

Race, Poverty & the Environment

A newsletter for social and environmental justice

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July 1990

There is no way to reorganize society along ecologically sound lines without challenging head-on the powerful, politically conservative forces — more plainly speaking, the corporations that now control the system of production.

-- Barry Commoner

Inner Cities to Join Ecology Debate

Disadvantaged inner city communities have a message for environmentalists, according to the founders of the Urban Habitat Program, an innovative project of Earth Island Institute designed to bring perspectives of under-represented populations into the environmental movement. Blacks and other minority groups are gaining insights about the value of their own experience as a source of leadership in efforts to help society as a whole move away from wasteful environmental practices toward sustainable urban communities.

"The destruction of the forest and the abandonment of the inner city are linked," according to Carl Anthony, director of the Urban Habitat Program. "Both patterns are the result of placing short term private gain over long term public interest, placing a higher value

>> see INNER CITY, page 11

The Struggle for Cultural Diversity

by Winona LaDuke

I want to talk about the need for cultural diversity as well as biological diversity, and the need to look holistically at the problem. First, I want to talk about something from our own culture, which is the Anishinabe culture, the Algonquin culture. We have an economic system, a whole value system, and pan of that value system — part of our whole way of living — is a concept called reciprocity.

When I go out and I harvest wild rice up on our lakes in Northern Minnesota, on our reservation. I bring tobacco, saymah, and I put the tobacco out. I make an offering when I go out to harvest, and then I collect different things from the land. We do the same thing when we go out hunting — when we go out hunting, whether its for wapsh or atuk, rabbit or deer, all the different parts of the creation. we give something in order to get something back from the creation. We have a reciprocal agreement, and this confirms our relationship to the creation — we're a part, an integral pan of the ecosystem. We're an integral part of the ecosystem in our areas. Reciprocity is an essential part of our value system. which is very contrary to the

industrial value system and the industrial society in the United States.

The industrial system is based on capitalism, and essentially the mainstay of capitalism is that you put things like labor and capital and resources together for the purpose of accumulation — you take more than you need. That is the whole essence of capitalism, to accumu-

When we go out hunting, whether its for wapsh or atuk, rabbit or deer, we give something in order to get something back... Reciprocity is an essential part of our value system.

late more than you need. In conaast, the essence of our relationship to the creation. the essence of reciprocity, is that we take only what we need.

I mention this because in the history of this continent, in the history of industrialism, the battle cry has been "manifest destiny," the perceived God-given mandate to exploit the resources and the people of this land. and of the whole world. Because of that mandate. and because of the industrial system. which has obviously wreaked destruc-

>> see RECIPROCITY, page 12

The response to the first issue of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* has been more enthusiastic than we could have imagined. We have received dozens of encouraging letters, telephone calls, reports and documents from people all across the country, who shared their interest in our project. Several national newsletters have carried announcements about *RPE*. Copies of *RPE* have been distributed at perhaps a dozen environmental conferences, and someone called to say that photocopies are being made in Europe. We have much, much more information than we can publish.

Because of the volume of material, we had to leave out several of the pieces we promised last time, notably the reportback from the Eco-Cities conference and several articles submitted. Please be patient -- we're just getting going and working it out.

In order to make *RPE* more useful, we have decided to organize each future issue around a single topic linking

multicultural communities and social justice to a major environmental theme. Some of the topics we are considering are: air quality as a social justice issue; pesticides; environmental education in multicultural communities; transportation alternatives and environmental

Editors' Notes

justice: rural poverty and the environment; ecological restoration strategies in poor and multicultural communities; water resources and the poor; the crisis of trash. If your work focuses on any of these themes, please let us know, so we can mention it in that issue.

As you will see on page 15, we have accepted advertising. We are doing so under the following principles:

1. Advertising will not be accepted from polluters or organizations we deem oppressive.
2. Advertising will not ever make up more than about 10 percent of the newsletter, or no more than one full page per eight-page or 12-page issue, or two pages of a 16 or 20 page issue.

We feel that accepting advertising using these principles can both offer our readers a service -- if you'd like a job doing environmental work, see the ad on page 15 -- and help us defray the costs of the newsletter. Let us know what you think.

For environmental justice,

Carl Anthony *Luke Cole*
 Carl Anthony Luke Cole

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RPE

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Pollution and other forms of environmental degradation take a heavy toll on the black community. Using pre-existing grassroots and social action organizations, blacks are beginning to challenge government and private industries that would turn their communities into the nation's dumping grounds for health-threatening toxins.

The modern environmental movement grew out of the civil rights and anti-war movements of the late 1960s. Student activists broke away from those movements to form the core of the environmental movement in the early 1970s. Many student environmental activists had hopes of bringing environmental reforms to the urban poor. These activists, however, were met with resistance and suspicion. Growing tension between the environmental movement and the social equity movement contributed to environmentalism being tagged as "elitist."

The Politics of Pollution

Exposure to environmental toxins varies across population groups, as does a community's response. The vastly different action strategies employed by middle-income white communities and lower-income black communities can be explained by each's access to power. The middle class-dominated environmental movement of the 1960s and

The Quest for Environmental Equity: Mobilizing the Black Community for Social Change

by Robert D. Bullard & Beverly H. Wright

1970s built an impressive political base for environmental reform and regulatory relief. This relief, however, did not address the disproportionate burden of pollution carried by the urban poor and minority residents.'

Few environmentalists realized the implications of the NIMBY (Not in My Back Yard) phenomenon.² The hazardous waste facilities, garbage dumps and polluting industries were likely to end up in somebody's backyard, and more often than not, these locally unwanted land uses ("LULUs") ended up in poor, powerless black communities, rather than in affluent suburbs. This pattern has proven to be the rule, even though the benefits derived from industrial waste production are directly related to affluence.' Public officials and private industry have in many cases responded to the NIMBY phenomenon using the "PIBBY" principle: "Place in Blacks Back Yard."³

Although concern about the environment cuts across racial and class lines, environmental activism has been most evident among individuals who have above-average education, greater access to economic resources, and a greater sense of personal efficacy. Mainstream environmental organizations have been late in broadening their base of support to include blacks and other minorities, the poor, and working-class persons.

The civil rights movement has its roots in the Southern United States.

emergence of a small cadre of blacks who see environmental discrimination as a civil rights issue.

The Environmental Equity Movement

A growing number of grassroots organizations and their leaders are adopting confrontational strategies (e.g., protests, picketing, political pressure, litigation, etc.) to reduce and eliminate environmental threats. The national black political leadership has also demonstrated a willingness to take a strong pro-environment stance. The League of Conservation Voters, for example, has for years given the Congressional Black Caucus high marks for its excellent pro-environment voting record.

Toxic waste disposal has generated protests in many communities across the country. The first national protest by blacks came in 1982 after predominantly black Warren County, North Carolina, was selected as the burial site for 32,000 cubic yards of soil contaminated with highly toxic PCBs. Black civil rights activists, political leaders, and local residents marched against the construction of the PCB landfill in their community, and more than 400 demonstrators were jailed. Although the protests were unsuccessful in halting the landfill construction, they marked the first time blacks mobilized a nationally broad-based group to protest environ-

Southern racism deprived blacks of "political rights, economic opportunity, social justice, and human

dignity." The new environmental equity movement also is centered in the South, a region where marked ecological disparities exist between black and white communities. The 1980s have seen the

People are becoming more aware of how racial discrimination and oppression are reinforced through the designed physical environment in which we live. In many insidious ways, the process by which our habitat is planned and built keeps people isolated, disempowered and repressed. A deepening understanding of the impact of the urban habitat on peoples' lives, and how our habitat can be employed for our em-

and the planning of entire cities has evolved as a professional service to the privileged few. The accumulation of capital enables private patrons, corporations and governments to create physical settings designed to protect their bounty and strengthen their empire. Like the military triangle, the private and corporate patrons, the architects and the building contractors reinforce each other in constructing large and ostentatious structures for their own profit and ego gratification. The resulting skyscrapers provide regimented lives to ever-growing masses of people.

The most dramatic

eminent

Urban Bar-raising: Building Community Through Environment

by Karl Linn

powerment, should contribute to our liberation.

All cultures shape their habitat. Traditionally, indigenous people the world over have built beautiful homes with local materials. Villages and towns which nestled harmoniously in the landscape. Constructing their own homes instilled in the builders feelings of accomplishment and self-confidence, and generated a deepened sense of belonging to a place.

Today, labor-displacing machines are creating impersonal and alienating buildings without human hands. Massive, regimented apartment buildings and office complexes intimidate and isolate their occupants from one another. Reducing people to passive spectators in their own living and working environments contributes to their experience of powerlessness, as their sense of self-reliance becomes undermined.

Over the centuries, the architecture of buildings and open spaces

pression of social stratification, oppression and racism is in the location of peoples' communities. Living on the "wrong side of the tracks" or the "wrong side of the highway" separates the have-nots from the haves — usually people of color from the white middle class. Similarly, each higher foot of elevation that houses occupy on the hills of cities suggests a proportionate increase in investment portfolio of the owners.

The majority of inner-city dwellers, largely people of color, live in declining neighborhoods and substandard housing in the flatlands of cities. These are also usually the designated locations for polluting industries and incinerators, and dumping grounds for toxic waste. The African-American and Latino residents of these neighborhoods struggle to survive despite abject poverty, unemployment, and no prospect of change. Many succumb to despair and escape into drug and violence.

At the same time, the affluent minority — the

white middle class — lives in the expanding gentrified quarters of cities, saturated with extravagant consumer offerings. Their neighborhoods adjacent to but in contrast to the "others." In the words of Lester Pearson, former president of Canada. "No planet can survive half slave and half free. Half engulfed in misery, half careening along toward unlimited consumption. Neither ecology nor morality can survive the contrasts."

Community Design Centers

Grassroots organizations and progressive social movements, especially in their early stages of growth, have paid little attention to their built environment. It seemed intractable and too expensive, and consequently irrelevant to their struggles. Yet the spaces in which we live affect our spirit and action much more than we realize. Oppressive physical surroundings perpetuate and reinforce their residents' oppression.

During the last 30 years of working with a variety of grassroots organizations and social movements, environmental designers have learned to work with highly conscious and inspired but often unskilled volunteers, and with little money. Organizations such as Planners for Equal Opportunities, the Planners' Network, and Architects/Planners/Designers for Social Responsibility have worked closely with neighborhood residents on affordable housing, control of land for community open space, and counter-gentrification strategies to stave off the displacement of the poorer residents. Community design centers also offer economic advice, trainings and employment.

To encourage active involvement of residents in the restoration of the private and public spaces in their neighborhoods, participatory planning and self-help management and construction methods have been developed. This is to ensure that peoples' active participation, their "sweat equity," will produce material equity and growing control over the habitat that they restore. The sense of satisfaction in joint accom-

>> see URBAN, page 5

ONE. Recognize that building bridges to minorities is a necessity if the movement is to succeed. This means accepting the fact that other people have legitimate environmental, social and economic priorities that may differ from those articulated by the environmental establishment — and realizing that political relationships are a two-way street. Don't take anyone's support for granted.

TWO. Aggressively recruit minority professionals, preferably people with close relationships to minority organizations. No other efforts can

unteering. Recruit students from community colleges and historically black colleges and universities.

SIX. Establish a presence at minority-group conventions and meetings. You can bet that industry will be there.

SEVEN. Establish toll-free numbers for consumer information on issues of interest to urban and low-income people — lead paint poisoning, asbestos, toxic dumping, and so on.

EIGHT. Make minority people and their issues visible in advertising and promotional campaigns. Publicly commit

Blacks and Greens

What can the environmental movement do to reach out to minorities? Here are ten recommendations...

succeed without this step.

THREE. Stress the jobs-creation aspect of environmental programs. Make sure all environmental legislation includes generous provisions for retraining and/or relocating workers who may lose their jobs due to new regulations.

FOUR. Ensure that minorities get their fair share of jobs and business opportunities created by recycling and other environmental reforms. Incorporate affirmative-action and minority-set-aside goals into new rules and regulations.

FIVE. Offer paid internships or fellowships to low-income students. Unlike their more well-to-do counterparts, few can afford the luxury of vol-

to spending as much on saving children as on saving whales or rainforests.

NINE. Offer some of the movement's considerable lobbying and political clout in support of minority issues, such as affirmative action and sanctions against South Africa. This may make some environmentalists uncomfortable, but both justice and political give-and-take demand it.

TEN. Share the movement's growing financial resources with emerging minority environmental organizations.

— Paul Ruffins

This article originally appeared in the March/April 1990 New Age Journal, and is reprinted with the permission of the author.

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plishment of tangible restoration work is an empowering experience, contributing to the growing solidarity and community among the participants.

For neighborhood grassroots organizations to tackle restoration projects effectively requires a realistic assessment of available human and physical resources. Small improvements — for example, the clearing of a vacant lot to build a neighborhood commons consisting of a community garden, a sitting area and a playground — bring people together to improve the quality of their daily lives. Restoration of community open spaces is also

relatively easy to accomplish, preparing people to tackle more demanding efforts such as the restoration of buildings. To begin with, people could also paint murals on the bleak surfaces of neighborhood buildings, murals depicting their struggles and aspirations. People could also paint over the billboards which tower over urban neighborhoods, ruthlessly exploiting peoples' vulnerabilities with advertisements for liquor and cigarettes. The Rev. Calvin Butts, who ran such an effort in Harlem, says, "I started this campaign because alcohol and tobacco are the leading killers of people in this community."

Community-based restoration

workshop centers could also be set up and accumulate tools and equipment. These centers could conduct research and development in creative recycling of salvage and surplus building materials, to produce marketable products which would strengthen the economic viability of the organization. The centers could also serve as training grounds for neighborhood residents and young people. In time, these workshops would be magnets of creative work, social hubs of inspiration and communication.

Urban Barnraising

Despite the evolution of human

>> see URBAN, page 11

REPORTBACK...

Forum on the Siting of Toxic Activities in Poor Communities and Communities of Color. Boalt Hall. LC-Berkeley. April 17, 1990.

Fighting LULUs: Effective Community Organizing

The siting of toxic activities in poor communities and communities of color was the focus of a symposium held in April at the University of California's law school in Berkeley and organized by the Committee on Race, Poverty and Environmental Justice. More than 300 community activists, environmentalists and students participated in the conference and considered the links between the environment, human rights, poverty law, and community development.

The problem is clear. Polluting industries, toxic waste dumps and incinerators, freeways, pipelines, and prisons are disproportionately sited in low-income and minority communities. Robert Bullard, a sociologist at the University of California at Riverside, noted that the **pattern** of siting of municipal landfills and other "LULUs" (locally unwanted land uses) is not random: "LULUs happen to **be** where poor people and people of color live." Bullard noted that in Houston, more than 75 percent of the municipal landfills were located in predominantly Black communities, although the city's population is only 25 percent Black. Houston's pattern of siting waste facilities is not unique among cities in this country.

The success of affluent white communities in fending off noxious facilities **has** often driven these facilities into poor and minority communities which **are** unable to offer **strong** and organized resistance to polluters and policymakers. According to Bullard, "a direct result of NIMBY ('Not in My Back Yard') is PIBBY ('Place in Blacks' Back Yard')."

Both Bullard and David Hahn-Baker, of the National Wildlife Federa-

tion, criticized the traditional environmental groups for paying scant attention to the quality of life in poor communities and emphasized that environmental justice and social justice **are** inextricably linked. "Our definition of 'environmental issue' must be broadened from birds and bunnies, or even toxic waste, to the issues of low income housing and health care," urged Hahn-Baker.

Moreover, environmentalists have a responsibility to protect low income and minority peoples, who are the most environmentally-stressed sectors of our species, and help them "develop a habitat where they can grow and propagate."

The symposium emphasized solutions to the problem of siting of toxic facilities in minority communities. Community organizations and environmental groups can build effective coalitions to press for improvements in health, housing, and environmental quality in poor communities. As communities become more organized and empowered, they will **better** defend themselves against abuse by polluters.

One positive example was described by Sheila Cannon, organizer of Concerned Citizens of South-Central Los Angeles. Cannon's group forged a successful, **broad-based** coalition which stopped the City of Los Angeles from building a large garbage incinerator (LANCER I) in that predominantly **African-American** neighborhood. Cannon and Concerned Citizens emphasized to numerous groups throughout the Los Angeles basin that "if they're going to put an incinerator in our neighborhood, they'll put one in yours. So, if you don't help us, you're going to get one, **too**."

The East San Francisco Bay city of Richmond offers another example of **grassroots** organizing against toxic facilities. In that city, over 350 industrial facilities store or release into the environment more than 200 hazardous **chemicals**, according to Michael Bellevue of Citizens for a **Better** Environment (CBE). Richmond's

plants annually emit about 800,000 pounds of toxics into the **atmosphere** and produce 179,000 tons of hazardous waste.

The low income African-American and Latino residents closest to these facilities have countered the toxic onslaught by **forming** the West County Toxics Coalition. The Coalition's goal, according to its lead organizer Henry Clark, is not to close down the local industries, but, rather, to reduce their toxics emissions, monitor air and water quality, **assess** public health risks, and establish community warning systems. The Toxics Coalition and CBE have challenged one of the community's largest plants, the Chevron Chemical Co., in numerous legal and direct actions.

Both the **South-Central** Los Angeles and Richmond **cases** demonstrate how **grassroots** organizations can empower communities of color and successfully prevent or reduce toxic activities. Moreover, they exemplify the intersection of environmental law, human rights law, and **poverty** law. Joel Reynolds, an attorney with the **Natural** Resources Defense Council in Los Angeles, **stressed** that environmental law can serve **grassroots** organizations working to prevent the siting of hazardous facilities in low-income communities. In Reynolds' experience, success has resulted when a **strong** community organization focuses on a discrete **project**. The group must have resources and stamina, and be able to **obtain** and translate technically complex **information**.

The overriding theme of the conference was that we all must recognize our common **interests**. Environmental groups abdicate their **responsibility** and lose **credibility** by ignoring issues concerning people of color. Low income and minority communities on the front lines of the **struggle** to protect their environments from toxic facilities also need the scientific and legal expertise of the national environmental groups.

-- Daniel Suman

"Environmental Racism: Policy Decisions that Impact Disenfranchised Communities," panel at the California Coalition for the Future of Public Health Conference. Los Angeles, April 25, 1990.

Public Health and Environmental Racism

At the California Coalition for the Future of Public Health (CCFPH) Conference in Los Angeles on April 25, 1990, the Health Promotion track sponsored a panel on "Environmental Racism: Policy Decisions that Impact Disenfranchised Communities." The session was held to examine the

Michel Gelobter, Director of Environmental Quality for New York City.

Assemblywoman Roybal-Allard pointed out that since "the environment" means many different things to different people, environmental problems cannot be solved unless attitudes change to include everyone in the policy-making process regardless of economic, social or racial status. She noted that strong grassroots movements in communities of color are achieving a political base to counter policy decisions that permit the dumping of toxics in such communities. As a state legislator, Roybal-Allard has taken an active role in addressing the environmental concerns/problems confronted

and other disenfranchised groups have to unfairly pay the price. He discussed the composition of the environmental movement, highlighting the need for greater diversity and for strategies which are inclusive of non-mainstream communities.

The session was an attempt to increase the awareness among public health professionals of the concerns of people of color and other disenfranchised communities as they combat critical environmental problems. In defining California's public health agenda for the 1990s, public health professionals can play an important and active role in shifting strategies and consciousness to respond more appropriately to the environmental health needs of people of color and other disenfranchised groups. This means accepting the fact that these other communities have legitimate environmental, social, health and economic priorities that may differ from the traditional approaches of the public health profession.

-- Magdalena Avila, MPH, MSW

Since "the environment" means many different things to different people, environmental problems cannot be solved unless attitudes change to include everyone in the policy-making process.

"The Grassroots Toxics Movement," panel at the National Lawyers Guild Convention, Austin, TX, June 2, 1990.

consequences of public policy decisions which too often ignore, and have historically overlooked, the environmental health problems affecting people of color and other disenfranchised groups.

Low-income people, rural residents, people of color and poor white communities — people who live in economically deprived areas with low land costs and who have little political clout — are frequently targeted by polluters. The session touched on this and many other issues using political, epidemiological and theoretical frameworks. Panel presenters included Assemblywoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, 53rd District in Los Angeles, Wendel Brunner, Director of Health, Contra Costa County (California) Health Services Department, and

by her constituents, a large majority of whom are people of color.

Dr. Brunner used the case study of Contra Costa County to elaborate on the many different dimensions of environmental problems which contribute to environmental racism. He pointed out that economics in addition to race plays a critical role in such selections. He proposed the development of policies which guarantee a fairer process for the distribution of hazardous waste sites within the state/county.

Gelobter laid out a theoretical framework for examining environmental racism and areas for consideration when developing policy. He sought to prevent discrimination through closer analysis of those factors put in place whereby people of color

Pollution Prevention & Grassroots Activism

At the recent National Lawyers Guild annual conference in Austin, Texas, over 300 lawyers, legal workers, and law students filled the main meeting room to listen to the Plenary Discussion, "The Grassroots Toxics Movement." The tone was set early on by Barry Commoner, who argued that solutions to environmental problems require structural reform of society and are integrally linked to the struggles for economic and social justice. A related theme was articulated by all the panelists: a new source of thinking

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about tactics and long range vision for the environmental movement comes from the grassroots, from working people, people of color and women who are defending themselves from environmental poisons in their neighborhoods and in their workplaces.

Commoner began the discussion by telling people what most already knew: the massive governmental effort to clean up the environment, begun in the 1970s, has largely failed. The level of most pollutants in the air and water has either remained the same or increased in the last 20 years. To figure out why the effort failed, Commoner urged people to look at the handful of pollutants which have been reduced, agents like lead, DDT, PCBs and Strontium 90 -- pollutants where the government did not try to control the facilities which produced them, but rather eliminated them from the environment altogether.

A simple principle emerges, says Commoner: "If you don't put something into the environment, it's not there." Underlying this simple concept is the distinction between control and prevention of environmental poisons. Twenty years of environmental regulation has shown that controlling the level of pollutants in the environment does not work. A control strategy also has deleterious implications for poor people. Controlling pollutants means establishing standards of "acceptable" levels of the pollutants. Regulators go about this by balancing the benefits of the toxin with the costs in terms of human lives. Because the cost-benefit analysis is a quantitative process, the analyst must convert human lives into dollars. This means that people with little earning power are valued less, and the cost-benefit balance is weighted against them. "That's one reason," says Commoner, "why toxic waste incinerators are put in poor neighborhoods, and why pollution as a whole has a disproportionate impact on poor people."

A prevention strategy, on the other hand, means changing the production process to eliminate the pollutant entirely. This entails, for example, burning less fossil fuels for energy production, using fewer chemicals in

agricultural production, and developing non-polluting modes of transportation. A technological transformation of this magnitude, says Commoner, requires that the production process itself become more democratic and accountable to popular control. The reason for this is simple. The decisions to create pollution-generating technologies (gas guzzling cars, chemically intensive food production, etc.) have been made privately, with one criteria in mind: maximizing profits.

Putting human needs before corporate profits is a tall order. But, as the other panelists reminded the audience, it is a principle around which grass roots environmental activists have been organizing for years.

John O'Connor, director of the National Toxics Campaign, provided a concrete example of how environmental activists are focusing on the production process in an effort to change the power relations between corporations and neighboring communities. Around the country, local groups are engaged in "Good Neighbor Campaigns," an attempt to exercise local control by negotiating with the local corporations to get them to prevent pollution at its source, even if that means going beyond what the law requires. Obviously this requires a large dose of community organizing to build the political leverage necessary to persuade corporations to alter their production processes. One of the more successful examples of this strategy, according to O'Connor, is in Richmond, California, where the West County Toxics Coalition is currently at the bargaining table with Chevron urging them to reduce their release of poisons into the air and the San Francisco Bay.

Rebecca Harrington and Mandy

Hawes reminded the group that any environmental movement worth its salt must recognize that environmental poisons in the workplace cause tens of thousands of deaths each year and constitute one of the largest "environmental" problems we face. Harrington, a longtime United Farm Workers (UFW) organizer in Texas, pointed out that Alar was banned as soon as middle-class consumers realized its adverse health effects. Why, she wondered

A longtime United Farm Workers organizer pointed out that Alar was banned as soon as middle-class consumers realized its adverse health effects. Why, she wondered aloud, have those same people been so indifferent to the plight of farmworkers who are daily exposed directly to hundreds of chemicals far more dangerous than Alar?

aloud. have those same people been so indifferent to the plight of farmworkers who are daily exposed directly to hundreds of chemicals far more dangerous than Alar? Harrington emphasized the point made by all the panelists: that people with direct exposure to toxics often have a more sophisticated understanding of environmental hazards than do professional regulators analyzing the problem from far away. The first table-grape boycott of 1965, for example, had as a key demand the total elimination of DDT, a pesticide that the federal government did not fully ban until 1973.

Transforming the production process
>> see GRASSROOTS, page 10

Resources

Articles & Reports of Interest

Charles Cole. "Triple Jeopardy: Race, Poverty and Toxic Waste." *Response* (April 1990), p. 26-27. Describes toxics problems and incidents in El Paso, TX, and Juarez, Mexico.

Hazardous Waste Sites and the Rural Poor: A Preliminary Assessment, a new report of Clean Sites, the industry-funded group set up by William Reilly to monitor Superfund sites, finds that Superfund sites in poor, rural counties are being cleaned up as fast as any other Superfund sites. We're skeptical of this report but thought you'd like to know about it -- let us know what you think. Contact: Clean Sites, 1199 North Fairfax St., Alexandria, VA 22314. 703/683-8522. The report is \$8.

Michael Karnbler, "Signs of Life. Signs of Death." *Z Magazine* (May 1990). An essay about community activism against tobacco and alcohol billboards in the South Bronx and Harlem.

Eric Mann, "Environmentalism and the Corporate Climate: Ecology and Social Meaning." *Tikkun Magazine* (March/April 1990). Reprint available from Labor/Community Strategy Center, 6454 Van Nuys Blvd. Suite 150, Van Nuys, CA 91401. 818/781-9922.

Richard Moore and Arnoldo Garcia, "Environmental Inequities." *Crossroads* (June 1990). An interview with Richard Moore about grassroots organizing in communities of color. See also *Crossroads*, below.

Mtangulizi Sanyika, **Communities at Risk: Regional Transportation Issues in the Bay Area: The Concerns of Communities of Color and Low Income Neighborhoods, and Pricing Strategies and the Transportation Needs of Marginal Communities**. Two reports of the National Economic Development Law Center, 1950 Addison Street, Suite 200, Berkeley, CA 94704. 415/548-2600.

Neil Seldman, "Social Justice and Solid Waste Management," *The Egg, A Journal of Eco-Justice*, Vol. 9, No. 2. Reprinted by the Institute for Local Self Reliance, 2425 18th Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20009. 202/232-4108.

"Uranium Enrichment Plant Battle is First of Second Nuclear Generation," a pamphlet on the proposed siting of nuclear plant in the center of a poor, African-American community in Claiborne Parish, Louisiana. Available from Nuclear Information Resource Service, 1424 16th Street, NW, Suite 601, Washington, DC 20036. 202/328-0002.

Cultural Arts

15 Ecology Songs for the Whole Family. A fun and educational tape by Candy Forest Nancy Schimmel and the Singing Rainbows Youth Ensemble, with Laurie Lewis and Rosie Radiator. Available for \$10 from Sisters Choice, 1450 Sixth Street, Berkeley, CA 94710.

Newsletters/Magazines

The African Farmer. Dedicated to the continent's small scale farmers, this publication honors the promise and possibility embodied by the tens of millions of women and men who till the soil and produce the food of Africa. Available through the Hunger Project 1338 Sutter Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.

Capitalism, Nature and Socialism. International, theoretical and and political journal of socialist ecology — including ecological Marxism and feminism. \$5/issue. P.O. Box 8467, Santa Cruz, CA 95061.

Crossroads: Contemporary Political Analysis & Left Dialogue. Published "to promote a candid appraisal of new realities: to foster dialogue on the U.S. left; to push forward the development of effective strategies for progressive and socialist activism." Pilot issue (June 1990) includes an interview with Richard Moore called "Environmental Inequities." \$24/year, 11 issues. P.O. Box 2809, Oakland, CA 94609.

Global Pesticide Monitor. Published by the Pesticide Action Network, North American Regional Center, the Monitor follows national and international pesticide news. Contact: Monica Moore, PAN, 965 Mission Street, #514, San Francisco, CA 94103.

Upcoming Events...

Women of Color at the Center: 3rd National Conference on Women of Color and the Law, October 6-7, 1990, at Stanford Law School. Speakers will be legal and non-legal scholars and practitioners who place women of color at the center in theory and practice. Info: Women of Color Conference, Stanford Law School, Stanford, CA 94305, 415/723-8014.

New Solutions: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy, is an exciting new magazine published by the Oil.

Chanical and Atomic **Workers International** Union that makes the link between the environmental movement and the union movement. \$20/year, 4 issues. P.O. Box 2812, Denver, CO 80201.

Reconstruction, a new journal of opinion that "is particularly concerned with providing a forum for uninhibited commentary on African-American politics, society and culture." \$25/year, 4 issues. 1563 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

Silicon Valley Toxus News, a publication of the Silicon Valley Toxics Coalition. News from the fight against toxics in the micro-electronics and high-tech industries, including successful local campaigns for groundbreaking ordinances. \$20/year, 4 issues. Contact: Ted Smith, SVTC, 760 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95112. 415/287-6707.

Working Notes On Community Right to Know. A newsletter for individuals and organizations interested in combating toxic pollution. Published by the Working Group, a coalition of more than a dozen national environmental and public interest groups. Contact: Paul Oran, US PIRG, 215 Pennsylvania Avenue, SE, Washington DC 20003. 202/546-9707.

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to prevent pollution also requires that environmentalists fashion conversion strategies so that working people do not lose their jobs, according to Mandy Hawes. Hawes, a workers' compensation attorney from the Silicon Valley, has spent the last 15 years working with assembly line workers in the microelectronics industry who are exposed to a host of toxics in their workplaces. Hawes called for the creation of a Superfund for workers, to retrain workers displaced from pollution-generating technologies and to pay for medical help for workers "on the front line." Hawes sees a natural alliance between labor and environmental activists, but warned the audience that for this coalition to come to fruition, environmentalists must sensitively address the needs and concerns of working people.

Cynthia Hamilton, a professor of Pan-African Studies at Cal State-Los Angeles, spoke of the labor-environmental coalition that emerged in South-Central Los Angeles to oppose the proposed LANCER Solid Waste Incinerator (see Vol. I, No. 1 of Race,

Poverty & the Environment).

The people of color with whom she worked saw the proposed incinerator not merely as an "environmental" problem, but as yet another disruptive development issue that would displace people,

and add few jobs to the community. *and* cause environmental harm. A coalition between workers and environmentalists, however, is only as good as the solutions which are proposed. Hamilton agreed with Commoner in warning people not to be seduced by consumer strategies to end pollution or toxic waste. "Look to the corporate source of pollution," says Hamilton, "the production process itself is where we need to

put the blame."

Hamilton argued that people of color, organizing in their communities, are making a lasting contribution to the environmental movement: They are changing the movement's language from one of pollution control and regulation to one of justice and economic development; they are changing the movement's focus from animals and pristine environments to urban areas and disenfranchised communities; and they are changing the structure of the environmental movement itself, from a top-down, centralized organization run by experts and professionals to a loosely structured, grassroots organization, run by ordinary people and democratically accountable to its constituents.

This last point has always been a credo for grassroots organizers. All the panelists agreed that because the dominant forms of hierarchy and oppression are so ingrained within us, the struggle to combat them must be taken quite seriously. Put simply, the environmental movement itself must reflect the kind of change envisioned for society as a whole. At its best, the

People of color, organizing in their communities, are making a lasting contribution to the environmental movement: They are changing the movement's language from one of pollution control and regulation to one of justice.

movement should be multi-racial, democratic and lead by people with direct experience of environmental degradation. As became clear after more than two hours of discussion at the NLG conference, the grassroots toxics movement is embodying these principles. The movement reminds us that, as with virtually all pressing social problems, long-lasting solutions require coalition building. uncovering the

structural roots of the problem, and creating democratic structures to control corporate power.

— Brian Bloom

Meeting of the Coordinating Council, Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice, June 8-9, Albuquerque, NM.

Network Plans Future Actions

Coming back together for the first time since forming in April, the coordinating council of the Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice met in Albuquerque, NM, in early June.

The council had two special guests from Washington, DC, Art Ray and Alex Varela, both attorneys for the US Environmental Protection Agency. Ray and Varela talked about EPA sitting on toxic waste dumps in communities composed of people of color, the lack of staffing and resources for departments affecting people of color (farmworkers and pesticide poisonings, for example), and how EPA hiring practices exclude people of color.

The council then discussed strategies with Art and Alex. The need for a training and action institute which would focus on the training needs of communities of people of color was affirmed by the group. Such an institute could provide training in neighborhoods near contamination sites. We must have our own experts on economic and environmental justice that

will be a tool and resource for communities of color.

Some of the options we discussed include filing for Endangered Species status -- one Endangered Species petition might be for an indigenous population being impacted by a known and well-documented toxin, like a Native American community facing radioactivity from uranium mining.

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Another **strategy** is holding hearings in **locations** that are threatened by toxics. This is to give a voice to people in affected communities, and **bring publicity** to their issues. Whether they speak Spanish or English, residents in the **Southwest** have right to **speak out** and **be heard**. A **tour with children** from communities affected by toxics was also discussed. Manuel Vasquez of the **Maricopa County Organizing Project** informed the group that a special U.N. observer would be in the country **soon** to document instances of Human Rights violations in the U.S., and poisoning of our communities could **be** documented.

Richard Moore of the Southwest Organizing Project gave an update on the letter sent in February to the "Group of 10" national environmental organizations. We have had responses from the National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund, Audubon Society, Wilderness Society, Friends of the **Earth/Environmental Policy Institute**, Ocean Society, Natural Resources Defense Council and the **Izaak Walton League**. Although **all** agreed on the need for dialogue, the tone of the responses varied. One of our issues with the Group of 10 is the **lack of people of color on the boards of directors** — we want minorities on the Boards, but not simply as tokens. The environment is not a white, black, brown or Indian issue — it affects us **all**.

We are in the planning stages of the Regional Activist Dialogue II for September. We continue to move forward with our local struggles, and to develop a **strong regional network** which will demand **eco-justice** far our communities.

— **Marta R. Salinas**

The Coordinating Council of the Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice is made up of:

Richard Moore, South West Organizing Project
 Arizona: Rae Augustine, Tucsonians for a Clean Environment, Tucson
 Juma Lopez
 Manuel Vasquez, Maricopa Co. Organizing Project, Phoenix
 California: Henry Clark, West County Toxics Coalition
 Cynthia Hamilton, Labor/Community Strategy

Center, Los Angeles

Marta Salinas, McFarland
 Ernie Witt, West County Toxics Coalition
 Colorado: Mike Maes, Neighbors for a Toxics Free Community, Denver
 Lorraine Granado
 Nevada: Odessa Ramirez, Rural Alliance for Military Accountability, Carson City
 New Mexico: Father Bill Sanchez, Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, Villanueva
 Sylvia Ledesma
 Oklahoma: Vicki McCullough, Native Americans for a Clean Environment, Tahlequa
 Marilyn Garcia, National Toxics Campaign, Oklahoma City
 Texas: Ruben Solis, Southwest Public Workers Union, San Antonio
 Antonio Diaz

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on private profit than on the protection of life.

"We chop down the **trees** to build suburban sprawl. Suburban sprawl eats up farmland on the metropolitan fringe. requires more freeways with attendant congestion, pollution and waste of fossil fuels. In order to pay for this new development -- for new shopping centers, schools, public health and safety services **on** the suburban fringe -- whole neighborhoods, factory buildings, **schools**, stores and people must be **abandoned**. These abandoned neighborhoods become the waste **dumps** of industrial society, **places** where poor people and people of color live. To **correct** these patterns, to protect our **neighborhoods**, to save our precious **natural resources**, new socially-just and ecologically sustainable urban and **metropolitan** priorities are needed. **People of color and working people must take a more aggressive role in making decisions about our shared urban environment.**"

Earth Island's Urban Habitat Program is a model environmental program linking such concerns of urban multicultural populations for **protection** and restoration of their **neighborhoods** to protection and **restoration** of the biosphere. Members of the Urban Habitat Program policy board are Carl Anthony, **Ellie Goodwin**, Victor **Lewis**, **Karl Linn**, Arthur **Monroe**, **Cordell Reagon**, Eleanor **Waldon**, and Halima al **Zahid**. For more information contact Urban Habitat Program, Earth Island Institute, 300 Broadway, San Francisco, CA 94133. 415/788-3666.

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habitat-making into a function of elite patronage, building **traditions** which engender cooperative participation and community are still alive. The old American tradition of **barnraising**, for example, generates cooperative spirit and sense of community. A farmer alone was unable to carry the long, heavy beams necessary for the barn. In order to **survive**, European settlers had to engage in mutual aid and erect each barn as a cooperative effort. As they worked together, they experienced their interdependence. Though Africans and Native Americans were excluded from these **barnraisings**, they had their own traditions of **barnraising**.

Our disintegrating urban habitats with their multitudes of unemployed and homeless people are the new frontiers for restoration and urban **barnraising**. Restoration efforts should aspire toward environmentally, economically and socially sustainable development at the **grassroots** level. Urban **barnraisings** can be inspiring, celebratory events, bringing together large numbers of people to work cooperatively.

Affirmation of cultural pluralism at the **grassroots** is beginning to transform the image of urban neighborhoods. Ethnic, lifestyle and religious diversity is becoming impressively visible through large murals, building design, and public open spaces. With the passage of time the colorful richness of human **expression** can imbue the fabric of peoples' habitat with the vibrant spectrum of the rainbow.

The rigor and discipline of restoration **work**, and the cooperative spirit **that barnraisings** engender, promise to **prepare a fertile soil** for the growth of **community** among people, the very **roots** of democracy.

Karl Linn is a landscape architect, educator and environmental psychologist. He is a founding board member of Architects/Designers/Planners for Social Responsibility and serves on the board of the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG). With Carl Anthony, he is a co-founder of Earth Island's Urban Habitat Program

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tion and devastation in our communities — and which has caused the extinction of more species in the past 150 years than since the Ice Age — the industrial society and the indigenous people will always be enemies. There is no reconciliation between industrial society and people of the land. There will never be a **reconciliation** between them.

This fundamental polarization puts indigenous people, and other people of color, in a position to begin to talk about the need for **structural** change of society. Any future solution we look at cannot come from industrial society. It has to come from a much broader context and recognizing that is part of the problem we are facing. The tendency of industrial society is to look to reform the society, not to change or to challenge the structural basis of the problem. There is inherent in **industrial** society a **structural** problem.

What we talk about in the **short** term — and I find this acceptable — is things like recycling and the greening of the market, but in the long term we must talk about a fundamental change in the way we live. We must **learn** to live in a society that is not based on conquest, but in a society that is based on survival.

Indigenous people, and people of color, have never had **access** to the pie in this country — we have systematically been deprived of access to industrial society. Indian **people are** the poorest people in this country (**There** is no reason that we should be the poorest people in this country — we should in fact be the richest people in the country, but the fact is that we have been dispossessed of our resources). But **because** indigenous people **are** the **poorest** people in this country, and **other** people of color **are poor** as well. **because** we have never had access to the pie, we **are** in a different position, and I think a qualitatively better position. to

resist industrial society and to resist the pie.

We must all of course join in this struggle, but for some it will be more difficult. Privilege in this country is

We don't just need places where the toucan and jaguar can live. We need places where we can live. Indigenous people are an integral part of the ecosystem.

based on skin color. It is also based on sex. It is also based on class. And because of that, it is a bigger **struggle** for people of lighter pigmentation to resist the society. They have a larger **stake** than we do.

A Holistic View

The tendency in the environmental movement (and the tendency generally) is not to look in a holistic manner at **the future**, and we need to get away from that. We need to look at things like cultural diversity and not just biological diversity. We don't **just** need places in the Amazon where the toucan and the jaguar *can* live. We need **places** where the **Yanomama** can live. **Where** the **Kayapo** can live, **where** the **Ache** can live. All of those indigenous people **are integral** parts of their ecosystem.

We also need places where the **Inishinabe** can live, where the **Yurok** can live, where the **Dakota** and the **Dene** can live. **We are** an **integral** part of the **ecosystem** just as anything else. Since 1900, a tenth of **the** forest in the Amazon has disappeared, but **one indigenous nation per year** has **disappeared** in the Brazilian Amazon. **One-third** of all **groups** — **90 out of 270** — have entirely disappeared from **the** Brazilian Amazon. Corporations cannot get to the forest unless they get rid of the people.

We need to look **at** a broader context of issues **and** we need to **relearn** how to think. **Industrial** society **teaches** people to **compartmentalize**, and many of us

are beginning to resist that and look at things in a holistic manner. All of the issues **are** of course totally related.

Pollution & Blame

There are several things I'd like to bring to your attention, **several things happening today** in North America that are unacceptable. It is **unacceptable** in 1990 for people in Wisconsin to be walking around with forks and spears with an effigy of an Indian on top of **them** — that is what is going on right now in Northern Wisconsin. They call it the

Selma, Alabama of the North. There **are** white people who **are** preaching Indian-hating, saying that the Indians **are** taking **too** many fish off the lakes — they've got bumper stickers on their cars that say, "Save a fish — Spear an Indian." And they've got effigies of Indians on spears. This is unacceptable; **racism** is unacceptable. And we need to understand that the Anishinabe of Northern Wisconsin are not responsible for the decline of the fish in the **northem lakes**. Who is responsible is Potlatch, **Blandon**, and other paper companies which have caused mercury contamination and acidification of the lakes in **Northern** Wisconsin.

It is unacceptable, even more so, to **find** public policy that reflects racism in this day and age. It is more and more prevalent in the North. What we **see** in Wisconsin is a governor who continues to blame **the** Indians for declining fish populations while at the same time he opens up the North to Anaconda and **Kennecott** for a exploitation. The reality is that if indigenous people **had** control of their land **and natural** resources in Northern Wisconsin, Kennecott and Anaconda would not be **there** pillaging it. We **need** to stand by **the** Indians of Northern Wisconsin — and we need to **all understand** the relationship between the issues of racism and **environmental degradation**.

It is unacceptable in Minnesota for our people not to **control** their own land. Ninety-four percent of the land on our

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reservation in Northern Minnesota is held by non-Indians. We have a great reservation, and we have a great land base (My theory is that the better the land you had, the less of it you have today — that's the way it works in America). Today, they want to **terminate** our title to the rest of our land, to go in and clear cut our forests so that they can propose things like a nuclear waste repository for our reservation. **Our** reservation is at the headwaters of the Mississippi, and when the **Mississippi** leaves our reservation in Northern Minnesota, the water is pretty good. But I won't promise anything by the time it gets down to Minneapolis and you're **drinking** it in your glasses out there. If we had more control of our natural resources it would be a different situation. We need to begin to understand that.

Just because this society is spiritually bankrupt, it is **unacceptable** to legislate **and** judicially uphold the **destruction** of Indian religious systems in the United States. Indian people in California, according to the Supreme **Court**, don't have the right to practice their religion if a logging company wants to build a road through a sacred site. Indian people in Oregon and elsewhere do not have a right to **use** peyote, and our people do not have a right to use different kinds of **feathers or** other skins if state laws say that they can't use them. Indian people in the Southwest don't have a right to pray and have ceremonies in the Grand Canyon if the nuclear **industry wants** to go in to mine uranium.

These **are** critical environmental issues. We **practice** our religion in places **that are sacred**, and those places **are** being **destroyed** by **industrial** society. And it is not only an Indian **religious freedom** issue — it's an issue of **survival** for all of **us**.

It is also unacceptable to flood Indian lands in **Northern** Canada. I find

it totally ironic: If you lived in Paris, you would not wake up one day and find all of Paris underwater, unless there was a **tidal** wave or something. But Quebec Hydro, Manitoba Hydro and Ontario Hydro are flooding all of Northern Quebec, Ontario and **Manitoba** — essentially every single river that goes into James Bay, where the Cree and the **Inuit** people live — in order to keep the lights on in New York City. People are thinking about alternatives to nuclear power and alternatives to coal, but **hydroelectric** power of that scale is **not** a sensible or defensible alternative. There's a lot to **be** said for the indigenous value system of the Cree people — they say that the only people who should be allowed to build dams in our territory are beavers.

Wasichu

In conclusion, what I want to say is

*The Lakota word wasichu means
"He who steals the fat." That, I
believe, is the essence of the
problem in industrial society.*



that we have to look at the bigger **picture**. It is **cultural** diversity as **well** as biological diversity. We need to be able to pray in our language. It's that basic. Because that's how we were instructed that we were supposed to pray, so we need to **support that**. We need to look at things **like** industrial law versus natural law. In our **experience**, **natural** law looks more to the long **term**. And when we look to the new society, and the new way of Living here, we have to look toward **natural** law as something that makes **sense** for all of **us**. We all have to change how people think in this society. We all have access to power at different levels and in different places — **the** people who read this have access to power. We need to use **it**. We need

to use it to struggle, and we need to use it to change how people think.

We need to use it to make structural change in society. We are rich in North America because other people are poor. That is how society functions, how society works, and that is what we must change. The concept of reciprocity is critical in our culture, and we are asking you **as** people of **conscience** to embrace it. I don't associate the industrial society with a color. I associate it with a value system. The way I've heard it described the best is by the **Lakotas** — they use the term **wasichu**. The first time they ever saw a white person, a white man came into their camp in the middle of winter and he must have been totally starving. Well, the **Lakotas** were watching him and they were really surprised, **as** you can imagine. They watched him steal something and run away, because he must have been very frightened. But they went to see what he took, and what he **took** was the fat, not the meat. The **word wasichu** means "He who steals the fat." That, I believe, is the essence of the problem in **industrial society**.

We need to all **struggle** against the **wasichu**: It's a way of life, it's a way of **thinking**. But we all can **struggle** against it. People who have lighter **skin pigmentation** tend to have more power and access to ways to **struggle** in this society. And what may be surprising to you is that although Indian people in a lot of communities may be **poor**, almost every day Indian people pray for white people. In our language we have to pray for everything, and I guess that's how we give back what we can in our reciprocal agreement. Because we can't necessarily do the same things in Congress that you can do, but we can pray. **Megwitch**.

Winona LaDuke is director of the White Earth Land Recovery Project, and a member of the Mississippi band of the Anishinabe from White Earth Reservation. She is president of the Indigenous Womens' Network, and is active in land rights and environmental work in the Native American community.

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mental inequities and the first time demonstrators had been sent to jail protesting against a hazardous waste landfill.⁶

No single agenda or integrated political philosophy joins the hundreds of environmental organizations in the U.S. Issues on which these groups focus can greatly influence the constituents they attract. Issues most likely to attract black community residents are those couched in civil rights or equity frameworks, such as 1) advocating safeguards against environmental blackmail with a strong pro-jobs stance; 2) focusing on inequality and civil rights; 3) endorsing the politics of direct action; or 4) seeking political empowerment of "underdog" groups.

Mainstream environmental organizations have had a great deal of influence shaping the nation's environmental policy, but have not had a great deal of success in attracting poor and working class persons or people of color. Many of these individuals do not see the mainstream environmental movement as a vehicle that is championing the causes of political "underdog" groups.

Grassroots environmental groups have begun to bridge the class and ideological gap between mainstream environmentalists and communities. In some cases, these grassroots groups mirror their larger counterparts at the national level in terms of problems and issues selected, membership, ideological alignment, and tactics used. Grassroots groups are usually organized around area-specific and single-issue problems. Groups that focus on equity, distributional impacts, and economic-environmental trade-off issues appeal to some black community residents, especially those residents who have been active in other confrontational protest activities.

Environmental groups in the black community often emerge out of established social action organizations. For example, black leadership has deep roots in the black church and other voluntary organizations which have led the crusade against social injustice and racial discrimination. Many black community residents have affiliation with

civic clubs, neighborhood organizations, community improvement groups, and an array of anti-poverty and anti-discrimination organizations.

The struggle for environmental reform in minority communities in some instances has come from coalitions between environmentalists (both mainstream and grassroots), social action advocates, and organized labor.⁷ These somewhat fragile coalitions operate from the position that social justice and environmental quality are compatible goals. Although these groups are beginning to formulate agendas for action, mistrust still persists as a limiting factor. The coalitions are often bi-racial, with membership cutting across class and geographic boundaries. Compositional factors may engender less group solidarity and sense of "control" among black members, compared to social action or environmental groups where blacks are in the majority and make the decisions.

Black Environmental Activists in the South

The heightened militancy among Southern blacks on environmental issues served as a backdrop for studying the environmental equity movement that emerged in the 1980s. Five mostly black communities that were involved in environmental disputes during 1979 to 1987 were examined to illustrate a larger trend. They include Houston's Northwood Manor neighborhood; West Dallas, Texas; Institute, West Virginia; Alsen, Louisiana; and Emelle, Alabama. Although the communities have different histories, they all have challenged the notion that social justice and environmental concern are incompatible goals.

Houston, Texas. In 1979, residents of the city's Northwood Manor neighborhood, which is 84 percent black, chose to challenge Browning-Ferris Industries, one of the world's largest waste disposal firms, for selecting their area for a garbage dump.

West Dallas, Texas. For more than five decades, residents in West Dallas — 85 percent black — were bombarded with toxic emissions from the nearby RSR Corp. lead smelter, which pumped

more than 260 tons of lead particles into the air each year. In 1981, residents mobilized to close the plant and get the lead-tainted soil removed from their neighborhood.

Institute, West Virginia. A leak on August 11, 1985 at Institute's Union Carbide plant sent more than 135 local residents to the hospital. This accident heightened an already uneasy relationship that had existed for years between Union Carbide and the mostly black Institute community, which feared a repeat of Union Carbide's Bhopal disaster. Institute residents organized themselves into a group called People Concerned about MIC to combat this toxic threat.

Alsen, Louisiana. The nation's fourth largest hazardous waste dump, run by Rollins Corp., is adjacent to Alsen, a community which is 98.9 percent black and which lies at the gateway to the 85-mile corridor known as "Cancer Alley," where one-quarter of the nation's petrochemicals are produced. Between 1980 and 1985, the Rollins landfill was cited for more than 100 state and federal toxic emission violations, but did not pay any penalties. The community began organizing in late 1981 against the dump.

Emelle, Alabama. The Emelle landfill, owned by Chemical Waste Management, opened in 1978 and is the largest hazardous waste dump in the United States. Public opposition began soon after local residents discovered the new job-generating industry moving into their community was not a brick factory (as was rumored) but a toxic waste dump. Blacks make up more than 90 percent of Emelle, an impoverished community in the heart of the "black belt."

Strategies from the Grassroots

The environmental disputes in these five communities were seen by grassroots leaders as unfair treatment and another form of racial discrimination. These activists saw their communities bearing a disproportionate share of the risks associated with the industrial plants. The noxious facility siting

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disputes were linked to earlier civil rights disputes that centered on racial disparities. The politics of direct action, strategies borrowed from the civil rights movement, were strongly endorsed as remedies for this environmental imbalance. Residents in Houston and Dallas, neighborhoods in the two largest cities studied, were able to inject their environmental disputes into the local political elections. Of the five communities studied, Emelle, a community heavily dependent upon the millions of dollars pumped into the local economy annually by their hazardous waste dump, gave the strongest endorsement of the jobs vs. environment trade-off argument. However, even residents from this rural community were not willing to sit silent and watch their area turned into a toxic wasteland.

The opposition strategies adopted by black citizens varied across communities. However, several common strategies emerged. All five communities used protest demonstrations, petitions, and press lobbying to publicize their plight. Three of the communities — West Dallas, Alsen, and Houston's Northwood Manor neighborhood — were successful in enlisting government agencies to assist them to redress their environmental problem. The West Dallas community alone actually got the city and state to join in litigation against the industrial polluter. Houston's city council, after intense pressure from black citizens, passed a resolution opposing the controversial municipal sanitary landfill. Alsen residents convinced state environmental officials to take action against Rollins over its toxic emissions. These same three communities also filed class action lawsuits against the industrial firms.

Indigenous social action groups and their leaders held the most important and visible role in mobilizing opposition to industrial polluters. Black church leaders, community improvement workers, and civil rights activists planned and initiated local opposition strategies. Mainstream environmental leaders (and local affiliate groups) and other "outside elites" played only a minor role in mobilizing black opposition to the environmental threats. The West Dallas community was able to get a government sanctioned citizen group, the West Dallas Alliance Environmental Task Force, to work on the local lead pollution problem. Institute's People Concerned about MIC was initiated by a white professor from West Virginia State College and included a broad cross-section from the community. In Emelle, black civil rights activists of the Minority Peoples Council and

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Office of Environmental Policy and Planning has immediate openings for environmental professionals.

ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIST

Responsibilities of the position include the coordination of the Office's efforts in environmental economics. This will involve conducting economic cost/benefit analyses of environmental policy and regulatory decisions; assessing the cost-effectiveness of measures to protect water quality and supply, natural resources and the environment; economic forecasting of conditions likely to affect water supply or the environment; working in conjunction with a multi-disciplinary team to evaluate the economic costs of pollution and pollution control measures and communicating results and information on environmental economics to governmental agencies, elected officials, and the public.

ENVIRONMENTAL TOXICOLOGIST / EPIDEMIOLOGIST / MD

Responsibilities will include coordinating the Office's efforts in environmental health areas. This will involve conducting and coordinating exposure assessment; designing, planning, analyzing, interpreting and writing reports on exposure assessments related to complex epidemiological studies of populations exposed to the air, water, land and noise pollution; developing sampling methods for assessing the exposure and risk to humans and natural systems from pollution and developing criteria for setting standards for pollutant discharge and abatement; and communicating results and information on environmental health to governmental agenda, elected officials, and the public.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEER / SCIENTIST

Responsibilities will include coordinating the Office's efforts in environmental science or engineering. This will involve coordinating and assisting in the gathering and evaluation of data on air, water, soil and environmental quality; developing, refining and participating in specialized research projects aimed at monitoring, measuring, sampling, evaluating, and abating pollution in the environment; monitoring and assessing the state of technologies that may improve environmental quality; developing grant applications to conduct studies of environmental quality; developing, with a multi-disciplinary team, project evaluation methodologies that incorporate the principles of environmental science; communicating results and information on environmental science to governmental agencies, elected officials, and the public.

GEOGRAPHER / PLANNER

Responsibilities will include coordinating the Office's efforts in environmental planning and geographic analysis. This will involve developing and assessing plans for protecting and improving environmental systems at the neighborhood, local, city, and regional levels; monitoring variables that contribute or detract from environmental quality, including land use patterns, regional development, transportation plans, industrial projects, shifts in natural and built systems and communicating results and information on environmental geography and planning to governmental agenda, elected officials, and the public.

Applicants should possess an M.A./M.S., a Ph.D., or equivalent training and/or experience in a field/discipline relevant to environmental regulation and policy-making and extensive experience in environmental policy, regulation or enforcement.

RESEARCH ASSISTANT (2 Positions)

Responsibilities will include coordinating the Office's efforts in environmental policy, planning and regulation. This will involve developing projects to improve environmental quality; analyzing economic, epidemiologic, scientific, engineering and geographic aspects of environmental problems; collecting databases on environmental quality for use by agency officials and developing grant applications to conduct studies on environmental quality.

All applicants for the above 2 positions should possess a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college and six months of satisfactory full-time experience in research which involves gathering, organizing and analyzing data, and report writing; or a satisfactory equivalent. However, all candidates must possess the equivalent of a high school diploma.

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white environmentalists of Alabamians for a Clean Environment joined forces to work on the local hazardous waste problem — not a small point given the history of race relations in Alabama's black belt

There is a great deal of overlap between the leadership of the **social** action groups, neighborhood associations, and the **grassroots** environmental groups — usually organized around a single issue — that were formed to challenge local environmental problems. The pre-existing institutions, leaders and **organizations** played a pivotal role in the beginning, planning and mobilization stages of the opposition activities. Environmentalism in these communities emerged out of the indigenous groups that have historically of mobilized against social injustice.

How were the **environmental** disputes resolved? In West Dallas, Alsen and Houston, by governmental decisions and adjudication. Bargaining and negotiation were the chief **tools** used to address (though not resolve) the on-going environmental disputes in Emelle and Institute. Only West Dallas was able to force the polluting industry to shut down (but not dismantle and clean up the site), while capacity reductions **were** placed on the industries in Alsen, Houston and Institute.

Litigation brought by citizens from West Dallas and Alsen resulted in multi-million dollar **out-of-court** settlements in favor of the plaintiffs, and fines **paid** to governmental **regulatory** agencies for pollution and safety violations. The West Dallas plaintiffs — 370 children who lived in the **nearby** public housing project and 40 property owners — in 1985 won a \$20 million suit against RSR Corp. The 1987 settlement against Rollins awarded each Alsen plaintiff an average of \$3,000. **Government** officials also fined the Institute and Emelle facilities for pollution and safety violations. Citizens in Alsen and Institute were able to **extract** some concessions from the firms, mainly in the form of **technical modifications** in the plant operations, updating safety and pollution **monitoring** systems, and **reducing** emissions levels.

The federal court in 1984 ruled against the Houston plaintiffs (some five years after the suit was brought), and the landfill was built. The **Northwood Manor** residents, however, were able to force the city and state to modify **their** siting requirements and regulations. The Houston city council passed ordinances that **prohibited city-owned** garbage **truck** from dumping at the **controversial** landfill, and regulated the distance that future landfills could be placed near public facilities like schools, parks and playgrounds. This was not a **small** concession given that the city has long resisted any move to institute land-use zoning. The Texas Department of Health, the state permitting agency for municipal landfills, **also** modified its regulations, requiring waste disposal applicants to include socio-economic information on census **tracts** contiguous to the proposed sites.

Lessons Learned

As affluent communities **became** more active in opposing noxious facilities, the siting effort shifted "somewhere else" — often to poor, powerless, minority communities. This unequal **sharing** of benefits and burdens has **caused feelings** of unfair treatment among poor and minority communities.

Facility siting in the United States reflects long patterns of **disparate treatment** of black communities. There is a **direct** link between exploitation of the land and exploitation of people, especially black people. Polluting industries have long exploited the **pro-growth** and **pro-jobs** sentiment among **poor, working-class**, and minority communities. Paper **mills**, waste **disposal** and **treatment** facilities, heavy metals operations, and chemical plants, **searching** for **operating** space, found **these** communities to be a logical choice for expansion. The **communities** and their leaders **were seen** as having a Third World type of view of development — that is, "any development is **better** than no development at **all**." Many residents in **these** communities were suspicious of environmentalists, a **sentiment** that helped align them **pro-growth** advocates.

The 1980s have seen a "new" form

of environmentalism take root in black communities in the southern U.S. This new movement emerged around the toxics and equity issue. The **grassroots** environmental movement has a number of characteristics which distinguish it from the **mainstream** environmental movement. The grassroots movement 1) focuses on equity; 2) challenges mainstream environmentalism for its tactics, but not its goals; 3) emphasizes the needs of the community and the workplace as primary agenda items; 4) uses its own self-taught "experts" and citizen lawsuits; 5) takes a populist stance, relying on active members rather than dues-paying from mailing lists; **and** 6) embraces a democratic ideology not unlike that of the civil rights movement of the 1960s.⁹

Blacks have begun to challenge the legitimacy of environment-jobs trade-off. They **are** now asking: Are the costs borne by their community imposed to **spare** the larger community?

The NIMBY syndrome has trickled down to nearly all communities, even poor black communities. Few residents want **garbage** dumps, landfills or incinerators in **their** backyards. Blacks and other minorities are still underrepresented in the **mainstream environmental** movement, **however**. Some progress has **been** made in broadening the base of the environmental movement and mobilizing a wider segment of the **population**. Many black communities, however, **lack** the organization and **resources** — financial power and **people power** — to mount and sustain **long-term** challenges to industrial polluters and waste disposal giants who target **their** communities for the production and disposal of toxic materials.

Finally, black communities, especially in the **southern** United States, are beginning to **integrate** environmental issues into **traditional** civil rights agendas and to develop viable action strategies to combat environmental degradation, institutional discrimination, and public policy decisions that have **disparate distributional** impact on **the poor and people** of color. Residents of these communities **are** awakening to the **dangers** of living in polluted

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environments and are actively taking steps to correct this imbalance. Moreover, black citizens are beginning to use tactics borrowed from the civil rights movement — protest, political pressure, lobbying, grassroots organizing, and litigation — in launching a frontal assault on those polluting industries that would turn their communities into toxic havens.

Notes

¹Julian McCaull, "Discriminatory Air Pollution: If Poor Don't Breathe." 19 *Environment* 26 (1975); W.J. Kravant, "People, Energy and Pollution," in D. Newman and D. Dawn, eds., *The American Energy Consumer* 125 (1975); Vernon Jordon, "Sins of Omission." 11 *Environmental Action* 26 (1980); Richard Kazis and Richard Grossman, *Fear at Work: Job Blackmail, Labor, and the Environment* (1983); Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright "The Politics of Pollution: Implications for the Black Community." 47 *Phylon* 71 (1986); Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright "Blacks and the Environment," 14 *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations* 165 (1987).

²Denton Morrison "How and Why Environmental Consciousness Has Trickled Down." in A. Schnaiberg, N. Watts and K. Zimmerman, eds., *Distributional Conflict in Environmental Resource Policy* 187-200 (1986).

David Morell and Christopher Magorian, "Risk, Fear and Local Opposition: 'Not in My Back Yard.'" in Morell and Magorian, eds., *Siting Hazardous Waste Facilities: Local Opposition and the Myth of Pre-emption* 21 (1982); David Morell, "Siting and the Politics of Equity." in R. Lake, ed., *Resolving Locational Conflict* 117 (1987); John Logan and Harvey Molotch, *Urban Futures: The Political Economy of Place* (1987).

Robert Bullard, *Invisible Houston: The Black Experience in Boom and Bust* 60-67 (1987).

³Jack Bloom, *Class, Race and the Civil Rights Movement* 18 (1987).

Ken Geiser and Gerry Waneck, "PCB and Warren County." 15 *Science for the People* 13-17 (1983); Bullard and Wright, *supra* note 1.

⁴Jordon, *supra* note 1; Ronald Taylor, "Do Environmentalists Really Care About the Poor?" 96 *US News & World Report* 51-52 (April 1982); Robert Bullard and Beverly Wright, "Environmentalism and the Politics of Equity: Emergent Trends in the Black Community." 12 *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 21-37 (1987).

Sue Pollack and Joann Grozdzak, *Reagan, Toxics and Minorities* (1984). As early as 1983, the Urban Environment Conference workshops held in New Orleans presented civil rights and environmental issues as compatible agenda items. Urban Environment Conference, *Taking Back our Health: An Institute on Surviving the Threat to Minority Communities* 29 (1985).

⁵Robert Gottlieb and Helm Ingram, "The New Environmentalists," 52 *The Progressive* 14-15 (1988).

<< see RESOURCES, page 9

Resource Organizations

California Communities Against Toxics (CCAT). A statewide coalition of more than 60 grassroots anti-toxics groups. CCAT publishes a newsletter to keep members informed of developments around California. CCAT also has conferences which offer skills workshops and strategy sessions. **Contact:** Bill Buck. CCAT, 2269 Chestnut, Suite 279. San Francisco, CA 94123.

Center for Constitutional Rights Environmental Racism Project. The Center, born out of the southern civil rights struggle, and dedicated to the creative use of law as a positive force for social change, provides vigorous, innovative legal support to progressive movements. CCR recently announced expansion of its racial justice docket to include environmental issues. **Contact:** Matthew Chachere. Center for Constitutional Rights, 666 Broadway, New York, NY, 10012. 212/614-6464

Commencement 2000. A Project of the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, to develop elementary school, middle school, high school and college curricula and career guidance for multicultural students in fields related to forestry. **Contact:** Amahra Hicks. USDA Forest Service, 630 Sansome Street, San Francisco, CA 94111. 415/795-2926.

East Palo Alto Historical and Agricultural Society. Project to promote urban agriculture in a predominantly African-American community. **Contact:** Trevor Burrows, 1920 Cooley Avenue, # 12, East Palo Alto, CA 94303. 415/329-0294.

Eco-Justice. A network of people concerned about ecology and justice. Eco-Justice provides workshops, audiovisuals, publications and consultation services and leadership training. A contribution of \$25 or more includes a subscription to *The Egg: A Journal of Eco-Justice*. The Center for Religion Ethics and Social Policy. Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853.

Grassroots Alliance for Solid Waste Solutions, a network of environmental and community groups to exchange information, political and technical power, promoting the idea that raw materials recovered through recycling can provide the basis for economic revitalization of communities. **Publishes Facts to Act On.** Institute for Local Self Reliance, 2425 18th Street NW Washington DC 20009. 202/232-4108.

Oakland Museum Science Reach Program. Seeks to focus elementary school students attention on how the survival of the species is dependent on the health of its biological community. Setting up a curriculum project on the health of human communities, particularly inner city communities, to strengthen the crosscultural threads of our environmental education. **Contact:** Running Grass, Parker Elementary School, 7929 Ney Street, Oakland, CA, 415/331-4540; or Sandy Brecht, The Oakland Museum, One Thousand Oak Street, Oakland, CA 94607, 415/273-3410.

Scenic America. Publishes fact sheets on billboards and the environment, including the following topics: "Alcohol and Tobacco Advertising on Billboards," "Fighting Billboards on Health and Tax Issues," "Targeting of Low Income Areas With Tobacco & Alcohol Billboards." **Contact:** Edward T. McMahon, President, Scenic America, 216 Seventh Street, SE, Washington, DC 20003. 202/546-1100.

Toxic Communications and Assistance Project (T-CAP). A unique project of three groups -- Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes' efforts are directed toward organizing, the Legal Environmental Assistance Foundation provides legal assistance and Albany State College provides technical assistance and community outreach. T-CAP also publishes the *Southern Action* newsletter. A key resource: T-CAP, Natural Sciences Department, Albany State College, Albany, GA 31705. 912/430-4811.

People of Color Form Action Network

In April, more than 100 people of color from seven Western **states** and several Indian nations came together in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the **first** People of Color Regional Activist Dialogue for Environmental Justice. The historic event, organized by the Southwest Organizing Project (SWOP), culminated in the **forming** of the Southwest Network for Environmental & Economic Justice (SNEEJ), with the goal of establishing a training and action institute to provide leadership development and technical assistance to communities of color.

Recognizing that national environmental groups had largely ignored the needs of people of color, and had, in some instances, worked against their interests, dialogue attendees affirmed the need for environmental organizations run by and for people of color. **'A first** step was creating the Network, "a **multi-cultural, multi-national, grassroots** network whose focus is to address the fact that communities of color as well as economically depressed communities suffer disproportionately from toxic contamination." SNEEJ will address environmental issues within a social and racial justice context; its purpose, as approved by **participants**, is **"to** build a movement, to empower communities, to educate and **train** organizers on

environmental and social issues. to coordinate experts and to **be** responsive to people and the communities it serves."

Dialogue participants elected a coordinating council for the Network, and adopted a Statement of **Solidarity**. The statement recognized "that **all** women, especially women of color, children, and the elderly are the poorest of the poor and are paying the highest price from the pollution with increased work, health problems and economic devastation."

The Statement of **Solidarity** also included a call for the:

- Right to clean industry
- Right to be safe **from** harmful exposure
- Right to prevention
- Right to know
- Right to participate
- Right to protection and enforcement
- Right to compensation
- Right **to** clean up
- We have the right to health care of our choosing.

The SNEEJ coordinating council **has** met once since the April gathering, and another Regional Activist Dialogue is in the **works** for September (for news on the coordinating council's **first** meeting, see Marta **Salinas'** reportback on page 10).

For more **information**, contact Richard Moore. **SWOP/SNEEJ**, 1114 7th St N.W., Albuquerque, NM 87102. 5051 24718832.

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