 1987 Constitution. The same congress that passed the Mining Act shelved the Ancestral Domain Law.

The London-based international native rights organization Survival International has called the new code “the greatest of all threats to the future of tribal communities in the Philippines.” Most of the new mining claims are focused on gold, which is found in extensive low grade deposits. Because the grade of ore is

lower than those mined in the past, more ore must be mined at a faster rate, and more waste is generated for every ton of ore that is mined. The most profitable method to extract the gold is through open pit mining where large quantities of rock are basted, bulldozed, and pulverized so that the gold can be extracted by using cyanide and other toxic chemicals to separate the minerals. Using this method, gold production can be profitable, even if it produces as little as 1 gram of gold per ton of rock.



A lone wind mill stands idle on the Navajo reservation after ground water is contaminated by uranium mining, Church Rock, NM, 1999 (Photo by EJRC)

This may be cost effective for the mining companies but devastating to the local people who find their lands and waters ruined by silt and toxic discharges from the millions of tons of tailings (mine wastes) left over from this type of mining. According to the Center for Environmental Concerns in Manila, around 160,000 tons of chemical-laced tailings are dumped into Philippine rivers and lakes every day.

In Benguet province, which has been the Philippines' most important gold and copper mining region, runoff from the tailings has contaminated rice fields, killed biological life in the Itogon River

and led to severe health problems among the Igorot native people. While the government protects the large mining companies, no such concern is shown for the mining rights of the small-scale miners, which include up to 100,000 of the Igorot in Benguet province. Igorot means "people of the mountains." It is the collective term for all the native peoples of the Cordillera region, comprising seven major ethnolinguistic groups.

The Igorot have their own long-established mining practices which are communally controlled and do not use dangerous chemicals, such as mercury, in the processing of the minerals. Proceeds from the mining are shared in the community. However, under the provisions of the 1991 Small-Scale Mining Act, small-scale miners need prior approval through procedures controlled by the large mining companies. As the Benguet Corporation expanded its open pit operations, it encroached upon the diggings of the Igorot small-scale miners. When the Igorot barricaded the roads around the mine and demanded an environmental study, the government sent troops to clear the roads. The troops have remained to protect the assets of the Benguet Corporation, Asia's largest gold producer.

Al Gedicks is a mining activist, author, film maker and professor of sociology at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse.

Challenging Global Environmental Racism

Edith Rasell

In the 20 years since the historic report *Toxic Wastes and Race* was published, enormous changes have occurred in the economy. Most important is globalization, the growing economic integration and interdependence of countries around the world due to increased trade and investment flows across national borders. But with the expanded flow of goods, services and money has also come an expanded flow of dirty industries, environmental toxins and waste. Today it appears that toxic wastes and

environmentally hazardous facilities are disproportionately located in the global South where, predominantly, poor people of color reside. Environmental racism is a global phenomenon.

International Agreements on Trade and Investment

The global assembly line is a reality. But the international treaties and organizations that so precisely govern investments and trade to make the world safe for international capital fail to provide similarly detailed and enforceable policies to protect the environment or people who are exposed to hazards in their workplaces and homes.

Consider the World Trade Organization. According to Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch, "Over its almost nine years of operation, the WTO ... has systematically ruled against every domestic environmental policy that has been challenged and eviscerated exceptions that might have been used to safeguard such laws."



Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (SNEEJ) activists demand justice on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border, Phoenix, Ariz., 1995 (Photo by EJRC)

The 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement has been a model for subsequent treaties including the 2005 Central American (and Dominican Republic) Free Trade Agreement and the upcoming Free Trade Area of the Americas. But in these treaties, environmental concerns are relegated to side agreements, outside the main body of the treaty, and only weak enforcement mechanisms are provided. At the same time, strict provisions ensure that corporations are compensated for "expected" profits that may be "lost" due to public policies such as environmental regulations. The government and corporate elites who write these treaties, bringing with them their race and class biases, favor profits over protections for the environment, workers and communities.

Dirty Industries

Lax and poorly enforced environmental regulations can be found, to some extent, in nearly every country. But they are much more common in poorer, less industrialized ones. Weak regulations reduce the cost of environmental abatement and clean-up, raise corporate profits and benefit shareholders, corporate elites and also consumers with access to cheaper products. Weak environmental regulations harm the environment, workers in dirty plants and people who live within the area impacted by a polluting firm or waste disposal site.

The media are filled with horrific stories of firms' egregious abuses of the environment. Massively oil-polluted land and water in Ecuador, Angola and Nigeria show the impact of oil extraction in the presence of lax national and international standards. Hard rock mining is especially destructive. The U.S. firm Freeport-McMoRan operates a giant open-pit copper and gold mine in Papua, Indonesia, where one billion tons of waste have been dumped onto the land and into streams. Some 90 square miles of wetlands, once one of the richest freshwater habitats in the world, are virtually buried in toxic wastes. Gold mining is notoriously bad. To produce an ounce of gold requires cyanide to be sprinkled on 30 tons of rock, leaving behind contaminated waste and acidic water poisoned with cyanide and heavy metals that leached from the rock along with the gold. Today, 70% of gold is mined in developing countries.

The policy choice is not between an unregulated, environmentally destructive economic boom and a regulated, environmentally friendly but jobless economic bust. The choice is not between no jobs and dirty, harmful ones. The costs of environmentally sound production methods are a small share of a firm's total cost of production. Firms can produce their products *and* do so in an environmentally friendly way, protecting the environment, workers and communities.

E-Waste and Other Toxins

To keep computers and their toxic metals out of U.S. landfills, communities in the global North encourage recycling. But typically, "recycling" a computer or other electronic gadget means nothing more than shipping it out of the U.S. to contaminate another country, often in the global South. The color monitors of many computers are classified as hazardous waste by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Circuit boards and batteries are full of lead in addition to smaller amounts of mercury and chromium. Plastics used in electronic equipment may produce dioxins when burned. The United Nations Environment Program estimates that worldwide, 20 to 50 million tons of electronics are discarded each year. Less than 10 percent is adequately recycled, and half or more ends up overseas.

West Africa is one such dumping ground. Just one city, Lagos, Nigeria, receives e-waste equal to more than 100,000 computers or 44,000 TVs each month. Some of these machines will be repaired and re-used, but most will be discarded. In towns along China's coast as well as in India and Pakistan, adults and children work in unregulated and unsafe conditions dismantling e-waste with their hands without protective gear, contaminating themselves and releasing carcinogens and other toxins into the rivers, air and soils.

Shiploads of toxins and waste also are sent from the global North to the South. India is becoming the world's dumping ground for mercury. In October 2006, a Greek-owned tanker, flying a Panamanian flag, leased by the London branch of a Swiss oil and metals trading corporation with fiscal headquarters in the Netherlands, off-loaded petrochemical waste and caustic soda in Ivory Coast. Ten people died, dozens were hospitalized and more than 75,000 sought medical treatment due to their exposures.

The 1995 Basel Ban Amendment prohibits shipping toxic waste from the 26 most industrialized countries to the rest of the world. The U.S. refuses to sign this agreement. Instead we continue to purchase potentially harmful products but fail to take responsibility for properly disposing of them. According to Greenpeace, inspections of 18 European seaports in 2005 found that as much as 47 percent of waste destined for export, including e-waste, was illegal.

Climate Change

The U.S., with five percent of the world's people, produces 25% of the greenhouse gases. Climate change is another problem caused primarily in the global North but which will have its greatest impact on the South. The least industrialized countries are least capable of responding to the consequences of climate change: the inundation of coastal areas by storms and rising ocean levels; damage to forests, wetlands and rangelands which provide poor people with food, shelter and fuel; creeping desertification and shifting agricultural lands; and the spread of infectious diseases to new locations. According to the British NGO Christian Aid, by the end of the century some 182 million people in sub-Saharan Africa alone could die of diseases directly attributable to climate change. Many millions more throughout the world face death and devastation due to climate-induced floods, famine, drought and conflict.

The U.S. has not signed the Kyoto Protocol, an international effort to slow the pace of climate change. Nor has the federal government pursued other steps to control greenhouse gases such as raising the Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards, developing and promoting energy-efficient biofuels and other renewable sources of energy or providing incentives for improving the fuel efficiency of buildings and appliances.

Conclusion

Many people in the U.S. are very concerned with protecting the environment. But people in the U.S. are also profligate users of energy. We participate in an acquisitive and materialist culture that creates huge amounts of waste including e-waste which is disproportionately burdening people in the global South. The corporate bias that the U.S. inserts into international trade agreements harms the environment and workers, especially in the global South. To people familiar with environmental racism in the U.S., it is no surprise to learn that this pattern is also a global phenomenon, disadvantaging people of color in the global South.

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Understanding Global Environmental and Economic Justice

Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa

In 1987, when *Toxic Wastes and Race* was first published, the global community found itself on the leading edge of the new global economy. Economic globalization is used in a variety of ways and must be taken in the context of its usage. In this present context, I am using the term within the context of how we understand it in our contemporary context. That is, I am referring to the economic system that has been built upon the principles of neo-liberal economic theory. Among its tenets are free market economy, trade unfettered by regulation as much as possible, privatization and market determinism.

The Asian tigers had yet to rise to the prominence it held in the 1990s. Crippling debt in developing nations had yet to reach its apex of paralyzing effect. Corporate farming had just grabbed hold of the global agricultural economy. Today, we witness all those realities and other manifestations of globalization in their dramatic fullness.

Even as the dynamics analyzed in the report have come to full clarity some twenty years later, the realities remain alarmingly the same: People of color still suffer the full effects of environmental degradation more devastatingly than their white sisters and brothers. But there are different nuances to the realities. It is to those nuances that we turn our attention, for those nuances portend ugly storm clouds on the horizon.

Same Drama, Different Cast

The seminal 1987 report broke new ground, and yet pointed to realities that many people instinctively knew to be true: that people and communities of color, by intention, suffered the effects of environmental degradation to an inordinate degree. It was just that the report gave indisputable evidence and data that substantiated those instincts. But while the report cast a wide net, the evidence primarily reflected the reality of the day. That is, it looked at the reality primarily in terms of African Americans and Euro Americans. While African Americans still suffer the full force of environmental racism, other demographic factors must be taken into consideration. Twenty years ago, that approach matched the population of the day. Today, we cannot make the same claim. The fastest-growing segment of the population in the 2000 census was Hispanics. Asians also continue to increase dramatically in population percentages.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, injustice protruded in a variety of ways. It was clear that race played a vital role in the way people were treated. Who received services most quickly? Which wards received attention? These and similar questions pointed to the conclusion that people of color remained at the “back of the bus.” African Americans were the most victimized, but the significant number of Hispanics, mainly Mexicans, and Southeast Asians also got short shrift as relief services and dollars from government agencies trickled in.

What does globalization have to do with this? At a minimum, one can trace the migration patterns from the South directly back to the effects of globalization. During an immersion experience at Altar, Mexico, the final place of respite before undocumented persons cross the border into the Sonora Desert, I encountered a group of men who had journeyed from Chiapas, one of the southern-most states of Mexico. These men were farmers who had come over a thousand miles to make the life-threatening crossing, leaving family and friends, out of economic desperation. As the North American Free Trade Agreement had taken effect, agricultural trade between the United States and Mexico had led to dumping of U.S. subsidized corn into Mexico. Mexican farmers, unable to compete with the lower prices, had been squeezed off their farms. As the UCC documentary *Strong Roots, Fragile Farms* points out, as farmers lose their farms in the process, they are forced northward to the U.S. to find work. Hence, we see a dramatic increase in the number of emigrants from Mexico, documented and undocumented, crossing the border. Most find themselves as farm workers, wherein they are exposed to the worst environmental conditions.

The High Cost of Cheap Labor

The U.S.-Mexico border is a microcosm of environmental racism. In Neo-liberal economic theory, a free trade global economy runs on competition. Nations as well as corporations and individuals compete with one another for economic advantage. Nowhere is this most starkly demonstrated than in these border regions. Mexico competed with other countries to attract foreign corporations to relocate in their country. Tax savings, cheap labor and looser regulations provide incentives for attracting businesses. Maquiladoras, mostly U.S.-owned, sprung up all along the border. With the above-mentioned perquisites, companies were primarily concerned with an improved bottom line. They also pushed the limits on environmental regulations, even though they were already much less stringent than in the U.S. Deplorable working conditions and the employment of child labor abounded. Toxic wastes were indiscriminately dumped into rivers and onto the ground, from where it leached into drinking water sources. If they were challenged, they simply left, because there are other desperate nations willing to lay out the welcome mat for U.S. dollars. In one dramatic case, a major American paint manufacturer relocated in the Juarez region. They dumped lethal chemicals into the Rio Grande with impunity. When the Mexican authorities ordered them to cease, they simply left, leaving in their wake major environmental damage. In the global economy, such cases abound.

Water, Water Everywhere, and Not a Drop to Drink (almost)

The lack of safe, clean drinking water will be one of the most critical issues facing the world in the twenty-first century, or so insist many experts. In one of the most oft-quoted statements, a World Bank official observed that as wars have been fought over oil in the twentieth century, similarly wars will be fought over water in the twenty-first. The demographic trends reflect a migration to warmer climate regions in the United States. Because these regions, mostly in the southeast and southwest, had more sparse populations, water was never an urgent issue. But with the migration southward, the water resources have been taxed, sometimes beyond their limits. For example, Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, *Blue Gold: The Fight to Stop the Corporate Theft of the World's Water*, report that the Ogallala Aquifer, the single largest water-bearing unit in North America, which stretches from the Texas panhandle to South Dakota, has a withdrawal rate of 13 million gallons per minute, 14 times faster than nature can restore it. Dams have been built on rivers to divert water to serve these more densely populated areas. As this occurs, other regions that have depended on these water sources for generations find their water needs unmet. One example is in the greater San Diego region in southern California. As the population of the region has mushroomed, one of the groups left without adequate water resources is the Pala nation, a Native American tribe to the south of San Diego. The river that had served as their principal source of water, a once abundant stream, is now a dry river bed.

The U.S.-Mexico border region again provides examples of environmental racism as we consider water issues. When foreign-owned factories and *maquilas* poured untreated chemical wastes into the environment, the U.S. government did nothing, and the Mexican government, too afraid of losing economic input, tolerated it. It was only when the chemicals poured into rivers leached into groundwater on the U.S. side of the border, did the U.S. government intervene.

Corporate Farming and Race

The production and distribution of food have been dramatically affected by economic globalization. Pineapple grown in Mexico ends up on a table in New York. Sugar produced in the Philippines sweetens coffee served in Germany. Australian beef is featured on a menu in a Toronto steakhouse. It is second nature; we rarely think about it.

But agriculture has been affected in more profound ways than the transporting of food over thousands of miles. One of the more significant is the rise of corporate farming and the concomitant decline of family farmers.

Many of these corporate farms are located in or near communities of color. Corporate hog farms are some of the most egregious perpetrators of environmental racism. These hog farms create tremendous amounts of animal wastes. Factory-farm operations throughout North America have millions of gallons of liquefied animal feces stored in open lagoons that emit more than 400 different volatile, dangerous compounds into the atmosphere. These "sewerless cities" generate so much surplus manure that it cannot be stored or disposed of safely. Some large hog farms produce volumes of untreated hog manure equivalent to the human waste of a city of 360,000 people. One hog farming operation in North Carolina carelessly allowed tons of untreated wastes to leach into groundwater sources. During a severe storm, the wastes ran off into rivers and killed wildlife and contaminated drinking water sources. The community affected was predominantly African American.

Corporate farming is predominantly mono-cultural. That is, they produce the same crops on the same acreage year after year. They employ inefficient irrigation techniques that deplete drinking water sources from the communities in which they are located. As stated above, those affected are, more often than not, communities of color.

Conclusion

It is frequently said that the more things change, the more they stay the same. That observation certainly holds true in the twenty years since the report came out. Economic globalization has certainly rendered

the issue more complex and has added to the situation variables that were not anticipated in 1987. Unless we work toward a more humane and sustainable alternative to the way the global economy operates today, the *Toxic Wastes and Race* report will still describe who we are into the foreseeable future.

Reverend Dr. Wallace Ryan Kuroiwa is Minister and Team Leader of the Economic Justice Ministry Team and Racial Justice Ministry Team of the United Church of Christ based in Cleveland, Ohio.

No Climate (for) Justice – Oil, Toxics and Waste in West Africa

Leslie G. Fields

According to the Bush energy plan, West Africa is emerging as one of the fastest-growing regions for gas and oil production for the American market. The Bush Administration, seeking to diversify sources from the volatile Middle East region, has looked to African oil which is of high quality and low in sulfur making it suitable for stringent American refinery standards. West and Central Africa (the countries of Nigeria, Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, Sao Tome and Principe, Cameroon and Gabon—only Nigeria is a member of OPEC) are experiencing the beginnings of an oil boom with all the costs and none of the benefits due of weak governments, exploitation and corruption. This region has proven reserves of 60 million barrels of oil and now provides one in four new barrels of oil coming on the world market. This region had historically been the province of the European oil companies; but in ten years, if this region can remain attractive for investment, Central/West Africa could supply up to 20% of the U.S. imported oil.

U.S. investment also must include investment in this region's fragile civil society, and governments who are trying advance: the rule of law, improve governance and the natural and human environments. Alternatively, if the next administration only promotes the interests of the U.S. oil and gas corporations, this region's 200 million souls will continue to languish under increased corruption, cross-border violence and deteriorating environmental and human environments. Many of these companies still adversely affect environmental justice communities in TX, LA, NJ and CA. Indeed the gulfs between the respective Gulfs of Mexico and Guinea are not wide in this regard. The next Administration must not continue to practice a one-sided foreign policy regarding African natural resource development, in which the wheels of diplomacy are kept greased only for American oil and gas corporations at the expense of local communities.

ECOWAS and the West African Gas Pipeline

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is a regional group of 15 countries also headquartered in Abuja, Nigeria. A major project of the ECOWAS secretariat is the West African Gas Pipeline (WAGP) that will traverse onshore and offshore from Nigeria's Niger Delta, Benin, Togo to Ghana. The other unmentioned stakeholders, such as the communities within the path of the pipeline, were not involved in these negotiations. A political space needed to be cleared for their participation. The ECOWAS community will only be strengthened by greater involvement by civil society. This also would create a great opportunity and serve as a precedent for a more democratic decision-making process for oil and gas exploration and development in West Africa. WAGP had its genesis 21 years ago when the ECOWAS proposed a natural gas pipeline through West Africa as one its key economic policies.

The World Bank proposed a feasibility study report 11 years ago and determined that a 620-mile natural gas pipeline originating from Nigeria to Benin, Togo to Ghana would be commercially feasible. The cost of the WAGP is estimated to cost US\$500 million and will be implemented by the West African Gas Pipeline Company Limited (WAPCo), an entity owned by Chevron Nigeria Ltd., Nigerian National Petroleum Company, Shell Petroleum Development of Nigeria, Volta River Authority of Ghana, Societe Beninoise de Gaz S.A. and Societe Togolaise de Gaz S.A.

The Curse of Gas Flaring

In 1995, the World Bank declared that Nigeria flared more gas than any other country in the world. Locally excessive gas flaring contributes to greenhouse gas emissions, air pollution, respiratory and other health problems, associated noise and corrosion of natural and man-made structures. About 2.5 billion cubic feet of gas associated with crude oil is wasted every day. This is equal to 40% of all Africa's natural gas consumption, while the annual financial loss to Nigeria is about US \$2.5 billion. The flares have contributed to more greenhouse gases than all of sub-Saharan Africa combined. Flaring is generally illegal but permissible since 1984, pursuant to Section 3 of the Associated Gas Reinjection Act of 1979. In addition, the Nigerian Constitution stipulates the right to live in dignity, and to enjoy health and a satisfactory environment. Variances from the environmental ministers allow companies to flare gas, under field-specific conditions. These certificates are not made available to the public.

Gas flaring continues despite the seeming general agreement that it should stop. President Olusegun Obasanjo and the major transnational oil companies appear to have agreed on a non-binding commitment to a flare-out date of 2008. In November 2005 the community of Iwherekhan, Delta State and Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth-Nigeria filed an injunction to stop gas flaring in Iwherekhan. In April 2006, the judge ordered the Shell Nigeria Managing Director and the Petroleum Minister to appear in Federal High Court in Benin City to present a quarterly program for stopping gas flaring in the Iwherekhan community in one year. Once the program was presented to the judge, he granted a partial stay to allow Shell Nigeria and the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation to keep flaring gas until April 2007.

The World Bank claims that the WAGP will contribute to the region in two ways: 1) through the reduction of gas flaring in Nigeria and 2) through burning cleaner fuel in the thermal power stations in Ghana, Togo and Benin. The project has become the subject of a claim to the World Bank Inspection Panel by affected communities in Nigeria, who have cited the inadequacy of the project's environmental impact assessment and public consultations, and the failure to demonstrate how the project will reduce gas flaring in Nigeria or bring benefits to local communities. In September 2006 the European Investment Bank began considering investing up to \$87 million in the WAGP.

Governments and project sponsors are now moving forward without addressing community concerns to ensure that development aspirations are met and negative project impacts are avoided. This undemocratic process repeats a problematic pattern in West Africa generally and the Niger Delta specifically that has led to increased impoverishment and human rights abuses. In Nigeria, for example, contrary to basic principles of democracy, laws do not encourage oil companies to consult adequately with the local communities affected by oil and gas exploitation activities. The central government holds legal control of all land, and this situation leads to the signing away of community farms, forests and streams for oil and gas fields. Therefore the WAGP is a key strategic target to assert democratic principles since it can have a multiplier effect on broader regional development.

The U.S. must encourage the World Bank Group to establish a goal of at least 20% energy portfolio target for clean, renewable energy and a specific renewables unit within the Bank to achieve that target. This recommendation is an achievable and realistic target, and if implemented, will make a significant difference in the lives of the poor around the world. Other recommendations for sustainable development in the region could include the establishment of a Commission on Sustainable Development in West Africa, publishing all oil revenue and audits from the countries and companies, and the enhancement of current monitoring programs that track transparency, governance, public participation between African governments, the U.S. and the oil companies.

The Niger Delta region has been home to massive environmental devastation due to decades of pollution from multinational oil and gas companies. The communities in the Niger Delta and the Gulf of Guinea are suffering from exploitation from oil production, armed conflict from factions vying for power, horrific pollution and world indifference. The climate change and instability directly affecting this region is a precursor of things to come elsewhere. The extraction of the natural resources of West Africa has the potential of turning that region into either the engine or the exhaust pipe of the continent.

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Energy and Climate Change Impacts on Indigenous Peoples

Jihan Gearon

Since the colonization of North America, the costs of our fossil fuel economy have fallen disproportionately on the backs of Indigenous people. After the tribes were forcefully removed to seemingly useless pieces of land, it was discovered the reservations held enormous quantities of coal, oil, gas, and uranium. The U.S. Department of the Interior estimates Native American reservations contain as much as 30% of all coal in the western U.S., 4.2 billion barrels of oil, 17.5 trillion cubic feet of gas, and as much as 37% of all uranium. This discovery was soon followed by a series of U.S. policies aimed at removing Indigenous people from and developing these valuable pieces of land.

The Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 claimed to finally give tribes the ability to govern themselves. In reality, the policy either limited or ended traditional forms of self government and enabled energy corporations to broker deals with only a few decision makers, who now spoke for the entire tribe. Apparently, the acquisition of Indigenous land and resources still wasn't happening quickly enough. In 1971, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act extinguished all aboriginal land claims and turned tribal members into shareholders of for-profit corporations, who now owned the land. These corporations sole mandate was to make a profit and if they didn't, the federal government had the authority to dismantle the corporation and take possession of the land. With this fear ever looming, the corporations all too quickly entered into contracts to develop their oil and timber resources.

From extraction to distribution to consumption, Indigenous peoples in the U.S. are disproportionately impacted all along the road of destruction. The mining of coal, oil, and uranium on the Navajo reservation has left communities with a legacy of contaminated and diminished water resources, forced removals, and gridlocked economies. Pipeline and oil tankers spills such as the Exxon Valdez spill in Port Williams Sound, Alaska, home to the Eyak people, have discharged billions of barrels of oil on Indigenous lands. Refineries, like those in the home of the Ponca nation, in addition to contaminating the local environment, have increased the incidences of lung cancer and respiratory illnesses in Native communities.

Global warming and climate change pose yet another serious threat. The land of the Indigenous people in the arctic region is literally melting under their feet, disrupting the lifecycles of the plants and animals they depend on, and forcing coastal and island communities to abandon their homes and traditional lands. What happens to a culture when the land and environment it stems from no longer exists? Even more frightening is that the proposed solutions to climate change, such as carbon trading, nuclear power, and "clean" coal technologies, will only exacerbate the problems faced by Indigenous communities.

In addition, Native Americans pay the highest rates for fuel and electricity, have the highest percentage of unelectrified and unweatherized homes, and have the least control over energy services. No group of people in the U.S. should be more motivated to pursue sustainable energy development than Native Americans. In addition to vast fossil fuel resources, Native Americans also have vast and untapped renewable energy resources such as wind power in the plains, and solar power in the southwest. Many tribes have been exploring this efficient, innovative, and sustainable option. For example, the Just Transition Campaign, spearheaded by Navajo and Hopi grassroots community groups in the southwest, will use the profits associated with selling pollution credits of the recently shut down Mohave Generating Station to train local mine workers to develop and maintain renewable energy locally.

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Solidarity Statement on Environmental Justice and Climate Change

Environmental Justice Leaders from the United States*

We, the undersigned, have met in a gathering on climate change and environmental justice. We have heard from scientists and policy analysts, from Arctic communities and residents of ecosystems already impacted by the effects of climate change, and from community activists from areas such as Cancer Alley in Louisiana already breathing the toxins of the fossil fuel industry. We have shared testimonies of struggle and strategies for reducing the human impact on climate change and for achieving environmental and economic justice. The urgency of responding to climate change is undeniable; to ignore the issue means environmental and social disaster for all. The sins we commit against Mother Earth today will haunt our children and children's children tomorrow.

Statement of Solidarity

People of color, Indigenous peoples and workers bear a disproportionate health, social and economic burden of a society addicted to a fossil fuel economy. As such, they are the first victims of government inaction, corporate abuse and negligent public policy.

In solidarity, we stand together with people who are being affected now by climate change and those who will be affected in the future. We acknowledge that the people most vulnerable are disproportionately people in the global South and poor people, people of color and Indigenous peoples of the global North, including in the United States.

We are in solidarity with workers, whose health and safety are compromised by polluting industries, workers whose lives and well-being depend on their employment in polluting industries and workers who will seek new forms of employment as the world transitions from a fossil fuel economy. All workers must be made whole.

We are in solidarity with Indigenous peoples who experience the destruction of the global environment as an attack on their spiritual foundations, and with communities everywhere whose lives, homes and environment have been compromised by climate change and the industries that cause it. We acknowledge that climate change is impacting these communities. Moreover, the mechanisms that create climate change are the same ones that have advanced environmental racism in other areas. The struggles of these people, workers and communities for the environment and for justice must lead the resistance to climate change.

Call to Action

Environmental Justice organizations assert leadership on this issue. We are ready to work collectively with others to demand corporate and government accountability and justice for frontline communities and workers, the nations of the global South, and the communities of "the South within the North."

Though most affected, the voices of Indigenous peoples, people of color, low-income people and workers have been ignored to date on this issue. These communities have their own unique concerns and voices that must be included in any policy discussions about climate change.

We issue this call to action, to organize, link and advance this multigenerational struggle for a just transition to a clean and sustainable economy.

We seek to ensure an equitable climate policy that generates ample revenue to fund transitional programs and initiatives that assist people most vulnerable.

We acknowledge that the U.S. is a major contributor to the problem of human-contributed climate change and maintains a unique position as a world leader. The science is clear; negative impacts of global

warming will accelerate under present policies. The U.S. has thus far abdicated a leadership role to the long-term detriment of the entire world.

We believe that steps to reduce global warming can and should protect workers, low-income households, communities and the economy. No policy should be implemented at the expense of countries of the global South or otherwise promote environmental racism. The choice of technologies able to protect the workplace and environment should be available to all.

In fact, sensible choices do exist. We support energy-efficiency, conservation and renewable energy policies and practices. Global warming policies should not give away the right to pollute. We oppose any "grandfathering" of polluting industries. We support the precautionary principle—caution in the face of scientific uncertainty. In addition, we advocate for a transition to an economy devoted to sustaining quality of life and community health. We pledge to work to eliminate dependence on fossil fuels.

We seek responsible action now. The United States' responsibility in creating the problem requires significant reductions within the U.S. We urge the readers of this document to support our collective effort for an environmentally clean, safe, productive and just society free of the effects of global climate change. Policymakers must include the voices of those most vulnerable to climate change in the development of just and effective climate change policy now.

*Signatories present at the World Conference Against Racism included: Dr. Robert Bullard, Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University/National Black Environmental Justice Network); Pamela Chiang (Asian Pacific Environmental Network); Felicia Davis (Ben E. Mays Center, National Education Resource Center); Tom Goldtooth (Indigenous Environmental Network); Ansje Miller (Redefining Progress); Dr. Yvonne Scruggs-Leftwich (Black Leadership Forum); Ruben Solis (Southwest Workers Union); Amit Srivastava (Corpwatch); Jenice View (Just Transition Alliance); Dr. Beverly Wright (Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Xavier University/National Black Environmental Justice Network). Issued on September 4, 2001 in Durban, South Africa, at the World Summit Against Racism.