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Dear Friends,

Since the last issue of Race, Poverty & the Environment, much exciting new change has occurred at Urban Habitat. With a growing staff and reinvigorated programs, we're poised to aggressively move ahead with our mission of working toward social, economic and environmental justice in the Bay Area and beyond. Though the reality of war has set in and spurred an unprecedented anti-war movement in the U.S. and across the globe, we cannot afford to neglect the war that is being waged at home — against health, equity and the environment. Since President Bush took office his administration has been working steadfastly to roll back hard-won advances in domestic environmental and social policies. Long before the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C., Bush and his allies began a deliberate and systematic assault on the Clean Air Act — a benchmark piece of environmental legislation that has resulted in dramatic improvements in air quality and toxics reduction since its passage in 1974. While this weakening of environment laws is a threat to all Americans, it places low-income communities and communities of color in the greatest jeopardy.

Meanwhile, we see civil rights undermined at every turn. In addition to the challenge to affirmative action pending before the Supreme Court, University of California Regent and anti-affirmative action campaigner Ward Connerly has proposed a voter initiative that would seriously undercut efforts to achieve diversity and equal opportunity in California. While claiming to move us toward a "color blind state free of racial discrimination," the "Racial Privacy Initiative" would ban essential racial data collection in California, including data on public health, housing and homeownership, crime and policing. If successful, the initiative would make it difficult — if not impossible — to document the very inequalities that we're fighting to correct. These obstacles serve as reminders of the work we have yet to do. Through regional coalition building, legislative advocacy, and outreach and education in our communities, Urban Habitat is redoubling its efforts to advance social, economic and environmental justice. In recent months we have passed some significant milestones in pursuit of our goals.

- Last fall, Urban Habitat delegates attended two key summits — the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Durban, South Africa and the Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. We returned home with insights about local-global links as well as a renewed commitment to the national EJ Movement.
- In March, the Leadership Institute, an Urban Habitat program that provides training to community leaders, launched its latest series of workshops in Richmond, California. Participants, including faith-based leaders and community activists, gained tools to respond to the challenge of development and displacement in their communities. The next Institute, in West Oakland, is scheduled for June 2003.
- In April, the Social Equity Caucus (SEC), which Urban Habitat founded and convenes, hosted a two-day conference entitled "Bridging the Bay." The conference brought together a broad coalition of leaders representing labor, faith-based, youth, environmental, economic and social justice organizations. After identifying common needs, sharing strategies and building a powerful consensus, attendees left the gathering with a renewed sense of purpose and a common agenda to guide their work in moving the Bay Area region toward equity.
- This journal, published in partnership with the Center for Race, Poverty & the Environment, is back on track to be released biannually. As it has done for more than 10 years, RPE will continue to raise issues, articulate a broad vision for environment justice and serve as a forum for new strategies and models.

On behalf of the board and staff, I'd like to thank you for your interest in Urban Habitat and our work and for continuing to make equity issues a high priority in the face of domestic and international crises. In these trying economic times — when vital resources are being diverted from education, jobs, housing and environmental programs — low-income communities and communities of color remain the most vulnerable and hardest hit. Now, more than ever, we must work diligently to maintain a strong and unified voice for equity and positive social change.

In peace and solidarity,

Juliet Ellis
Executive Director
The Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment (CRPE) continues to work with low-income communities and communities of color nationwide to fight local environmental hazards, while also working on policy issues generated by our client communities. The past six months have been a time of success—and some setbacks—in our quest for environmental justice. Our efforts have been focused on clean air, clean water and civil rights enforcement.

Caroline Farrell, managing attorney of our Delano office, succeeded in forcing Safety-Kleen, Inc. to stop accepting radioactive waste at its toxic waste dump near Buttonwillow, continuing CRPE’s representation of Buttonwillow residents into its eleventh year. The toxic dump, now the largest permitted capacity dump in the United States, accepted thousands of tons of radioactive waste over the past few years, until CRPE’s permit challenge brought it to a halt.

Our Delano office has also been instrumental in helping the community of Arvin respond to a major pesticide poisoning incident, as organizer Joe Morales worked gathering complaint forms, more than 250 complaints have been filed and the pesticide applicator is facing a major fine.

Attorney Brent Newell has had significant success in forcing the state of California to begin to regulate agriculture under the federal Clean Air Act. Newell successfully challenged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s approval of a California air plan that continued to exempt agriculture, forcing a showdown in the state legislature over the exemption issue. Agriculture is a major air pollution source in the San Joaquin Valley, which has some of the worst air quality in the nation. Newell and Farrell are also fighting a series of mega-dairies on behalf of Valley communities.

As director of CRPE, I serve as co-counsel in the historic South Camden Citizens in Action vs. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection litigation, in which a federal judge ruled that the state of New Jersey had violated civil rights laws in granting an environmental permit to a cement processing plant in Camden. We were bitterly disappointed when the Court of Appeals—an eye to a hostile U.S. Supreme Court—significantly narrowed civil rights precedent in reversing the district court’s decision.

I’m also representing a client group from the Native Village of Kivalina, an Inupiat community on the Chukchi Sea, north of the Arctic Circle in Alaska, in their fight against the world’s largest zinc mine. CRPE’s 15-month investigation of the mine uncovered more than 3,200 violations of its Clean Water Act permits, and CRPE sued Teck Cominco Alaska Incorporated, the owner of the mine, in September 2002.

On March 15, 2003, the Central California Environmental Justice Network (CCEJN) held a resoundingly successful conference in Fresno, where more than 140 activists came together to share strategies, learn new skills and coordinate future campaigns. The CCEJN was created by CRPE and its Delano Advisory Board in 1999, and it is exciting to see it succeed—like a parent with a child leaving the nest for college, CRPE is proud of CCEJN!

CRPE sees 2003 as a time of growth, as we have recently moved to a new office and are spinning off from our long-time fiscal agent, the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. CRPE can now be reached at 450 Geary, Suite 500, San Francisco, CA 94102, 415-346-4179, or 1224 Jefferson Street, Delano, CA 93215, 661-720-9140.

La lucha continua!

Luke W. Cole
Director
About this Issue

Last fall, the Environmental Justice Movement reached yet another key milestone in its history with the Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. A decade after the first landmark gathering, the second Summit shed light on the enormous growth the movement has experienced, drawing over 1,000 participants from across the United States and from several countries around the globe. Activists and organizers took part in plenary sessions and workshops to learn and debate topics ranging from gentrification and smart growth, transportation equity and electoral politics to climate justice, globalization, immigration, military toxins and environmental reparations. It was an opportunity to reaffirm the principles of environmental justice, celebrate victories, assess progress and forge a broad collective vision for the future of the EJ Movement.

The Summit also brought into focus several key challenges facing those who struggle daily for environmental, social and economic justice. Tension over youth involvement, language barriers and leadership revealed potential pitfalls to building and sustaining a national, multiracial, multi-class, intergenerational movement that can successfully confront attacks on our communities. Meeting and resolving these challenges together, continuously, is the only way to ensure our ability to effectively resist the onslaught of new and emerging threats to low-income and people of color communities. A key product of Summit 11—the Principles of Working Together—will help guide us as we move forward to tackle these problems together.

This issue of Race, Poverty & the Environment both celebrates the EJ Movement and offers a critique of it. At this critical point in EJ history, RPE takes a big-picture look at the Movement's past, present and future. In the "Looking Back" section, three articles explore the relationship between EJ and the Civil Rights Movement, examining lessons learned from liberation struggles of the 60s and 70s, as well as failures and missteps to avoid. With this hindsight and analysis, the EJ Movement has the potential to be even more powerful and effective than the social change struggles that preceded it. Another article delves into the tensions between EJ and the environmental movement. The section ends with a review of key milestones in the Movement's history.

The next section on "Current Issues" starts off with a couple of reflections on Summit 11. Additional articles address key topics such as the challenge of developing a national environmental justice agenda and the question of leadership—What is it? How is it developed? How are related issues such as equitable development and immigration, "The Next Generation" brings together an array of youth voices to express the needs of young people in the Movement. The section ends with three articles exploring the connections between local and global struggles and highlighting some exciting projects that are working toward realizing the vision of international environmental justice.

With hindsight and analysis, the EJ Movement can be more powerful and effective than the social change struggles that preceded it.

As you're flipping through the issue, please note the list of resources, including new books (p. 55). Let us know what you think about the articles and what you'd like to see in future issues of RPE by filling out our survey or renewing your subscription.

Ziba Kashef
Editor
Looking Back

Our past holds important lessons for the future. In this section, critical observations about the Civil Rights Movement and environmentalism, plus milestones in environmental justice.

Lessons from the Civil Rights Movement
An interview with Damu Smith

Many environmental justice leaders and organizers consider the EJ Movement to be a direct descendant of civil rights struggles or the latest manifestation of the justice campaigns that peaked in the 60s and 70s. What have we learned from the successes and failures of the Civil Rights Movement? RPE asked longtime activist and EJ champion Damu Smith to offer his insights.

RPE: What are some key lessons the Environmental Justice Movement has gained from the Civil Rights Movement?

Damu Smith: The Civil Rights Movement has been defined at its core as a struggle for equal opportunity and equal treatment. The Environmental Justice Movement is fighting for equal protection, which is also a part of what defines the struggle for civil rights.

RPE: By equal protection, what do you mean?

Smith: I mean that all people have a right to equal protection as well as equal opportunity. The struggle for environmental justice has been a struggle for equal protection. It’s also been a fight against disproportionate exposure to sources of pollution and conditions of environmental degradation. The black community and other communities of color have been subjected to unequal protection and disproportionate exposure to toxic waste, polluting facilities and acutely deteriorated environmental conditions.

Because our struggle is indeed about equal protection and equal opportunity—the opportunity to be a part of decision-making processes that impact our environments—that links us to the other struggles that come under the framework of the Civil Rights Movement.

RPE: What struggles come under the civil rights framework?

Smith: The struggle for equal housing, equal justice, equal access to adequate transportation, and equal opportunity in the jobs sphere and in all aspects of our lives. Environmental justice is the same. Unfortunately, people often separate envi-
Success occurred in the Civil Rights Movement when the passage of legislation or enforcement of law was linked to mass movement in the streets.

Environmental justice from civil rights. They don't view it as a civil rights struggle. They view it more as something regarding only the environment. But indeed it is a struggle for civil rights, and in the international arena, it's a struggle for our human rights, which also applies for protections in the United States under international law.

RPE: When you say that people don't see it as a civil rights struggle, do you mean people within the EJ Movement or outside of it?

Smith: Some people outside of the Environmental Justice Movement don't look at this as a struggle for civil rights. For example, it has only been recently that groups like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—the country's premiere civil rights organization—have come to see environmental justice as an important part of the civil rights movement. But historically while the NAACP has passed resolutions in favor of environmental justice, up until recently they haven't really been that active. But now under Kweisi Mfume's leadership, they have really stepped up to the plate in recent months to take on the challenge of working for environmental justice.

RPE: What do you think ultimately convinced the NAACP and other organizations that are beginning to see the connections between environmental justice and other issues?

Smith: Pressure from the Environmental Justice Movement, particularly the black wing of the Environmental Justice Movement. We've been in communication with the NAACP over the past several months. I cannot tell you what a profound change this has brought about. Because up until this point, we were not feeling that the NAACP was on our side. But now we do. There have been strategy meetings held at the national level around developing steps to strengthen and enforce Title VI.

RPE: Could you define Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964?

Smith: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 says that recipients of federal financial assistance cannot discriminate based on race, color or national origin. In simple terms it means that federal dollars cannot be used in a discriminatory manner. And under the law that means specifically that state regulatory agencies that receive federal funds under the Clean Air Act cannot use the money in a discriminatory fashion.

States have been delegated authority by the federal government to carry out what's called the permitting provision, Title V, of the Clean Air Act. Title V allows permits to be issued to companies to do business in states. So the federal government has delegated authority in many instances to the states to issue permits for companies to do business. When a state regulatory agency issues permits, they are doing that with the use of paid staff who do research and review permits. Their salaries are often paid with federal money. The Environmental Justice Movement argues that when state regulatory agencies issue permits to companies who do business in communities of color, and they continue to issue permits disproportionately in communities of color, that is a violation of Title VI because they are discriminating by putting dirty industries more often in our communities than in white communities.

RPE: You just touched on another question in terms of tactics from the Civil Rights Movement, focusing on specific laws and policies, and using that to gain equal protection. How, as an activist, organizer and leader in EJ, have you applied that lesson from the way the Civil Rights Movement affected change?

Smith: Well the successes of the Civil Rights Movement occurred when the passage of a piece of legislation or the enforcement of a law was linked to mass movement and protests in the streets. In other words, the Voting Rights bill was passed was not just through a law being proposed in Congress. It came about as a result of people going to jail, marching in the streets, protesting, picketing, boycotting and engaging in mass social protest. It was that pressure from
the streets that brought about success in the suits.

In order for us to have equal protection in the area of environmental justice, we have to employ tactics similar to those of the Civil Rights Movement. We have to protest, we have to boycott, we have to go to jail. We have to engage in agitation so that political pressure comes to bear on our courts, on our state legislatures, on our city councils and members of Congress so that they will do the right thing, pass rules and regulations aimed at equal protection, and force companies that are polluting our communities to cease and desist from doing that.

But we are a long way from the kind of success that we need to have because in many ways the struggle for environmental justice is breaking new ground. The struggle for environmental justice is among the last manifestations of civil rights struggles that really is getting attention now.

At the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement we were having to fight against Jim Crow segregation laws, for having equal access to public accommodations, and that defined our struggle. So naturally, we couldn't deal with environmental justice at the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. We had to deal with those more essential things involving not only civil rights but human rights. But now that major aspects of that struggle have been achieved successfully, we've been able to turn our attention to other areas of civil rights over the last 20 years, and among those are the fight for equality and equal protection in the area of environmental justice.

RPE: You mention protesting, mass action. What else, in terms of lessons from the Civil Rights Movement, have been employed in EJ?

Smith: In terms of lessons we have to evaluate what the Civil Rights Movement was able to achieve and what it was not able to achieve. Now that's important because as we enter this new millennium, those of us leading the Environmental Justice Movement have to figure out what it really means to have long-term success in the area of civil rights.

We have to look very carefully at what it means to have civil rights laws pertaining to environmental justice effectively enforced in the long-term. Because oftentimes civil rights laws are passed and they aren't adequately enforced. In my view, what we have to do in the Environmental Justice Movement is a careful review of traditional civil rights jurisprudence. In other words, we have to look at how civil rights laws have been applied and enforced, and look very carefully at what the implications of that history have been for other areas of civil rights law for equal environmental protection. And that means that we have to have legal, political and organizational strategy sessions that will help guide our movement over the next several years so

Even when you win a legal victory, you have to maintain strong political, cultural and spiritual consciousness in the community.

to chemicals coming from facilities has actually caused a particular illness. That is a burden of proof that would be very difficult to document.

We think the better test for whether or not our civil rights are being violated is to say that if a community has a disproportionate number of polluting facilities that are emitting toxins or creating conditions that we know are threats to human health, then that is a prima facie case for discrimination. And that should be the extent to which we have to prove or document discrimination. That is consistent with traditional civil rights jurisprudence.

But what companies and what politicians are doing is trying to develop impossible tests so that when people of color bring lawsuits or file administrative complaints to agencies like the EPA, it becomes difficult to prove discrimination. That's an example of what I mean about how government agencies do everything to undermine the law by coming up with tricks and mechanisms
that make it difficult or impossible for communities to achieve justice.

**RPE:** You have largely talked about the legal aspect of the struggle. What other lessons in terms of organizing on the ground has the EJ Movement learned from how the Civil Rights Movement was organized?

**Smith:** We cannot separate developing good legal strategies from developing excellent organizing strategies and political strategies. The key to successful civil rights enforcement is a mass political movement in the streets and in the communities. That is the lesson of the Civil Rights Movement. So my point is that in order to bring about new civil rights laws and regulations to ensure environmental justice, we have to have a mass movement. Secondly, we have to monitor the enforcement of the law. But it’s only through that political heat from the streets that that will occur. If we don’t maintain the pressure, if we relax, the forces that oppose civil rights in the area of environmental protection who are working day and night to undermine the law will succeed.

We can’t allow that to happen. That means we’ve got to organize. That means all the traditional tactics that we’ve used over the years: protest in the streets, lobbying in Congress, sending letters to members of Congress and other elected officials, boycotting corporations that don’t do the right thing, and putting all kinds of public relations pressure on companies so that they will do the right thing. That’s what we did most recently in Norco, Louisiana where we forced Shell Chemical Refinery to pay for the relocation of the entire black community. That is a recent victory. But it came about as a direct result of mass political pressure where we actually shamed Shell into doing the right thing.

We employed similar tactics in the Shintech case in Convent, Louisiana. Different story, same basic tactics. That’s how we were able to win in northern Louisiana, in Forest Groves and Center Springs, two small semi-rural black communities facing the threat of yet another toxic facility being placed in the middle of their community. We combined all these tactics — getting members of the community, celebrities, church leaders, civil rights leaders, and anybody we could to help shed light on the situation and expose the injustice that was going on. That is what helped to bring about these victories and other communities fighting for environmental justice can learn from those lessons.

**RPE:** What do you think the EJ Movement could still learn from the Civil Rights Movement that hasn’t quite been realized or completely understood by people who are in the movement now? Are there steps that you wish the EJ Movement had taken to achieve victories?

**Smith:** On the one hand we are learning from the successes of the Civil Rights Movement. We’ve also learned from its failures.

It’s very important to spend a lot of time raising people’s level of political, spiritual and cultural consciousness in terms of the nature of the society in which we live and the communities from which we come. One of the big struggles that we have had in the Environmental Justice Movement is the fight to maintain unity in the community, the fight to maintain people’s interest, determination and will to fight.

Now certainly the Civil Rights Movement was involved in that part of the struggle as well. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. talked long and hard about the importance of black people developing the kind of consciousness to say that they had to stand up and be a man and a woman and be strong and fight the battle over the long haul. But that kind of work waned in the face of winning legal victories. So the lesson is that even when you win a legal victory, you have to maintain strong political, cultural and spiritual consciousness in the community, so that the community is aware of the need to maintain a fighting spirit and be involved in civic activity in society. Oftentimes communities have gotten complacent and people’s minds diverted. That means that a community’s capacity to fight is weakened. This is something that we have seen in many communities. If a large segment of the community is not willing to fight, it really makes the rest of the community weak and it makes the community suffer longer.

The level of consciousness and understanding has to be sustained for a long time. The Civil Rights Movement did not spend enough time focusing on that aspect of our struggle. That is something that we must do as we enter the new millennium in the face of new challenges.

**RPE:** So maintaining a high level of awareness and consciousness is critical?

**Smith:** Yes. And cultural identity. You know the whole issue of self-hate is a deep issue, a very painful issue in our community. When our community feels self-hate, which also brings about a sense of low self-worth, that often renders people so weak in the face of the attacks against our community. I spent more than half of my time in Louisiana and Mississippi and many of the other states that I’ve worked in trying to inspire people, trying to maintain their strength in the face of adversity.

That’s not to say that people were not being strong. But we had to contend with a lot of people in those communities who were very weak in terms of their political consciousness — people who just didn’t come to meetings, didn’t feel it was worth their time to do anything, people who spent so much time downing themselves.

When we were able to pierce through that, it strengthened our movement. But what we tried to tell people was that you have to maintain this level of awareness to protect your community forever because there are always going to be threats to undermine the health and safety of your community. If there’s any lesson we’ve learned, we have to maintain that kind of strong level of consciousness so that people have the will to fight and to protect their communities against environmental threats for many years to come.

Darnu Smith is a longtime human rights, environmental justice and peace activist. He is former executive director of the Washington Office on Africa, former national associate director of Greenpeace USA and associate director of the American Friends Service Committee’s Washington Bureau. Smith is executive director of the National Black Environmental Justice Network (NBEJN) and founder of Black Voices for Peace (BVFP).
What Can EJ Learn from the Civil Rights Movement?

A Critical Look

BY VAN JONES, ESQ.

A recent Village Voice cover story perfectly captured the present transitional moment in the politics of racial justice: "Civil Rights Is Dead: Long Live Hip-Hop."

A new generation of activists of color, born in the 1970s and 1980s, has emerged. And they have a different set of sensibilities, a different attitude and a different agenda.

For instance, at the 1963 March on Washington, not one speaker stressed concern for the environment. And yet, 40 years later, many of the most promising activists of color in the United States and around the world identify themselves as "environmental justice" activists—not primarily as civil rights fighters. In fact, the EJ Movement—which is committed to ending the disproportionate concentration of toxic hazards in communities of color—is one of the main arenas in which this new generation is coming to voice.

The EJ Movement is also often a site of significant interaction—and some real tensions—between 1960s veterans and younger activists. As they come into their own, many "new jacks" resent the way some civil rights veterans seem to assume that their 1960s experiences qualify them to lead in all other periods. But it would be a mistake for the newer activists to dismiss the civil rights experience out of hand.

For instance, at the 1963 March on Washington, not one speaker stressed concern for the environment. And yet, 40 years later, many of the most promising activists of color in the United States and around the world identify themselves as "environmental justice" activists—not primarily as civil rights fighters. In fact, the EJ Movement—which is committed to ending the disproportionate concentration of toxic hazards in communities of color—is one of the main arenas in which this new generation is coming to voice.

The EJ Movement doesn't yet have the mass appeal or mass base of the Civil Rights Movement.

Key Lessons

The Civil Rights Movement won its main victories between 1954 and 1970. During this period the movement was able to properly balance populism and elitism. Successful social change movements often combine the "bottom-up" approaches of grassroots protest with the "top-down" tactics of litigation and professional lobbying. Elites are important, but the key factor in winning fundamental change is the involvement of ordinary people on a mass scale. A proper balance puts the "popular movement" forces in the driver's seat, with the elites acting as much-appreciated co-pilots. The Civil Rights Movement achieved this balance often—and succeeded brilliantly when it did. For instance, the 1964 Civil Rights Act was the result of elite lobbying by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and mass mobilization by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

In contrast, the EJ Movement doesn't yet have the Civil Rights Movement's mass appeal or mass base. It's still rooted in small, foundation-supported non-profit organizations, and lawyers, policy wonks and professional organizers continue to dominate. The movement hasn't yet gained a true independent toehold in homes, workplaces, schools and places of worship. Here the EJ Movement has much to learn from SNCC, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and other 1960s efforts.

Second, the Civil Rights Movement was taken seriously not only because it appealed to the masses, but because it also could launch disruptive protests on a mass scale. In contrast, the EJ Movement's small rallies and sit-ins do not...
keep the nation’s powerbrokers awake at night. Certainly, EJ activists must take care when asking vulnerable constituents (who may have criminal records or shaky immigration status) to risk arrests at protests. But until the EJ Movement can unleash massive direct action to consistently shut down scofflaw polluters and do-­nothing regulatory agencies, it will remain a bit player in U.S. politics.

Third, the Civil Rights Movement pursued a specific, identifiableset of federal policy changes, including desegregated schools and voting rights. To win these goals, it combined a stunning array of tactics: litigation, lobbying, mass mobilization, public advocacy through media, electoral efforts, community education, rallies, protests, civil disobedience and (even) armed resistance. EJ is continuing to develop its tactical capacities, but a common, national goal remains unclear. EJ must do a better job of telling the country precisely what change it is seeking in law and why.

Fourth, the Civil Rights Movement was able to link its ostensibly narrow goals (empowerment for Blacks) to a soaring, universalist message that affirmed the core values of human rights and democracy for everyone. It projected a vision of a redeemed society that appealed to people of all races, including millions of whites. If the EJ Movement can duplicate these feats, it will change the country. While there are many eloquent exceptions, too often today’s EJ Movement sounds like a NIMBY movement in black-face (or brown-face): "Don’t dump on people of color" is less radical and less appealing to potential allies than, "Don’t dump on anybody, ever again." EJ could inspire the country (and thereby win much broader social support) by more powerfully and publicly standing for deep ecological principles that would get the entire planet off the toxic treadmill.

**Fatal Flaws**

And yet, not everything from the civil rights experience should be emulated. First of all, the civil rights "movement" long ago degenerated into a civil rights "bureaucracy," with its mass base demobilized and largely ignored. Lawyers, lobbyists and academics — the elites — now completely dominate an increasingly irrelevant set of hollow organizations and paper coalitions. The days of mass meetings, big rallies and dramatic confrontations are long gone. The bureaucratization of so vital a movement illustrates the dangers and difficulties of maintaining popular momentum, even once a cause attains it.

Ironically, while the civil rights establishment became increasingly divorced from the grassroots, right-wing conservatives moved in the opposite direction — from country club elitism to the mass-based populism of Rush Limbaugh, Newt Gingrich and George W. Bush. This just proves that mass politics are still possible, but that updated and more ambitious tactics are required. EJ activists will have to identify them.

A principal error of the 1960s progressives was to underplay the importance of developing powerful, independent media for the progressive movement. For example, the ultra-right Christian Coalition head, Reverend Pat Robertson, built up and now heads a multi-million dollar media empire that includes the Family Channel. Meanwhile, progressive figurehead Reverend Jesse Jackson was hosting one show on CNN and sending out fax alerts. How can activists expect to get anywhere knocking on doors in low-income neighborhoods where every house has right-­wing FOX News piped in? To be relevant in the new century, EJ activists must prioritize mass communications. They must not be afraid to talk about creating radio personalities (like Rush Limbaugh), reaching the youth through Web cast music and videos, producing comic books and video games, and even working with other progressives to buy radio frequencies and TV stations. This kind of sophisticated media apparatus — which the civil rights crowd never even tried to build — is absolutely necessary for progressives to become a real factor in U.S. politics today.

Another error: some civil rights leaders are still locked in an outdated "black-white" paradigm, while the numbers of Asians, Latinos and other people of color mushroom. Despite some tensions that surfaced at the Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, the EJ Movement has done a much better job of dealing with the new racial realities. It has much to teach the country on this score.

Some civil rights leaders are locked in an outdated "black-white" paradigm, while the numbers of Asians, Latinos and other people of color mushroom.
Learning from Our Past

EJ’s strengths and missed opportunities

BY SOFIA MARTINEZ

“"We speak for ourselves” has long been the mantra that brought people together in the Environmental Justice Movement. It’s a very grassroots phrase that reflects the fact that EJ has been a community-based movement lead by people of color. It also illustrates an important lesson from the social justice struggles of the 60s, which were also grounded in the grassroots. But looking at other movements and my own involvement in the organizations I have worked with and helped create over the last 20 years, it seems there are key lessons we haven’t yet learned from those earlier campaigns. The EJ Movement faces a time of great opportunity and great challenge, and the solidarity among people of color and commitment to the grassroots are being tested now.

Unlearned Lessons: Sexism and Racism

Sexism continues to be an issue in environmental justice. It has impacts on leadership, how issues are defined, what strategies are used, who gets heard and who gets seen. On the one hand, women have always been quite present in the movement, as in all movements, and probably in much larger numbers than men. Women are also in leadership positions and they receive recognition. However, it’s often a shallow, manipulative, and disingenuous kind of recognition. Making matters worse, some of the women leaders don’t want to deal with gender issues because they feel it creates division. They don’t challenge sexism the way they might challenge race or class issues. There have been strides but within organizations, people really need to look at gender more seriously. Young women are challenging sexism but it’s going to continue to be a long struggle.

In terms of race, the commitment to people of color leadership and voices has been one of the most powerful aspects of the EJ Movement. But there is still a tendency to view issues in black-and-white terms. I think it’s very important that people of color come together to learn about each other, struggle with each other and build strong alliances based on our common status in this society. Before we assume that we can make allies with white folks, sometimes, there are a lot of levels of work that we as people of color have to do internally and with each other.

Betita Martinez of the Institute for Multiracial Justice talks about “oppression olympics” in her recent book De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century. She writes about how we need to overcome the temptation to say things like, “I’m more oppressed because I’m Indian” or “because my people were enslaved.” We get into that a lot in EJ and I’ve definitely been guilty of it. But just because you’re a person of color or poor doesn’t make you right and manipulation has to be called for what it is. We all have our own internalized stuff and we really need to challenge ourselves so we can more effectively challenge white supremacy.

Confronting Class

During the Civil Rights Movement and the liberation and ethnic/racial movements of the 60s and 70s, activists struggled with similar divide-and-conquer issues. A lot of class conflicts arose because people of color—African-Americans, Native Americans, Chicanos/Mexicans—have been in this country for many generations and we’ve all been trained and conditioned to aspire to materialistic middle class values and individual success. These contradictions continue with us today in slightly different forms.

If we look back at the two People of Color Environmental Leadership Summits, class issues become apparent. Twelve years ago, we went to Washington D.C. to launch this movement nationally. Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. spoke about environmental racism and the term came into more common use. Dana Alston, now deceased, spoke the famous words, “We speak for ourselves” which was a direct challenge to the group of mainstream environmental organizations and others. There was a collective demonstration. About 500 people were expected but more than 800 people actually attended. It was an exciting time.

At the second Summit, however, I felt that the movement had been institutionalized. Former President Clinton’s Executive Order has been helpful. However, it started a whole process of institutionalization within the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The EPA is currently piloting an EJ curriculum, the “official knowledge” of EJ, according to the EPA. There is now a wealth of literature about EJ as well as numerous programs at universities. The story and the history of EJ are being written and institutionalized, creating the official knowledge and history of the movement. But the grassroots don’t have access to publishing.

Grassroots Focus

The EJ Movement must focus on the grassroots because they/we are the most disenfranchised. Whether the grassroots created the movement—whether we said “we will speak for ourselves”—we are not the ones publishing books, we are not the ones getting quoted. We are not the ones being heard in what is becoming mainstream EJ. We need to start challenging our internal membership, our internal structures, our internal stuff, because this movement depends on it. Democracy is internal; you have to be the change you want to see in the world.

These are just some of the realities within the EJ Movement. There’s been an institutionalization of EJ through the government and class issues have become a point of division. That’s what governments, agencies, institutions and universities impose even while we struggle against it. We’ve seen this historical phenomenon repeated over the last twelve years. These are our challenges.

Sofia Martinez is an organizer, teacher and media advocate from New Mexico.
Enviros often separated pollution from the people affected by it.

Green Politics and Civil Rights
The complex relationship between two movements

BY SALIM MUWAKKIL

During the first Earth Day celebrations in 1970, white students at San Jose City College wanted to dramatize the automobile's harmful effects on the environment. So they staged a spectacle that epitomized the oblivious and pampered angst of the time: they bought a new Cadillac and buried it. The Black Student Union demonstrated in protest, arguing that the money wasted on the car could have been better spent on a practical problem in San Jose's inner city.

Such discordant perceptions have always complicated the relationship between the environmental and civil rights movements. Despite the fact that racial minorities are disproportionately victimized by pollution, few traditionally have been involved in the organized struggle against environmental degradation. Reasons vary. Some black activists explain that they have ignored the ecology movement for so long because it excluded them.

At the turn of the century, blacks and other minorities were barred from the early wilderness preservation and conservation movements, precursors of modern-day environmentalism. Even the Sierra Club, the most progressive of the early environmental groups, excluded blacks, Jews and other minorities well into the 60s. According to some critics, vestiges of the old attitudes remain.

In 1990, a coalition of civil rights groups circulated a letter accusing eight major environmental groups—the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Audubon Society, the Environmental Defense Fund, Friends of the Earth, the Natural Resources Defense Council, the National Parks and Conservation Association and the Izaak Walton League—of racist hiring practices. These groups conceded that they had poor records of hiring and promoting minorities, but denied racist motives. They attributed their racial uniformity instead to the scarcity of minorities in the pool of environmental specialists.

Years later, the situation had changed somewhat for the better. "Some of these groups have really made a concerted effort to hire more minority staff and appoint more black and other minority board members," says Robert Bullard, director of Clark Atlanta University's Environmental Justice Resource Center and author of several books on the issue.

But there's still a long way to go. The problem runs deeper than hiring practices: there is a cultural gulf that white environmentalists have only recently begun to recognize. For years, the elite pedigree and elitist culture of mainstream environmental organizations blinded them to the ecological threats facing minorities. For their part, minority activists found such issues as saving the endangered spotted owl or the snail darter too abstract and insignificant compared to more urgent concerns of pollution and other quality-of-life issues.

However, the interests of environmentalists and civil rights advocates have converged in struggles that fall under the rubric of environmental justice. The environmental justice movement argues that social, political, economic and environmental issues are inextricably linked. The movement emerged as it dawned on African-American, Native-American and Latino leaders that minority communities suffer the most from pollution and benefit the least from cleanup programs.

"Slowly we are being picked off by industries that don't give a damn about polluting our neighborhood, contaminating our water, fouling our air, clogging our streets and lowering our property values," says Charles Streadit, an African-American resident of Houston and president of the Northeast Community Action Group.

Streadit speaks from bitter experience. In 1979, his group sued the giant waste hauler Browning-Ferris Industries for maliciously targeting their northeast Houston neighborhood for placement of a solid-waste landfill. Streadit's group lost the case, but while researching the issue they discovered that between the early 20s and the late 70s, the city placed all five of its landfills and six of its eight incinerators in predominantly black neighborhoods.

The Houston battle prompted similar ones throughout the nation. In 1982, North Carolina officials located a PCB (polychlorinated-biphenyl) landfill in predominantly black Warren County. Members of a broad range of civil rights groups, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Congressional Black Caucus, gathered to protest...
the landfill's construction. Several hundred demonstrators were arrested. While the Warren County battle, too, was lost, national black leadership became involved with environmental issues for the first time.

One of the civil rights groups that joined the Warren County protest was the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, which later sponsored the path-breaking study, "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States." Analyzing census data, the 1987 study found that race was the most significant of several variables in determining the location of commercial hazardous-waste sites in residential areas. It also revealed that three out of five African Americans and Latinos live in communities with one or more hazardous-waste sites. The commission's executive director, the Rev. Benjamin F. Chavis Jr., coined the term "environmental racism" to describe the report's conclusions.

The controversial findings exploded like a bombshell within the civil rights community and instantly energized many green activists, who used this potent issue to revitalize and expand the environmental movement. In October 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit took place in Washington, D.C., bringing together 650 grassroots leaders representing more than 300 community groups from across the country. "After that conference, the movement seemed to take off," says Hazel Johnson, founder and president of the People for Community Recovery, a Chicago-based program and one of the few environmental groups based in public housing. "Organizations from different parts of the country began coordinating their activities, and things were really going strong."

Most environmental justice activists conceive of their work as only distantly related to the mainstream environmental movement. The movement's growing organizing prowess has captured the attention of polluting industries. Many industry representatives believe it has the potential to become a more troublesome force than mainstream environmental groups. "It's a grassroots movement, and the people leading it are much more personally involved in the issues," says John Kyte, director of environmental affairs at the National Association of Manufacturers. "It's also different [from traditional environmental groups] in terms of its aims. We have people in this movement talking about tangible survival issues."

Industry was quick to respond to this threat. At a two-day conference in September 1994, the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chemical Manufacturers Association resolved to aggressively fund research attacking the scientific underpinnings of the environmental justice movement. Soon after the conference, a number of reports began appearing that refuted the findings of the United Church of Christ study. Chief among them was a widely quoted study by scientists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst funded by Waste Management, one of the nation's most egregious polluters.

Such negative PR has hardly broken the movement's stride. Researchers continue to uncover links between environmental degradation and social pathologies in the black community. A 1996 study at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, for example, suggested that exposure to lead in the environment may contribute significantly to criminal behavior, a finding that might help explain the high rates of crime in America's inner cities.

For serious activists, environmental justice issues seem like the only game in town. In fact, politicians close to the movement seem to be showing more backbone on environmental issues than anybody else. The Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) has the best environmental voting record of any bloc in Congress, according to the League of Conservation Voters. The CBC had an average score of 76 percent during the 104th Congress, compared to an average Democratic score of 70 percent and an average Republican score of 24 percent.

That's not to say, however, that they get any credit for it. "Historically, I think, environmental organizations have defined the environment basically as a white issue," says Bunyan Bryant, a professor of natural resources at the University of Michigan and a League of Conservation Voters board member. "Here are congressional representatives who time and time again have voted in the right direction, yet they have not received any recognition for their work."

That's starting to change. Black Caucus members are urging mainstream groups to take on issues of environmental justice. This convergence of forces helped convince President Bill Clinton in 1994 to sign an executive order requiring federal agencies to "identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." There have been many other movement victories: The predominantly Latino residents of Kettleman City, California, won a court judgment blocking plans for an incinerator in their town. Black and white residents united to quash plans for a uranium-enrichment plant in Homer, Louisiana. In Chicago, Hazel Johnson's People for Community Recovery has joined the Chicago Legal Clinic to help residents drive polluters out of several city neighborhoods. Civil rights groups are now seeking environmentalists' support to expand public transit subsidies and to get inner-city neighborhoods of cigarette and liquor billboards.

Once beyond the pale for environmentalists, these issues may help restore relevance to green politics. "If the environmental movement is going to bring about change, it can't go it alone," said Bryant, the University of Michigan professor, in an interview last year. "It's going to have to form some coalitions. Right now, the most viable movement in this country is the environmental justice movement."

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Environmental Justice Milestones

For many, the modern Environmental Justice Movement began in the late 60s and early 70s with specific events such as the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s efforts on behalf of striking garbage workers or the United Farm Workers' fight against pesticides. However, others also recognize that Native American activists have been waging land-use and environmental justice battles in North America for centuries. While the exact beginning of the EJ Movement may be debatable, it definitely gained momentum — and string of victories — in recent decades. Though no one list of milestones could encompass all of the key moments in EJ history, here, with the help of the Environmental Justice Resource Center, we highlight some critical benchmarks.

1964
U.S. Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Title VI prohibited use of federal funds to discriminate based on race, color and national origin.

1969
Ralph Abascal of the California Rural Legal Assistance filed suit on behalf of six migrant farm workers that ultimately resulted in a ban of the pesticide DDT.

1979
Linda McKeever Bullard filed Bean v. Southwestern Waste Management, Inc. lawsuit on behalf of Houston's Northeast Community Action Group, the first civil rights suit challenging the siting of a waste facility.

1982
Warren County residents protested the siting of the polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) landfill in Warren County, North Carolina. The term "environmental racism" was coined by Dr. Benjamin Chavis.

1986
West Harlem Environmental Action's (WE ACT) community organizing began to combat the harmful impacts of the North River Sewage Treatment Plant.

1987
United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice issued the famous Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States report, the first national study to correlate waste facility siting and race.

1989
The Great Louisiana Toxic March was led by the Gulf Coast Tenants and communities in "Cancer Alley," the industrial corridor between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. The march brings public attention to toxic living conditions in "Cancer Alley."

1990
Clean Air Act passed by U.S. Congress.

Robert D. Bullard published Dumping in Dixie, the first textbook on environmental justice.

1991
The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D.C., attracting over 1,000 participants.

The Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) was established.

1992
The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice was founded at Xavier University of Louisiana.


EPA released Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk for All Communities, one of the first comprehensive government reports to examine environmental justice.

WE ACT sued the City of New York for operating the North River plant as a public nuisance to the people of the West Harlem Community. WE ACT was eventually awarded a $1 million settlement and the City of New York set aside $55 million to repair air pollution and the waste water facility.

1993
EPA established the 25-member National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC).

Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) formed to inject an Asian/Pacific Islander perspective into the environmental justice movement and to build an environmental justice framework and principles into work in Asian/Pacific Islander communities.
The Farmworker Network for Economic and Environmental Justice (FNEEJ) formed to support the struggle of more than 50,000 workers in nine independent farmworker organizations.

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

**1994**

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

President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12989, "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations."

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

The Title IV lawsuit **Labor Community Strategy Center, Bus Riders Union, et al. v. Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority** was filed. The lawsuit charged that the MTA operates separate and unequal bus and rail systems that discriminate against the poor minority bus riders of Los Angeles.

**1995**

The Environmental Justice Fund was founded by six networks to promote the creation of alternative funding strategies to support grassroots EJ organizing.

1996

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

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

1998

United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice convened an array of grassroots environmental justice, civil rights, faith-based, legal and academic center leaders on the Shintech Title V permit application planned for Convent, Louisiana.

UN Environmental Programme Negotiating Sessions on Elimination of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) 1998-2001 took place.


Florida Legislature passed the 1998 Environmental Equity and Justice Act.

The Environmental Justice and Equity Institute was created at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee.

1999

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

2000

IEN developed a training partnership with Project Underground to hire and train a Native mining campaigner to address mining issues. This launched the Indigenous Mining Campaign Project.

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

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

2001

Environmental justice leaders participated in World Conference Against Racism (WCAR) held in Durban, South Africa.

Residents of Anniston, Alabama Sweet Valley/Cobb Town Environmental Task Force won a $42.8 million settlement against Monsanto chemical company. The community was relocated because of PCB contamination.

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

2002

Environmental justice delegates participated in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Rio + 10 Earth Summit, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Norco, Louisiana Diamond Community secured full relocation and buyout from the Shell Chemical Refinery.

Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit convened in Washington, D.C.

The list of milestones was adapted from "Environmental Justice Timeline - Milestones" compiled by the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University. A complete list can be found at http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/timeline2/%20EJTimeline.pdf.
Reflections on the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit

BY MICHELE ROBERTS

The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held in Washington, D.C. in October of 1991, continues to be considered by many as perhaps the most important event in the history of the environmental justice movement. The summit produced a powerful declaration on the principles of environmental justice that provided direction to the growing movement and continues to inspire activists.

Based on the accomplishments and impact of that summit, activists felt the need to reconvene with a celebratory anniversary and next-steps agenda. The Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held October 23-27, 2002 in Washington, D.C., attracted over a thousand participants from all over the United States, as well as from countries such as Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Panama, Guyana, Ecuador, South Africa and India.

As the new organizing director for Center for Health, Environment and Justice, I came to the summit to learn and share. Based on the goals established by the national planning committee for this summit, I attended with a great deal of excitement and expectation. The goals included:

- assessing the progress made since 1991
- developing strategies to build on the assets and successes of the current environmental justice movement
- broadening the scope of the movement to include work on economic issues, immigrant-bashing, globalization, welfare, government accountability and the overall health of communities
- improving the lives of people of color over the next 10 to 50 years
- spurring the growth of grassroots involvement at a level sufficient to achieve systemic change.
Numerous key events, plenary sessions and workshops kept participants engaged in a constant flow of stimulating dialogues. Plenary sessions such as "Affirming Local Concerns for a National Agenda" and "Developing Community-Driven Legal and Organizing Strategies" were very empowering. Workshops such as "Finding Solutions for Corporate Pollution," "Mining Impacts on Indigenous Lands" and breakout sessions on "Vieques," "Incineration," "Youth Organizing 101" and "Climate Justice" were extremely informative. These sessions stimulated dialogue and networking that well reflected the intended goals of the summit.

The workshop on incineration that I attended was a learning experience for all involved. Tom Goldtooth of the Indigenous Environmental Network described the impacts of incineration in Alaska on the indigenous population. After community leaders in Arkansas and Michigan shared experiences from their incinerator fights, including dealing with "good old boy" politicians, a community leader from New York City responded that they shouldn't allow these politicians to stop their efforts and shared how she won her fight. She told the group that if you can't gain support from elected officials you should organize not only to further your environmental goals but to challenge the officials in the next election. Towards the end of the workshop, an activist from the New York City-based organization Waterfront Neighborhoods invited the entire workshop to come to New York and help counter pro-incineration propaganda at a conference in November.

The summit opened and closed each day with a celebration of various cultural experiences. One evening African drummers and dancers performed. Asian youth led the opening activity one morning with a friendship-building ceremony, handing out strings that were to be placed on the wrist of the person seated next to them; the recipients then wished for prosperity for the person giving them the strings. On the last day of the summit, I participated in a circle dance with Native Americans.

At times, however, there was a level of tension that resulted in occasional protests. Tension and frustration began with the limited registration materials, accommodations and food, especially for the youth and those on scholarships; problems due to cost overruns. The lack of language translators made it difficult for the Spanish-speaking community to effectively participate at the Summit. In addition, the number of meeting rooms was inadequate and youth were not able to meet and plan their activities.

Nonetheless, I found the summit a very rewarding experience. For me the highlight was being able to meet and talk with Hazel Johnson, who I consider to be the "mother of environmental justice." Her organization, People for Community Recovery, has led the fight for environmental justice in an area of Chicago's South Side called the "toxic doughnut" because it is completely surrounded with toxic industries and dumps.

I first had the pleasure of hearing Hazel Johnson at the First African American Women in the Law Conference held in 1995 in Washington, D.C. Hearing her story and her commitment to fight for justice for her family and community strengthened my own commitment to the movement. I was thrilled to be able to share my feelings with Mrs. Johnson and thank her for all that she has done for the movement. Apparently I wasn't the only one who felt this way, for Mrs. Johnson was one of several women at the summit honored for their accomplishments at a dinner on the summit's final night.

Others who I was meeting for the first time also left a deep impression—for example, activists from Youth from the Bronx whose goal is to "green the ghetto" and Virginia Townsend, a community activist from Holly Hill, South Carolina who is seeking organizing assistance in her fight for relocation against Giant Cement. Hearing about what people have accomplished and their willingness to continue to organize left me feeling more empowered and determined to assist in their daily organizing struggles.

Leaving the summit, I believed that those who attended will indeed help fulfill the ambitious goals set by the summit's planning committee. True, it will be a challenge, especially given the current administration in Washington. But the participants of the first summit have made tremendous strides in advancing the goals of the movement. The people I met at the second summit are committed and ready to do the same.

Michele Roberts is organizing director for the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (CHEJ). This article, which first appeared in CHEJ's newsletter, was reprinted with permission.
Reflections: A Filipina's Perspective

BY AIMEE SUZARA

I arrived at the Second National People Of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in October 2002 with a heavy heart.

Just a few months earlier, cuts were made in funding for Superfund site cleanups, representing a trend of post-911 attacks on environmental policy in the United States by the Bush administration. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, residents living near former U.S. military bases were continuing to suffer from toxic waste-related illnesses such as congenital defects, leukemia and other cancers—a tragedy for which the military still refused to take responsibility. A renewed military presence in the Philippines as part of the "War against Terrorism" highlighted this toxic legacy.

The first major event that characterized the gathering for me, however, was the youth rally that ensued the morning of the second day. Marching and chanting "no justice, no peace" dozens of youth proceeded to the front of the assembly room and presented demands which ranged from receiving meal tickets to having a stronger voice in the workshops. The following day, Spanish-speaking delegates protested the inadequate number of translators available. These events altered the entire course of the summit: rather than an orderly proceeding through the dozens of panels, workshops and plenaries, the weekend was characterized by spontaneous caucuses and resolution-drafting sessions held in the hotel lobby, individual hotel rooms and conference halls. The chaos revealed the conflict underlying the diversity of voices, the "War against Terrorism" highlighted this toxic legacy.

The chaos at the Summit revealed conflict within the Environmental Justice Movement.

The low turnout a result of poor outreach, financial limitations or something deeper? "It's largely an issue of outreach and education among Filipino immigrant communities and Filipino Americans [in terms of] what environmental injustice is, and how it affects us all," said Jorge Emmanuel, founding member and former chairman of FACES. He added, "Filipinos such as those in Crockett/Richmond, California, who area dealing with pollution from refineries, may not see themselves as part of a larger movement."

Similarly, for Filipinos living in the Philippines, the term "environmental justice" may not yet have meaning. "They may not be aware of the environmental justice movement as an international movement that could provide support for their struggles," states Christina Leano, co-coordinator of the SF Bay FACES chapter. Nevertheless, at FACES we agree that having more Filipinos involved in the EJ movement in the U.S. would benefit both the movement and our constituency.

Overall, it was evident to me that Summit II was just a beginning. The low representation of Filipinos and the rupture of order revealed not a failure on anyone's part, but the magnitude of the work that needs to be done to truly address multiculturalism, diversity and solidarity within the movement itself.

Aimee Suzara is a writer and activist who has worked for several years in the Filipino American community and against U.S. military toxic waste in the Philippines. She is a founding member and board member of the Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solutions (FACES).
To strengthen a national movement we have to assess and evaluate the needs of grassroots groups.

A Little History

If we look back historically in the Environmental Justice Movement, several particular issues came out of the First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. We discussed and debated, one, whether at that particular point we wanted to form a national organization. Some felt that when a national organization is formed, it diffuses the bottom-up character of a movement and that there’s more emphasis placed on the development of the national organization versus local peoples’ needs, including the need for grassroots groups to build their infrastructures, to get training and technical assistance, and to develop state, regional, national and international strategies for environmental and economic justice. At that moment in history, it was the opinion of grassroots organizations and others that the grassroots groups needed entities to help them forge collective agendas. What we needed to do was build regional environmental justice networks.

Now, the other primary question that gets us to where we are at this particular moment was the question of whether the movement would be centralized or decentralized. It was generally agreed at the first Summit that the movement would be decentralized. That decision was crucial to the movement’s overall development and where we are today because although it’s very difficult to maintain a decentralized movement in terms of communications, resources and a whole set of complex issues, that’s the charge that was moved forward.

A few years after the Summit, the Washington Office on Environmental Justice was formed. When the Washington Office was being discussed among network representatives, grassroots groups, academics and religious leaders, we decided to call it the Washington Office on Environmental Justice, not the "national" office on environmental justice, to avoid suggesting that the office represented the entire movement. We wanted to have an entity or an institution that would lobby...
formally on our behalf, discussing political issues and developing political strategies to move those issues forward. But the Washington office still needed to be "bottomed up." It needed to have grassroots representation on its board of directors. If there was a bill or a piece of legislation that was being discussed, then that had to be processed somewhere among our grassroots constituencies.

That became very, very tough. Some grassroots groups felt that politically they didn’t have enough clarity or understanding of the significance of having a Washington Office on Environmental Justice. From the perspective of many of the networks, since we were at different places historically at different times, it was too soon to form a Washington office. Consequently, the office was dismantled. But I still believe today, and I think our Southwest Network continues to believe, that a Washington-based office on environmental justice, driven by grassroots organizations, could be crucial and vital to the Environmental Justice Movement.

Key Questions
Some of those questions and challenges are still in front of us. Is this movement going to continue to be decentralized? Or is there discussion on the floor about centralization of the movement? You cannot discuss a national organization, politically speaking, without discussing the question of decentralization versus centralization, and at the same time analyzing our past, both success and challenges, from a decentralization standpoint.

Everyone agrees that this movement should be lead by the grassroots. That really sounds good. But in everyday practice, how does that particular piece get moved forward? From a practical standpoint, how does that get institutionalized in our movement?

At the second Summit, ideology was brought up but not discussed at the level that it could have and should have been. Methodology was being touched on but not at the level that it could have or should have been. The question of gender should have been discussed. And when you talk about class versus race in this movement, it’s not the case that all of us people of color are in the same place at the same time. Class issues have to be discussed.

Do I believe that there should be a national organization representing the entire Environmental Justice Movement? I would say at this particular point there’s a whole lot of analysis — some concrete political, social and economical analysis — that would have to take place to get us to that conclusion.

Building Trust, Moving Forward
Primarily, what we have to do to strengthen a national movement is to assess and evaluate the needs of the grassroots groups. Because if you don’t do that first, then you’re leaping ahead and you’re talking about building something national that, in fact, may leave behind the primary groups that make up this movement — grassroots environmental justice organizations. So, on the one hand, it’s easy to say, “bring them to the table, invite them to the meeting, buy them an airplane ticket, put them in a hotel room.” But what really assists in the development of grassroots organizations or grassroots constituencies is a process that ensures that they are full players at all levels of decision-making.

A significant question for us at the Southwest Network is, How do we continue to develop a working, practical, trust-building relationship with our constituency? For example, although our regional and bi-national office is located here in Albuquerque, one of the primary functions of this office is to carry out the mandate of our constituency. We have several campaigns, including Youth Leadership, Land Use/Land Rights and Border/Worker Justice. Each campaign has 10-15 representatives of organizations that are part of the campaign. When you look at the way that we structured and modeled our decision-making process, it’s clear that all of the decisions regarding our campaigns are made by the campaign leadership. They decide the goals, objectives, tactics and strategies.

That’s one way that we have consistently attempted to live up to our political commitment of developing a bottom-up process. And yes, it does take longer. And yes, sometimes all of us get frustrated because it seems like it’s taking too long. But the issue always comes down to whether we want to be here for a minute or for a while.

Finally, we’re part of a domestic and international movement that has had many victories, both at the local, state, regional, national and international level. But in order to strengthen the movement, we have to sit down and analyze the pros, cons, successes and challenges of other movements, including the civil rights and liberation movements of the 60s and 70s. Some people say to me, "Richard, that takes too long. Why do we have to study history in order to make a decision about where we’re going?" But I say, in order to know where we’re going, we have to know where we came from.

Richard Moore is executive director of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, a bi-national organization that comprises over 60 community-based grassroots organizations working in communities of color in six southwestern states and Northern Mexico.
LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP

The question of leadership is a profound one in all social movements, but particularly in environmental justice. To probe the meaning of leadership and how it can be fostered in our movement and in society at large, Race, Poverty & the Environment convened a roundtable discussion between Juliet Ellis, executive director of Urban Habitat; Carl Anthony, founder of Urban Habitat and program officer at the Ford Foundation; and Angela Glover Blackwell, president of PolicyLink.

RPE: The word leadership means different things to different people. It’s often said that the Environmental Justice Movement is led by the grassroots. So what does leadership mean, from your point of view, in the EJ Movement, which is a decentralized movement led by people of color?

Juliet Ellis: It’s different than other movements because the core principle of EJ is that those most affected should be the ones out in the front driving the agenda.

Angela Glover Blackwell: Well I’m going to start with what leadership is. When you talk about leadership you’re talking about people who set the pace and the vision, and those who are able to run out to the end and get a sense of what’s ahead, but also come back and be with people who are going there with wisdom about the path.

Too often in this country, leadership does not come from the people who are most vulnerable in society because they don’t have the kind of access — either access to the media or access to policymakers or access to resources — that people who are white and more affluent and more educated in society have. So even when that leadership tries to do for everybody, the absence of the people keeps solutions from being sustainable and authentic.

Carl Anthony: Well, I think that we’re really in trouble. I think the society is in deep trouble, that there’s a leadership vacuum in the whole society. When we talk about leadership there’s a tendency to say the whole society is healthy and that poor people and people of color lack leadership. I think frankly the whole society is in trouble. One of the reasons that we’re in trouble is because it’s a big job to provide leadership and it means that you have to solve all the problems that everybody else has brushed under the rug.

If you look at the strength of the environmental justice movement, it really is awe-inspiring. I went to this meeting recently and there was one woman who said, “You know, I don’t know nothing about chemistry. My expertise is not in medicine; my expertise is in suffering.” And then afterward she took apart this environmental impact report and dealt with all these technical issues. She said the reason she was doing this work was...
because when her daughter was five years old, she had gone out and was playing in an asbestos dump. There was no sign saying it was an asbestos dump, so she was playing in it for five or six years. And then the city came around and said there’s a problem here. So she had to start figuring out, What is asbestos?

But at the same time, we’re in trouble because the society doesn’t care. So the question, How do you develop a common sense of leadership that is grounded in the most vulnerable but in some way carries everyone else along? is a big challenge.

Ellis: But those folks are positioned to provide leadership. People are looking for somebody who inspires them and who is from the community and who has experienced those types of things. I think that someone from West Oakland is primed to provide the leadership for all of Oakland or the Bay Area if that individual had the space to take the time, to be thoughtful, to be visionary, and to think long-term. But one of the problems is that people who are most marginalized are dealing with day-to-day issues. How do they take time away from their child who is sick from playing in asbestos to be able to think long-term and to see what the prize is at the end, and to be able to get above the muck and provide leadership for everybody?

Anthony: I think that’s true. The other problem we have is people understand leadership to mean that you’re not connected, and that you’re not really grounded. And so we have a whole system of rewarding people who are more and more disconnected.

Glover Blackwelk Carl, when you say that the country has a crisis of leadership, what does that mean?

Anthony: What I mean is if you look at all the systems in the country — the economic system in terms of globalization, the health system, the educational system, the criminal justice system—all the systems are facing major crises in leadership. You look at all these crises that a healthy society, especially the most powerful one in the world, should have somehow resolved but it hasn’t. We have more people in prison per capita than any other country in the world. It’s become more efficient to figure out how to build prisons and spend $30,000 to $40,000 a year to keep somebody incarcerated than it is to actually release the talent and creativity of that person to help the whole society really address these issues. So when I say that the country is in a leadership crisis, I mean Bush—and I don’t want to get into a political conversation but—can keep everybody’s attention on this military thing, and it works politically because we don’t have the capacity to redirect the conversation. We have not found a way to engage the creativity of all these populations we have.

RPE: Getting back to the grassroots/community-based level, you identified some challenges to creating leadership. How does that get done when people are over-extended and have other problems going on in their lives? How do you create and sustain leadership at that level?

Glover Blackwelk What Carl just described is our current situation. It’s been this bad for a long, long time. But we didn’t describe this condition in the past as a crisis of leadership. During slavery or before the civil rights movement or during the industrial revolution, we had a society that treated people differently, that ignored the needs of vast numbers of people and that worked for a few. But I think that almost universally, when you think back on those times, you don’t think of the problem as a crisis of leadership. Why do we think of it as a crisis of leadership today? The old system is no longer sustainable. The old ways of disregarding, dismissing and disrespecting large segments of the population is no longer sustainable because there’s a bright light shining on those populations, because we have redefined what we mean by inclusion, and because people of color and people who have been marginalized have ascended to leadership positions and positions of influence. Everybody’s at the table; everybody’s demanding to be heard. And we don’t have enough leaders who know how to operate in that environment.

I believe that the leaders who are most likely to be able to operate in that environment are people from the communities that we’re talking about right now. They can operate effectively in this environment because leaders from communities of color, from communities that have felt like outsiders, if they are effective, are able to think about the “other.” Their effectiveness has been based on understanding what their agenda is and being able to build broader support for that agenda from a commitment to justice, fairness and inclusion. They have developed strategies that are based on coalition building, demand and advocacy and all those things one has to
"We don’t talk enough about followership. Supporting and helping leaders to be able to do what they do best is also important."

– Angela Glover Blackwell

pursue to attain justice. That’s what the world needs today.

If you ask how do we get these people into more visible leadership positions given all the challenges, I think there are interventions that would do that and the way we should start is with programs that target leaders of color and give them the time, space, networks and skills they need.

**Ellis:** Much of the leadership development that takes place is based on relationship building and opportunity and doors being opened and access. And the question is: How do you do that in a more deliberate way so that you are targeting folks, that you’re opening those doors and you’re taking the time to groom folks, to mentor them, to strategize with them, and to connect them to other relationships? Nobody who’s sitting here got here without doors being opened and relationships being fostered and nurtured, and being able to fail.

**Anthony:** When you talk about the civil rights movement, all of us who are old enough eventually at some point learned that we were building on the struggles of other people who were engaged in them over a longer period of time. But I think one of the really important lessons in all this is just because you’re old, you may not be right; just because you’re young you may not be right. But if you act with integrity and try to distill what are some really important principles, then I think we do have some hope. Each community has leaders for progressive change that go back a long time.

**RPE:** What you were saying, Carl, leads to another question: Is EJ suffering from a lack of a commitment to mentoring and bringing up the next generation of leaders? In many cases, leaders stay in organizations for several years, sometimes decades, and they may or may not make the effort to foster the next generation of leaders. Is that an issue and how can it be addressed?

**Ellis:** The issue of leadership transition seemed evident at the Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit. Many of the people who were in the visible leadership roles are people who’ve been doing this work for a long time. Many times it’s the same players who all are connected, who know each other, who are the spokesperson for the movement, while there’s another tier of activists and leaders who are doing work and trying new strategies. There seems to be a lack of space for this group to provide leadership within the larger context.

**Glover Blackwell:** There’s often no place for a lifelong justice activist to go. You just have to acknowledge that. I mean people who decide that they want to devote their lives to justice have very few work opportunities to choose from and if they get one opportunity, they tend not to let it go because to let it go means to leave justice work. That’s not what people want to do.

**Ellis:** That is the first time I’ve ever heard anybody explain it that way. Because within my peer group when we talk about leadership issues it is framed as, "Why won’t these elders make room for the next generation?"

**Glover Blackwell:** I worked for ten years in a general public interest law firm, where we were working on issues of health and environment, and consumer and constitutional issues—a dream job for a person committed to justice. When I decided I wanted to go and looked around there was no place to go. So I created an organization. And that says a lot because if you don’t have the capacity—and it takes a lot of connections to be able to create an institution—there are not a lot of places to go and stay in justice work. And the longer you do justice work, the harder it is to go anywhere else.

Not only is there no place to go, but nobody figures out a way to create a space for you to move into a more visible leadership position. If you’re a corporate leader, when you get moved on—whether it’s because you’re doing a bad job or because it’s time for you to retire—you’re taken care of. If you are a university president, and you decide it’s time to move on, you go be the head of a foundation. If you’re the head of a foundation and it’s time to move on, you go be the head of a university. If you’re a really outstanding mayor and you’re a lawyer, you’re going to go to a big corporate law firm because you’ve got all the connections. If you’re a successful corporate lawyer, you go to a big, wealthy non-profit (like the Red Cross) or join industry, which has prestigious, paying boards of directors.

But in our work, this does not often happen. Instead of taking care of justice leaders, the community and foundations burn you out and wear you out and then ask, Whatever happened to...?
Ellis: It's frustrating because many times the conversation is framed as if there is a lack of second-tier leadership and that the executive directors are aging out and there's a concern about what's going to happen to these organizations that anchor EJ. But you've got people like me and others saying that there is no vacuum in leadership. We are ready to lead. But there isn't a space or support for us younger activists to move into those positions. Rarely do they hire someone who is 30 to run these organizations.

Glover Blackwell: I don't want to dismiss the notion that it is frustrating for people in your generation. You should be frustrated because there aren't places for you to move up into. But I do think that there are strategies. One is for current leaders to begin to be comfortable sharing leadership positions. There's no reason why all these organizations shouldn't have co-leaders, co-executive directors. That allows for many things. It allows for the younger leaders to have a lot of input and to get a lot of experience under their belt before they have to carry the burden alone. It also allows for the person who is in the more senior position to begin to have some time and space to think about how to transition. Because you don't have the time to think about how to transition when you're trying to keep the organization alive and it all falls on your shoulders.

We could also begin to have dialogue with foundations about how to become more deliberate about helping people to transition, not just out, but to other positions of leadership and influence. Here's part of the problem we also face: really effective justice leaders have made a lot of enemies in the mainstream. And so it's easy for a foundation president to become a university president because they probably provided a lot of money to the university along the way, or they provided lots of opportunities. But if you're doing environmental justice, think of the enemies that you've made on the corporate side, so transitioning into a corporation is probably not an option for you. We need to begin to think about what the options are and create ways for people to provide broader leadership. Universities ought to be a place to do that. Municipal government ought to be a place to do that. Foundations ought to be a place to do that. So we ought to have some pipelines for more senior leaders in the same way you think about pipelines for more junior leaders.

RPE: What about women in leadership. Do women face the same barriers they might face in the corporate sector? There are more women visible in leadership in EJ today but there are still tensions around gender. What do you think about that? What kind of challenges do they face?

Glover Blackwell: I think that women do face special challenges when it comes to leadership. But it's interesting in this kind of work. I'm torn about how to answer that question because on the one hand, if you just do a head count, you will always find that there are fewer women in leadership positions. But if you look at who's influencing what happens, I think women are very influential in justice work. And they're very influential in justice work because they do the work. And very often if you're doing the work, you get to influence how it's going whether you get designated as the leader or not.

Ellis: I keep thinking back to when you and I were sitting here and you had talked to me about professionalizing my leadership. At the time I didn't know what you meant.

Glover Blackwell: What I meant by it was that you are dearly in a leadership position but that being designated a leader doesn't make you a leader. In order to become a leader you have to acknowledge that you are. Very often I think women fail to do that because women are so used to influencing the work by doing it without getting credit, without doing the framing, that we sometimes fail to say, "I am the leader and as the leader I'm going to operate in this way." It's particularly a challenge for women because we're used to being the worker bees. But the worker bee and the leader are not the same. As women we have to prepare ourselves for the isolation and take risks and accept responsibility.

Anthony: How do we continue to tell the stories of what justice work is about so that people can see themselves doing the things that are necessary to promote the needs of the community and also be able to be effective in terms of their own personal lives? I'm speaking now about women of color, African-American women in particular. How do we tell the stories of what it means to be an effective, successful person in such a way that not only can the person realize their highest potential but do it in the context that actually helps to transform the community? The black community and the white community—the whole society.

Glover Blackwell: I agree. I also think that we don't talk enough about followership. Because I don't think that anything is more important for successful leadership than followership. I sometimes shy away from using the phrase that everybody is a leader, even though I know what it means. It means that in some instance in our lives, there's always somebody looking to you for leadership and you should be aware of that. But I also think supporting leaders, helping leaders to be able to do what it is they do best, is important. When we think about the skills that leaders need, you can identify them. There are people in the environmental justice movement who have a lot of skill, who have moved into leadership positions because of the atrocities they've witnessed and experienced, and we need to be dear about the additional skills that they need in order to be able to step up to the moment and move beyond the issues that brought them into the struggle. I think this is a role for foundations, universities and communities as they come together and say, How do we find, shine a bright light on and support our leaders so that they can provide leadership to as broad a realm as possible?

Ellis: I think this whole issue around different leadership styles between women and men is interesting. Women are able to provide leadership in a way that is relationship-based as well as being analytical and able to think big picture and being ethical and ambitious, aggressive and assertive. But we also want to have families and have relationships with the people we work with. How do you get your arms around that? How do you provide leadership and be accountable?
and say, I am a leader and the buck really does stop with me, yet I do care about your family and I want people in communities to be heard and to drive the agenda and feel that they’re being supported. Those things matter to me.

**Anthony:** I also want to underscore another part of this. There are always these sort of inner voice questions: If I go do x, am I really selling out? If I try to live up to my highest potential, does that mean I think I'm too good for the community?

**Ellis:** I think EJ is a little bit wrought with that ideology that says you can't step out and lead. The fact that you can see that there is a problem and no one is doing anything about it leads to the question: Do you have the backbone to say, I know we're going to get critiqued but at least somebody has to initiate the dialogue. I'm not saying it has to be my way; I'm just saying let's have a conversation. If you have a better way, let's do it your way. But somebody should do something. Because that to me is leadership.

**Anthony:** Exactly. The challenge is honoring what you know is really important about the sort of groundedness of being with the community and being grassroots and really honor that. But at the same time also understand that other things need to be added in order for that to be effective, and then having the courage to actually step into positions that are not always popular.

**RPE:** One more question: youth leadership — teenagers, young adults. There's a lot of energy and passion among youth but they're frustrated that they're not always seen as leaders and get excluded. How do you feel youth can be supported and respected for their ideas?

**Glover Blackwell:** I have one thing I want to say about that that might be controversial. I don't mean to be negative but I don't like it when organizations decide, they need to get some young people in leadership positions. Back during the civil rights movement there were a lot of young people in that movement and each one of them earned their place at that table. It was because of what they were doing, the stance that they were taking, the courage

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**Cultivating Community Leadership**

"The Leadership Institute has helped me to look at some deeper political analysis that we need to bring into our organization when we work with local issues. For example, transportation issues are broader than just Oakland. Gentrification is not just on the local level. We need to know what is happening in the Mission, in Richmond, in Palo Alto. We need to see those communities as interrelated."

— Karleen Lloyd, PUEBLO, Oakland, 1999 Institute Participant

Urban Habitat founded the Leadership Institute for Sustainable Communities in 1998 with the goal of supporting Bay Area people of color leaders to achieve just, stable and sustainable community development. Since then more than 45 community leaders have graduated from the Institute.

Leadership institute participants are experienced and emerging community leaders from all walks of life who are nominated to represent their organizations. The Institute involves both the individual and the organization to ensure the development of strong infrastructure for community change. Leadership Institute Trainers are activists, organizers and researchers from Urban Habitat and other community-based institutions.

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- Providing community, labor and religious leaders with an in-depth look at the complex economic, political and social forces shaping our region and the dynamics of institutionalized racism in the region.
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- Leadership

To get more information on the Leadership Institute, contact Miriam Walden at miriamwalden@hotmail.com or Mateo Nube at mateo@urbanhabitat.org or (510) 839-9615.

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Who’s Got the Power?
Resolving the grassroots-intermediary rift

BY RINKU SEN

Most environmental justice groups do not have internal scientists and lawyers to provide the hard data and legitimacy they need to wage their campaigns. They often borrow such resources from better-funded universities, legal and research organizations. With this relationship in mind, EJ activists who attended the First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 developed principles to ensure that the people most affected by environmental racism would not be forced into the background of their own movement by their technical resource allies. Today, however, people of color populate both grassroots and technical sectors, a trend that has begun to remove the historic racial divide between communities and experts.

As the movement enters another decade, how is the relationship between the grassroots sector and technical sector shaping up? Collaborations are often productive but sometimes problematic. At the heart of the debate lies the familiar conflict over who is authorized to lead the agenda when various sectors—communities, scientists, researchers, lawyers, funders—comprise the movement.

Grassroots and Intermediary Partnerships

Many grassroots groups have enjoyed successful partnerships with technical resource people. For example, Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE) has worked with the Center for Community Change, the Washington-based organizing and policy technical assistance organization, to help develop national transportation policy. West Harlem Environmental Action (WE ACT) has collaborated with Columbia University to observe air quality and get the Environmental Protection Agency to continue monitoring toxic hotspots. Southwest Environmental and Economic Justice Network (SNEEJ) worked with the Labor Occupational Health Program at UC Berkeley to train local leaders to confront environmental hazards.

These productive projects shared three key elements: community power, explicit front-end discussion of expectations, and technical humility. These and other “Principles of Working Together” were drafted and approved at Summit II. The first, community power, depends on strong grassroots organizations, activists say. The stronger a community group is, the better
it is able to seek technical expertise that is appropriate to its strategy. "Groups with more experience tend to have more control over the research content and process," says Karleen Lloyd, organizing director at People United for a Better Oakland. The team can then tailor the technical work to advance campaign goals and tactics.

Second, front-end discussions of accountability and expectations—ideally articulated in writing—characterize successful collaborations. Richard Moore, executive director of SNEEJ, notes that such collaborations should begin with a negotiation process that delineates "how the decisions are going to get made [and] how the resources will be raised and distributed." These agreements become especially important when organizing goals clash with technical limitations. For example, campaigns often require a strong assertion of discrimination or proof of harmful intent on the part of polluters. But science and law, however, can't always produce such definitive evidence. Robin Turner, a former staff person for the Joint Center for Political Studies and currently a graduate student in Political Science at UC Berkeley, says that hard science's standards of proof rarely allow a researcher to link chemicals to health conditions with absolute certainty.

However, Swati Prakash, director of environmental health at WE ACT, notes that it's also important to distinguish between what technicians can't do and what they won't do. "Research often doesn't get back to a community in a timely manner, and there have been issues about the flexibility we can have in using research for campaigns," she says. That's where the third element, technical humility and service, comes in. Whatever the expert's goals, she or he should be willing to be directed by the strategy of an affected community. "Technical experts should serve the strategy, not the other way around," says Heetan Kalan, director of the South Africa Exchange on Environmental Justice.

Authority to Lead,
Race and Class
The fault line between grassroots and technical folks has been blurred some-what by the growing numbers of people of color entering the field as technical experts. But differing beliefs about power and the dynamics of social change, often stemming from class-based experiences, can adversely affect collaborations. On the one hand, some believe that the most enduring and radical social change involves the people most affected shaping solutions on their own behalf. Another philosophy asserts that elites are the ones who make real change happen by using their authority and influence with other elites.

However, Summit II's Principles of Working Together explicitly state that "people from grassroots organizations should lead the environmental justice movement." To Connie Tucker, director of the Southern Organizing Committee, that means "the role of technical experts is to provide resources, not political leadership." But Robert Bullard, professor of sociology and director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University, argues that the resource provision is too limiting for people like him who have a real stake in the movement and who have proved their responsiveness to communities. "Some [groups] want to put somebody who works in a university in a box and only pull them out when they think they need them," he says. He objects to the use of a grassroots identity to keep academics, scientists and other professionals out of efforts that should include them: "Grassroots is bandied about almost as a weapon."

Bullard points to an alternative: the multi-class and individual/organizational membership of networks like the National Black Environmental Justice Network, which he helped to start. WE ACT is another example of an organization, which is bringing expertise in-house, bridging the gap between grassroots and technical sectors. However, the mixed membership model opens up a number of questions about the movement's class orientation. As larger numbers of people of color occupy technical positions that require high levels of education, "class differences trump racial ones," says Ludovic Blain, an associate director of the Democracy Program at DEMOS and co-founder and former chair of the New York Environmental Justice Alliance. Richard Moore says that SNEEJ has learned the hard way not to abandon its contractual process, even with technical experts of color. "People of color organizations can have the same pitfalls that others can have," he notes. "Everyone can say, on one hand, that we support and promote grassroots leadership, but in practice how does it get carried out? Who's accountable to whom? We have the right to assess that in each other."

Prakash warns that people who are not directly affected by a policy often have lower standards for declaring a victory. She cites the example of working with the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) to reduce diesel fuel emissions in New York. When the governor and the MTA committed to switching to low-diesel buses and installing pollution control devices, "NRDC saw this as a final victory and took out an ad congratulating the governor and the MTA," Prakash explains. "We saw it as partial, because we needed to reduce diesel emissions in Harlem specifically, not just pollution generally." While most EJ activists would probably agree with Prakash, some fear that the middle class experience of most technical experts would lead them to make similar choices in multi-class organizations.

Aside from the class background and orientation of individuals, the societal value—and subsequent funding—assigned to non-organizing professionals also fosters resentment. Much of the organizing money in the EJ Movement comes from a dozen identifiably progressive foundations. The larger foundations tend to give to white environmental organizations for EJ-related work, or to academic and scientific research efforts. Blain implies that research and policy organizations tend to receive higher levels of funding from larger foundations than grassroots organizations do. It isn't at all clear, according to Turner, that the money can actually be redirected from research/policy organizations to grass-roots organizations: "I think it's actually different streams of money."

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We Must All Be Accountable in a Grassroots Movement

BY PENN LOH

In 1992, I was a twenty-something graduate student at UC Berkeley who had just joined a student of color environmental justice group, Nindakin, which was an affiliate of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. As a member, I often felt out of place. Not only was I not in my home community (Boston), but I was at an elite university with all its privileges. As a group, we also struggled over our role, particularly one question: Are we fighting our own oppression within the university or are we using our resources to support local community groups?

More than a decade later, I work for a community-based EJ group, Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE), and those questions persist. During my seven years at ACE, the group has grown from an intermediary organization providing legal and technical support to grassroots groups in Boston to a group that is also organizing communities directly, nurturing youth leadership, building coalitions and planning to establish a grassroots membership. We are neither a grassroots group nor an intermediary; we are both.

I realize now that the divide between “grassroots” and “intermediary” is just a reflection of the root injustices — racism, classism, sexism — that we are fighting against. An intermediary is an intermediary because it has some form of power that the grassroots doesn’t and feels some responsibility to share it.

For me, the guiding light for resolving these tensions comes from Dana Alston’s words at the First People of Color Environmental Justice Leadership Summit: “We Speak for Ourselves.” In that statement, she challenged us to build a movement led by those most affected — a goal that is easy to say, but hard to do. If we are a movement led by people struggling locally, then how do we build power and use it to achieve broader change, both regionally, nationally and internationally?

Are we building an EJ army with a general directing the troops or a federation of guerilla groups? Are we building a software empire, with a monopoly on the operating system, or an open-source Web with programs that any of us can adapt and use for free?

At ACE, through an ongoing study group with our youth, staff, board and community leaders, we’ve started to tackle these questions. We agreed that a “movement” has lots of people, each with a shared analysis of what’s wrong. Like flowing streams of water, we’re headed in the same direction, but not necessarily in a coordinated manner. A movement hits critical mass when people can identify with it and take part, yet without necessarily belonging to a group. We concluded that the EJ Movement is still in its infancy, not yet a mass movement but with the potential to be one.

With the help of the Environmental and Economic Justice Project (which is based out of the organizing group AGENDA in South Los Angeles), ACE determined that we needed to build power of sufficient scope and scale to achieve systemic change.

This discussion has helped us draft a five-year strategic plan that defines our role in the movement. ACE sees itself as part of a movement that is building power from the bottom up, with strong grassroots organizations connected through networks and a broad base of leadership that is representative of, and accountable to, our communities.

ACE’s staff has community organizers born and raised in the neighborhood along with lawyers and other professionals from inside and outside the community, white and of color. Yet, none of us has license to speak for the community. As staff, we are accountable to the youth, residents and community groups we work with. Our constituents currently make decisions about strategy and overall direction as members of our project and campaign committees and our board of directors. As we move to a membership structure, all decisions will flow from our members, who will also elect a majority of our board. Our job in supporting the grassroots is to continually develop leaders who in turn nurture others to follow them. As civil rights leader Ella Baker said, we have to, “Give light and people will find a way.”

Many of the principles for resolving the clashes between grassroots and intermediaries are already in place. At Summit I, EJ organizations from across the country agreed that the EJ agenda must be set by those most directly affected and that our first priority was to strengthen the grassroots base. At Summit II, we went a step further with the “Principles of Working Together,” which sets a code of conduct to ensure the integrity of grassroots leadership while working with all sectors of the movement.

The challenge now is to put our shared principles into practice by:

- Strengthening grassroots organizations. Change happens through collective action, not through an individual savior or charismatic leader. We must make ourselves replaceable and restrain personal glorification.

- Actively combating internalized racism and classism and putting into practice meaningful democratic participation. As Ghandi said, we must be the change we wish to see in the world.

- Creating an ongoing forum for communicating, resolving conflicts, and keeping ourselves accountable to our agreements.

Penn Loh is executive director of Alternatives for Community & Environment, based in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and co-chair of the Northeast Environmental Justice Network. He has been involved in supporting grassroots environmental justice efforts since 1992.
Cultures often collaborate—and clash—in justice movements.

Overcoming Internalized Racial Oppression
A challenge to the people of color Environmental Justice Movement

BY RON CHISOM, WITH DAVID BILLINGS

In November 2002, I attended a conference of some 500 to 700 hard-core activists of color. As committed as we all were to our common work on issues of race and the environment, you could feel the tension in the room and the divisions across class and regional lines. You could see the generation gaps. Different groups of color viewed each other warily. Even as speaker after speaker called for a united front against white supremacy and the destructive environmental policies that disproportionately impact us, the attendees had a difficult time coming together.

We have all been there, at some large gathering of social justice activists, united against oppression. Yet all around the room groups huddle in their own ethnic and political enclaves, distrustful and suspicious of each other. Everything is a potential battleground, from what food is served to who will present the agenda. Some might debate the featured speakers while others complain about not being part of the planning process. Still others will read the room and shout, “Where are the youth?” “Where are the gays and lesbians?” “Where are the Black folks?” “The Native Americans?” “Where are the women?” Soon people begin to murmur and leave and we return to our respective communities more divided than when we came.

What’s going on here? Why, if the struggle for equality and ending oppression unites us, can’t we get along? Do we fear coming together? Do we think that if we unite, we will no longer have any excuse not to fight the common enemies we know are killing us all?

The answers to these questions are both simple and complex. In a world where the voices and concerns of oppressed groups are rarely heard, the suppressed rage boils over in those few settings where we do gather to express our needs. Our tendency is to turn on each other rather than join forces and seize the day. Maybe it’s easier to see one another as the problem than it is to struggle against the larger, almost insurmountable challenges we face as oppressed peoples. Or perhaps we are being set up, goaded into quarreling with one another by The Man using that old divide-and-conquer tactic: preoccupy progressives and radicals with their own stuff and they will self-destruct.

Such divisions among progressives of color are not unusual. The tensions and discord are more the norm than the exception in my experience. They show up in local organizing efforts as well as in national movements. And they are indicative of a phenomenon we have known about for a long time called Internalized Racial Oppression.

In a race-constructed, white-supremacist state, Internalized Racial Oppression is as toxic as any chemical. It pollutes our organizations and movements for justice and equity. It poisons relationships among people of color. It keeps us from effectively working and organizing with white anti-racist allies.

What exactly is Internalized Racial Oppression—IRO, for short? We at The People's Institute for Survival and
To assume that people of color, just because we are activists, understand the impact of race and racism is to invite dissension among us.

Beyond believe that IRO manifests itself in two primary ways in a race-constructed society: people of color internalize inferiority (the minority syndrome) and white people internalize superiority (the entitlement syndrome). These phenomena are both conscious and unconscious. They are historical and cultural manifestations of racism.

At The People's Institute, we define Internalized Racial Oppression as a "multigenerational process of disempowerment by which People of Color accept and live out the definition of self, given by our oppressor." Conversely, it is also a "multi-generational process of empowerment by which white people accept and live out the power, privilege and prerogatives of being white in a race-based society."

IRO has many expressions. For example, ethnocentrism pits people of color against each other. Ethnocentrism is operative when people of color of various ethnicities see each other as the problem. An example is seen in the emerging Black versus Brown debate or in the dynamics that often exist between Indigenous people's approach to organizing as compared to Latino or African-American people's approaches. If not checked, this form of IRO fosters competition and rancor among groups of color. The end result is to keep white power and privilege in place and ensure that white-led movements dictate the agenda of people of color. Throughout the history of the United States, white domination of social justice movements — whether the struggle was for worker's rights, gender equity or just environmental practices and policies — has been assured, in part, because IRO kept people of color at odds with one another. While the differences of worldview, opinion and approach are real and often valuable, they need not jeopardize alliances. With a common analysis of IRO, these differences can make us stronger and broaden our base.

Another example of IRO is class tension or distancing. For instance, many activists grow distant from the very communities that raised and nurtured us. Our own politics and ideologies often make it impossible for our constituents to understand us. Even our globalism and international viewpoints, as important as they are, can separate us from people in our own neighborhood or even our own family. While we debate the strengths and weaknesses of grassroots versus professionally-led organizing strategies, we cannot let class create divisions in our movement-building campaigns.

IRO is at work in a white supremacist world-state whether there are any representatives of the dominant white culture around or not. Thus, our efforts at building coalitions among people of color are constantly threatened. Without a collective analysis and understanding of Internalized Racial Oppression, our efforts will continue to be undermined.

So what do we do to overcome Internalized Racial Oppression? I believe all organizers who want to do effective work in building a just, safe and equitable world need to:

Do a historical and multi-generational analysis of how Internalized Racial Oppression is manifested. The People's Institute has developed an "Undoing Racism"/"Community Organizing" process. We believe it is essential that activists have a collective understanding of how racism, culture and history impact our work. To assume that people of color, just because we are activists, understand the impact of race and racism is to invite dissension among us.

Recognize how internalized racial inferiority is perpetuated among people of color and begin a process of "undoing" the negative messages of worthlessness and minority status that IRO nurtures. At The People's Institute, we emphasize the "undoing" of racism rather than "unlearning" or "dismantling" racism because we believe that when we work together across racial/ethnic lines with a common analysis, we can identify how IRO operates among us all and begin to combat its negative messages and influences.

Learn how internalized racial superiority is perpetuated among white people and begin a process of identifying and "undoing" feelings and assumptions of entitlement among whites.

Understand that people of color have been strongest historically when we fought collectively against injustice and inequity. We must resist ideological wedges that divide rather than unite us. Organizers must be trained and skilled in keeping broad coalitions of people together.

Recreate those cultural "buffers" within family, faith and community that give people of color a sense of our own power. Family and community represent the 'wealth' that we must affirm, nurture, grow and admire. The People's Institute does this through an emphasis on culture and history as tools for organizing. Culture is not entertainment and history is not academic. They represent two essential ingredients of the organizing task and they serve as anchors that keep us grounded in our efforts to work together as people of color.

Affirm the importance of community organizing and leadership development to sustaining the work for justice and liberation.

Ron Chisolm is the co-founder and executive director of The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond in New Orleans. An organizer for over thirty years, he has worked in social justice movements across the United States and in different parts of the world.

David Billings is a core trainer with The People's Institute. A historian and activist, he is co-coordinator of The People's Institute Jim Dunn Center for Anti-Racist Community Organizing and helps facilitate its monthly "Organizers' Roundtables."
While women have long been among the movers and shakers in environmental justice struggles, they have not always been visible as leaders and recognized for their contributions. But the work and influence of women at all levels of organizing is undeniable. RPE asked three key leaders to discuss gender roles as women in EJ.

**Beverly Wright, Ph.D.**

The Environmental Justice Movement evolved out of the experiences of women who first observed and raised the alarm about the health of their communities. Since women are the nurturers of the children and caretakers of the elderly, who other than women would be more qualified to observe and report the deterioration of the human condition in their communities?

Women of color have been at the forefront of every social, economic and environmental justice struggle in this nation. They have not always, however, been recognized as the leaders of these movements by the larger society. More often than not, they have stood in the shadows of men who have taken the more public spotlight as spokespersons for social justice.

I have been involved in the Environmental Justice Movement for nearly 20 years. In fact, I can remember attending meetings in the early years of the struggle in which I was the only woman. This is in complete contrast to my experiences when visiting embattled communities. Most often, I was met by a woman, a grandmother, school teacher or great-grandmother who began organizing her community around the issue of diminishing health that she believed to be related to a toxic facility, landfill, polluted river or stream.

Many parallels can be drawn between women in the Civil Rights Movement and those in the Environmental Justice Movement. Women played a crucial role, but with a few exceptions (Fanny Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks), were rarely acknowledged. Though women were the true organizers and workers in the background, their public role was often minimized.

However, the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit permanently established women as bona fide leaders along with men of the Movement. The Summit I chair and more than half of the executive board were women. Women led, moderated or presented during more than half of the 86 workshops and plenaries. Their work in organizing and implementing all Summit activities did not go unnoticed. “Crowning Women” was the first awards dinner held to honor women of color in the Environmental Justice Movement. Twelve women were also honored with the "Bread and Roses" award for their leadership, innovative grassroots organizing tactics and commitment to the principles of environmental justice. The “Dana Alston” award paid tribute to the...
Women of color have been at the forefront of every social, economic and environmental justice struggle in this nation.

Beverly Wright, Ph.D., is a professor of sociology and the founding director of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University of Louisiana in New Orleans. She served as chair of the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.

Susana Almanza
In the womb of women and mother earth lives the seed of birth and rebirth and the need for protecting our off-spring. This natural instinct has women throughout the world working on environmental justice issues and making a difference.

People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources (PODER) has worked to ensure that young and older women are given the tools to empower themselves and their community.

PODER believes that the training of women must begin early in life. PODER employs high school students as permanent part-time staff and hires a group of high school and college students to work on youth-related issues during the summer months. PODER encourages all young students to continue college and to bring balance to their life by working on community issues.

Through activism in PODER women learn what it means to work within an organization and they practice developing training plans that include needs assessments, training goals, activities and easy-to-use methods of evaluation. Women discuss and share strategies for integrating health and safety into our neighborhood and gain a greater understanding of, and capacity to use, environmental regulatory agencies. Women also learn how to facilitate small group discussion and how to increase public participation in decision-making regarding environmental problems.

PODER feels that resources must be made available for hiring student interns and permanent part-time students in environmental justice organizations. PODER also feels that resources are needed to reintegrate mothers and grandmothers into full and/or part-time paid activism within these organizations. Women must continue to participate in panel presentations, lectures, workshops, ceremonies, committees and public office.

PODER’s vision is one that honors the sacredness of human life and the environment.

Susana Almanza is executive director of People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources, based in Austin, Texas.

Sayo'kla Kindness
Women have been given a sacred connection to Yulkinulha Ohuntsyake—Our Mother the Earth. Like her, we are life givers. It is through our bodies that the next generation of unwkehewe (the people) are born. With this spiritual connection to Mother Earth and our inherent role comes a responsibility to protect life and the yet unborn. A movement to protect the health of our communities, our lands and our environment would be incomplete without women. Our role is of vital importance. Encouraging and supporting young women in the environmental justice movement is crucial to the development of our political thought and to our continued participation in the movement.

In 1999, I was hired by the Indigenous Environmental Network (IEN) as their Mining Organizer. I was fresh out of college and had little organizing experience. As a young native woman new to the environmental justice movement, I found it quite overwhelming. I was at times lost and confused by information overload and exhausted by the never-ending work. There were times when I felt that I was not doing enough even though I was traveling non-stop and working 60 hours a week. I felt insecure about everything (and sometimes still do!), from my writing to my speaking abilities but I "hung in there" because I believe in this work and enjoy this work. It was through the nurturing and encouragement of those around me—my boss, my co-workers, my family and other sisters in the movement—that I have come this far.

I recently celebrated my third year with the Indigenous Environmental Network in October and this I claim as my own personal victory. I am grateful to the forward vision of my mentor Tom Goldtooth, director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, who has given me the opportunity to do this work, who believed in me and who is committed to nurturing other young men and women in the environmental justice movement. We will keep the sacred fire burning bright! Yutakwenewehoku (all my relations).

Sayo'kla Kindness, Turtle Clan, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin Mining Organizer-Indigenous Environmental Network/Project Underground
Examples of successful organizing tactics abound, from cross-movement coalition building to grassroots and legal strategies.

Movements that cross borders are increasingly common.

Movement to Movement
Creating effective collaborations for social change

BY ELIZABETH TAN

With the recent war on Iraq serving as the backdrop to the current economic recession, there is clearly a need to develop and advance an alternative vision for social, economic and environmental justice. To meet this challenge, it's imperative that the Environmental Justice Movement continues to strengthen its capacity to build and sustain coalitions that link related issues as well as movements. We must work more closely with our allies from other social change movements, including union organizers, farm workers, youth, indigenous tribes and environmentalists to build a stronger and more unified voice for justice.

The fight for justice is not a new one, especially in our country's most marginalized neighborhoods where poverty, unemployment, failing schools, toxic environments, and lack of access to health care and affordable housing are constant threats to a community's health and security. While there are many successful efforts taking place throughout the country to alleviate these problems, the struggles are often isolated within a particular issue area or geographic location. Differences in race, ethnicity, class, gender, culture and age can also contribute to the fractured nature of progressive social change. As a result, we're experiencing victories for particular neighborhoods and gaining ground on a variety of issues, yet failing to generate the shared vision, agenda and power needed to challenge the root causes of injustice. Instead, we often find ourselves locked into a defensive posture and competing for resources to protect our communities from the latest crisis or threat.

As Taj James, executive director of the Movement Strategy Center, explains: "In the absence of broader social movements as effective vehicles for mass participation in civic life, the quality of life for people in marginalized communities continues to be eroded and our rights continue to be undermined. The social impact is compounded by a divide-and-conquer strategy that has been used historically to polarize and isolate marginalized groups so that we remain in a state of perceived opposition..."
A growing number of environmental justice organizations are creating strategic partnerships across issue areas, locations and movements.

with each other, competing for legitimacy and limited resources.” To address this challenge, there are a growing number of environmental justice organizations that are searching for opportunities and resources to create strategic partnerships within and across issue areas, locations and movements. These alliances encourage organizations to strategize and operate outside of their usual boundaries and to work together to increase their individual and collective power.

Alliance Building
Due to the fact that the Environmental Justice Movement integrates various issues such as economic justice, social justice and public health, building alliances across movements is a logical strategy. In San Francisco’s Mission District, a neighborhood that has been heavily impacted by the forces of gentrification and displacement, the grassroots environmental justice organization PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental Rights) is working to increase community participation in land-use and planning decisions. To achieve this goal, PODER is collaborating with a non-profit affordable housing developer, a local economic development corporation and organizations that work on tenants’ rights to develop an agenda for planning and development that reflects the needs and priorities of the neighborhood’s low-income residents, particularly immigrants and people of color. When asked why PODER has adopted this cross-issue coalition building strategy, executive director Antonio Diaz says, “In order to have an even greater impact on an issue as contentious as land-use planning in San Francisco we recognized the need to connect our struggles in order to leverage our power.”

Cross-movement alliance building is also emerging within the regional, state, national and international arenas in recognition of the fact that communities are often impacted by decisions that take place outside of their local boundaries. In California, a statewide coalition of economic, social and environmental justice organizations is developing to increase their impact at the policy level. For the past 18 months, members of the California Alliance have educated themselves about their different issues, goals and strategies in an effort to build stronger relationships and a deeper understanding of the ways in which their work and priorities connect. Ultimately, the Alliance hopes to build on the strength of these partnerships to advance a proactive policy agenda that results in long-term systemic change within California’s low-income communities and communities of color.

The Chemical Weapons Working Group (CWWG) is an international coalition of citizens living near chemical weapons storage sites in the United States, the Pacific and Russia. To oppose incineration of chemical weapons and promote safe disposal at all of the sites, CWWG has brought together a diverse membership representing grassroots citizens organizations, civil rights groups, indigenous tribes, environmentalists, labor and peace activists, among others. Since 1991, they’ve successfully opposed incineration at four out of nine sites, and continue to press for safe disassembly and neutralization of chemical weapons internationally.

Another arena in which alliance building is taking place is the global justice movement. An ambitious effort is being undertaken by an emerging national coalition of U.S. grassroots organizations that are working together to provide an alternative to corporate globalization. As director of the Southwest Organizing Project and member of the Grassroots Global Justice (GGJ) coalition, Michael Guerrero, is energized by this new area of work. “The global justice arena is exciting because it offers a space to develop a broader agenda and vision that address the roots of problems, and the fact that more and more important decisions are taking place and being played out globally,” says Guerrero. “The potential of the global justice movement is huge because it generates more dialogue in the U.S. about alternatives and provides opportunities for U.S. groups to learn from others around the world.” (For more details about GGJ, see sidebar, p. 35)

Challenges to Coalitions
Although these types of alliances create opportunities to significantly expand the reach and effectiveness of local organizing efforts, it’s challenging to build and sustain coalitions, especially when the membership represents different issues, organizing approaches, geographical locations or movements. The work can be time- and resource-intensive and potentially divisive. The most common challenge may be the fact that grassroots organizations often enter coalitions without having resources to support the additional work that is inevitably generated. For organizations that are struggling to cover their general operating costs, this extra financial burden is often hard to carry throughout the various developmental stages of an alliance.

Several lessons have been learned from past efforts including the importance of avoiding coalitions that are created to meet the requirements of a particular funding source. These contrived alliances often collapse because they lack the authentic relationships, trust and common ground needed to form a strong foundation. Coalitions that evolve from a shared set of values and goals tend to be more capable of sustaining their effectiveness over time. It’s also important for a coalition to clarify from the outset its internal operating practices and expectations regarding structure, resource allocation, agenda setting and decision-making process. Transparency and clear lines of communication can help prevent misunderstandings and unmet expectations.

An Urgent Need
Within this economic and political climate, the need for strategic cross-move-
ment alliances grows stronger. Under the Bush Administration, the threats facing marginalized communities will only intensify due to the government's unwa- 
ering commitment to war. Instead of allocating resources to address our most urgent domestic priorities, the government will spend an estimated $80-100 billion dollars to fund the war and an additional $50-150 billion dollars to rebuild Iraq. (At press time, Congress approved nearly $80 billion to cover the initial cost of war.) Although the federal budget was in surplus only three years ago, the proposed 2004 budget of $2.23 trillion will burden our country with a $307 billion dollar deficit.1

Faced with the war on Iraq, Michael Guerrero believes that "the biggest mis- take of this moment would be a single-issue response. We can’t just talk about stopping war. We must understand that it is about how we share the world’s resources equitably." Amy Dean, executive director of Working Partnerships USA, agrees: "The anti-war movement has to be about more than a discussion of foreign policy and diplomatic relations among nations. We must define justice because notions of justice have changed. Currently there is no social contract, no agreement around what constitutes the basic rights of working people to a living wage, health care, education and affordable housing."

As we continue to struggle for the resources and energy to engage in new partnerships, it is important that we learn from each other's successes and failures. There are new coalitions forming every day but their stories are not being shared in a strategic and systematic way. If we remain isolated and disconnected, we will fail to build the power we need to develop and advance an alternative vision and agenda for justice. Now, more than ever, we need strategic cross-movement alliances to pave the road to peace and justice, at home and abroad.

Elizabeth Tan, part-time program director at Urban Habitat, also works as an independent contractor with organizations committed to environmental, social and economic justice.

Strategies that Work

BY KIM PAULSON

Community Air Sampling

Years ago, a Unocal oil refinery in Contra Costa County, California had a leak in a regeneration tower. Company firefighters called for a factory shutdown, but Unocal management insisted everything was safe. During the next 16 days, Unocal employees and residential communities located downwind were exposed to 200 tons of an aerosolized catcarb solution, a mixture of chemicals that is strongly alkaline. Direct contact with catcarbs can lead to symptoms such as burning eyes, nose and throat, lower respiratory problems as well as headaches and gastrointestinal illness.

Soon after the leak, 1,300 employees and local residents became ill. When their complaints were dismissed by local authorities, residents hired a law firm, which hired a scientist to design an inexpensive air sampling method using a five-gallon bucket and a capture bag. Working with Communities for a Better Environment (CBE), an environmental justice agency, residents learned to measure air samples that proved the presence of refinery emissions at unsafe levels. The scientific merit of the bucket sampling method was backed by the Environmental Protection Agency, which later decided to sponsor its use and work with CBE to develop a quality assurance program.

The community’s activism produced both tangible and intrinsic results. Backed by their own proof of toxic emissions, residents acquired enough leverage to arrange “Good Neighbor” agreements with Unocal. Community benefits included improving company monitoring of the emissions, job training for residents and funds for community improvement. Additionally, government agencies that formerly lagged in response to residents’ complaints started taking samples closer to areas of release and created mobile tests to replace stationary ones.

The residents also made significant gains that will benefit future struggles. First, the buckets campaign put a tool in the hands of individuals, building self-confidence and galvanizing individuals to shift from passive observers to activists. Second, as they worked toward a common goal, residents built ties across racial lines in the community. Third, the residents were able to restore and protect the environmental assets of their own communities.

At press time, word of mouth had spread the success of the “bucket brigade” to over 30 communities in the United States, Africa, Latin America and Asia. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, residents of the SouthWest Organizing Project have taken monitoring to the next level. After raising $100,000, they persuaded the New Mexico Department of Environmental Quality to co-implement a comprehensive program that monitors air samples around the clock. The ultimate goal is for all environmental regulatory agencies to take responsibility for full monitoring systems in their communities. For more information, please contact Azibuike Akabe of CBE at 510-302-0430 or azibuike@cbe.cal.org.

Sources

Azibuike Akabe of Communities for a Better Environment.

Zoning Out Waste Dumps

In Hamilton Township in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, a rural community of 400 residents formed the Tioga County Concerned Citizens Committee (TCCCC) and successfully fought two different landfill proposals by two different companies.

When citizens heard about the first dump site proposal in 1984, they used simple but time-intensive grassroots strategies such as bake sales, flea markets and raffle sales to raise money for contacting locals and putting ads in the paper. They also filed court challenges that created multiple hurdles for the company, Ronald Clark, Inc. and Solid Waste Industries. In April of 1989, their permit application for the landfill on Barney’s Hill was denied by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Shortly thereafter, the company went bankrupt.

In March 2001, Waste Resources Corporation, which had ties to the previous corporation, proposed a dump site on the same land. This time residents were ready. Hamilton Township hired an environmental zoning lawyer to help them implement a new zoning ordinance designating zones for every possible activity.

At the same time, members of TCCCC gathered 1,900 petition signatures and presented copies of the petitions to their state representatives, state senators, county commissioners and township supervisors. Subsequently the Pennsylvania House of Representatives unanimously passed HB 1436, giving local municipalities the right to “say no” to dumps. But the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee refused to present the bill to the Senate for a vote and it died in committee.

However, TCCCC continued fighting the project and a court challenge finally brought them their second victory in the spring of 2002.

When asked if he considered the fight over, TCCCC president Charlie Andrews replied, “Unfortunately no, it’s not. The land is still in private hands and is of little value due to previous deep and strip mining operations. However, the owner is holding out for a high bid and unless we can somehow raise the money to buy the land ourselves, we remain organized for the next battle.”

TCCCC is now a nonprofit representing 200 families and 26 local businesses. For more information contact Charlie Andrews, president of the TCCCC at: PO Box 124, Blossburg, PA 16912 or e-mail at TCCCCNoDump@netscape.net.

Sources

Based on conversations with Charlie and Joyce Andrews of the Tioga County Concerned Citizens Committee.
Transportation Justice

The San Francisco Bay Area is known for many things: the Golden Gate Bridge, natural beauty and agonizing traffic congestion. Between 1993 and 2001, when Silicon Valley’s prosperity transformed the area, the commuter population increased 30 percent. Much of that increase resulted from individuals travelling to work in the Bay Area every day in their cars.

Meanwhile, funding for public transit stagnated and failed to meet the needs of communities, especially in low-income areas. As a result, in February 2001 Urban Habitat was one of several community and environmental groups (including Bayview Hunters Point Community Advocates, Communities for a Better Environment, Latino Issues Forum, Our Children’s Earth Foundation, Sierra Club, and Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund) to file a lawsuit against the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

They sued to compel MTC to implement TCM 2, a transportation control measure the commission adopted 21 years earlier to meet its Clean Air Act obligations. TCM 2 requires MTC to increase transit ridership in the Bay Area by 15 percent over 1983 levels. In 2001, transit ridership was only slightly higher than it was in 1983, despite the 30-percent population increase.

In November 2001 the plaintiffs won. The groups’ victory requires MTC to achieve a region-wide increase in transit ridership of 15 percent above 1983 levels by 2006. As of February 2003, the plaintiffs had obtained court orders requiring MTC to do the following: demonstrate how the 15-percent increase would be achieved by November 2006 through the adoption of a Regional Transportation Plan amendment within six months; file quarterly reports of its progress; and file annual ridership reports. The MTC also allocated $100,000 to The San Francisco Foundation to assist low-income and communities of color in participating in transit planning. For more information, contact Juliet Ellis, executive director of Urban Habitat at 510-839-9510 or at info@urbanhabitat.org.

Relocation Victory

Diamond is a four-block African-American community in Norco, Louisiana. For years, it was situated between a large Shell chemical plant and a Motiva oil refinery, also partially owned by Shell. Starting in the 1970’s, Diamond residents argued that toxic emissions and noxious odors from the plants were responsible for the high rates of asthma and cancers in the community. In the late 1980’s, residents formed a community-based organization, Concerned Citizens of Norco (CCN). Their goal was to convince Shell to purchase their homes at fair prices, allowing them to relocate to a safe and healthy environment.

Following years of community protests, several fines from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and media exposure, Shell offered to buy a limited number of homes closest to the chemical plant. But the company only offered an average of $26,000 per home (due to the low resale value caused by the polluting of the neighborhood) and the plan would have divided networks of families along the four blocks.

In response, residents redoubled their efforts in the following ways:

Generating publicity. The Louisiana Bucket Brigade (LABB), which trained residents to take air samples, worked with the Refinery Reform Campaign to create a Web site with extensive testimony from Diamond residents. Several protests, including representatives of groups across the county, took place outside Shell’s headquarters in New Orleans, attracting media attention.

Documenting injustice. CCN and LABB linked Shell’s treatment of Diamond residents to the company’s operations in Nigeria, where Shell had caused widespread environmental devastation but left the region impoverished. A Nigerian representative joined in the protests in New Orleans to show solidarity in the fight against the company.

Setting a deadline. “They knew that if there was no resolution by June 2002, we would take our fight [to the World Summit on Sustainable Development] in Johannesburg,” Anne Rolfs of LABB said.

In June 2002, Shell announced its plan to relocate residents by buying the homes on the two remaining streets for a minimum of $80,000 each, plus $20,000 in moving costs.

Sources

“Litigation Report as of 2/03,” Transportation Solutions and Defense Education Fund.

Press release titled “Community Groups Settle Lawsuit with MTC Under the Clean Air Act: MTC Pays $100K to improve participation by low-income communities in transportation planning.” Issued by Susan Britton, Earthjustice; Alan Ramo, Attorney for Communities for a Better Environment; Anuja Mendiraita, San Francisco Foundation; Karen Pierce, Bayview Community Advocates; and Juliet Ellis of Urban Habitat.


Kim Paulson is executive administrator at Urban Habitat.
Movement Building

What leading environmental justice organizers have to say about taking the Movement to the next level

Expand the Mass Base of EJ

Since the first National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991, the environmental justice movement has grown tremendously both in scope and scale. Hundreds of EJ organizations have sprouted across the United States and throughout the world. EJ has become institutionalized in academia, in government agencies and in legislation. Environmental justice issues have expanded beyond toxics in communities of color to include anti-gentrification campaigns, fights against international trade agreements and climate justice initiatives.

Despite the movement’s growth, our social, economic and environmental conditions haven’t necessarily improved and have, in many cases, worsened. The safety net has been dismantled, unemployment is on the rise, attacks on immigrants and sovereign peoples have increased, regulations and laws for environmental protection are being repealed, and U.S. militarism is aggressively moving forward in ways that will likely result in unjust wars and further destruction of the Earth.

Building a more powerful and effective EJ Movement is especially critical in these times, and what’s needed is a multi-layered set of strategies to counter the prevailing trends. We need to sharpen our political analysis and openly discuss the conditions we’re facing and in which we operate. We need to consciously and deliberately strengthen our connections with other movements that share our political perspectives, including the anti-war, the immigrant rights, the anti-corporate globalization and the racial justice movements. These times require that we explicitly broaden our analysis and build our power to the scale needed to achieve systemic change.

The EJ Movement needs to build on its strength, which emphasizes grassroots organizing as a key strategy and asserts that those most impacted need to be the driving force and leadership of this movement. Building this movement means that we need to continually expand the mass base of EJ activists, to deliberately develop a growing set of diverse EJ leaders and to access the variety of resources and strategies necessary to exercise power in legislative, electoral, media and legal arenas, we must always be clear that impacted communities...
must drive the movement’s direction. One of our goals has to be to build power in these communities and to fundamentally alter power relations if we want any of our victories to be long lasting.

We must also recognize that we need to build our own capacity, our level of skills and an accountable leadership so that we can operate in a coordinated manner. Our movement must be built on principled, respectful relationships and integrity. We have to call out and openly address the many "isms" that have divided other movements — racism, sexism, dasism, age-ism, heterosexism, individualism, paternalism and internalized oppression. We must learn how to struggle politically with each other when political differences exist — and not confuse personality differences with political conflict. And we must be constructively critical of our own and other organizations as we ask ourselves if we’re doing the best we can to develop new leaders, expand the base and build ongoing political consciousness.

Joselito Laudencia is the executive director of the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN).

Articulate New Goals

The Environmental Justice community is unified in its goal to develop grassroots voices and leadership to protect our communities from the disproportionate burden of pollution and economic disinvestment/exploitation that we bear. We are unified in galvanizing and organizing our communities to become meaningful participants in the processes and decisions that affect the sustainability and health of our communities. Our common vision has led to many community-based and site-specific victories by community advocates over the last ten years, and it has led to singular federal and state initiatives as well. Yet, we have not developed the infrastructure nor drawn a plan to begin the battle to achieve systemic change.

Ten years of effective environmental justice advocacy at the local level has led to heightened expectations. Many community residents, policymakers and environmentalists hope that the EJ Movement has articulated a national policy and legislative agenda, and that it has infrastructure, capacity, long-term vision, and the ability to mobilize communities into proactive planning and decision-making processes. However, there remains a void of sustained collaborative national action to affect community-driven policy, legislation and political will. The void cannot be filled legitimately without our advocacy and work, but it may be filled inappropriately by others, including the mainstream environmental groups whose top five national priorities do not incorporate our concerns, well-meaning folks who are not accountable to any community, and opportunists who wrap themselves in the cloak of environmental justice to "extort" minority money from mainstream environmental groups.

For a number of years, WE ACT has urged our fellow EJ advocates to develop a mediation and conciliation process to address conflict. Internal conflicts have been sparked by a lack of understanding of each other and by racism, sexism, classism and egoism. Though opportunities for mediating conflict have been made available (through foundation support), the need for conflict resolution has not been articulated or embraced by all movement leaders.

The mandate from the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit to go home and organize our grassroots base continues. It may be desirable but not necessary for us all to move on together. For those of us who
"Our common vision has led to many victories and initiatives. Yet we have not drawn a plan to begin the battle for systemic change."

— Peggy Shepard

have developed regional and national networks, we should continue that work and begin, through other alliances, to develop the mechanisms and infrastructure to effect the following initiatives:

- Organizing and leadership development training targeted to EJ organizations so they can effectively develop a strong grassroots base
- Youth leadership development and mentorship
- Voter registration/education campaigns to strengthen the electoral base for environmental/economic justice concerns and to educate legislators and policymakers
- State legislative campaigns regarding EJ concerns
- Identification of environmental justice champions and legislation at the congressional level
- Capacity to engage in lobbying activities at the state and federal levels
- Global dialogue, networking and collaboration
- Collaborations to improve our children’s environmental health and to enhance environmental health infrastructure at the state level
- Partnerships to develop a community-driven research agenda.

There is much to be done, and it will take all of us—the current EJ community, youth activists, new leaders, and coalitions with other social justice advocates—to accomplish the common goals and principles we have articulated over the last ten years. Now it is up to our communities to articulate new goals and objectives and to use our common sense of purpose to achieve healthy sustainable communities and the reality of environmental justice.

Peggy M. Shepard, co-founder, executive director, West Harlem Environmental Action, and co-chair, Northeast Environmental Justice Network.

Speak for Ourselves, Fund Ourselves

Where do we go from here? Thirty-five years ago, Dr. King stood atop the proverbial mountaintop, bore witness to the Promised Land and pondered this important question. He doubted that he would ever get there himself. Yet, he understood the importance of clearly articulating where we needed to go even when victory was in sight. In our struggle for environmental justice, our communities must address the same type of critical questions at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

The environmental justice movement has had its share of victories and has staked its claim as a living and breathing political movement. Yet, now that we have reached the mountaintop, how do we get down to the valley that has been promised? As difficult as the question Where do we go from here? was in 1968 is the question How do we get there? in 2003.

The EJ movement has always demanded its right to speak and organize for itself. Yet it has never funded itself. We have built organizations, networks and convened two national summits in ten years. The tragic irony is that many of these “movement” organizations and actions have been built with “project grants” from some of the very agencies and enemy institutions that we have been fighting. We should make no mistake in confusing these funds with “repairs” or political “expropriations.” There are strings and possibly ropes and chains attached to every dime. More perilously, “tainted money” transforms the way we think about our movement, our goals, our friends and our enemies.

The threat of corporate and government money to the class character and political practice of the environmental justice movement is real. It is evident that such funding has contaminated elements of the movement when the easiest way to spark a fistfight in an EJ circle is to bring up the subject of green—and I am not talking about the environment. Too many EJ community confrontations have moved from the industrial fence line to the conference room of a four-star hotel, paid for with a government agency or foundation credit card. I promised myself years ago that I would never march again after I heard this chant: "What do we want? MONEY! When do we want it? NOW!" Only a few protestors shared my sense of nausea.

In the beginning, the movement’s leading organizations were rich only in human resources, impassioned spirits
and righteous indignation. With clear voices, the movement challenged callous corporate polluters and white "environmentalists" who showed more concern for the blue whale than the blues of Black, Brown and Red people living in environmentally impacted communities. The people's power helped the EJ movement climb the mountain. However, we must remember that many of the leading movement organizations of Dr. King's day stumbled and fell into post-movement avalanche from which we have yet to fully recover.

The EJ movement today, like the civil rights movement and other social movement predecessors, is particularly vulnerable to the threats of an extremely sophisticated and complex corporate nemesis that has the capacity to pose as both enemy and friend. The treacherously subtle social dynamics of corporate imperialism exist as an even greater threat to the struggle for sustainable development than any toxic chain of chemicals or hazardous waste. We must not fail to connect politics and economics in a principled and strategic way. We must not fail to broaden our mission to include those things that we are for as a natural consequence of what we oppose. We are still fighting for freedom, economic and political self-determination. Ultimately we must be the masters of our fates and captains of our destinies. Movements frequently experience temporary victories only to be rolled back into even more precarious positions. This reality is the omen of chaos, not community.

Lukata Mjumbe is the director of the Rural Training & Research Center of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

Work Beyond Our Borders

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa last fall the United States environmental justice movement was faced with a challenge: How would we incorporate into our work an international strategy to fight the corporate-driven policies of the U.S. government that affect not just our communities at home but third world nations and indigenous peoples everywhere? In response to that challenge, the Labor/Community Strategy Center and the Bus Riders Union six-person delegation developed strategies to fight the destructive impacts of global warming. These include forging campaigns to cut auto production and consumption by 50 percent and to double the gas mileage for every car on the road.

Today Bus Riders Union (BRU) organizers are on the buses of L.A. with flyers in English, Spanish and Korean describing how our Clean Air, Clean Buses, Clean Lungs campaign will fundamentally challenge the corporate and government institutions that sustain racism and violate the sovereignty of third world nations. Recently, on one bus I met Renee, a black woman with six school-age children who was dependent on the bus system for her mobility. I talked to her about the need to expand the system to ease her commute, which on any given day would include two or three buses and long waiting times. Expansion would help curb L.A.'s car dependency, ease our insatiable want for oil and regulate the barrage of greenhouse gases causing the mass suffering of third world people. Renee, observed, "It'll take a war to get people to give up cars! You may as well stop this campaign now!"

But as I told her about how the Small Island Nations are threatened with extinction from rising waters due to the Earth's warming and how Indigenous peoples who depended on their lands for centuries are being forced off sacred territory by transnational corporations drilling for oil, Renee's tone changed from skeptical to serious.

For Black, Latino, Asian and working class people like Renee, the Bus Riders Union campaign speaks to their material need for better public transportation and improved air quality. But our work must extend beyond our borders and into the realm of international environmental justice and civil rights. WSSD gave us the opportunity to directly work with fellow environmentalists from the Small Island Nations, South Africa, and the Philippines. The Strategy Center and the BRU is already incorporating into our work the strategies, analysis and demands we learned from our international brothers and sisters. Building a strong EJ movement in the United States with this type of international orientation can add to efforts led by third world activists to implement the Kyoto Accords on Climate Change, regulate transnational corporations or radically change the consumption and production patterns of first world nations.

In that vein, our Clean Air, Clean Lungs, Clean Buses campaign is making these demands:

• Reduce the number of cars on L.A. roads from 8 million to 4 million
• Double L.A.'s bus fleet from 2300 buses to 4600 buses. We have already replaced 2300 diesel buses with 2300 Compressed Natural Gas buses
• Spread the message that public transportation is a life-and-death issue — for children in Los Angeles with bronchitis, asthma, leukemia, cancer, and myriad lung diseases, and for the children of Samoa and Tuvaluu, whose culture, civilization and land are in danger of extinction.

Cynthia Rojas is a lead organizer with the multi-racial, multi-lingual Labor/Community Strategy Center and the Bus Riders Union.

"The EJ Movement has always demanded the right to speak for itself and organize itself. Yet it has never funded itself."

—Lukata Mjumbe
As evidenced by their on-the-ground organizing and passionate activism, youth comprise a vital part of the Environmental Justice Movement. In order to give voice to this dynamic generation, we asked several youth leaders and organizers across the country to offer their thoughts about youth involvement and how EJ can change to better embrace youth ideas and perspectives.

### A Need for Support

I feel the environmental justice movement, particularly the People of Color Leadership Summit, needs to get youth more involved, and adults need to know that youth are here for today, tomorrow and the future. At UPROSE (United Puerto Rican Organization of Sunset Park), young people are the backbone of the movement and play a leadership role, but that wasn't the case at the Summit. Adults need to work more with youth, instead of having two tracks—youth ideas and adult ideas. If we have an issue that we think is important, they need to back us up like we back them up.

Most of the youth leaders are in school, so they have to make a choice between volunteering or getting a part-time job. They should be getting paid on a part-time basis throughout the school year so they won't have to make the decision between doing what they love and getting a job they need. Youth also need funding for after-school programs like tutoring. They should have proper orientations and good mentors whose example they can follow. They should also be well-trained in organizing.

I feel like environmental justice is suffering from its success—losing its grassroots focus. The Summit had a lot of self-important leadership that was not community-based. They try to make decisions for us and take credit for doing work we've been doing. Our grassroots leaders are not getting the credit they deserve. That needs to change.

I've been at UPROSE since I was 13. We work on transportation alternatives, open space equity and other issues. I've seen many changes and improvements. I think youth involvement in EJ is improving. It's going in the right direction.

Crystal Domenec, 19, cofounder/organizer of Youth Justice at UPROSE

### Speaking for Ourselves

We need to be on the boards or planning committees [of EJ organizations]. Adults always tell us that the "youth are the future," but when the time comes to plan events, some people don't care what youth have to say. If there's a committee that makes all the decisions (i.e., What's the next event? What are we trying to protest next?) for one organization and it doesn't include youth, that makes no sense. Groups say they're affiliated with youth but there is no teenager on staff. They're trying to speak for youth but they're not youth.

Youth and adults need to work together. Adults say, "You're too young, you don't know this." But youth also say, "They're too old, they won't understand." We need to break that barrier. We need to get unified. Adults need to get more youth involved—if not in environmental justice, than in something that gets them out of doing the negative. If you see a teenager, he's already stereotyped as a criminal or someone who listens to rap music. We need better representation. We need media to acknowledge all youth out there are not bad. We're trying to help our community.

David Noiles, 20, youth organizer with Alternatives for Community & Environment/Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project (ACE/REEP)
More Youth Representation

There should be more youth on the executive committee of the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summits. With only one youth representative—one person representing a lot of youth alongside all these adults—there just wasn't enough of a youth voice at the last Summit. The Summit plays an important role in helping us to do the work we do. It's the central gathering place for all of us to come together, support one another and decide where the EJ movement is going. That's why it's important to have youth representation.

There should also be more gatherings for the youth and for the EJ movement—not just a once-in-ten-years kind of Summit. We need more opportunities for dialogue at the local and state level.

Youth are already doing a good job with their organization at the local level. But it's been hard and a struggle for them to work with other organizations and the larger movement. We need more adult support and money to help youth get together and work together on their goals and their long-term visions.

Sandy Saeteurn, 20, general support associate and part-time youth organizer, Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN)

Invest in Youth

There needs to be more investment in the youth, especially Native youth. Youth in Indian Country have to deal with the past racist Federal Indian policies and cultural eradication, which has manifested in social ills that plague our Indigenous communities. Currently Indigenous youth have to deal with many issues that range from identity crisis, drug/alcohol abuse, cultural loss, suicide, depression and hopelessness. This calls for more support and encouragement of Native youth who are involved with environmental justice work. Native youth are also some of the most marginalized people within the mainstream and Native society. This needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

We need to empower our youth and offer them a new way of thinking, knowing and understanding based on the cultural values of our peoples. This does not necessarily mean going back to pre-contact times but learning about the past and present. By understanding history, we may find the solution to save our people from the current situation that they are in. This calls for innovative ideas and solutions—not solutions from the government or outsiders but from the people themselves. Creativity needs to be encouraged.

The local youth leaders also need to be identified. Give them proper training with tools and funds necessary to carry out the work. There also needs to be a network or coalition building in place so native youth from all over the globe can keep each other empowered because power lies in UNITY.

Roberto Naluquis, 23, Indigenous Youth Coalition of Pinon and Black Mesa Water Coalition

Mutual Listening, Mutual Respect

If youth and adults are going to work together, there should be mutual respect. Adults believe they know what's best. But us youth also know what's good for us. So we should have a say in how things work. There should be mutual listening. That's the starting point: listening to each other.

I've done trainings on adulthood, training youth and adults to listen to each other. I've helped youth to understand that they do have a voice. I've also tried to open their minds by saying, "You have ideas; express them." It's important to get youth to become more confident talking to adults and working with adults. I also teach adults about youth ideas and that they should listen to them.

Once listening happens, we need to talk about how to work on improving our society and our community. We can go deeper into the issues involving the community, our society—what's happening in the world, the war—and how to improve them. At that point, we would have more of a dialogue going.

We need workshops to educate youth, just to get them to understand the issues. Once they know the issues, we can train them and build confidence and leadership skills. Then we can teach them how to take action.

Yvonne Itoo, 18, former executive committee member, People of Color Environmental Network (PCE)

Youth Ownership

We need to get more involved in the decision-making in our communities. Youth tend to participate but they need to be in an atmosphere where they feel comfortable expressing themselves. For example, it can be a camping facility, where young people go and learn about other communities, and discover the assets and deficits of their community. Generally, youth need to meet where they don't feel threatened, where there's no one criticizing them, where they can feel free to express themselves.

To move forward, youth need training in general organizing. Then we need to have them work on a project where they can win easily, a small victory that can motivate them to do bigger things. Youth often rely on someone else to tell them what to do but when they understand an issue, they can take ownership and make projects their own. We as coordinators can help but have youth take the initiative.

Here at Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles one of the first projects was organizing a community cleanup and working on a mural. Youth took ownership from the beginning—they chose the street, they did the outreach, they did everything. That gave them power.

In South Central we really need to work on motivating young people. They need to be motivated to care about their school and community. We need to come up with creative ways to get them involved. They want to improve things, but some feel embarrassed or ashamed to clean up the community or to say they deserve better. They want to be involved in communities, in activities that are fun but also improve the community.

Juan Garcia, 23, youth coordinator, Concerned Citizens of South Central Los Angeles

Chi Mei Tam, 18, former co-leader at Asian Immigrant Women's Advocates (AIWA)
Immigration, Population and Environmental Justice

BY ARNOLDO GARCÍA

Immigration is once again at the center of national debate, deemed a major threat to U.S. national security after the September 11 terrorist attacks. Capitalizing on the 9/11 backlash, the anti-immigrant movement rapidly added terrorism to its list of social and economic ills to blame on immigrants, reviving longstanding arguments against immigration. Fueled by the economic slump, the 9/11 anti-immigrant hysteria now threatens to devour the civil and human rights of immigrants and non-immigrants alike, giving new life to unbridled calls for racially restrictive measures. This volatile situation presents the immigrant rights movement with tough challenges and opportunities that put the defense of the rights of immigrants at the center of the demands for social, environmental, economic and racial justice.

Immigrants have always been subject to repression and abuse in times of economic decline and political crisis. But anti-immigrant violence, hate crimes and a new type of racial, ethnic and religious profiling have spiraled out of control since 9/11. Thousands of Muslims, Arabs, South Asians, Middle Eastern, African and Asian immigrants are being harassed, arrested, jailed, and many deported, as part of the domestic “war on terrorism.” The three major anti-terrorist laws — the USA PATRIOT Act, the Aviation and Transportation Security Act and the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act — severely restrict immigrant rights. Growing numbers of immigrants and citizens working in industries or sectors of the economy considered vulnerable to terrorist attacks — including airports, energy, transportation and even kiosks — are being subjected to heavy scrutiny and immigration raids, job loss, deportation and imprisonment.

Certain right-wing groups, especially the Federation for American Immigration Reform, have never stopped blaming immigration and immigrants, in particular, for sprawl, traffic congestion, deterioration of services and education, environmental degradation and pollution, unemployment, crime, over-population and even the cultural decline of the U.S. Besides drastically curbing immigration and further criminalizing immigrants, the anti-immigrant agenda calls for prohibiting citizenship to the children of the foreign-born; curtailing or ending public benefits, education, social and health services for legal immigrants; intensifying border militarization and expanding border enforcement strategies into the U.S. interior to detain and deport “illegal” immigrants, among other restrictions. In their view, immigrants do not have or deserve environmental protections or other civil liberties and rights.

The consequences for the environmental health of communities are devastating. While the right-wing groups want to dose the border and drastically limit immigration they have no qualms about importing natural resources and exporting pollution across borders. Like ecological systems, communities of color do not have borders. Environmental justice recognizes that environmental racism has global and disproportionate impacts on sister communities, which are being subjected to toxic waste and industrial polluting production. For environmental justice community groups, organizers and advocates, the challenge is to protect all communities of color, regardless of their immigration status.

Globalization and Migration

In the debate over immigration’s impact on the United States’ population growth and the environment, anti-immigrant and right-wing forces fail to address or acknowledge U.S. liability for the displacement of communities that are forced to migrate. One of the main causes of involuntary migration is environmental degradation, resulting from economic restructuring. Globalization, or international economic restructuring, is driven by unsustainable social and economic development that puts profits before environmental protection and community. U.S. intervention — whether economic, cultural or military — triggers displacement and forces people to move in search of survival. As long as the U.S. and other Northern hemisphere countries do not pay for the costs and effects of displacement, the benefits of migration will naturally accrue to the U.S. or receiving country, and the burden will be placed on immigrants and their home communities.

The International Office for Migration reports that one in every 35 persons worldwide is a migrant with some 175 million people migrating across borders. That is almost three times the number of individuals displaced by World War II. While this represents a very small portion of the world’s population, global migration is an indicator of the severe displacement being caused by “free” trade and the social, political and economic disruptions being visited upon communities across the world. For many, migration becomes the only option for survival.
The U.S. receives less than two percent of the world’s migrants and refugees. The immigrant community grew rapidly during the 1990s, with over 13 million people entering the country, according to the U.S. Census. Now there are over 31 million immigrants in the U.S., representing about 11 percent of the population — still lower than the record level of 15 percent set in 1900. The Urban Institute reports that in 2000, while over two-thirds of all immigrants lived in six states (California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey, and Illinois), those states’ actual share of immigrants declined from 75 percent in 1990 to 68 percent of the total in 2000. Many new immigrants have settled in other states, especially in the U.S. South, that had not seen significant immigration in over 100 years.

Over 85 percent of immigrants in the U.S. are considered "people of color," hailing from Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and other parts of the world. This is the demographic revolution that troubles anti-immigrant groups. The majority of immigrants do not only share the same color, they also share the same strata of poverty and exposure to environmental degradation and toxic waste. The Census reports that one in five children and one in four low-income children is the child of an immigrant. Twenty-five percent of low-wage workers are foreign-born.

While the Right blames immigrants for the plight of inner cities and increasing racial disparities, the scapegoating of immigrants draws attention away from the government and business agenda institutionalized in the 1980s by then President Ronald Reagan. That agenda imposed cutbacks and privatization of public services, and reversed and curtailed civil rights, environmental protections, and labor rights in order to maximize profits and capital mobility. Services, investments, industries, jobs and capital have since moved to the suburbs and across international borders, facilitated by "free" trade agreements. Low-income and working people, communities of color and immigrants bear the brunt of these changes.

The anti-immigrant agenda pits low-wage workers of color against immigrants and against each other, obscuring the structural conditions that deny access to living wage jobs and services to all workers. Repeating the mantra that immigration poses the greatest threat to the environment and dwindling resources, anti-immigrant groups are successfully promoting their belief that population — and not consumption — is the problem.

While the U.S. is home to less than five percent of the world’s population, it consumes more than 35 percent of the world’s energy and natural resources. Not all consumers are created equal; some have a bigger ecological footprint or impact than others. A Bill Gates or even the average white middle class suburbanite has a bigger ecological footprint than an undocumented migrant farm-worker. Yet the anti-immigrant agenda and the current U.S. immigration policies fail to address the root causes of international migration, including economic pressures, civil and political strife, and environmental degradation caused by unsustainable profit-driven development. A more equitable redistribution of the resources accumulated through globalization could ameliorate and even lessen the impacts that force people to leave their communities.

Justice for Immigrants, People of Color

Immigration is not a law enforcement or anti-terrorist problem. The immigrant rights movement is ultimately about securing sustainable community development and human rights, including labor, cultural, civil, social, economic and environmental rights, for everyone. Immigrant rights are also about equality and racial, economic and environmental justice. Immigrants, people of color, and low-income and working people share the same problems of poverty, access to jobs and housing, and suffer the same levels of unemployment and exposure to environmental degradation. Together they form a majority in the U.S. whose combined agendas have the potential to transform the human and political landscape of our country.

Arnoldo Garcia works for the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights in Oakland, California. He edits their news magazine, Network News, and is a longtime cultural worker and musician. For more information and resources on immigrant rights and peace, equality and justice, visit www.nnirr.org.
Ownership can increase residents’ financial assets and ensure that they have a voice in decisions about their communities.

For decades, economic development policy in the United States, at all levels of government, has focused on attracting private investment into poor urban and rural areas. While these policies have sometimes succeeded in improving the physical environment of some communities, they have been less successful at benefiting the people who live in them. In large part this is because many residents of poor communities do not own assets in their communities.

Resident ownership mechanisms (ROMs) is a PolicyLink term for strategies and tools to enable low-income/low-wealth residents to gain an ownership stake in the revitalization of their communities. Ownership can increase residents’ financial assets and ensure that they have voice and influence in decisions about their communities. This article, excerpted from a PolicyLink report titled Sharing the Wealth: Resident Ownership Mechanisms, explores opportunities for residents to be included as active and vested partners—with the private, public and nonprofit sectors—in economic development activity in their communities.

The Policy Disconnect
Over the past 40 years, policymakers have treated efforts to help low-income people and revitalize impoverished communities as if each had little relation to the other. For example, economic development initiatives typically encourage private investment in low-wealth communities. However, these publicly financed incentives rarely include a *quid pro quo* that new investments provide economic benefits to community residents. As a result, investors, developers and entrepreneurs gain wealth as real estate values appreciate and businesses earn profits but residents who do not own homes, businesses or property have little to gain. In fact, they are sometimes forced out of neighborhoods they have lived in their whole lives, due to the rising rents and property tax assessments that accompany gentrification.

Similarly, most social policy has provided assistance to low-income people, with no direct link to the places where they live. While important, these policies have emphasized income and services—not wealth creation. Yet, the asset divide between rich and poor is growing faster.
than the income gap. Without assets, the poor cannot take advantage of economic opportunities: nor can they resolve crises—a rent increase or job loss—without severe consequences.

**Resident Ownership Mechanisms: Key Characteristics**

Resident ownership mechanisms are a promising vehicle for merging people and place-based strategies and linking revenues from community development to building individual and family assets. They include a mix of the following characteristics:

- **Leverage economic activity to produce resident benefits**
- **Target low-income and other wealth community residents as beneficiaries**
- **Enable residents to be owners of economic development activities**
- **Build the financial assets of residents, and**
- **Give residents a voice in decision-making.**

The best ROMs give residents a voice in key decisions affecting their lives. They advance democracy in both the political and economic spheres, thereby creating a sense of ownership—both literally and figuratively—over their communities.

**Resident Ownership Mechanisms: Highlights of Models and Examples**

ROMs are emerging in many areas of community development, including commercial real estate development, new business development and home-ownership.

**Commercial Real Estate Development**

Emerging models of particular interest include commercial development ventures launched by community development corporations (CDCs) or other organizations that offer residents stock in the development, and Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs) designed to include community residents as key stockholders in a portfolio of community real estate assets. One promising example of a ROM in the real estate arena is Market Creek Plaza in San Diego, California.

**Market Creek Plaza** is a 20-acre, mixed-use commercial and cultural center in the heart of San Diego’s Diamond neighborhood—among the most diverse and underserved in the city. A product of an extensive community planning process, Market Creek is among the nation’s first real estate development projects to be designed, implemented and ultimately owned by community residents.

Market Creek Plaza is anchored by an enormous, well-stocked grocery store, in operation since early 2001. Retail shops and restaurants, some occupied, some still undergoing final "tenant improvements" to the interior, fill out the plaza. Community residents will soon have the opportunity to transition from stakeholders to stockholders in the development. A limited liability corporation has been set up to facilitate resident ownership and ensure broad-based participation. The Jacobs Center for Nonprofit Innovation has provided comprehensive support for this resident ownership strategy, including the provision of training in the economics of investment as well as supporting the establishment of several related entities to expand community asset development and capacity building in connection with the project.  

**Business Development**

ROMs in the business arena include worker-owned cooperatives and employee stock ownership plans in which workers are owners of the company, as well as enterprises such as B.I.G. Wash, where residents come together to initiate a community-serving business and sell shares to their neighbors.

**B.I.G. Wash** is a community business started and owned by residents of the low-income Columbia Heights neighborhood in Washington, D.C. The idea for the business was born when a group of friends were discussing the need for a laundromat in their neighborhood. With technical assistance facilitated by the local Hope Housing Development Corporation, they researched the market, secured financing, and ultimately raised $30,000 to start a laundry in 1995. They were able to do this by selling shares of stock in the company for $100 per share, payable in increments, to others in the neighborhood.

Today B.I.G Wash is thriving. The neighborhood has a vital service and part-time jobs for nine residents. The original investors received dividends equal to 185 percent of their holdings over three years. In 1999, one member sold a share for $600. Twenty-nine community residents hold shares in the company and participate in major decision-making about the business. The increased equity and annual dividends increased the financial stability of the shareholders and even enabled some to purchase homes in the neighborhood.  

**Home Equity**

Home equity may be the most traditional way to build assets among low-wealth individuals and families, but it is often the most difficult, especially in gentrifying neighborhoods where home values are skyrocketing. ROMs such as community land trusts (CLTs) and limited equity-housing co-ops (LEHCs) have a long and proven track record of helping low-wealth families to access affordable housing while building home equity.

LEHCs enable residents to share ownership of a building by purchasing shares in a cooperative corporation. They preserve ongoing housing affordability by limiting the price at which shares can be resold. CLTs acquire real estate and sell the homes to residents while maintaining ownership of the land on which the homes are built. The CLT ground lease includes a locally determined "resale formula" that governs the price at which a dwelling unit may be resold, ensuring that the housing remains affordable for future owners.

Burlington Community Land Trust is among the most successful and venerable examples of community land trusts in the United States.

**Burlington Community Land Trust,** Burlington, Vermont. One of the largest and most influential CLTs is located in Burlington, VT. Since the early '80s,
Burlington has become an increasingly desirable—and expensive—place to live. With active support from city government, Burlington Community Land Trust (BCLT) was established in 1984 to produce—and preserve—affordable housing for local residents. BCLT has 340 single-family homes and condominiums in its shared equity program, and due to resales, these structures have served over 400 households. All families in the shared equity program earn less than 85 percent of area median income. BCLT Director Brenda Torpy says, "We're old enough to have had a number of resales, and we've seen it really work. The second time around we don't need any additional government subsidy and we typically serve an lower-income family. We're doing that at the same time that the seller is taking equity with them and has had all the tax benefits and all the security that homeownership offers."

Resident Ownership Mechanisms: Sharing the Wealth More Broadly

The experience to date in conceptualizing and implementing ROMs is promising. Although no two ROMs are identical, many common lessons are emerging from their implementation. As community activists, leaders and organizers work to establish ROMs in their communities, they should seek to ensure:

Ongoing and meaningful resident education, participation, and leadership:
Residents—the ultimate beneficiaries of ROMs—need to become engaged early and to stay involved throughout the planning and implementation processes.

Access to high-quality technical support:
The design, development, and implementation of ROM models require specialized technical expertise in a mix of finance, real estate, corporate law, tax accounting, and other areas.

Adequate funding and financing for planning and implementation:
Whether adapting an existing model or designing a new one, ROM development involves a substantial commitment of time and resources.

Developing ROMs requires early and ongoing investment by funders who are willing to support a range of planning, development and implementation activities.

Active engagement in the political process:
Much as other private developers, business owners, and local financial institutions are active players in the political process, so too are successful ROM developers.

Strong accountability systems:
In the long term, the credibility of a ROM model will depend on effective and transparent monitoring and evaluation systems.

Finding ways to tell the story:
Telling the story of how the ROM was created and how it is operating helps to build financial, political, and public support. In addition, documentation helps to spur replication and interest in exploring mechanisms that can expand ROM operations.

Advancing Economic Security, Opportunity, and Democracy

Private markets are recognizing that poor communities hold a wealth of undervalued assets—buildings, infrastructure, and human capital—with the promise of a strong return on investment. ROMs can help leverage these assets in a way that produces win-win solutions for all stakeholders. They can benefit low-income/low-wealth residents who become vested in their community's revitalization as well as private investors and developers who profit by working with residents as partners.

Resident ownership mechanisms, alone, will not end poverty, but they can be an important part of the solution. ROMs make the link between people-and place-based development strategies. They offer collaborative, community-building approaches to development. They forge new civic relationships, where residents are partners with business and political leaders. And they give residents a voice, as stakeholders and shareholders in the decisions that affect their lives. Like other asset building strategies, ROMs help to increase individual and family wealth and help to build strong, organized communities.

This article was excerpted from a PolicyLink report Sharing the Wealth: Resident Ownership Mechanisms by Heather McCulloch and Lisa Robinson. PolicyLink is a national nonprofit research, communications, capacity building, and advocacy organization dedicated to advancing policies to achieve economic and social equity based on the wisdom, voice and experience of local constituencies. To order a copy of Sharing the Wealth, contact PolicyLink at (510) 663-2333 or info@policylink.org. The report can also be downloaded from the PolicyLink website: www.policylink.org.

Sources


2 Information for this description was derived from several sources: a telephone interview with Rita Bright, B.I.G. Wash founder and board member, telephone interview, March 2001; David Montgomery, "A Neighborhood Cleans Up: Community Laundry Sells Shares," Washington Post, March 8, 1999; and Jessica Gordon Nembhard, "Entering the New City as Men and Women, Not Mules: Democratic and Humane Economic Development Strategies for Revitalizing Inner Cities" (unpublished manuscript, 2000), pp. 15–16.

3 This description is from the Institute for Community Economics website at http://www.icectl.org/clt/cltprofiles.html.
Despite significant improvements in environmental protection over the past several decades, 1.3 billion individuals worldwide live in unsafe and unhealthy physical environments (Bullard, 1993). Hazardous waste generation and international movement of hazardous waste and toxic products pose some important health, environmental, legal, political and ethical dilemmas.

The systemic destruction of indigenous peoples' land and sacred sites, the poisoning of Native Americans on reservations, Africans in the Niger Delta, African-Americans in Louisiana's "Cancer Alley," Mexicans in the border towns, and Puerto Ricans on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico all have their roots in economic exploitation, racial oppression, devaluation of human life and the natural environment, and corporate greed.

Unequal interests and unequal power arrangements have allowed poisons of the rich to be offered as short-term remedies for poverty of the poor. The last decade has seen numerous developing nations challenge the "unwritten policy" of Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries shipping hazardous wastes into their borders. Most people of color communities in the United States and poor nations around the world want jobs and economic development—but not at the expense of public health and the environment.

Why do some communities get dumped on while others escape? Why are environmental regulations vigorously enforced in some communities and not in other communities? Why are some workers protected from environmental and health threats while other workers (such as migrant farm workers) are allowed to be poisoned? How can environmental justice be incorporated into environmental protection? What institutional changes are needed in order to achieve a just and sustainable society?

What community organizing strategies and public policies are effective tools against environmental racism?

This paper analyzes the causes and consequences of environmental racism and the strategies environmental justice groups, community-based organizations and governments can use to improve the quality of life for their constituents.

Anatomy of Environmental Racism

The U.S. is the dominant economic and military force in the world today. The American economic engine has generated massive wealth, a high standard of living and consumerism. This growth machine has also generated waste, pollution and ecological destruction. The U.S. has some of the best environmental laws in the world. However, in the real world, all communities are not created equal.
Globalization of the world's economy has placed strains on poor communities and nations inhabited largely by people of color.

Environmental regulations have not achieved uniform benefits across all segments of society (Collin and Collin, 1999). Some communities are routinely poisoned while the government looks the other way.

People of color around the world must contend with dirty air and drinking water, and the location of noxious facilities such as municipal landfills, incinerators, hazardous waste treatment, storage and disposal facilities owned by private industry, government and even the military (Bullard, 1993a, 1999, 2000). These environmental problems are exacerbated by racism. Environmental racism refers to environmental policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or color (Bullard, 1993a). Environmental racism is reinforced by government, legal, economic, political and military institutions. Environmental racism combines with public policies and industry practices to provide benefits for the countries in the North while shifting costs to the countries in the South (Godsil, 1990; Colquett and Robertson 1991; Collin 1992; Bullard 1993a, 1999, 2000).

Environmental racism is a form of institutionalized discrimination. Institutional discrimination is defined as "actions or practices carried out by members of dominant (racial or ethnic) groups that have differential and negative impacts on members of subordinate (racial and ethnic) groups" (Feagin and Feagin, 1986). The United States is grounded in white racism (Doob, 1993). The nation was founded on the principles of "free land" (stolen from Native Americans and Mexicans), "free labor" (African slaves brought to this land in chains) and "free men" (only white men with property had the right to vote). From the outset, racism shaped the economic, political and ecological landscape of this new nation.

Environmental racism buttressed the exploitation of land, people and the natural environment. It operates as an intranation power arrangement—especially where ethnic and racial groups form a political and or numerical minority. For example, blacks in the U.S. form both a political and numerical racial minority. On the other hand, blacks in South Africa, under apartheid, constituted a political minority and numerical majority. American and South African apartheid had devastating environmental impacts on blacks (Kalan, 1994; Durning, 1990; South African Department of Environmental Affairs, 1996).

Environmental racism also operates in the international arena between nations and between transnational corporations. Increased globalization of the world's economy has placed special strains on the eco-systems in many poor communities and poor nations inhabited largely by people of color and indigenous peoples. This is especially true for the global resource extraction industry such as oil, timber and minerals (Gedick, 2001; LaDuke, 1999; Karliner, 1997; Rowell, 1996). Globalization makes it easier for transnational corporations and capital to flee to areas with the least envi-
Unequal power arrangements have allowed poisons of the rich to be offered as short-term remedies for poverty of the poor.

The adverse impacts fall heaviest on the poor. This deadly pattern occurs disproportionately among people of color in the U.S. who are concentrated in urban centers in the Southern United States, coastal regions and areas with substandard air quality. Climate justice links human rights and ecological sustainability. Climate justice advocates are calling for solutions to ward off global climate warming that do not fall hardest on low-income communities, communities of color or workers employed by fossil fuel industries (Bruno, Karliner and Brotsky, 1999:3).

Not surprising, resistance to reigning in climate-altering activities through the Kyoto Protocol has come largely from the fossil fuel lobby, companies that either extract, process and sell fossil fuels, generate electricity using coal, oil or gas, and automobile makers. Communities suffer from environmental and health assaults from being fence line with polluting industries. Giant oil companies are major contributors to both local pollution and global warming.

In July 2000, a coal lobby group, Center for Energy and Economic Development (CEED, 2000), funded a $40,000 study blasting the Kyoto Protocol for the harmful impact it would have on blacks and Hispanics (Management Information Services, Inc., 2000). The report, entitled Refusing to Repeat Past Mistakes: How the Kyoto Climate Change Protocol Would Disproportionately Threaten the Economic Well-Being of Blacks and Hispanics in the United States, was released by several minority business and labor organizations (i.e., A. Philip Randolph Institute, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, The National Black Chamber of Commerce), none of which have environmental or environmental justice track records.

The report somehow glossed over the fact that its sponsor, CEED, is a U.S. coal and rail lobby formed in 1992 with the expressed purpose of "protecting the via-
The environmental justice movement has begun to build a global network of grassroots groups, community-based organizations, university-based resource centers, researchers, scientists, educators and youth groups. Better communication and funding is needed in every area. Resources are especially scarce for environmental justice and anti-racist groups in developing countries. The Internet has proven to be a powerful tool for those groups that have access to the worldwide web. Erasing the "digital divide" becomes a major strategy to combat environmental racism.

Resources


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Climate Change: What’s Justice Got to Do with It?

BY ANSJE MILLER

In 2001, the citizens of Tuvalu, a nation of 11,000 people living in nine coral atolls (islands) in the Pacific Ocean, began searching for a new home to escape their sinking homeland. The next year, the native villagers of Shishmaref, just south of the Arctic Circle in Alaska, voted to move the entire village inland in order to flee the rising waters encroaching on their homes and community. During the same summer, the residents of San Antonio, Texas ended four years of drought with a flood that swept away a house, contaminated drinking water and killed nine people. These are just three examples of massive environmental disruptions that are consistent with predictions of climate change that even the U.S. government has acknowledged is likely.

So, how does the environmental justice movement, rooted in local communities, relate to this global problem? The human faces of climate change include seniors fatally assaulted by an increasingly volatile climate. "We don't see climate change as merely a question of changing temperature, but the human lives that are affected by it," says Genaro Lopez of the Southwest Workers Union and the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative (EJCC). In an all too familiar story, low-income and people-of-color communities are the first to experience the impacts of climate change and have the least resources to adapt to the impacts. This is true both in the global South and here in the United States. When and if the U.S. government is ever galvanized to action, efforts to end our fossil fuel addiction are also likely to fall disproportionately on those least able to pay. Without a focus on climate justice, the U.S. can too easily ignore the human and ecological toll of action or inaction on climate change.

Also known as global warming, climate change is fundamentally an issue of human rights and environmental justice that connects the local to the global. "Along the gulf of Mexico coast are numerous petro-chemical and oil-based industries which we know to be among the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions and they are causing changes to the climate," explains Lopez. These industries span the gulf from southern Mexico to Florida. "Not only do they produce carbon dioxide," Lopez explains, "but they produce other toxic pollution and waste. And who lives around these industries? It's our communities — the people of color, Indigenous People, low-income people and workers. The changing of the climate is another layer on top of all the effects of contamination that our communities face daily."

In April 2001, a coalition of 28 environmental justice, climate justice, religious, policy and advocacy groups created the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative. At the debut of the EJCC, member Tom Goldtooth, director of the Indigenous Environmental Network, remarked that "the launching of this grassroots led initiative is a response to a global warming crisis that affects our local and global communities. By launching this initiative we are working with democracy movements worldwide that are struggling against oil interests. They include communities polluted by refineries as well as indigenous communities trying to maintain their cultures and their lands."

The United States alone is responsible for 25 percent of the gases that cause this global problem. Recognizing that this fact puts Americans in a unique position to affect change, the EJCC strives to educate and activate the people of North America with the purpose of creating and implementing just climate policies in both domestic and international contexts. At a time when the United States has taken an official position on climate change, the EJCC is a vital new voice for local, regional and national grassroots action.

Americans are paying the price of climate change today and U.S. government policy is ignoring the price many of us will pay tomorrow. Solutions to our climate and energy problems must ensure the right of all people to live, work, play and pray in safe, healthy and clean environments. To that end, the EJCC has participated in multiple UN and national conferences on climate change, racism and sustainable development to educate delegates and other activists about climate justice and environmental racism. The Initiative has also issued a statement of solidarity and developed, "10 Principles of Just Climate Policy" to guide policymakers and assess climate policy proposals. Through these efforts, we hope to educate our communities about the dangers of climate change and spur quick implementation of climate policies that represent justice for our communities.

Ansje Miller coordinates the Environmental Justice and Climate Change Initiative. To learn more about climate justice, the EJCC, or to get involved see www.ejcc.org.

Sources
Youth of Color and Global Justice

BY COLIN RAJAH

In the Spring of 2000, ColorLines magazine published an article by Elizabeth “Betita” Martinez, entitled "Where Was the Color in Seattle?" Referring to the World Trade Organization (WTO) Seattle meeting in 1999, where tens of thousands of protestors voiced dissent about globalization, the article highlighted the fact that few protestors were young people of color. A Bay Area youth organizer, Jinee Kim, was quoted saying, "I was at the jail where a lot of protesters were being held and a big crowd of people were chanting. 'This Is What Democracy Looks Like!' I thought: Is this really what democracy looks like? Nobody here looks like me!"

Jinee and about 40 other young activists of color were in Seattle as part of a delegation organized by JustAct, a San Francisco-based youth organization promoting global justice. Most of them, and dozens of others JustAct contacted about the protest, had little understanding of the significance of the WTO before the event. Those who ended up going to Seattle found the culture at the protests alienating and struggled to relate to it. If the WTO represented a system of oppression to grassroots communities of color around the world, why were youth of color in the U.S. relatively uninformed and disinterested in activities to challenge it? Are people of color not as internationalist? Do working class communities lack the capacity to learn and engage in issues beyond their immediate communities?

The answer to those last two questions is a resounding no. Young people of color from working class communities in the U.S. struggle to understand issues broadly framed under the term "globalization" precisely because they aren't framed by us. The lines of such battles are drawn by mostly white, middle-class folks who want to challenge oppression here in the U.S., "in the belly of the beast," where most of the world's power and wealth is concentrated. While their advocacy on behalf of poor communities in the South is noble, the anti-globalization movement will never result in the multiracial mass movement it aspires to be because it continues to be led by middle-class whites.

Since only 25 percent of 18-22 year olds in the U.S. are enrolled in four-year colleges, according to U.S. Census statistics, and only 1 percent of the total world adult population has a college education, most of the leadership and participation in global events (whether they are major institutionally-driven meetings such as WTO or international conferences like the World Social Forum) should better reflect the vast majority of people in the world who do not have access to formal higher education. The nature of such events would be radically different from the present ones being driven by academics, government officials and trained professionals. The voices of those most impacted by international socio-economic policies must be heard. Otherwise, the very process of democracy is undermined.

With the lessons from Seattle in mind, JustAct is beginning to find opportunities for grassroots youth organizations from the U.S. to meet, dialogue and build long-term relationships with grassroots organizations around the world. This approach assumes that youth of color are very politically active and have strong community-building values, though they often lack the resources and opportunities to develop alliances with their peers in other communities, whether here in the U.S. or around the world. With such opportunities, youth can sharpen their analysis, be more effective in implementing strategies around local work, and help build a greater mass movement for social change that serves as an example for communities around the world.

An example: in 2001, JustAct took a delegation of about 20 youth of color from the U.S. to the Second World Youth Festival in Panama. These youth, who were organizing around issues of environmental justice, prisons, education and racial justice, were able to share their concerns and learn about militarization, privatization and human rights issues from counterparts in Asia and Latin America. The experience was so powerful that participants expressed how they would approach their work differently and how vital it was for them to begin to build those cross-border relationships.

Grassroots young people of color are probably more internationalist and more concerned about global justice issues than our white allies realize because, in many cases, our histories of migration from other countries are more recent or because we have a more collective sense of identity that transcends national borders. Therefore, when we struggle for justice on a global scale, we do so not only out of altruism, but because we see that struggle as part of our own process of liberation. We just need the resources and opportunities to develop international alliances and create stronger communities that reflect our just and sustainable values.

A native of Malaysia and a youth activist/organizer for more than 18 years, Colin Rajah is currently the executive director of JustAct: Youth Action for Global Justice, a national nonprofit organization promoting youth leadership and action for global justice.
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Recent Books


Looking for Leadership

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that they showed that got them to that table. They were in leadership positions and they had to struggle with older people, but they were at the table.

But now when we form a committee, we put together a board, we have a meeting and we say, "We need to get some young people here." And young people are brought in and jump over every step on the leadership ladder. I think that we ought to find those people who earned their way in. Now we need to recognize when they've earned it. We need to acknowledge it. But I do not like this idea of going out and finding a young person just based on age. But I don't know if you all feel differently about that.

Anthony: I agree with you. But I also want to highlight the importance of being able to recognize when that barrier is there. The fact of the matter is that young people have created an international language. I'm talking about hip hop. You see people on television in China doing hip hop and say, "How in the hell did they find out about that?"

Some of it is commercial exploitation, some of it is negative, but there's a lot that is actually really powerful and it was created by young people.

So I think there is the challenge, which goes back to recognizing the strength that is coming up through young people. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link, so we have to think about five year olds, ten year olds, 20 year olds and 30 year olds.

Ellis: There are a lot of young people that are really effective and able to get masses of youth out there pushing their agenda. Yet we haven't within the EJ movement been really strategic about making those links with their efforts. Youth have been really powerful organizers—better than a bunch of us. How do we make those connections and include them in the movement?

Glover Blackwell: Where people have earned it, we need to aggressively go after them. But I don't think we're going to have young people who can play that leadership role if we don't have programs that they're able to run and make their own decisions about. They won't develop their leadership if they're constantly trying to work into the agenda that has been set by earlier generations. With SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee] and other civil rights organizations, a lot of young people said, "This is the way we want to do it" and did it. 

Who's Got the Power?

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These tensions over resources, among other issues, shaped the movement's decision at Summit I not to create a centralized, national multiracial grassroots organization. But many feel that the time has come to address the lack of trust between grassroots groups and technical experts who can most easily enter national policy debates. The movement has not had a national office since the mid-1990s, when the Washington Office on Environmental Justice, which had been initiated by the regional and constituency-based networks, closed down after a few years of operation. Prakash notes: "At the end of the day, major power players like Congress and the EPA are looking for [direction] from the environmental justice movement and someone has to fill the vacuum."

New Models

As the movement goes forward, all parties need to reexamine the lines that define organizations, movements and the roles of individuals. In the larger social and economic justice movements, two trends further complicate these debates. First, hybrid organizations, which perform multiple functions including organizing, research, technical assistance or policy development, are gaining political and financial momentum. ACE and WE ACT are exploring such combinations in their organizational models.

Also, mixing organizations and individuals in network memberships is increasingly common, especially in economic justice, for building fast-moving and politically ambitious vehicles while still serving grassroots struggles. These networks, such as the Campaign for Contingent Work in Massachusetts, include academics, union officials and other individuals. Such networks are better able to incorporate hybrid people who started out in organizing and then became researchers or lawyers or scientists.

As ACE's executive director, Penn Loh, says, "The real discussion is around what kind of power we're trying to build. Is the movement building power so that we can transform the way that decisions happen, or are we just trying to change the people sitting in certain positions of power? If we agree on the first, then there's a context for more effective and successful collaboration between folks coming from different places."

Rinku Sen is the publisher of ColorLines magazine and the director of the New York office of the Applied Research Center. She is also the author of Stir it Up: Lessons in Community Organizing and Advocacy (Jossey-Bass).