

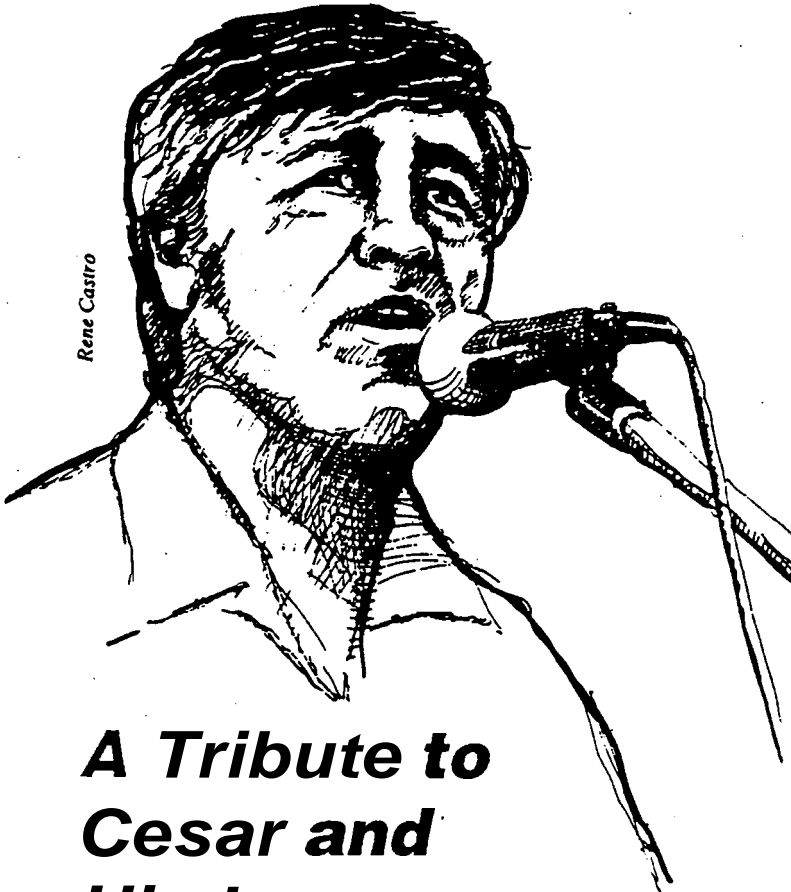
Race, Poverty & the Environment

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and environmental justice

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A Tribute to Cesar and His Lessons

by José R. Padilla

*"Fighting for social justice...is one of the
profoundest ways in which man can say 'yes' to
man's dignity, and...there is no way on this earth in which you
can say 'yes' to man's dignity, and know that you're going to
be spared some sacrifice."*

— Cesar Chavez, 1975

In the summer of 1973, in the sweltering heat of the
Coachella Valley. I met with Cesar **Chavez** for a few minutes

>> see **CESAR CHAVEZ**, page 40

Beyond Black and White

by Elizabeth Martinez

Working in New Mexico with the movement of the
1960s. I seldom heard Chicana or Chicano activists **speak**
in terms of "environmental" issues. Yet many problems
plaguing Chicano as well as Mexican and Native American
communities were in fact environmental. Living a
few miles from Los **Alamos**, home of the atomic bomb,
we periodically **learned** of rumors about radioactive leaks
and spills on Indian pueblo land. To the **north** we saw
logging companies hauling out tons of timber, denuding
huge **areas** with full **cooperation** from the U.S. Forest
Service. That was land once collectively used for survival
by **Mexican/Chicano** communities going back centuries.
The Forest Service had taken it and in return given us
Smokey the **Bear** to admonish the impoverished: "Don't
litter."

Sewage plants and slaughterhouses had a habit of
finding their way into Chicano and native communities
more than others. A friend who went to work making
circuit boards at a new **electronics** plant in Albuquerque
during the early 1970s later learned that hundreds of her
co-workers had filed suit for exposure to poisonous
solvents. The hippie invasion of those years brought
uninformed Anglos dumping waste into **streams** that
served as villages' drinking water. Even worse was the
developers' invasion and its effects.

We called all this **racist**. We saw it as part of the
colonizer's oppression against **Raza** and Native American
s, closely **related** to the fight for land and water rights.
Environmentalists rarely sided with us because they
didn't see those daily-life struggles as environmental.

>> see **BEYONDBLACK AND WHITE**, page 21

Latinos & the E'nvironment

**INSIDE: Land Struggles, Dying for a Job, Organizing Farmworkers, PODER,
Colonialism and Resistance in Puerto Rico, the Southwest Network in Action,
the South Bronx, Dr. Loco, Graffiti and more...**

Colonialism, Resistance, & the Search for Alternatives: The Environmental Movement in Puerto Rico

by Deborah Berman Santana

The environmental movement in Puerto Rico arose during the 1960s in response to various manifestations of Puerto Rico's still-colonial political status and dependent economic development strategy. Given the never-ending debate on the island concerning Puerto Rico's political status as a "territorial possession" (to use Washington's euphemism for a colony) of the United States, it is understandable that activism around environmental issues would from the outset become extremely politicized (as, indeed, is true of virtually every issue in Puerto Rican society). In fact, many of the island's well-known environmental activists participated in the "Third World" radicalism of the 1960s; it could even be argued that most early environmental issues — such as the fight against military appropriation of land and toxic experiments, privatization of coastal resources for tourist development, and environmental destruction to benefit foreign corporations — were initially nationalist campaigns, and only later became conscious environmentalist struggles.

However, it would be an error to dismiss Puerto Rican environmentalism today as a **narrowly-based** movement of left-wing intellectuals, because serious environmental degradation and **health** threats to workers and communities has broadened the movement to include members of nearly every **social** and ideological sector on the island. One nonprofit organization in particular, *Misión Industrial de Puerto Rico*, was founded in 1969 by a number of local religious organizations, and was instrumental in bridging the **gap** between left-leaning environmentalists and ordinary working communities. *Misión Industrial* functions as an **environmental** watchdog and educator as well as a **community** informational and organizational resource. In this work they have been joined by other organizations, such as the *Centro para Información, Investigación y Educación Social* (CIIES).

The environmental movement can claim some impressive victories in its fight against ecologically risky projects for economic development. Early examples **include** the defeat of proposals during the early 1970s for construction of an oil **refining** "superport" and a nuclear power plant. In addition, a twenty-year battle against plans by Kennecott and American Metal Climax to **strip** mine the interior mountain region for copper appeared to have been won during the late 1980s; late

in 1993 local activists geared up for another fight against U.S. mining interests which have once again begun exploratory drilling in the area. Among recent issues provoking strong community opposition **throughout** the island are proposals to build giant incinerators and establish a series of regional waste dumps. Especially heated is the campaign by residents of the *municipio* of **Guaynabo** to prevent Browning Ferns Industries (BFI) from building a landfill directly over the headwaters of a river which provides some of the drinking water for San Juan, the island's capital, the landfill would handle, among other things, the ashes created by a proposed incinerator for San Juan.

The most significant development in the Puerto Rican environmental movement during the 1980's was the evolution of community groups into organizations which go beyond single-issue, local concerns to support islandwide initiatives. Environmental groups have become quite adept at utilizing the media to inform and **mobilize** broad sectors of the Puerto Rican

The most important challenge is not simply to stop harmful economic projects which threaten the environment, but also to provide an alternative to the Puerto Rico model of development.

public quickly; such quick and well-publicized responses have sometimes forced corporations, the island and federal **govern-**ment, and even the U.S. military, to drop or modify plans that were barely off the drawing board.

Strategies and Analysis

But for many the most important challenge is not simply to stop harmful economic projects which threaten the environment, but also to provide an alternative to the Puerto Rico model of development. Can the Puerto Rican

Many of the island's well-known environmental activists participated in the "Third World" radicalism of the 1960s; most early environmental issues in Puerto Rico were initially nationalist campaigns, and only later became conscious environmentalist struggles.

environmental movement — which has shown itself capable of building broad-based coalitions to struggle against environmental degradation — expand and deepen such alliances in order to prepare and struggle for environmentally and socially appropriate economic alternatives?

In response to this challenge community activists in various locations around the island are mobilizing to offer alternative strategies for economic development. While differing in origins and emphases, they share a number of traits. First, they emphasize community

involvement in deciding and directing development strategy. Second, while they are willing to work with government they rely primarily upon cooperating with local and like-minded community groups around the island. Third, they are concerned about environmentally and socially sustainable use of resources in development. Most importantly, they express a strong desire to break with the cycle of dependence, and encourage self-reliance and a cooperative spirit in their search for economic and social solutions to community problems.

Perhaps the most advanced of the community initiatives is taking place in the south coastal *municipio* of Salinas. Located in a region where the economy revolved around sugar production during most of the twentieth century, Salinas has experienced high unemployment and increasing marginalization since the decline of that industry. Operation Bootstrap provided limited employment in Salinas, and over the years the number of manufacturing jobs there has declined.

In 1978-79 Salinas provided the stage for the island's first broad-based alliance of community groups, environmental activists, labor unions, and religious organizations; they fought against construction of a Monsanto herbicides plant on an 80-acre site of mangroves along the Caribbean coast next to two of Salinas' poorest communities. Against all expectations the "Anti-Monsanto Front" forced Monsanto to cancel its plans and sent

shock waves throughout the multinational business world in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Many of the same local people involved in the Monsanto struggle are now trying to develop more environmentally and socially appropriate economic alternatives in Salinas. They work with civic groups, labor unions, municipal government, as well as with some state agencies, and have put into practice the principle of placing "Salinas primero" ahead of individual ideological agendas. Their work has already begun to bear fruit; the local activists have succeeded in establishing a community-run adult school, where participants earn their equivalency diplomas while learning trades such as commercial fishing, restaurant operation, industrial sewing, and agro-industrial production. All of these enterprises stress integrating local products into the economic development strategy, and some have already begun the difficult process of starting worker-owned businesses. In addition, the local activists started a newspaper, organized cultural, educational, and athletic programs for children and youths, and have spearheaded a loose network of similar community-based groups throughout the island.

Still, such activism faces great odds. The political and economic power of outside capital and the decision-makers in San Juan and Washington over this long-colonized island poses a formidable challenge to community-activism; moreover, the challenge of mobilizing significant numbers of the poor and



Déborah Berman Santana is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography & Planning, University at Albany, State University of New York, and interested in Latin America and sustainable development.

Suggested Readings

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García Martínez, Neftali. 1978a. "Puerto Rico siglo XX: lo histórico y lo natural en la ideología colonialista." in *Pensamiento Crítico*, no. 8.

López Montañez, Wilfredo, and Marianne Meyn. 1989. "Modelo de desarrollo capitalista y destrucción ambiental." in Hedstrom, Ingemar, ed. *La situación ambiental en Centroamérica y el Caribe.* San José, Costa Rica: D.E.I.



working-class Puerto Rican majority may well be no less an obstacle. The island's excessive reliance upon outside resources for economic development, as well as the heavy dependence upon the local and federal governments to subsidize Operation Bootstrap's failures, has fostered a dependent mentality among many Puerto Ricans, who have been taught erroneously that their country has no resources, thus leaving it with no alternatives. This contributes to a collective low self-esteem, encouraging a cynical, "me-first" attitude which can erode the spirit of cooperation and impede efforts to gain popular support for economic alternatives based upon a more positive appraisal of the island's natural and human resources.

In conclusion, Puerto Rico's environmental movement is characterized by its highly politicized nature and strong undercurrent of nationalism; effective use of the media to mobilize on specific campaigns; more emphasis upon environmental justice, community empowerment, and economic alternatives, and less upon preserving wilderness areas free of human influence — as opposed to the "mainstream" (white.

middle-class) movement in the United States — and finally, increasing success at building broad-based coalitions and moving beyond single-issue, localized campaigns.

So what's next? For the Puerto Rican environmental movement to provide a nucleus for a national popular movement capable of demanding and effecting change it would have to focus on two important issues. First, it would have to fight against the colonialist-inspired ideology of lack of natural resources, which is responsible not only for the island's dependent development strategy, but also hinders public awareness of the need to protect the environment. Second, it must focus on the effort to develop sustainable use of all of the island's resources in such a manner that it provides for the economic and social needs of its people, while protecting the natural environment for the use and enjoyment of future generations. This is increasingly being focused upon by many of the activists. They understand that, in the words of one Puerto Rican environmentalist, "environmental struggles are not purely scientific in nature, but rather are social and political."

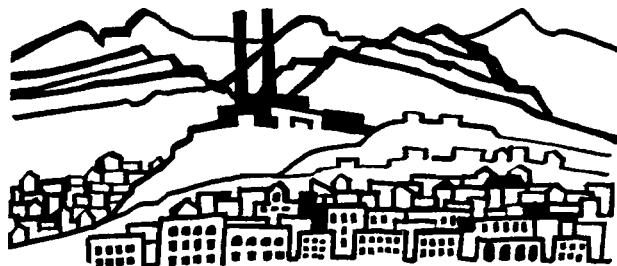
Adding the Issue of Class: *Latinos and Air Pollution in L.A.*

by Lisa Duran

The "Latino community" in L.A. has been the subject of numerous articles and books, but one fact remains after one rinses away the wash of homogeneity: Latinos cannot be easily categorized. They represent recent Mexican immigrant families or individuals, recent **Central** American immigrant families or individuals, middle class third and fourth generation Chicano professionals, senior citizens, second graders, aspiring corporate businessmen, off-season **farmworkers**, Spanish-only speakers and English speakers who know only enough terms in Spanish to plug into the cultural signposts of their families. All of these people breathe air that is the worst in the nation, that contributes to significant lung damage and that causes up to 2500 deaths *per year* in the County of **Los Angeles**.

We at the **Labor/Community WATCHDOG**, a multi-racial community group in Los Angeles, seek to build a movement to clean up the air by challenging the ability of corporate capital to make decisions in private that impact the public. For us, cleaning the air in Los Angeles means building a

Latinos in Los Angeles need a coherent strategy within the environmental movement, one which incorporates the complexity of our culture.



Rini Templeton

multi-racial movement of the unorganized, then challenging governmental institutions to **craft** policy that is protective of the public health (not corporate profits), and directly confronting the corporations which both pollute the air and attempt to evade the laws and regulations that require them to clean up. We approach these questions as a "think **tank/act tank**:" by organizing from a theoretical framework. Our organizing comes out of an analysis of the **structural roots** of the problem of air pollution and economic development. Our understanding informs the organizing strategies and plans which then allow us to deepen our **understanding** and become more effective organizers. We put a lot of emphasis on publications — setting down our goals, our experiences, and our evaluation of those experiences to be used as **tools** in organizing both to influence consciousness & debate among community members and also liberal to left organizers. We stress the development of political consciousness as an important part of our organizing.

In an attempt to build a multiracial countywide movement and organize the unorganized, we have gone door knocking in the **heavily polluted neighborhood of Wilmington**. We have gathered individuals from throughout the county to join our organization. We have **fought** at the **South Coast** Air Quality Management District (AQMD) for smelter regulations and the right to know, the reduction of toxic emission reductions and to oppose the establishment of a market to buy and sell pollution. And in the aftermath of a disastrous explosion and four-day fire, we have confronted Texaco with its abuses in the community and demanded change. (We are about to

launch a boycott of Texaco for its non-response) Our work in Wilmington reflects the nature of that heavily Latino community, and our meetings and **written** materials are bilingual **spanish/english**.

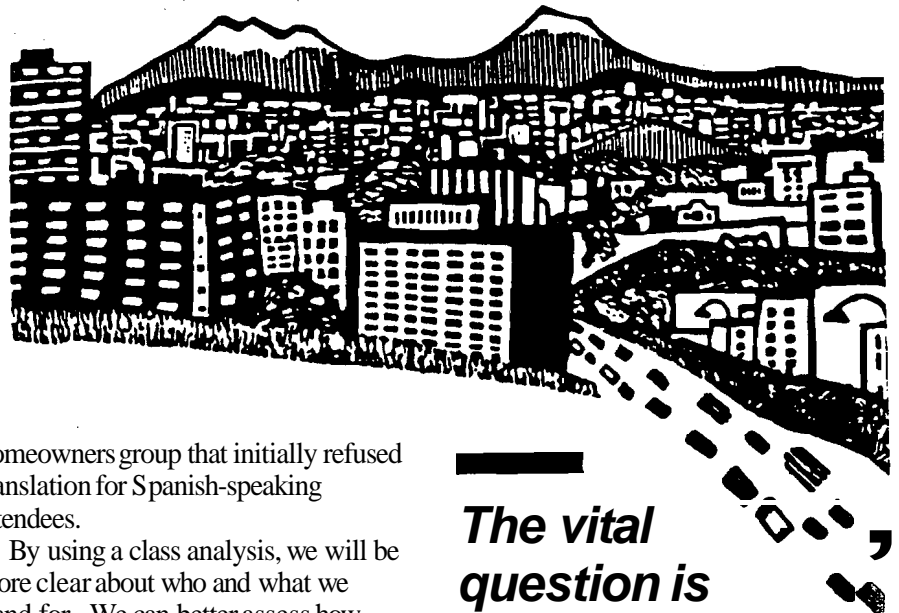
Two questions: How is this collection of different Latino nationalities, classes, and sub-cultures going to be served by any movement with a single approach to cleaning up the air in Los Angeles? But how can a "movement" be built without a unifying approach that allows activists

and organizations to deal with diverse social groups?

The Labor/Community WATCH-DOG has decided that because we want to clean the air and promote social justice, our work must be informed by a class analysis which allows us to depart from the interests of working class people and communities of color. We believe it will be impossible to clean up the air without addressing the very power relationships inherent in our economic and governmental structure that perpetuate inequality and environmental degradation for the vast majority of people in the U.S.

Latinos in Los Angeles need a coherent strategy within the environmental movement, one which incorporates the complexity of our culture and which goes beyond an "empowerment" model whereby people who were formerly voiceless in decision making become new players in the arena. That will only result (as it has) in people of color becoming employees of oil refineries and calling themselves environmentalists. If all one wants is a seat at the table, it doesn't matter what game is being played, does it?

The vital question is "whose interest will this strategy serve?" The answer. "It will serve the Latino community" is not precise enough. Will it serve right-wing Republican businessman Xavier Hermosillo who is perpetuating tensions with his race-baiting of African Americans? The Southern California Gas Company (one of Southern California's biggest emitters of Nitrogen Oxides) pays for the meetings of the Environmental Working Group of the Ethnic Coalition and gives its employees release time to serve there. Who benefits when polluting corporations fund the environmental justice movement? The needs of poor Latino immigrants in the aftermath of the L.A. uprising were explicitly rejected by the middle class professional Latinos elected to "serve" them. And some of the strongest political tension we have experienced in Wilmington was at a community meeting called by a conservative middle-class multiracial



homeowners group that initially refused translation for Spanish-speaking attendees.

By using a class analysis, we will be more clear about who and what we stand for. We can better assess how policies affect the communities with which we have identified our interests. By being clear about how we use that analysis, we can call to our side those who share our interests. We will better recognize our true friends and enemies.

Using a class analysis does not mean negating other forms of oppression, such as gender oppression, homophobia, and most especially racism, which has its own very particular dynamic in U.S. history and must be very thoroughly incorporated into any analysis. But we need a form of strategic analysis about how those forces interrelate with each other. Without it, groups can become enamored of their own perceived "exclusive" form of oppression—such as those feminist groups which perceive all men as the enemy, or national groups who consider "the white man" the enemy, without regard to the subgroups within each category of "men" and "white men". With it, we can build the broadest possible movement to promote justice with the most diverse forces.

Lisa Duran is an organizer with the Labor/Community WATCHDOG. Their organizing work is based in Wilmington, a community heavily impacted by oil refineries, and countywide through work in transportation policy in the County of Los Angeles.

The vital question is "whose interest will this strategy serve?" The answer, "It will serve the Latino community" is not precise enough. Will it serve right-wing Republican business owners or the needs of poor Latino immigrants?

La Sierra Foundation de San Luis: Reviving the Chicano Land Grant Struggle

by Devon Peña

The Costilla County Conservancy District (CCCD) represents traditional and sustainable agricultural water rights users in a predominantly Chicano area in southern Colorado's San Luis Valley. The District has long been involved in environmental struggles, the most recent example being its efforts to prevent the establishment of the Battle Mountain Gold (BMG) strip-mine and cyanide-leaching operation in the headwaters of the Rito Seco, a source of water for farmers and ranchers in the area.¹

The 77,000 acre Culebra Mountain Tract, or *la sierra* locally, is the traditional commons of the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant. These common lands were stolen by Anglo politicians and land speculators in the 1860s and were physically enclosed in the 1960s. The Land Rights Council in

Native locals, some 500 families who are descended from the original land grant settlers, are in the majority opposed to either private or state ownership of what is rightfully and historically considered a commons.

San Luis has waged a struggle over more than two decades of legal court battles and other resistance.² The original Beaubien deed granted settlers perpetual use rights to *la sierra* for hunting, fishing, wood gathering, wildcrafting, and pasture. The enclosure of this homeland by the Taylor family in 1960 was followed by a virtual "range war" as locals struggled to maintain their historical access to the land.

The CCCD, representing more than 30 local *acequias* with the oldest water rights in Colorado, and the Land Rights Council, representing the original land grant heirs, have established *La Sierra Foundation de San Luis* to purchase the Mountain Tract and convert it into a locally-owned and self-

managed common property resource. The Taylor family of North Carolina has primarily managed the commons as a hunting preserve (with annual receipts of \$300,000 to \$500,000 in elk hunting fees collected annually).

The Governor of Colorado, Roy Romer, has signed an executive order establishing the Sangre de Cristo Land Grant Commission. This is a historic event; such a commission has never been established in the history of Chicano land grant struggles. The Commission is charged with planning for the acquisition and management of the Culebra Mountain Tract as a unique protected natural and cultural area. However, native locals, some 500 families who are descended from the original land grant settlers, are in the majority opposed to either private or state ownership of what is rightfully and historically considered a commons.

Some political leaders would like to see the State of Colorado own the land, seeing it as the "Crown Jewel" of the Colorado public lands trust. The covetous interests of the state are easy to understand: the Mountain Tract is a relatively undisturbed and roadless area above 10,000 feet and is home to at least two endangered or threatened species (*Strix Occidentalis*, or Mexican Spotted Owl, and the native cut-throat trout); it includes a privately-owned 14,000 foot peak and eight other peaks over 13,000 feet.

Nothing else in the state's public land trust inventory even comes remotely close in size, undisturbed status, habitat integrity, biodiversity, and topographical variation. In fact, there may be no other privately-owned land parcel in the US that is as culturally and biotically unique as the Culebra Mountain Tract. Only 2,000 acres in the southern part of the common lands have been clear-cut for commercial timber, leaving a healthy, unfragmented habitat domain for hundreds of species that includes many old-growth stands (Ponderosa, spruce, and Doug fir). No other area of the state land trust has as rich a living tradition of sustainable local cultural adaptation to nature.

The local community will struggle to make certain that the purchase ultimately places ownership and management in the hands of the land grant heirs. This land is not "public," it is a common property resource. It should be held in common for use by the land grant community. These are genuine Chicano land ethics that govern *la sierra*: usufruct in perpetuity is contingent on a norm of wise use which is enforced through

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sanctions against environmental abuses.'

We will not allow our **homeland** to be converted into a clear-cut **strip-mine** or a recreational backyard for yuppie, backpacking tourists. Nor will we allow the Culebra to be converted into a "museum" of a "quaint and exotic" local culture for the amusement of those who would gawk at **Chicana/o** farmers and ranchers as if they were exhibits in a zoo. We will not allow "deep ecologists" from Boulder, Denver, Aspen or Santa Fe to overrun the mountain while they seek a reprieve from overcrowded cities by engaging in the "spectacle of the marmot" in our homeland. The national **parks** and forests of the Colorado Front Range suffer from overuse by backpacking tourists involved in "nature appreciation." In some cases, "nature appreciation" produces more severe impact than overgrazing by sheep or cattle (the Indian Peaks "Wilderness" outside Boulder and Wheeler Peak "Wilderness" outside Taos are two such regional examples).

Local people believe that, ultimately, no one owns *la sierra* — the **mountain** owns us by claiming our spirits and giving us the opportunity to develop a sense of place through the centering power of our religious customs, **familial** traditions, and agricultural practices. Hopefully, we will continue to oblige nature by being wise stewards of our homelands. This will be the first time a Chicano land grant community legally restores a significant portion of traditional common lands for purposes of reclaiming the usufructuary rights of the **settlers**.

This struggle has the potential to open a new process for redefining the political and cultural geography of the entire Southwest. One small step for San Luis, one giant step for Aztlán. Restoring Chicano land grants **means** reclaiming legal control for the heirs and reclaiming the health of the land through the protection, revitalization, and empowerment of local knowledge of sustainable management of ecosystems. A public land **trust arrangement**

with the State of Colorado would not achieve these aims. Only the management of the Culebra Mountain Tract as a common property resource will provide the legal and administrative capabilities for the democratic and sustainable self-management of this homeland.

Our local *culturas* are constantly under pressure to assimilate and as a result there are some in our own communities who have become egoist and consumerist predators of the **land**-pasture and wildlife poachers as it were. Revitalizing the land-based ethics of our communities is thus an important aspect of the struggle to restore our land and water rights, both legally and ecologically. A central feature of the proposed management of this commons is educational: *La Sierra Foundation de San Luis* will establish an environmental research and teaching institute in the Mountain Tract dedicated to promoting sustainable agroecology, **agroforestry**, and artisan handicraft traditions through a unique blending of conservation biology, **bioregional** land and water use planning, and steady-state economic development

The management of the Culebra Mountain Tract as a common property resource will emphasize self-management, local democracy, and sustainable development. By sustainable development we understand a regional economy based on the principles of *intergenerational equity* (we should care for the land in a manner that protects the rights of future generations), *interspecies equity* (we should manage the land to protect the habitat and life opportunities of all species and not just humans), and *intergroup equity* (we should manage the land in a manner that protects the rights of all ethnic, gender, and social **class** groups and make certain no one suffers disparate or discriminatory **treatment**).⁴

The management of the commons lands will emphasize supporting limited-resource ranchers, farmers, artisans, and **wildcrafters** (herbalists) in the microbasin. We recognize that to address **rural** environmental degradation

you must first deal with **rural** poverty. And the best way to deal with **rural** poverty in a unique **cultural setting** like the Upper Rio **Grande** bioregion is to promote sustainable agriculture and other micro-entrepreneurial and artisan handicraft traditions. Yet, the only way to promote such sustainable **agroecological** development is by restoring the homeland commons, so violently and unjustly expropriated from the land grant heirs.

This struggle represents an effort to put into practice the "**Principles of Environmental Justice**," adopted by the First national people of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991.⁵ We are hopeful that this effort succeeds and becomes an inspiration and model for other Chicano and native American land grant communities. It is a moral crime that the legal system and Congress have refused to democratically resolve the theft of Chicano and other native American lands (like the 1872 mining act, a great terrain robbery). So, with no political or legal remedies on the horizon, we are forced to plan the game of free market [sic] economics

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and buy our natural heritage back.

This land rights struggle involves an ambitious, locally-led effort to protect natural and cultural diversity together and so preserve future options for

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sustainable and equitable **development**. This is one of the few land grant commons that *has* nor been converted to the public domain. It will be more difficult for other Chicano land grant communities to renegotiate ownership of public lands; we are **ironically** fortunate that in the case of the **Sangre de Cristo** land grant "ownership" fell into private **hands**.⁶

La Sierra Foundanon de San Luis has raised close to \$6 million from national private foundations towards the purchase of the Taylor Ranch (the price ranges between \$18 and \$32 million). Our goal is to establish an autonomous, long-term resource base for combating **rural** poverty, cultural deterioration, and ecological damage in the bioregion.

This effort is about protecting groundwater (and surface water) from contamination by toxic wastes from industrial mining. Protect water quality and you protect the local culture and its sustainable traditions. **Destroy** the watershed and you **destroy** the **irrigation acequias**; destroy the **acequias** and you undermine the **material**, ecological, and spiritual basis for cultural vitality and continuity and local economic autonomy. If we do not acquire the **Mountain** Tract, then BMG or some other mining **and/or** timbering interest will. The impetus for the community **land** trust purchase grew out of our experiences with and **struggles** against **BMG's** cyanide leach mill and mining operations in the Rito Seco watershed. An offer to purchase the land has been made by the Trillium Corporation of Oregon, a clear-cutting industrial forest exploiter. We are trying to prevent damage instead of merely addressing it after the fact⁷

We are also working with support from the Kellogg Foundation to promote sustainable and organic farming practices and cooperative development in the Upper Rio Grande (Costilla, Conejos, **Rio Arriba**, and Taos counties). A major **aspect** of the Kellogg project is to document and preserve the traditional **agroecological** and ethnoscientific knowledge and practices native to the bioregion. The

promotion of sustainable **agroecosystems** in the Culebra microbasin is contingent on our ability to reclaim the Mountain Tract as a common property resource.

The legal restoration of common property ownership **will** promote equitable access for local people to natural resources. The ecosystem management approach of the **Founda-**tion will protect the watershed from environmental damage. Regenerative **agroforestry** projects will be developed to improve watershed quality and wildlife habitat. Ecosystem protection will also support long-term sustainable development by promoting self-reliant, locally-controlled agricultural and **artisan** craft production based on principles of mutual aid and cooperative work democracy. We **ask** for the support of all environmental justice activists, so that we can become autonomous and self-reliant, provide a model for other communities, and promote sustainable and **culturally-**respectful development.

Tax-deductible donations to the La Sierra Foundation de San Luis may be sent to Bob Green, Project Development Coordinator, Costilla County Conservancy Dismct, 410 Church Place, Suite A, P.O. Box 42, San Luis, CO 81152. 719-672-3213.

Devon Peña is associate professor of Sociology at Colorado College, and a consultant to the Costillo County Conservancy District.

Notes

¹D. Peña and J. Gallegos, "Nature and Chicanos in Southern Colorado." in: R. Bullard, (ed.), *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. Boston: South End Press. 1993, pp. 140-160; D. Peña, R. Martinez and L. McFarland, "Rural Chicana/o Communities and the Environment: An Attitudinal Survey of Residents of Costilla County, Colorado," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies*. 4 (winter). 1993, pp. 47-76.

²R. Tweeuwen, et al., *La cultura constante de San Luis*. San Luis, CO: San Luis Museum and Cultural Center,

1985; Pefia, Martinez and McFarland, *ibid.*; Pena and Gallegos, *ibid.*

³D. Peña, "The 'Brown' and the 'Green': Chicanos and Environmental Politics in the Upper Rio Grande," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, 3(1), 1992, pp. 79-103; D. Pefia, "Los animalitos son inteligentes: Land Ethics and Sense of Place in the Upper Rio Grande Homeland." in: D. Pefia, I. Talamantez and V. Kjongearrd, (eds.), "Subversive Kin: Chicana/o Studies and Ecology," Special Thematic Issue, *The New Scholar*, 15 (Winter), forthcoming: 1994; D. Pefia, "Acequias and Chicano Land Ethics," Paper presented at the 35th Annual Conference of the Western Social Science Association, Corpus Christi, TX (April), 1993.

⁴See: Costilla County Conservancy Dismct, *La Sierra Foundation de San Luis: Position Paper*. San Luis, CO: Costilla County Conservancy Dismct, 1993. I thank Michael Fischer, former executive director of the Sierra Club, for his ideas on the concept of equity in sustainable development.

⁵At the first national Summit, Washington, D.C., October 24-27, 1991. See: "Principles of Environmental Justice," in: C. Lee (ed.), *Proceedings of the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit*. New York, NY: Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ, 1993.

⁶Another similar case is that of the **Tierra Amarilla** land grant in the Upper **Chama** basin in northern New Mexico (which is checkerboarded into private and state-owned public lands). See: Peña, "The 'Brown' and the 'Green'", *ibid.*; L. Pulido, "Sustainable Development at Ganados del Valle," in: R. Bullard, (ed.), *ibid.*, pp. 123-139.

⁷In the case of the **Summitville** mining disaster (across the San Luis Valley from us in the **San Juan** Mountains and an EPA-designated Superfund site), some **40,000** acres of farmland have been **severely** impacted by toxic contamination of the headwaters for irrigation in that region.

It's Time Latino Workers Stopped Dying for A Job

by Amanda Hawes

Occupational health and safety is a key issue for all workers. For workers of color the issue is even more critical as it is the Latino, African-American, Asian and other workers of color who are most often put in conditions which jeopardize their health and increase the risk of job injury and illness. Among the thirty industries in the US with the highest percentage of non-white workers, the non-whites are concentrated primarily in manufacturing and services, the two sectors of the economy with high rates of occupational disease.¹ For Latino workers the picture is especially grim.

Agricultural Work

Of the estimated 5 million migrant and seasonal farmworkers, 75% are Latino and 20% African-American. According to Mullings, the use of organophosphates in pesticides are a major hazard of farmwork and it is often minority workers who are assigned to mix, formulate and spray them. Minority workers have the highest rates of organochlorine pesticide residues and in some areas the highest rates of pesticide-induced liver and renal dysfunction.¹ Another serious concern for male as well as female agricultural workers is the risk of reproductive harm from heavy exposure to pesticide products both prior to conception and during pregnancy.

Manufacturing

Job health and safety for Latino workers has never been simply a question of trying to halt pesticide overexposure for agricultural workers (a task whose accomplishment still eludes us). There are significant job health and safety issues for Latino workers in many other job classifications in which Latinos are concentrated. The highest injury rates of all tend to be in manufacturing; Latinos comprised 35% of all operatives in this sector by 1985, the largest representation of any single racial/ethnic group in this occupational sector. (Nor are high injury rates the only concern for Latinos in manufacturing; see below re: Adela Perez and the Campaign to End the Miscarriage of Justice.)

Service Sector

Latinos are also heavily represented in the service sector,

the second most dangerous industry according to State Industrial Relations Reports. Included in this category are building maintenance workers, hotel and restaurant staff, hospital and convalescent home workers. Many types of injuries occur: amputations, burns/scalds, contusions/crushes, strains/sprains, cuts/punctures, abrasions and fractures to list the more common acute traumas. Repetitive strain injuries are increasingly being recognized for their disabling potential for workers doing a wide variety of tasks in the service sector.

Construction

In the San Francisco Bay Area, recent census data showed that some 40% of laborers and almost 20% of operatives in the construction industry are Latinos, who face fatal and disabling risks on a routine basis. (e.g. death by suffocation when unreinforced sides of ditches bury laborers alive, collapsing scaffolding, unsecured apparatus)

Occupational Disease — The Scourge

Nor is the numbing effect of the accumulation of disabling injuries all that overwhelms us. The same socio-economic forces that concentrate Latino workers in jobs with high injury rates also cause the Latino workforce to be subjected to a stunning degree of risk of occupational disease. Consider the experience of Adela Perez.

The Story of Adela

When Adela Perez took a job in a Silicon Valley electronics assembly plant in the late 60s she was glad to be bringing home money necessary to feed three children. She was also relieved to swap the apron and hair net she wore for hot, steamy, back-breaking cannery work for the smock and "finger cots" worn in what she and all her co-workers thought was the "clean industry." She didn't know the finger cots and the smock were provided so she wouldn't contaminate the valuable end-product. She didn't realize the elaborate air-handling system was there to remove particles from the air that might also contaminate the product—didn't realize that it did not and could not protect her from hazardous chemical fumes and vapors. She had no way of knowing that the glues and resins she used contained components capable of causing

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lung cancer—and that what seemed like small amounts could expose her to a very big risk of cancer.

So when Adela's health began to fail her in the mid-70s and she developed lupus, part of her denied that her work in the clean rooms of Silicon Valley could have made her sick. But another part of Adela Perez told her to get busy and fight for the Right to Know exactly

The semi-conductor industry only started using glycol ethers in photolithography after data emerged to indicate that the chemicals were reproductive toxins.

what she was working with and if it could affect her health. Adela Perez became a charter member of Injured Workers United and for years spoke out against the hidden dangers of the so-called clean industry and would be writing this story herself except for one thing: Adela Perez died of lung cancer in 1991.

Adela's children have urged us to put their mother's uphill struggle against cancer and for workers' rights in its proper context. And so at SCCOSH we do our educational work in the name of ADELA: **Asociacion de Educacion Laboral Activista**—the Association of Activist Labor Education. Our motto comes from Adela's snuggle, "**Si Vale Mucho La Vida**."

The Challenge: Adela's story is but one of many that illustrate some basic

health and safety challenges facing Latino workers in the '90s. This brief article can only touch on those challenges and encourage concerned members of the community to examine the issues in depth as part of an analysis of community needs. And unless and until there is greater awareness of these risks, not only by workers and their families but by the service and health care providers who attend to community needs, Adela's story will be repeated thousands of times over: For example:

What can happen when you and your doctor are both unaware of dangerous workplace exposures: For years Amparo V. cleaned peanut butter equipment with a highly toxic chlorinated solvent known as "TCA" as part of her job at a food processing plant. When her liver enzymes started to be elevated her doctor asked if she worked with chemicals. She said no, since she thought of TCA as a cleaner. Neither the doctor nor his patient explored the issue of her work exposures further. Amparo continued at her job, her liver condition deteriorated, she underwent two liver transplants and died at age 52.

What to do when the doctor doesn't listen: When he started throwing up at work, Jesus M. asked for a transfer from the noxious job of spraying ornamental flowers at a nursery and was told to get a doctor's note. He told the doctor what he did at work and how he felt. The doctor dismissed him by saying, "You're just trying to get out of work." Right! He was! Several weeks later he was admitted to the hospital, in total kidney failure. His plight was finally noticed by an ESL teacher who learned he was paying \$300/month for anti-rejection medication and couldn't make ends meet. A claim for workers compensation benefits—including full medical coverage—was then initiated.

HIV and hepatitis transmission at work—how to broach the subject: A dozen middle-aged Mexican women workers at a San Jose convalescent home listened in rapt silence as a Latino health educator spoke about the risks of HIV transmission in health care settings. While their supervisor had

welcomed SCCOSH injury and illness prevention lectures on back safety, chemical handling and stress, he had thought an HIV class unnecessary, having had only one needlestick reported to him in ten years. After Jaime finished his presentation he asked if anyone in the room had ever been stuck by a needle at work. Three women raised their hands. All had been stuck in the past three years; none had reported anything or sought any help out of fear and ignorance; all were living in silent terror. The first chance they had ever had to voice their concerns came when a compatriota got the opportunity to broach a subject of pressing concern for all.

Reproductive Hazards on the Job

Women of color who are of child-bearing age and who work in semiconductor manufacturing are at significantly increased risk of miscarriage if they work with chemicals during pregnancy—especially a group of solvents known as the ethylene based glycol ether solvents. This risk has been noted for years based on animal studies and hazard alerts have been sent out by SCCOSH and the State Health Department since the early 1980s. Indeed, the semiconductor industry only started using glycol ethers in photolithography after data emerged to indicate that these chemicals were reproductive toxins! When SCCOSH and others called for a ban on glycol ethers in 1986 the industry response was to fund a study of miscarriage rates among production workers. The results were released in Dec. 1992 and confirmed what the animal data indicated. Yet a year later, the industry still has no real program in place to a) remove these noxious chemicals from workers' lives; b) make a full and fair disclosure to at risk workers of the risk they face; and c) acknowledge any responsibility for the devastating impact on the lives of so many workers that this insistent use on glycol ethers has caused.

The importance of knowing the risks of your job: The importance of knowing about reproductive risks at work goes beyond the semiconductor

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industry, of course. Ethylene based glycol ethers have been identified in a variety of paints, inks, cleaning products used routinely in work environments where Latinos are concentrated. Several of these glycol ethers are on the Proposition 65 list as reproductive toxins. But for any worker contemplating parenthood, the presence of the generic Proposition 65 sign on the shop wall alluding, obliquely, to the presence on the premises of something the State of California deems a reproductive hazard is *not enough*. The identity of the material in question, its location and other useful information is vital. SCCOSH believes that any employer who **chooses** to use a reproductive toxin on the Prop. 65 list should be required to spell out the details in a meaningful injury and illness prevention program, conveyed to workers in plain, understandable terms and language. Trying to make this proposal state policy,

Employer resistance to giving workers information on workplace chemicals is a chilling reminder of what a "business climate" is all about.

however, has provoked astounding resistance from employer interests who offered two conflicting lies in a **successful** effort to defeat the proposal. They argued (a) that such a requirement was too burdensome and (b) that they are already providing that information anyway. This sort of employer resistance to giving workers of child-bearing age basic information on which to make informed choices is a chilling reminder of what a "business climate" is all about.

Beware the NAFTA Shaft

As Congress passed **NAFTA** and its side agreements purporting to protect the environment and workers rights, many US labor leaders and environmentalists decried the agreement because it is seen as encouraging the "race to the **bottom**" in terms of standards and protection. Existing conditions in the *maquiladora* industry and surrounding *colonias* are often made Exhibit A for what is likely to happen to the environment and to working people and in an era of **unrestrained**, unregulated trade. But we don't have to look that far for our evidence! Too many workers in the US toil in deplorable conditions now for anyone to believe that the **NAFTA** is going to simply lower standards and protections from some presumed acceptable current level. Workers today do not have safe working conditions or adequate recourse against hazards. Workplace injuries are today perceived as nothing but a routine cost of doing business.

It Can and Does Happen Right Here! The most recent **horrific** example of business as usual comes from Oakland, California where Ramon **Romero** died last month from inhaling toxic fumes in a vat at **KL Plating**. Sr. Romero entered the vat to rescue a **co-worker** who was stricken while cleaning the vat. While the District Attorney is exploring homicide charges and OSHA has shut the operation down, the community searches in vain for answers. This plating company was repeatedly approached by a local health and safety education project about providing emergency training for its workers. The official response was that \$30 per worker was too much to spend on injury and illness prevention. While we cringe at this callous response, it reflects a set of fairly typical attitudes:

1. It is enough that employers are required to carry workers compensation insurance in the event of a worker injury or illness.
2. **Industrial** accidents, are simply a cost of doing business.
3. Since a claim for workers compensation is basically the only remedy an injured worker or his

A Solution: SCCOSH

The Santa Clara Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH) is a non-profit organization serving the occupational health and safety needs of working people, especially workers of color, of limited literacy, **and/or** limited English. SCCOSH is a statewide support center for Legal Services programs in California. Se habla español. Current campaigns include Campaign to End the Miscarriage of Justice, Asian Workers Health Project, Workers Compensation clinic project, and support for maquiladora workers facing hazardous working conditions in border assembly plants. **A los a quienes les interesan nuestros programas, que nos llamen en San Jose: 408-998-4050.**

dependents can make against an employer anyway — even for "serious and wilful" misconduct — why should an employer spend money on prevention?

When the hysteria over workers compensation fraud and workers compensation reform dies down, we need to examine why the workers compensation system does so little to prevent injuries and illnesses. Attitudes like these can help us understand—and become that much more determined to effect change.

Amanda Hawes is Executive Director of the Santa Clara Center for Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH).

¹ Davis, Rowland, "Problems Faced by Minority Workers," *Occupational Health: Recognizing and Preventing Work-Related Diseases*. Levy and Wegman, ed., Little, Brown and Co, Boston 1983.

Leith Mullings, "Minority Women, Work, and Health" *Double Exposure*, Wendy Chavkin M.D. ed. Monthly Review Press. New York 1984.

Deconstructing Environmental Racism: A Look at the Early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee

by Laura Pulido



Rini Templeton

The concept "environmental racism" has come to signify several distinct forms of discrimination and oppression which target people of color. Included are the disproportionate exposure of **racial/ethnic** minorities to various forms of environmental degradation, a disregard for their vision of resource use, exclusion from environmental decision-making both by the state and mainstream environmental organizations, and less rigorous enforcement of environmental regulations and protections than Anglo communities receive. These are all distinct forms of racism, but **emphasis** on "race" and "racism"

Understanding the dynamics and nature of the boycott is imperative to understanding how working class Chicanos defined and organized around environmental issues.

obscures other crucial forces shaping the lives of **racial/ethnic** communities and their response to oppressive conditions.

Examining the term "race" and "racism" reveals several other phenomena which are **central** to understanding the environmental justice movement. Increasingly, people realize that races do not exist in and of themselves, instead, they are something we give meaning to. **This** doesn't mean that racism and discrimination are any less real, only that their **signifi-**

cance and salience are constructed and maintained by a particular cultural and economic system. Moreover, while discrimination continued against particular groups based solely on skin-color or phenotype, **current** forms of racism are also predicated on cultural practices and the political weakness of **racial/ethnic** minorities.

When analyzing the environmental struggles of **racial/ethnic** groups it is also important to distinguish between the economic and material objectives of various communities. Not **all** minority communities are the same, nor **are** the forms of racism which they experience. The racism which an **undocu-**mented immigrant experiences may be quite different from the racism which a Chicano professional encounters, since racism is refracted along the lines of class and one's position within the division of labor.

People of color have responded to **such** oppressive **condi-**tions by organizing and promoting **ingroup** identification and pride, what is known **as** *ethnicity*. Recognizing the role of **ethnicity** is crucial to seeing people of color not as "racial categories," but **as** people with real histories, cultures, relationships and struggles. This leads us to another **important** force in the formation of **oppression** and mobilization, culture. It is incorrect to assume that particular races are associated with specific cultural characteristics, but through **ethnicity** **racial/ethnic** groups have cultural identities which can serve both as a basis of oppression **as** well as key tool of empowerment.

While many people of color may intuitively realize the complexity of what constitutes "race" and "racism," such a textured analysis does not readily show through in our **political** rhetoric, demands, or within the larger political discourse. **This** results in a reified usage of race which only serves to **perpetuate** the belief in racial categories and racial differences and **contributes** to a pathetic public discourse which **skirts** such **central** issues as the distribution of wealth and power, uneven economic development, the "**racialization**"

of various issues and regions, and the multifaceted nature of racism itself.

One example of an environmental justice issue which is routinely promoted as evidence of environmental racism is farm workers' exposure to pesticides. Because farm workers are overwhelmingly Chicano/Latino (ie: nonwhite) and are disproportionately subjected to a very real form of environmental contamination, agricultural chemicals, it is interpreted as environmental racism. Farm workers are indeed victims of intense racism, but the contours of their lives are also shaped by other forces which engage in a dialectic with racism to produce unique forms of oppression, exploitation and empowerment

Economics is of course central to understanding the case of farm workers. Farm workers' living and working conditions are a function of their class position, meaning their relationship to the means of production, or capital. When farm workers have sought to alter the conditions under which they work, or how much money they earn, such as in the early pesticide campaign of the United Farm Workers in the 1960s-70s, they were fighting against the growers,

or capital. The fact that it was *Mexicano/Chicano* workers who filled this role is a function of their role within the international division of labor (which is a different relationship than class). It was not an accident that it was brown Latino workers who did the most menial, dangerous, and poorly paid work. Racism was an important factor in placing *Mexicanos/Chicanos* in this position and perpetuating their oppression. This can be seen in cultural arguments used to justify the inhumane conditions workers were subjected to, such as the belief that *Mexicanos* were well suited for stoop work because of their stature, or the strategic myth that

Mexicanos/Chicanos didn't mind seasonal work, as they didn't want to settle down anyway. But the fact that it was Latinos who filled this role was largely a result of global uneven economic development and the resulting unequal power relations. That Mexicans have provided the low-wage labor of California for decades is not merely a function of racism, but of far more complex global economic forces which interact with racism.

In order to

While many people of color may intuitively realize the complexity of what constitutes "race" and "racism," such a textured analysis does not readily show through in our political rhetoric and demands.

counter the many forms of environmental degradation and oppressive conditions farm workers were subjected to, they realized they had to gain more power and the most feasible way to do so was through unionization. Acting as a collective would give workers at least some degree of power with which to counter the immense power of agribusiness. The challenge was how to become a union when the powerful growers, along with the state, opposed them. The *UFWOC* responded by launching a consumer boycott of table grapes which would bring additional pressure to bear on the growers and hopefully force them to recognize farm workers' right to unionize.

While the boycott was being waged, the *UFWOC* also moved the pesticide struggle into other spheres, including the courts. The *UFWOC* initiated numerous lawsuits which sought not only to ban specific pesticides, but also to change the regulatory conditions under which they were used. For example, the *UFWOC* brought the first "community right to know" lawsuit in California, and perhaps the nation, in 1968. At that time, the public, including workers, did not have access to information on local spraying activities. Through a series of lawsuits in both Kern and Riverside counties in California, the courts eventually conceded that such information was in the public interest, despite agribusiness' claims that they were trade secrets. This was a crucial first step in allowing rural communities and workers to have the information necessary to begin protecting themselves.

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In addition, the UFWOC also filed a series of lawsuits and **administrative** actions which sought to ban DDT (both in California and nationally), numerous organophosphates (which became widespread after the banning of DDT), and to force the California Department of Food and Agriculture to begin enforcing their own laws regulating

Although the Chicano movement consisted of a series of struggles across the Southwest, the UFWOC's struggle took on mythic proportions as it became a rallying point for the Chicano population.

organophosphates. These measures were taken not only to reduce the use of pesticides, but also to **harrass** growers and to serve as bargaining chips in their future negotiations.

Nevertheless, the objective of the UFWOC was to secure a union contract. This was seen as the most effective vehicle to protect workers from pesticide poisoning, as well as to change the prevailing economic and power relations. A contract was crucial

because it was enforceable. In the 1960s, there was scarcely any regulation of pesticides in terms of worker exposure, and even if there was, the UFWOC knew that given the political climate, enforcement would be negligible.

The UFWOC boycott was a **tool** to help secure the contract, but verged on becoming a social movement itself during the 1960s-70s. Understanding the dynamics and nature of the boycott is imperative to understanding how working class Chicanos defined and organized around environmental issues. It wasn't just about class and the division of labor, it wasn't just about race, but it was also very much about ethnicity and culture. As an ethnic group, *Mexicanos/Chicanos* share certain traits, such as language, history, and culture, creating a very real material basis to ethnicity. Racism against this group has included a denigration and oppression of *Mexicano/Chicano* ethnic identity and culture. Because of this, ethnicity and culture became central to the empowerment and mobilization of the Chicano population. Although the Chicano movement consisted of a series of struggles across the Southwest, the UFWOC's struggle took on mythic proportions as it became a **rallying** point for the Chicano population. Because of the UFWOC's location within a disempowered **racial/ethnic** minority group, their struggle for **environmental** and economic justice was far more than a battle against racism. It was a **battle** against economic exploitation, against ethnic and cultural denigration, against environmental degradation, and **for racial/ethnic** pride, Chicano empowerment, and **better** wages and working conditions.

In July 1970, after a prolonged boycott, the grape growers of California finally signed a contract with the UFWOC which contained an historic **Health & Safety Clause**. Unlike other labor contracts, which typically required management to comply with all state and federal regulations, this contract broke new ground in protecting workers and giving them unprecedented power

in managing **ranch** pesticide use. The Clause provided for a health & safety committee composed of workers solely of the Union's choice. The committee was charged with participating in all decisions involving pesticides, including determining "re-entry" periods, which were a key factor in worker poisoning. The Clause banned **outright** several pesticides, including DDT, Parathion, TEPP, Aldrin, Dieldrin, and Endrin, and gave the UFWOC the right to ban other pesticides in the future. In addition, growers were required to give workers at least seven days notice whenever organophosphates were applied and to administer cholinesterase tests subsequent to exposure. Workers were also allowed to refuse any work which they considered dangerous.

These are some of the highlights of the contract, which not only protected workers, but opened the door to pesticide regulation in California and the nation. Thus, the UFWOC's story is an important piece of environmental history which is often not fully appreciated. But it is equally important for what it can teach us about environmental racism and environmental justice. Neither represents a simple set of conditions and forces which can be casually attributed to "racism." without uncovering what racism means in that particular circumstance. More likely, given the complexity and ever-changing nature of capitalism and the global economy, racism, ethnicity and culture are shifting concepts that remain central, but are played out in different ways across the landscape.

Laura Pulido is an assistant professor of geography at the University of Southern California.



Rini Templeton

The Connection Between Latinos and the Environment

by Jose Morales

The Macro Perspective

The global degradation of the environment threatens the survival of all life on this planet as well as human life. While this degradation affects all people, it does so unequally. This is a central point regarding the connection between Puerto Ricans and Latinos and the environment in the USA. How is this possible? To start, the degradation of the environment is generally the result of human activity; in particular, how society creates and recreates its life. In other words... the unequal degradation of the environment results from the unity of production and the social order. Production can be understood as industrial activity, and the social order is the way in which the society is organized around recreating its life enabling production to happen.

The problem has been that there has always been a tight linkage between how we recreate our way of life and the degradation of the environment. The elimination of waste and dangerous materials affecting human health was impossible, because then industrial activity would then be impossible. Since pollution has been linked to what we need to live, the traditionally predominant view on the issue has been how we should regulate/control/manage pollution.

To illustrate the point of linkage of pollution and industrial activity, an example of a body can be used. The body is society and getting food and eating is creating its life. The brain (the powerful) decides what needs to be done to eat, but it knows that every time it prepares food and eats (to live) it must also poison itself. So it must do several things to keep alive and functioning. It must control its eating by taking in smaller pieces and do so every so often. This is the idea of regulation/control/management of pollution. The body decides that it will only dirty its hands and concentrate the poison in its feet. The hands and feet are correspondingly the disenfranchised workers, poor and communities of color.

To put the last statement another way, since the elimination of industrial activity is impossible, the social order regulates the degradation linked to it for all people by pollution control, management and regulation. Nevertheless, the social order also channels the degradation selectively, localizing the undesirable work, products, and waste on what the social order designates as the undesirable people. Not only is degradation unequal, but in disenfranchised communities, the impact is unequal. The beleaguered and debilitated array of supportive

structures such as education, health indicators, access to health services, stability of community institutions, and political power that normally buffer the affects of degradation in the Puerto Rican and Latino community, make the impact of degradation even more severe.

Latinos, the environment and the cities

Census trends predict that Latinos will be the largest national minority group in the United States in the coming years. One of the characteristics of the established Latino population is that most live in the America's urban centers and most Latino new comers will probably also settle in urban areas. An example is that 75% of all Boricuas are concentrated in America's inner cities. In addition, many of us have seen the massive arrivals of Dominicans, Mexicans and Central Americans to the Latino communities spread throughout New York City. This urbanization of our population is paralleled by the general population where 75% of all US population lives in cities.

The decay of the cities, as Ritchie Perez has stressed, is of paramount importance because most Puerto Ricans and Latinos live and will live in the cities. Many things characterize the decay among them are a deteriorating infrastructure, lost manufacturing and associated industries with their jobs, and high concentrations of people in destitute poverty. The decay's social consequences are visible to any New Yorker and were visible to the Nation and world with the LA riots.

A malicious neglect by the federal government under three Republican Administrations has been a major cause of this deterioration. For example, federal dollars to the cities dropped from 9 percent in 1978 to 4.2 percent in 1986. The federal government's process of defunding city governments greatly increased the financial burden of city and state governments. The shifting resources that proved necessary for city governments to provide essential city services resulted in less funds for city environmental agencies. This caused a decline of environmental protection and a degradation of the urban environment overall, especially in terms of air quality and hazardous waste. This negative effect probably impacted more severely on communities of color in these cities.

The low level of environmental protection of cities can be shown by two examples. The Williamsburg/Greenpoint area was shown to have 1.5 pounds of toxic air emissions for every

woman; man and child per square mile of this area. This is far above the government's clean air standards. The Latino population in this area is one of the most concentrated in the country. On the National scene, the Argonne National Laboratory has compiled data that shows that 91% Hispanics disproportionately live in cities that exceed the federal Clean Air Act's emissions standards for certain air born pollutants.

The combined effect of Republican administration hostility to cities and beleaguered local governments has resulted in a decline in the protection of the urban environment, particularly in communities of color. Whether the new Democratic Administration, in the light of competition pressures for deregulation and budgetary cutbacks will move to curtail urban environmental degradation is still a big question.

Another factor that influences the impact of the environmental degradation on the cities is the lack of an adequate response mounted by traditional environmental movement. There has been a lack of emphasis on urban environmentalism by the mostly white, middle class movement since white flight has left the urban areas for People of Color. The environment of the cities has been understudied and it seems that cities lack of a theoretical framework such as the ecosystem idea for wilderness areas. This is beginning to change due to the influence of the grass roots organizations of people of color. This influx of activists will push the urban environment to become a priority, so that we have ideas that will allow our work to forge ahead.

To transform the environment of Latinos, the social order must also be fundamentally changed. We must move from an order shaped by economic exploitation and racial injustice to one where the democratic spirit of self determination invades our economic and cultural lives as well. Perhaps only when the disenfranchised and their allies rise up against the scourges of racism, poverty and pollution that there will be a "new world order". Only then will we have clean, earth friendly, egalitarian ways of living on our planet.

The micro-perspective

This perspective presents the ways in which the environment of Latinos gets degraded by the intersection of the social order and production. How we work to recreate our life concerns the issue of occupational health or the exposure of workers to toxic chemicals (ie. Pesticides) in the work place. How we live addresses among others, the issue of lead poisoning from lead based paint and proximity to transportation routes. How things are made and or disposed of deals with the issue of exposure to toxic and hazardous materials in communities. The disposal of sewage, toxic and radioactive waste from production and services, as well as the incineration of solid waste from temporary goods, are the major ways in which our communities confront these issues.

Jose Morales recently migrated from New York to San Francisco. He is co-founder of the Toxic Avengers and the Northeast Environmental Justice Network. He was also a convener of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights. Currently, he is a PHD student at the University of California, San Francisco in Environmental Oncology. This article is an excerpt from "What Justice???...Environmental Justice!" prepared for the New York City Assembly of the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights.

History and Recent Developments in Puerto Rican Environmental Activism

This section attempts to provide a preliminary history from the 1960s to the present of environmentalism in the Puerto Rican and Latino community in the East Coast and Midwest. This information will give the readers the idea that Puerto Ricans have had concerns for our environment for many years. An important goal is to identify the people who have done the work in the East Coast and Midwest communities. A more documented history of this aspect of our movement will be critical for our regional and the national Puerto Rican movement. It would be very helpful if anyone who has more information towards this end would share it. The following is a time line of the groups and events on the local community and national scene that have dealt with how we work to recreate our life, how we live and how things are made and or disposed of.

Many of the organizations and struggles mentioned below involved the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights (NCPRR), an organization which defends the civil and human rights of Puerto Ricans.

Late 1960s-present — Lead poisoning

Some NCPRR members have been pioneers in dealing with the issue of lead poisoning. They instituted some of the first lead screening programs in this area in New York City. Today, there are lead services in major medical centers such as Montefiore hospital and activists in other communities such as Dominicans in Washington Heights and Latinos in Boston deal with lead poisoning prevention.

1980s — Pesticides

An NCPRR member organization, Comité en Apoyo de Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA), in New Jersey, has long worked against the poisoning of Puerto Rican, Latino and other agricultural workers of color due to exposure to pesticides in the fields.

1982 — Dioxin

Members of the NCPRR were lead in the struggle against dioxin contamination in the community in New Jersey.

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1986 — Workplace poisoning

NCPRR members working with the ILGWU were very active in dealing with worker's exposure to toxic chemicals in the Uretek plant in Connecticut.

1987-present — Toxic, radioactive and solid waste

The Toxic Avengers (TA) of El Puente, a member organization of the NCPRR in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York were the pioneers in putting forward the concept of environmental racism in the Puerto Rican and Latino community. They struggled against the operation of a local company called Radiac Research Corporation that stored toxic and radioactive waste and has planned to become the interim storage site for most of New York state's Radioactive waste. In addition, they started work on the solid waste issue against the construction of the Navy Yard incinerator to burn municipal garbage. The TAs also started a recycling program within El Puente to work with other neighborhood groups around these issues.

Late 1980s-early 1990s — Toxics, Asbestos and Air pollution

In Chicago, Illinois, activists and members in the NCPRR chapter, The United Church of Christ, and a group called LUCHA have been organizing against toxic waste contamination in close proximity to the Puerto Rican and Latino community.

Parents and workers in a day care center in the South Bronx, New York struggled against Asbestos contamination in their center.

In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Norris Square Civic Association is beginning the fight back against the burning of tires close to the Puerto Rican community. ...

1990-91 — Asphalt plant

Boricuas in Lorrain, Ohio were involved in an trying to stop an asphalt plant being built near their community.

Early 1990s — Right To Know Laws

Congreso Boricua in New Jersey has worked with another member organization, CATA, around passing Right to Know Laws regarding community and agricultural workers exposure to pesticides.

1990 — The NCPRR convention

The first workshop on Puerto Ricans and the environment was organized. The members assembled in New York City for the 10th Anniversary of the NCPRR were unanimous in passing an amendment condemning environmental racism and proclaiming the environmental rights of the Puerto Rican community.

1991 — Conference on the occupational health and safety of workers of color

A group of Latinos in and out of city government and other people of color organized the first five language conference of its kind in local 1199 New York City around the working conditions of workers of color.

1991 — The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit

Grass roots environmentalists of color from all over the continental United States—Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Marshall Islands and Mexico, gathered to crystallize the movement for environmental justice. A contingent of Puerto Ricans from the East Coast (New Jersey, Boston, and New York) and Puerto Rico marched and met under the banner of NCPRR. NCPRR members organized a caucus of all Latinos for networking during the summit and it was at this historic meeting that the first substantial connections with island environmentalists were made.

1991-92 — Medical waste Incinerator

NCPRR members in the South Bronx of New York City are leading the struggle against the Bronx Lebanon

Medical waste incinerator. This may be the most highly developed environmental struggle waged to date in the environmental community in that it has employed a wide range of tactics and has incorporated both various generations of activists.

1992 — EPA developments

The environmental justice movement forced the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to form a working group on environmental equity to study the issue and produce a controversial report in the summer of 1992. This working group and their report, as well as an issue of its journal dedicated to environmental equity, gave recognition to the phenomena of environmental racism. Several months after the summit an internal EPA memo was leaked to members of the movement, stating the EPA was to head off the linkage of environmental activists with the traditional civil rights movement. A development they saw as explosive. This was another recognition of the momentum and importance of the national movement

1992 — Building the Latino environmentalist network

Jean Gauna and Richard Moore of the Southwest Organizing Project visited NCPRR members and friends in New York in an activity hosted by the Toxic Avengers.

1992 — Sewage sludge plant

NCPRR members, organizing with members of the Puerto Rican community in the Red Hook section of Brooklyn, New York, were successful in preventing the siting of a sewage sludge plant.

1992 — Sewage sludge plant

Individual NCPRR members protested the siting of a sludge plant in the Sunset Park section of Brooklyn, New York.

— Jose Morales

Enough of the Great Melodrama of Race Relations in Los Angeles

by Victor Valle and Rudy D. Torres

Reliance on color codes to explain the inner city rests on a system of neat racial categories, but something about Latinos undermines it.

The recent flurry of newspaper articles and TV news retrospectives on Los Angeles six months after the riots shared a common story line. Whether victim, bystander or hero, they were all actors in the great melodrama of "race relations." For audience convenience, it seemed, the cast was color-coded.

But racial strife did not create the L.A. communities that went up in flames. Over and over again, citizens interviewed in the aftermath stories said as much: The riots were principally the result of economic inequalities. Still, the journalists pushed racial conflict as a principal force behind the April unrest.

This emphasis on "race relations" is perplexing. Taken at face value, it suggests that if only the city's various racial and ethnic groups could just "get along," recovery would be just around the corner. No wonder much of the post-riot coverage reads like a morality tale.

But the media's proclivity toward symptom-cause confusion masks a deeper problem: The race taxonomy reporters largely rely on to describe inner-city life rests on a system of dubious racial categories. Fortunately, there is something about Latinos that undermines this system. That something is *mestizaje* — Latin America's unfinished business of racial and cultural crossbreeding. Despite racist injunctions to forestall the consequences of five centuries of genetic and cultural dialogue between the descendants of Europe, Africa and Asia and the hemisphere's indigenous peoples, *mestizaje* insinuates itself in every aspect of Latin American life.

In the United States, *mestizaje* expresses itself in the Latino's refusal to choose one language over another, or one culture or national heritage over another. Latinos prefer to juggle them all, even if the resulting synthesis may seem messy or dangerous. But to those conditioned to tidy racial compartments, Latino ambiguity is indeed threatening. A

people who violate boundaries of race, language and culture upset myths of a nation-state based on borders and exclusion.

It's thus not surprising that the media also stumble over the *mestizo's* celebration of ambiguity. The clash of race language and lived reality was evident in the post-riot coverage in the nation's elite print media. The "two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal" dichotomy made famous by the Kerner Commission report was simply not big enough to contain a "multicultural" upheaval in which villains and victims defied racial typing.

Ted Koppel's foray into South-Central was one example. By largely turning "Nightline" over to interviews with

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African-American gang members, he fell into the black-vs.-white trap. Another variation on the black-white dichotomy, blacks vs. browns, suggests that Latinos are snatching jobs the nation owes to blacks. In its most divisive form, this thesis blames Latinos for the poverty in African-American communities.

There is no sinister conspiracy here. The media merely reflects beliefs widely held by their audiences and codified by the nation's political institutions. The Census Bureau, for example, has had an especially difficult time trying to figure

Beyond Black and White

out how to **classify** Latinos by color.

In 1940, Latinos were categorized as "**black**" or a "racial" non-white group. In the '50 and '60 Census, the category of "white persons of Spanish surname" was used. In '70, the classification was changed to "white person of Spanish surname and Spanish mother tongue." Then, in '80, the expansive "**non-white** Hispanic." Latinos were back to square one. Because the census uses a "white" and "black" paradigm to classify residents, it has shuttled Latinos back and forth between the two extremes. In each case, the principle behind the label is the perceived presence or absence of color.

Latinos pay the price each time they conform to such **color-coded** insanity, especially when they try to **extract** a few morsels of recognition from the **media**. They know reporters will take notes if they frame their demands in the language of racial or ethnic smfe, and only perfunctorily record their economic and social complaints.

Accordingly, the **Los Angeles** depicted in the riots **reaffirmed** the image of an industrial city of the **1950s**, one that upheld the corporate status quo bolstered by improved "race relations" as the only reasonable alternatives to arson and looting. The reporters barely noticed that the flames had charred a different city, one transformed by global **restructuring**, post-industrial manufacturing and collapse of **all** the mythic categories that once **defined** the city's social, cultural and linguistic identity.

Still, **all** this provides an unusual opportunity for journalists to describe the city anew, **as** if seen for the **first** time. Latinos are key to this renaming and retelling. The authority comes from the very **mestizo** ambiguities they share in a more **concentrated** form with the citizens of the world's post-industrial cities.

But it will take courage and subtlety to tell this story. Both local and national Latino leadership, which includes Latino journalists, must **find** the words to continue the dialogue of inclusion that writers such as **José Martí** started more than a century ago when he redefined Latin America as "**Nuestra America**"

Latin and Caribbean America has struggled to live and understand its difficult heterodoxy. English-speaking North America may be ready to join this conversation when it overcomes its disdain of **mestizo** impurity. Latinos can hasten this dialogue by recognizing their many ambiguities and border-crossings **as strengths**, and by remembering that America is moving toward a future in which its citizens will be accomplices in multiracial kinship and culture. This is the mirror Latinos hold up to America.

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Neither, of course, did they see similar problems of **African-Americans**, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Americans, and poor whites as relevant. It would take persistent organizing, activism, and documentation to begin winning recognition of environmental racism and the need for environmental justice. Nor is that struggle over.

For Latinos and others this problem has an extra **dimension**. Dominated by people of European descent, most environmental groups think of racism in exclusively **Black-white** terms. If they do recognize links between environmental issues and Latino communities, it is often in limited ways, important though they might be: "oh, **Latinos—right, pesticides... farmworkers**." End of discussion. One gets the feeling that the average Anglo image of Latinos features **stoic-faced campesinos** marching with **Cesar Chavez** and **some-**where in the **historical** background Carmen **Miranda** in her **fruit-filled** hat alongside a **mustachioed Mexican revolution-**ary. All too often Latino struggles are **trivialized** and don't even appear in the **mainstream's** landscape of racial issues; after all, they aren't **Black** or white.

New Thinking About Racism

U.S. society **today** demands that we **look** more **closely** at Latino communities and their collective experience with racial issues and struggles. One major reason **to** do this rings loud and clear: the Latino population is growing so rapidly that, if present immigration rates continue, they will be the nation's largest people of color within a few decades. You might expect this in California but such growth is not regional: in 1991, Latinos already totalled 24.4% of New **York City's** residents.

A second reason for new thinking about racism is the recent scapegoating of immigrants (read, Latinos and Asian/Pacific Islanders) for the nation's economic woes. Such **immigrant-bashing** is racism incarnate, a fact often forgotten because the dominant society applies an exclusively **Black-white** model of racism. **We** need to expand the **bi-polar** model; we need a multi-faceted model — not only because it is more accurate demographically but also because it is a crucial step in building the solidarity needed to confront racism **every-**where.

An extreme narrowness of thinking about racial issues has long pervaded white institutions and everyday perceptions. To mention just a recent few examples: a **two-hour** TV program on racial issues hosted by Phil **Donahue** had eight **guests—all** of them African American or **Euro-American**. **An** entire theme **issue** of *The Nation* magazine on racial inequality **last** year contained **only** two brief phrases concerning people of color—other than African-Americans. The fact that Latinos **participated** massively in the April 1992 **Los Angeles** uprising following the acquittal of Rodney King's **assailants**, with Latino deaths about one-third of the total, did not change the **media's** perception of that event **as** "a **Black riot**."

Longstanding ignorance accompanies this blindness. Race

Beyond Black and White

relations scholar Bob Blauner wrote in 1972 that "Even informed Anglos know almost nothing about La Raza, its historical experience, its present situation...And the average citizen doesn't have the foggiest notion that Chicanos have been lynched in the Southwest...that an entire population has been exploited economically, dominated politically, and raped culturally." Blauner's words still apply 20 years later.

Several historic reasons explain this myopia. Latinos have not had the African American's numbers, geographic spread, lengthy tradition of

The term "Latino/a," while problematic, is less eurocentric and inaccurate than "Hispanic."

militant **resistance**, and central role in the nation's only civil war. They did not spearhead the assault on structural racism twice in a century: the original Reconstruction and the 1960s Black Civil Rights Movement. Also, in the evolution of U.S. **racism**, the concept of "whiteness" on which an empire was built depended totally on the **presence** of an opposite, "blackness," for its existence and justification. This in turn had profound psychological consequences, including a dread of race-mixing and white sexual anxiety which have **always** been most powerful in relation to **African** Americans.

All this leads to the common perception among Latinos that Anglos — at least up to now — do not hate or fear them so much as dismiss them as insignificant. This dismissal feeds on the historic contempt of the U.S. for Latin America—its people, their languages and culture, and their issues. The Yankee vision has never moved beyond a **U.S.-centrism** that can only imagine relations of domination with other countries, especially those in "its" backyard. Indifference if not contempt then washes onto Latinos in this **country**.

Confusion about how to categorize Latinos has also sustained the exclusively Black-white framework of analysis. The U.S. Census termed Latinos "white" until 1990, even though U.S. society treated them with institutionalized racism. (Occasional exceptions may be made when a relatively "Caucasian" appearance combines with a middle-class manner to enable some Latinos to "pass"—at least until a Spanish surname or accent surfaces.)

Just What Does "Latino" Mean?

As a people we combine indigenous, European, and African roots — in degrees that vary from one area or nation to another. The African is often the least **acknowledged**; many people are unaware, for example, that an estimated 200-300,000 Africans were brought to Mexico as slaves under Spanish rule. As **that** history suggests the term "**Latino/a**" which I've used here, while problematic, is less **eurocentric** and inaccurate than "Hispanic." Actually most Latinos identify themselves by their specific nationality — Mexican, Guatemalan, Venezuelan, **etc.** — rather than by any general term. When one is needed, some of us like "La Raza" (the people) best.

La Raza includes people **linked** to 20-plus countries but all having experienced colonialism, direct and indirect, by Spain or Portugal and by the U.S. It was colonization that provided the economic basis for the racism and oppression we have experienced. U.S. colonization has been longest and most direct for Mexican Americans and **Puerto Ricans**. Almost one-third of today's United States was the home of Mexicans dating back to the **1500s**, until Anglos seized half of Mexico by war in 1848. The Mexicans themselves, of **course**, occupied lands seized from Native Americans but this does not negate the reality of Mexican-Americans as a colonized people. Nor does the fact that most of our people today date from 20th century immigration.

In the 1960s the term **Chicano/a** exploded on the scene as a cry of proud identity from a militant youth movement. It affirmed the reality of a people

and culture with Mexican origins but born or bred in the U.S. "**Chicano**" is far more than a new flavor of **Latin**; it is a political term and very much alive today, especially among youth determined to fight institutionalized racism.

That **racism** means our children face a grim future, given the 27% poverty rate, 36% high school drop-out rate, and 42% child poverty rate (even higher than that of African Americans) according to the 1990 Census. They will also encounter the most **discrimination** in housing markets of any U.S. **population** group. Our names and culture have **been** made to equate inferiority; the Spanish language has become a badge of the non-white and colonized.

In addition to these signals of racist **treatment**, Latinos along with Asian-Pacific Island Americans **experience** the special discrimination reserved for **people** who are or look like non-citizens. Anti-immigrant **racism** takes a constant toll at the border and **nearby areas** where the Border Patrol, the largest and most **out-of-control** police force in the U.S., rape and murder **Latinos/as**. At the border, at work, or just standing at a bus-stop, **workingclass** Latinos are vulnerable throughout daily life — with or without legal documents.

As all this shows, we **must** expand the exclusively Black-white framework of racial analysis and realize that racism evolves; that new varieties emerge. To see institutionalized racism as a problem faced only by Black people isolates them from potential **allies**. For people of color to **see** only the bi-polar model of racism encourages us to **remain ignorant** about each other's **community** and progressive Anglos to **remain fixated on** Blacks as the only **important target** of racism diminishes Anglo ability to combat racism effectively.

In the end, by **blocking perception** of common interests the bi-polar framework serves to sustain **white supremacy**. We **all** have to gain by reaching for our understanding of **racism** today and knowledge of the **Latin** along with others', **immigrants**, poverty, and the **environment**.

Elizabeth Martinez is a San Francisco-based activist and writer.

Texas Task Force Takes On Environmental Racism

by Antonio Díaz

In January 1993, the state of Texas took a bold step towards addressing environmental racism. The chairs of the two principal state environmental regulatory agencies, the Texas Water Commission (TWC) and the Texas Air Control Board (TACB), announced the formation of the Task Force on Environmental Equity and Justice to provide recommendations to the newly merged state environmental agency on issues pertaining to environmental inequities. As co-chair of the task force, I participated in its development and activities. This essay will provide some background on how the formation of the task force came about, its purpose and the results of its deliberations.

Environmental Justice Struggles en Tejas

As is the case with most efforts to positively influence social policy, the formation of the state sanctioned task force to address environmental justice in Texas has its roots in the community organizing and **grassroots** activism occurring throughout the state. Texas, which has had significant struggles by communities of color against environmental injustices, frequently tops the nation in the largest amount of toxic chemicals released. According to the *1991-1992 Green Index* published by the Institute for Southern Studies, Texas is among the worst states in the nation in the release of cancer-causing chemicals into the environment and the least amount of spending, per capita, on environmental protection.

Moreover, the growth of communities of color is increasingly changing the demographics of the state. In 1990, people of color made up more than 45% of the combined population of the state's 10 largest counties. Texas has the second largest Latino population, the third largest African American population, the fourth largest Asian population and the eighth largest Native American population in the nation.

Among the myriad environmental justice struggles that people of color in Texas have engaged in are the following: the efforts of an African American community to be equitably relocated from living on a Superfund site in **Texarkana**, Texas; the ongoing attempt to ameliorate the public health and environmental impact of lead slag contamination in West Dallas, a predominately African American and Latino **community**; and the **Chicano/mexicano** binational work occurring in Brownsville, TX-Matamoros, Mexico to pressure the largely **U.S.-owned maquiladoras** to adopt environmental safeguards and responsible labor practices, and urge U.S. public health agencies to examine the environmental causes of the cluster of neural tube birth defects in that region.

Along with these efforts, a major occurrence which highlighted the impact of environmental racism in the state of Texas, and led to the formation of the task force, was the

victorious campaign by a Chicano environmental justice group and a primarily African American coalition of neighborhood associations to relocate a 52 acre fuel storage tank **farm** adjacent to a predominately Latino and African American neighborhood in east Austin. This struggle occurred in the state capital, received extensive media coverage and was defined by the organizations involved as a clear example of environmental racism. Since this community-led effort occurred in the environmental regulatory agencies' "**back-yard**", it further sensitized state regulators and policy makers to this crucial issue.

A final ingredient which set the context for the development of the task force was the formation of, and the statewide gathering held by, the Texas Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (**TNEEJ**). The Texas Network grew out of a series of meetings, coordinated by the Texas Center for Policy Studies, a non-profit environmental research and advocacy organization based in Austin, to examine the impact of environmental hazards on communities of color in Texas and plan for the **statewide** gathering. **TNEEJ's** first statewide gathering, held in August, 1992, included sessions on economic policy and environmental impacts, the North American **Free** Trade Agreement and workplace **toxics**. At this **gathering**, which brought together more than 70 participants from across Texas and northern Mexico, the chairs of the **TWC** and the **TACB** participated on a panel on state regulatory agencies and environmental racism. This gave the two heads of Texas' environmental agencies an opportunity to hear **firsthand** the concerns of people of color from throughout the state.

Also, for this statewide gathering, the Texas Center for Policy Studies released a draft of a report prepared for the Texas Network titled *Toxics in Texas and Their Impact on Communities of Color*. The report is a **preliminary** study of the siting of toxic facilities in Texas **and the demographics** around those facilities, as well as an **overview of environmental justice issues** of concern to Texas' **communities of color**. These activities, among other **local, regional and national** initiatives, created a greater awareness **of environmental racism** in Texas. From this context of struggle that **communities of color** have engaged in throughout the state, the **TACB** and the **TWC** established the **environmental equity and justice task force**.

Texas Environmental Equity & Justice Task Force

In January, 1993, the formation of the Task Force on Environmental Equity and Justice was announced. The Task Force, formed by the chairs of the Texas Air Control Board and the Texas Water Commission, was charged with providing recommendations to the newly merged state environmental agency on issues pertaining to environmental inequities.

which was to merge on September 1, 1993. The 27-member Task Force consisted of representatives from diverse sectors: community groups, municipal government, state environmental regulators, civil rights organizations, legislators, industry and labor interests, etc. The formation of the Texas task force was unprecedented; no other state had initiated such a body to consider environmental racism and provide recommendations to its policies and practices.

The task force had limited time to provide its recommendations to the agencies. Various subcommittees were formed to focus on areas such as a review of the state agencies' statutes, policies and procedures which may lead to inordinate environmental hazards to low income communities and communities of color; an analysis of the role that local governments play in the location of facilities that pose a significant risk; and a review of the agencies' communication with communities of color to provide recommendations on how the agency can become more "user friendly," among other factors.

Throughout this process, at each meeting of the task force, the public comment period was utilized by citizens from throughout the state to voice their concerns and highlight particular community environmental justice struggles. The task force members also received reports by agency staff on issues ranging from the agencies' permitting process to the setting of effects screening levels for air emissions to state environmental and public health initiatives along the Texas-Mexico border.

On August, 1993, the task force presented its report to the agencies. Though consensus was reached on most of the report's recommendations, a contested recommendation and two dissenting reports were included. Among the recommendations for the new state consolidated environmental agency were:

develop a comprehensive database of information on facilities, permits, enforcement actions, demographic and

socioeconomic information, health data, complaints, etc., with a geographical component;

- meet the language needs of the public by publishing public notices in multiple languages, providing **translation** and **transcription** services for public meetings, and ensuring that the central and district offices have the capability of communicating in languages other than English;

- enhance the permitting process by requesting the participation of local governments and community groups seeking redress for environmental inequities.

The contested recommendation dealt with the extent that the Office of the Public Interest Counsel should be an independent entity with the same powers available to a private counsel. The report with its 44 recommendations was also accompanied by two minority reports. Members of the task force representing industry and business interests disagreed with the premise of the task force and report that environmental racism actually existed in Texas. In response, several of the members representing citizen concerns submitted their own opinion which was critical of the weakening of the report by industry representatives. The citizens' dissenting report cited over 20 studies that document environmental racism and stated, "we know there is too much pollution in our neighborhoods because we see it, smell it, hear it, and are affected by it ... we are offended by the implication ... that our experiences are not credible enough to justify strong action."

Next Steps for Environmental Justice

Although expected differences of opinion did arise within the task force, the deliberations for the report and its recommendations brought together and initiated dialogue between different sectors who do not usually sit together to discuss these issues. Furthermore, the task force's work provided an important first step for a state environmental regulatory agency to address

environmental justice in Texas.

The chairman and commissioners of the new consolidated agency accepted the report and its recommendations. Additionally, the commission's chairman established an implementation committee and an environmental equity office at the new agency. It remains to be seen to what extent the recommendations will be incorporated and the long term impact of the task force. It will be necessary that community, civil rights and environmental groups, and other interested individuals and organizations, continue their work to ensure that state and local regulators and policy makers implement the needed equitable environmental policies and practices. These are necessary steps to obtain an accurate assessment on the extent of environmental racism and to seriously make efforts to rectify this problem in Texas. Ultimately, the continued leadership and work by **grassroots** community activists and organizations, and the building of a broader movement for environmental justice, will be necessary to realize the needed changes for a clean and safe environment and workplace.

Note: The Texas Task Force on Environmental Equity and Justice Report can be obtained by contacting Clyde Pykes, Office of Air Quality, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, 12124 Park 35 Circle, Austin, Texas 78753, 512-908-1058. For a copy of the Texas Network report prepared by the Texas Center for Policy Studies (TCPS), contact TNEEJ, P.O. Box 684825, Austin, Texas 78768-4825 or TCPS at 512-474-0811. The report is available for \$10.00.

Antonio Díaz is co-chair of PODER (People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources), an East Austin environmental justice organization, and staff member for the Texas Center for Policy Studies in Austin, Texas.

Expansion of the Port of Miami

by Daniel Suman

Twenty blocks north of the modern high-rise buildings of downtown Miami, Florida, and the luxury passenger liners of the Port of Miami lies the neighborhood of Edgewater-Wynwood. The population of this Miami neighborhood is largely Latino and low-income and faces high levels of unemployment. Single-family residences, apartment buildings, small offices, and vacant lots form the neighborhood's physical structure. The continued existence of Edgewater-Wynwood will be in jeopardy, however, if the Port of Miami and Dade County have their way.

The Port of Miami's Proposed Transfer Facility

In May 1993, the Port of Miami, an autonomous agency of Dade County, introduced a proposal before the Metro-Dade Seaport Committee to purchase 110 acres of land in Wynwood now occupied by residences and small businesses. The Port hopes to develop the land into a container storage and transfer facility for containers entering Miami by sea with East Coast destinations. The project's official name is the Intermodal Container Transfer Facility.

The Wynwood site is ideal for the Port for a number of reasons. It is serviced by rail lines of the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC), is adjacent to Interstate 95, and is only two and a half miles from the Port of Miami. The present transfer site is located in Hialeah at a distance of over 22 miles from the Port on congested state roads. Port officials insist that they must obtain the Wynwood site so that Miami can become the premier Inter-American seaport. Because cargo traffic doubled between 1989-93 and is expected to double again between 1993-97, the Port administration argues that it must increase storage facilities. Moreover, recently the Port entered into a joint venture with the FEC Railway to operate a container transfer facility on the 59 acres at the old FEC site in Wynwood. Thus, the additional 110 acres of land will expand the Port's existing container transfer operations.

Probable Community Impacts

The possible creation of this expanded transfer facility in Wynwood will negatively impact the residents of this struggling neighborhood and destroy their sense of community. At least twenty four businesses with over 650 employees and a payroll of greater than \$14.2 million would be displaced. Over 220 homes with 645 residents would be condemned and

razed. The facility would increase tractor trailer traffic in central Miami, elevate levels of noise and air pollution, and be an eyesore in a city whose economy depends on tourism. The facility would also cut into the City of Miami's tax base because government land is exempt from property taxes.

Port officials claim that the facility would create over 500 new jobs. They offer to mitigate the development by planting trees around the site's perimeter to hide the view of stacked containers, trucks, and cranes.

Community Opposition

Wynwood-Edgewater residents are outraged by the Port's expansion plan and by the manner in which County officials have neglected their input in the planning process. Local community social and business groups, such as Concerned Citizens of Edgewater, the Edgewater Economic Development Corporation, Aspira Florida, the Senior Center, the Hot Meals Program, the Holy Cross Daycare Center, and the Corpus Cristi Catholic Church, are united in their opposition to the Port of Miami/Dade County proposal. Even the City of Miami seems to be taking a critical stance largely based on the potential loss of tax revenues. City officials question what Dade County would give the neighborhood and the City in exchange for their project.

County's Procedure

Earlier this summer the Board of County Commissioners almost adopted the Port's expansion plans without formal public input. On June 1, the County Manager proposed the acquisition of the Edgewater-Wynwood site to the Board of County Commissioners by all means possible. Several days later, when the County Commissioners began to consider the matter, neighborhood organizations who attended the meeting voiced their concern. As a result of this community opposition, the County Commission decided to postpone further action until they had held a public hearing in the neighborhood. Over 500 people attended this public hearing held on June 16 at a community school.

As a result of the public hearing, several County Commissioners supported the appointment of a task force to study the issue of Port expansion. Although the Board of County Commissioners approved the task force in July, the County Manager named the Port Director as Chairman. Residents of Edgewater-Wynwood, however, represent only 25% of the task force.

The task force has yet to report to the County Commissioners, and the Port expansion project is temporarily on hold. Nevertheless, the composition of the task force and the great economic and political power of the Port of Miami suggest that the expansion project will move forward. Community groups are organizing to address their next administrative or legal defenses to the Port's expansion project.

Daniel Suman is a professor at the University of Miami.

Building Power Without Borders

by Catalina Muniz

The Third Annual Gathering of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice Network took place on August 18-21, 1993, in San Diego, California and Tijuana, Mexico. The theme of the Gathering was "Building Power Without Borders - In the Spirit of Our People." The Youth Caucus met on Wednesday and Thursday to develop the goals of the Youth Leadership and Development Campaign and further define their role within SNEEJ. The general body of the Network came together on Thursday, with an opening ceremony which included performances by Aztec and African dancers and Korean drummers.

Early Friday morning we boarded buses to go to Tijuana, Mexico where we would spend the remainder of the day in La Colonia Chilpancingo In El Cañon del Padre. The day in Tijuana began with testimony about the struggles — poisoning, labor exploitation, etc. — people face daily in their communities due to the presence of the maquilas.

Being new to the border area, I was amazed at the number of maquilas that are built on the hillside of the Colonia Chilpancingo. A noticeable feature of all the maquilas was a posting saying that they were looking for new employees. A myth surrounding the negotiations of NAFTA is that it will create jobs in Mexico. Although jobs might be created because of the maquilas, a net loss of jobs will result because jobs will be lost in the small business sector where most people are employed. We also learned that the maquilas have a turnover rate of 100% and workers have to be bused in from the interior of Mexico. This high turnover rate prevents union organizing and keeps wages low.

A press conference, which was attended by press from Mexico and the United States, was held following the testimony. After the press conference, we held a demonstration in front of a proposed hazardous waste transfer station to express our solidarity with our Mexican sisters and brothers and to put these multinational corporations on notice. The target of the protest, Pacific Treatment Environmental Services, is the corporate offspring of Pacific Treatment Corporation which has polluted communities of color on both sides of the border. We were reminded again of this unjust and artificial border that divides people but not corporate environmental racism as

The Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice meets in San Diego, U.S., and Tijuana, Mexico

we headed back to San Diego at the end of the day.

On Saturday morning, we heard a panel of speakers from the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Southern Organizing Committee, the Asian Pacific Environmental Network and the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice. Representatives from each network spoke about issues of environmental and economic injustice that affect their communities. The need for regional networks to work together nationally was evident in their presentations.

The Southwest Network was formed to bring together activists and grassroots organizations of people of color from across the Southwest to broaden regional strategies and perspectives on environmental degradation and other social, racial and economic injustices. Thus, the general membership decided not to caucus as ethnic groups this year (which we have done in previous years), because our strength lies in networking among different ethnic groups.

Although a relative "newcomer" to the Coordinating Council, I left the Gathering with a rejuvenated sense of energy and a growing commitment to the Southwest Network. This sense of belonging was evident in the other Gathering participants, as well as the notion of strength in unity and the need to concretely push forward our agenda in the coming year.

Catalina Muniz is a Southwest Network Coordinating Council Representative from New Mexico. She works with the University of New Mexico Office of Minority Recruitment and Retention, and has been an active member of the UNM Chapter of MECHA since 1991.



Rini Templeton

CATA

15 Years of Farm Worker Action

Twenty farm workers in Florida break into small groups and draw a detailed **map** on the flip chart of the farms they work. The maps include the location of crops, mixing and storage of pesticides, housing, packing and shipping, drainage canals, eating areas and sanitary facilities. They draw a skull and cross bones in the areas where chemical hazards exist and a serpent in areas where physical hazards are found.

The workers reconvene in a large group, post their maps on the wall and discuss the physical and chemical hazards they find in each production process. These include preparation of **the** soil, planting, hoeing and weeding, thinning, cutting and packing and shipping. Then they list the problems which they think **are** most serious: exposure to pesticides while the plants **are** still **wet**, lack of training, lack of field sanitation, heat, low back pain caused by bending over eight hours a day, and hand arthritis caused by making **2,300,000** repetitive motions with the clippers each year. Eagerly, they then begin to discuss possible solutions: educating farm workers about their rights; **strategies** for assuring that the grower obey the re-entry times and provide sanitary facilities; rest breaks on hot days; researching handle design and spring pressure on clippers; and asking the grower to provide cuuers which cause the least stress on hands. A future meeting is planned to follow up on these strategies.

The facilitator of the discussion is a farm worker from CATA, part of the **Farmworker** Health and Safety Institute. Fifteen CATA farm workers have been **trained** as pesticide educators and have given over 185 pesticide programs in camps and communities in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Puerto Rico.

Ninety-five per cent of the farm workers who work the fields of New Jersey or in the mushroom houses of Southeastern Pennsylvania are Puerto Ricans or Mexicans. Most of them share the common experience of migrating from their homes and leaving their families and support systems to live in Anglo communities where they are isolated from the local culture and social support systems, and where they perform grueling work for minimum wage and live in often horrendous camps.

Their common experience as Latino migrants who face terrible working and living conditions created a need to develop a common base of support and empowerment so that they could work together to improve their lives. Thus in 1979 migrant farm workers organized CATA — the Farm workers Support **Committee** — so **that** farm workers could develop the skills and organizational capacity to achieve these goals.



CATA is the only existing organization through which the **35,000** farm workers who harvest the fruit and vegetable crops of New Jersey, the **100,000** workers and their families who harvest the **mushrooms** of Chester County, Pennsylvania, or the **100,000** seasonal **farm** workers who harvest the cane, coffee, fruits and vegetables of Puerto Rico can work together to attain humane working and living conditions. Recently CATA has also begun to work with the more than **30,000** Dominican farm workers who migrated to Puerto Rico seeking work.

Agricultural production in Puerto Rico, Pennsylvania and New Jersey is very labor intensive and practices require a tremendous use of pesticides to which farm workers **are** exposed. Out of this concern, in 1989, the CATA membership mandated that the organization focus on the issue of pesticide exposure of farm workers, and the Pesticide Project was born.

Over the last three years, the Pesticide Project **has** accomplished a great deal. Over 600 workers have participated in leadership development programs. More than 300 workers have given public testimony and conducted educational campaigns concerning legislation to provide pesticide hazard communication and field sanitation to **farm** workers, which resulted in a state field sanitation standard and a strong pesticide Right to Know Law being passed. Pesticide and field sanitation violations have been documented and campaigns have been developed to pressure agencies to improve enforcement of existing laws.

CATA shares its experiences and resources with other farm worker organizations in the east through the Farm worker Health and Safety Institute. For more information about CATA, write or **call: Farm Workers Support Committee**, 4 S. Delsea Drive, **Glassboro**, NJ 08028. (609)881-2507.

People Organizing to Demand Environmental Rights in San Francisco

by Leticia Alcantar

Maria O. and her child came to the U.S. from Cuba in 1992. She recently arrived in San Francisco after a brief stay in Miami. She was referred to a housing complex by a social service agency which places new immigrants in apartments. Three months after she moved into her new San Francisco apartment, her 18 month old child was tested with elevated levels of lead. There are three other families in the same housing complex whose children are lead poisoned. None of the parents were notified about the lead hazards or existence of other lead poisoned children in the building.

This scenario is not new or uncommon to poor people and people of color who live in urban areas in the United States. Most commonly, families exposed to elevated levels of lead suffer from a number of other social and economic inequalities, such as inadequate housing conditions, little or no access to healthcare, and poor nutrition due to poverty. to name a few. A recent California study showed that 67% of the children with African American, Latino or Asian backgrounds tested were found to have lead levels greater than 10 micrograms per deciliter of blood (mg/dl). In San Francisco, one in 12 children tested in a recent survey were found to have elevated levels — that is, eight percent of the children tested were contaminated with dangerous levels of lead.

One community in San Francisco is organizing to prevent the causes of this silent epidemic called lead poisoning. PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental Rights) is a community-based grassroots organization in the Mission District which was created in 1991 soon after the results of a local lead survey were released. PODER is a membership organization made up of families of lead-poisoned children and of concerned residents and tenants. The majority of its leadership is mono-lingual Spanish speaking women who have not been involved in any other community organization before now, PODER's members come from a number of Latin American countries — including Mexico, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala and Cuba — as well as Southeast Asian countries including Vietnam and Cambodia. Since it is generally the mother who is responsible for the children's health care, most of PODER's members are women.

From 1991 to 1992, PODER worked with other organizations to successfully support the passage of the first Lead Poisoning Prevention Ordinance in San Francisco. While the Ordinance mandates that the Department of Public Health (DPH) create an effective comprehensive lead poisoning prevention ordinance, PODER members have found that a mandate alone is not enough.

Recently, PODER members have waged a campaign to demand accountability from politicians and policymakers, agency bureaucrats and landlords to require better enforce-

ment and monitoring of the Ordinance. The members have developed a list of proposals based on their experience with the implementation of the Ordinance. As tenants, all members felt disenfranchised and without rights. In fact, in San Francisco's Mission District 80% of the people, most of whom are low income and people of color, live in rental units. These tenants are at greatest risk of suffering from lead poisoning and other substandard housing problems because they do not have control of the property they live in. Low-income tenants and tenants of color are often victims of slumlord abuses because they can not afford to pay higher rents, they speak foreign languages or because they are unaware of their rights. Even when they understand their rights many low income tenants and tenants of color fear asserting them because of their misconceptions about complaining to government agencies in this country.

One PODER family's experience is instructive. When the child of the family was discovered to have blood lead levels above 20 mg/dl the DPH performed an environmental test of their apartment and discovered high levels of lead in the paint. None of the other tenants with families were given notice about the high levels of lead in the building by the landlord even though it is mandated by law. Despite the requirement for notification to other occupants of the building, there is no enforcement or monitoring mechanism to ensure compliance with the law. Moreover, there is still no law which says that lead is a housing or health nuisance. Only after doorknocking the entire building and encouraging parents to have their children's blood tested was it discovered that three other children were also lead poisoned in the same building.

Recently PODER members arranged a meeting with the Director of the Lead Poisoning Prevention Project in San Francisco. At the meeting, the members presented a list of detailed demands regarding tenant rights, notification and lead hazard cleanup. The Director, after intensive pressure from members present at the meeting to respond to the demands, agreed to vigorously support several of the demands and to arrange meetings between PODER members and other agency bureaucrats, including the Director of the BPH to seek support for the remaining demands.

This is only the beginning for PODER's members. We plan to work hard to create and pass a lead hazard reduction ordinance that will focus on removing lead from our environment with greater participation from the community.

Leticia Alcantar is a staff attorney at the West Coast Regional Office of Consumers Union and Project Director for PODER (People Organizing to Demand Environmental Rights). Anybody interested in more information can call Lisa Pagan or Leticia Alcantar at 415/431-4210.

The South Bronx Coalition for Clean Air

by **Nina Laboy**

The South Bronx Coalition for Clean Air is a grassroots group of over 50 active volunteers with more than 800 participants, primarily African-American and Latino residents of the poorest Congressional District of the United States. Members of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights and local schools and community-based organizations were among the founders of the South Bronx Coalition for Clean Air, uniting with other community groups with the primary goal of shutting down a medical waste incinerator built in our backyard, without our knowledge.

This incinerator, developed by a **firm** called Resource Management, Inc. and sponsored by Bronx Lebanon Hospital and originally proposed as an upgrade, has, as of January 15, 1993, secured the right to burn 48 tons of infectious medical waste, plastics and paper per day, 24 hours a day, right in the middle of New York City, in the South Bronx. The developers convinced Bronx Lebanon Hospital officials to use their sponsorship in exchange for free burning of their waste, and were granted a \$15 million tax-free bond package based on their ability to provide jobs to local residents. **As** far as we know the only South Bronx "resident" hired was the local Community Planning Board **Chairman**, who is still on their payroll as a "job developer" — this same person was also Chairman of the Bronx Solid Waste Advisory Board! The FBI says they are investigating possible corruption, but we have heard nothing from them.

Our Coalition is determined to win against this blatant example of environmental racism in an area which right now has one of the highest rates of immunodeficiency and respiratory disease in the United States. The Hunts Point-Port Morris area of the South Bronx is a four-square-mile area which already contains over 60 waste transfer stations handling all types of materials, many highly toxic, a municipal de-watering plant, a sludge treatment plant, two city transit authority garages, and a large heating-oil retail and storage plant which over the years has caused extensive contamination of the soil. Additionally, there is an electrical rail system, a Consolidated Edison electrical plant, a city sanitation garage, various recycling plants, legal and illegal dumping sites, a newly built sludge **pelletization** plant and a proposed municipal newspaper de-inking plant.

The neighborhood is also home to the Hunts Point Regional Food Market, the largest food distribution center on the eastern seaboard. Business leaders estimate that thousands of jobs, if not all, will be lost due to food contamination from the plants and incinerators in this area.

Through our struggle against the incinerator, we learned

much about how to organize our community. We are now working to provide a health analysis and a health **risk** assessment of our area, both of which have never been done adequately. We will continue pressuring governmental agencies to provide the Bronx with an environmental benefits program and remediation. We will soon open the **first** environment and **fundraising** resource center in the South Bronx, thanks to a small grant from the Citizens Committee for New York City.

Our fight against the incinerator has not ended and will not end until it is closed. Resource Management has filed for Chapter 11 and the judge has decided to accept affidavits from the community opposing the reorganization. One of the affidavits is charging Resource Management Technologies, Inc. with conspiracy, and the court with conspiracy if they approve the reorganization. The hearing has been postponed three times and now is scheduled for February, 1994.

In the meantime, we are keeping the pressure on the hospitals and clinics that supply the incinerator with medical waste. This includes **HIP**, a local health maintenance organization. We are demanding that they change their method of waste disposal. They are seriously considering the option of autoclaving, after meeting with community residents in the fall of 1993. Those present at the meeting found out that the administrators of HIP did not have the knowledge that we had about the company and about medical waste disposal and its hazards.

Another potential environmental struggle the South Bronx Coalition For Clean Air is researching at this time is the development of the Harlem River Yards, a 90-acre plot of land which surrounds the southern tip of the South Bronx. The coalition is opposed to the privatization of that property by the New York State Department of Transportation, and we are demanding that the original 1982 Environmental Impact Statement (**EIS**) be respected. This EIS proposed the development of an **intermodal** railway freight center, which would connect the Bronx to a national network of commercial freight. The private developer chosen has proposed that a paper mill, a waste treatment plant and another waste **transfer** station be built on this "gateway to City."

On December 13, 1993 we gave our comments on the proposed Croton **filtration** plant and Jerome Park Reservoir conversion. The probable impact on the central community of the Bronx could be **terrible**. We continue to provide workshops for youth in the public and private schools in the area.

The South Bronx Coalition for Clean Air's activities have been the most significant organized protest in the area in many years. Its influence on community activists and especially those fighting environmental racism is nationwide. We believe it is because we simply **w**e about our future and that of our children and families.

"NO JUSTICE, NO PEACE -- END ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM NOW!"

Nina Laboy is the Director of the Bronx Office of Voter Participation and the Co-Chair of the Bronx Clean Air Coalition.

Taking Back New Mexico

The **SouthWest Organizing Project (SWOP)** is a statewide, multi-racial community organization in New Mexico, with membership in Albuquerque as well as the northern and central parts of the state. The group works to develop leadership in indigenous communities and working class neighborhoods, and for over 12 years **has** made it possible for thousands of New Mexicans to begin to have a place and voice in social, economic and environmental decisionmaking which affects their lives. "We reach our objectives by educating, organizing, and **developing** leadership in our communities," says Jean Gauna, SWOP's executive director and a founding member of the group. "We are working for the self-determination of our peoples — when they can take direct responsibility in running their communities."

The group, founded in 1981 by "three folks on unemployment with a solitary typewriter," according to SWOP Board president Sofia **Martínez**, has grown into a national leader in the movement for social justice. SWOP works on environmental justice, economic justice and public participation projects. "We have the right to safe communities, yet our neighborhoods suffer the most from pollution," explains Michael **Guerrero** of the SWOP staff. "We have the right to live and raise our children in our communities, yet we have

SWOP has long been a leader in the environmental justice movement, working locally to empower New Mexican communities to stand up to corporate polluters and developing regional and national networks of activists.

little control over how our neighborhoods develop and we are often **forced** out for economic reasons." To remedy this, SWOP has developed a Community Bill of Rights, which addresses issues of empowerment, **information** and the responsibilities of **industry** and government.

SWOP has long **been** a leader in the environmental justice

movement, working locally to empower New Mexican communities to stand up to corporate polluters, and developing regional and national networks of activists. The Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice was initiated by SWOP in 1990, and Network director Richard Moore is former co-director of SWOP.

One of SWOP's major focuses for the upcoming year is the semiconductor industry giant Intel, which is seeking to expand **its** plant near Albuquerque. The plant in **Sandoval** County is already Intel's largest manufacturing operation, producing 50 percent of the corporation's revenue and 70 percent of **its** profits. SWOP **sees** danger in letting the giant company get bigger, however, pointing to excessive tax breaks, occupational hazards, water contamination, and discriminatory hiring practices. "We consider Intel's expansion nothing more than a multi-million dollar hustle of New Mexico — our communities and our people," says **Gauna**.

Aida Franco, the SWOP staffer on the campaign, says that the **tax** breaks offered to Intel, combined with other government giveaways, make the company the state's largest welfare recipient. She also points out **that Intel** is the 8th largest polluter in the entire state, and has a less-than-sterling **track** record for occupational safety and health. In June of 1993, over 80 construction workers went to local hospitals for health problems due to chemical fumes at the Intel site.

SWOP's campaign seems to be having an effect. In an ominous development that demonstrates the power of the community group, Intel has distributed information to its employees on SWOP, including material which is incorrect and **misleading**, and has held **mass meetings** of employees to discuss SWOP and other community groups questioning the company.

While Intel may be SWOP's largest target this year, the group also **has** several **other** campaigns running:

- The **Campaign to Take Back New Mexico** is a non-partisan voter **registration**, education and get-out-the-vote drive in three counties, designed to significantly increase **participation** of previously unregistered **people** in municipal, state and federal elections.
- SWOP's **Sustainable Communities Campaign** strives to make the public aware of, and able to participate in, decisions affecting industry and the economy in New Mexico. It also works to help workers injured in "high tech" and other industries to obtain justice.

- The **Martíneztown Campaign** develops new leadership and increases grassroots participation in that historic Albuquerque community, including helping local residents **oppose** the siting of a new federal courthouse in the community.

For more information on SWOP's activities, contact SWOP at 211 Tenth Street, SW, Albuquerque, NM 87102, 505/247-8832.

Defining Power in Tejas

Latino Environmental Group PODER Widens East Austin Agenda

by Elaine Ayala

Susana Almanza and Antonio Diaz don't consider themselves pessimists. They don't see themselves as loud-mouth agitators either, or as anti-business. The two longtime environmental justice activists speak calmly, softly, with a peace that may come from being on a carefully mapped, if jagged, road.

Others may hold distinctly different opinions of the two forces behind PODER, the David that helped fight the tank-farm Goliath and won. In some corners, the organization is seen as a gadfly, its agenda radical, its leaders malcontents.

Still, People Organized in Defense of Earth and her Resources — whose acronym, PODER, is Spanish for power — has come a long way in the 2 years since it was organized: The Latino advocacy group was **part** of an East Austin coalition that successfully fought a gasoline tank farm that had been contaminating soil and groundwater and was linked to health problems. PODER has recently been buoyed by discussions with the chip-manufacturing and research consortium Sematech.

This summer, PODER experienced a rite of passage, a retreat that its leaders — a handful of professionals who grew up in the Chicano organizations MEChA and the Brown Berets — believe has **launched** the group into the 21st century. It allowed the group to break its **100-mph** pace to fight burnout and "ensure its longevity," as one put it.

Recently, it opened an office at **55 N. Interstate 35** in Austin, equipped with phones, a computer and a staff of volunteers. It was another step in the group's evolution as an organization that can participate in a technical discussion about chemical solvents as well as hold demonstrations. PODER believes it has made a significant contribution to Austin, although **co-chair Almanza** says the city government "sees us as a threat. They know we're organized now. They know we do our homework and that we're not just a group that does a lot of screaming and hollering."

The group, headquartered on the east side, credits itself with making an environmentally conscious city — focused on issues such as Barton Springs and the golden-cheeked warbler — more conscious of environmental problems east of Interstate **35**. PODER, its members say, helped teach Austin about environmental racism — the nationally documented correlation between industries that pollute the environment and the type of neighborhoods where they're found.

What the group most seeks is a place in corporate and governmental discussions about industrial pollution and growth in Austin's Industrial Expansion Area (also called the

City Enterprise Zone), a large portion of the city east of Interstate **35** where tax abatements were granted in exchange for the promise of job creation. "If certain voices aren't heard and taken in account," says Diaz, an environmental researcher at the Texas Center for Policy Studies and PODER's co-chair, "we'll have a city booming with population and industry. We'll have a city that will target the east side for these industries. We'll have low-skilled, low-paying jobs for **Austinites**, but other jobs will go to people outside Austin who were imported by the companies."

Diaz also envisions a worst case scenario — a city not unlike other major U.S. urban centers, "heavily populated by people of color and industries that look clean on the outside but aren't inside."

PODER seeks a place in corporate and governmental discussions about industrial pollution and growth in Austin's Industrial Expansion Area.

"Folks won't want to live in Austin. They'll work in the city and want to get out afterward."

Almanza also is concerned about the effects of light rail in Austin. She recently **traveled** to Sacramento, California, to learn about its system and returned with one prediction: Austin's light-rail system will need a maintenance yard, and **East Austin** will be the likely location. She believes the maintenance yard could erase eight blocks and fill the environment with noise and other forms of pollution.

There are other issues PODER is interested in, including the closing of the Holly Street Power Plant. There, it's playing a supportive role, holding workshops on the health effects of living near an electromagnetic field.

It's Electronics **Industry Good Neighbor Campaign** is an educational project created to inform residents about the health and safety implications of living next to high-tech companies. The campaign is multipronged but focused on

getting companies to adhere to Clean Texas 2000, a state agreement that requires companies to set up citizen advisory committees and participate in open, ongoing dialogue with residents. PODER says some companies have been **resistant**, a charge members of the Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission's Waste Reduction Advisory Committee have echoed. Diaz is a member of that committee and co-chairs the commission's Environmental Equity and Justice Task Force.

PODER also is concerned with Bergstrom Air Force Base's conversion to a municipal **airport**. PODER plans to monitor the impact of the flight plan, traffic, congestion and noise pollution on neighborhoods.

"We're not against industry," Almanza says, "but we want clean industry and sustainable industry."

So its agenda is full: **tank-farm** cleanup, Bergstrom's conversion to a municipal **airport**, light rail, **lead** contamination, noise pollution. It is an **agenda** that does not separate social justice issues from economic issues or either of those

"We're not against industry," Susana Almanza says, "but we want clean industry and sustainable industry."

from the environment. For PODER, they are interwoven. Its central mission remains educating and empowering people it believes are the most adversely affected by environmental degradation: the poor, the Latino, the black.

While worried about those issues, PODER is not pessimistic. Its leaders sound **upbeat**, encouraged by their early success and the post-graduate educations they're receiving. PODER has each of them scurrying around the country attending conferences, sharing information and building alliances with other groups fighting for environmental justice.

Only a handful of grass roots **Latino** environmental justice groups exist across the country, but PODER is hoping to parent more. It envisions advocates and professionals rising from the neighborhoods themselves. And as it maps its destiny into the 21st century, it also sees a larger office, a full-time researcher, an analyst and support staff.

Early this year, several members flew to Washington to testify before a congressional panel, arguing in favor of a \$10, million Sematech appropriation to **research** less environmentally harmful alternatives in the semiconductor manufacturing process. The \$10 million was approved. PODER found another reason to celebrate.

Elaine Ayala is a reporter for the Austin American-Statesman. from which this article was reprinted.

Communique from Chiapas

The following is the full text of the declaration from the Lacandon jungle by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

**Today we say enough is enough!
To the People of Mexico:
Mexican Brothers and Sisters:**

We are a product of 500 years of **struggle**: **first** against slavery, then during the War of **Independence** against Spain led by insurgents, then to avoid being absorbed by North American imperialism, then to promulgate our constitution and expel the French empire from our soil, and later the dictatorship of **Porfirio Diaz** denied us the just application of the Reform laws and the people rebelled and leaders like Villa and **Zapata** emerged, poor men just like us. We have been denied the most elemental preparation so they **can** use us as cannon fodder and pillage the wealth of our **country**. They don't care that we have nothing, absolutely nothing, not even a roof over our heads, no land, no work, no health care, no **food**, nor education. Nor are we able to freely and democratically elect our political representatives, nor is there independence from foreigners, nor is there peace nor justice for ourselves and our children.

But today, we say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. We are the inheritors of the **true** builders of our nation. The dispossessed, we are millions and we thereby call upon our brothers and sisters to join this **struggle** as the only path, so that we will not die of hunger due to the insatiable ambition of a **78** year dictatorship led by a clique of traitors that represent the most conservative and sell-out groups. They are the same ones that **betrayed** Vicente **Guerrero**, the same ones that sold half our country to the foreign invader, the same ones that imported a European prince to rule our country, the same ones that formed the "scientific" **Porfirista** dictatorship, the same ones that opposed the Petroleum Expropriation, the same ones that massacred the railroad workers in **1958** and the students in **1968**, the same ones that today take everything from us, absolutely everything.

To prevent the continuation of the above and as our last hope, after having vied to utilize all legal means based on our Constitution, we go to our Constitution, to apply Article **39** which says:

"National Sovereignty essentially and originally resides in the people. All political power **emanates** from the people and its purpose is to help the people. The people have, at all times, the inalienable right to alter or modify their form of government"

News: Chiapas, Mexico

Therefore, according to our constitution, we declare the following to the Mexican federal army, the pillar of the Mexican dictatorship that we suffer from, monopolized by a one-party system and led by Carlos Salinas de Gortari, the maximum and illegitimate federal executive that today holds power.

According to this Declaration of War, we ask that other powers of the nation advocate to restore the legitimacy and the stability of the nation by overthrowing the dictator.

We also ask that international organizations and the International



organizations and the International Red Cross watch over and regulate our battles, so that our efforts are carried out while still protecting our civilian population. We declare now and always that we are subject to the Geneva Accords, forming the EZLN as our fighting arm of our liberation struggle. We have the Mexican people on our side, we have the beloved tri-colored flag highly respected by our insurgent fighters. We use black and red in our uniform as our symbol of our working people on smoke. Our flag carries the following letters, "EZLN" Zapatista Army of National Liberation, and we always carry our flag into combat

Beforehand, we refuse any effort to disgrace our just cause by accusing us of being drug traffickers, drug guerrillas, thieves, or other names that might be used by our enemies. Our struggle follows the constitution which is held high by its call for justice and equality.

Therefore, according to this declaration of war, we give our military forces, the EZLN, the following orders:

First: Advance to the capital of the country, overcoming the Mexican federal army, protecting in our advance the civilian population and permitting the people in the liberated area the right to freely and democratically elect their own administrative authorities.

Second: Respect the lives of our prisoners and turn over all wounded to the International Red Cross.

Third: Initiate summary judgements against all soldiers of the Mexican federal army and the political police that have received training or have been paid by foreigners, accused of being traitors to our country, and against all those that have repressed and treated badly the civil population and robbed or stolen from or attempted crimes against the good of the people.

Fourth: Form new troops with all those Mexicans that show their interest in joining our struggle, including those that, being enemy soldiers, turn themselves in without having fought against us, and promise to take orders from the General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.

Fifth: We ask for the unconditional

surrender of the enemy's headquarters before we begin any combat to avoid any loss of lives.

Sixth: Suspend the robbery of our natural resources in the areas controlled by the EZLN.

To the People of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just

To the People of Mexico: We, the men and women, full and free, are conscious that the war that we have declared is our last resort, but also a just one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against us...

one. The dictators are applying an undeclared genocidal war against our people for many years. Therefore we ask for your participation, your decision to support this plan that struggles for work, land, housing, food, health care, education, independence, freedom, democracy, justice and peace. We declare that we will not stop fighting until the basic demands of our people have been met by forming a government of our country that is free and democratic.

JOIN THE INSURGENT FORCES OF THE ZAPATISTA ARMY OF NATIONAL LIBERATION.

-- General Command of the EZLN, 1993.

From the Capitol Views on Policy Development

by Ellie Goodwin

The year is 1990. It is the 20th anniversary of "Earth Day". The leaders of the nation's ten largest environmental organizations receive letters from grassroots organizations blasting their patterns of disregard for people of color in pursuing environmental agendas. *Race, Poverty & the Environment*, a newsletter for social and environmental justice, is born. During the past four years, *RPE* has tackled a myriad of topics: water, energy, pesticides, youth. All have been scrutinized through the lens of social and environmental justice — the perspective of the non-Anglo, poor and disenfranchised. It is from this perspective that *RPE* now turns its attention to policy.

Actually, the corporate culture has only itself to blame for the rise in environmental activism. Previously, industrialists and corporate giants might have been able to hide behind the "subjective" nature of accounts of discrimination. Anecdotal accounts were highly personal. To charges of racism or discrimination, legions of attorneys and corporate officials made statements that the individual or group was mistaken — no racial slight or overt discrimination was intended. However, "intent" is hard to hide when a company has a track record of locating in or near communities of color. The Commission for Racial Justice study, *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, finished off the fairy tale that economics determines the siting of toxic facilities: the higher the concentration of non-white people, the higher the concentration of noxious facilities and industries.

But problems of hazardous waste facilities, poor transit service, foul air and water did not occur over night. These effects are the result of years of planning and negotiations. In most cases, neighborhood representatives are rarely invited to participate in those forums, and it is only when a problem reaches intolerable proportions that local voices are heard.

This new column will examine policy developments related to the new field of environmental justice. Since resigning as managing editor of *RPE*, I have been involved in environmental justice activism at the state level. Working in California's capitol provides an ongoing demonstration of how the work at the grassroots is (or is not) translated into policy. As luck would have it, upon my entrance into this field, an unprecedented assault on environmental regulations was being waged by industry and the private sector. Environmental protections and regulations regarding the public's right-to-know were being systematically targeted as major burdens to the state's economic recovery. In limiting or revoking the public's access to environmental impact reports or assessments, a vital link in the public participation chain would be severed.

This situation is being replicated across the country. Under

the guise of a sluggish economy, industry representatives are attempting to make the case that environmental regulations are hampering attempts to spur the economy. Most alarming is the type of regulation these interests are targeting. Not surprisingly, they are regulations which govern environmental impact reporting and the public's right-to-know. For environmental justice activists, these regulations form the core of much of our work. Without access to information or the requirement that companies complete EIRs, hold public hearings, etc., the public would have no notice of industry plans for their neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, there are few opportunities for community-based organizations to thoroughly address environmental/social justice concerns at the statewide policy level. While conferences and other forums serve to bring issues to light, providing opportunities to discuss topics, the next step — that of policy development — is rarely taken. Activists note that what often happens when non-traditional input is solicited, the community issues are "tagged on" as an afterthought.

There are encouraging signs. The appointment of Rev. Benjamin Chavis as Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People moves that organization into a key leadership role in environmental justice activism. As the nation's largest and most prestigious African American organization, the NAACP position on issues of national policy development is actively sought. With Dr. Chavis at the helm, environmental justice is a much higher priority. And while the Clinton Administration has had its ups and downs with communities of color, the willingness to openly discuss the topic of environmental justice is light years ahead of the previous two administrations.

This column will also focus on developments and events around the country, and their policy implications. We need to see that not only can our community colleagues wage strong campaigns against environmental and social injustice, but that we have policy changes to solidify these gains. By observing how policy develops in relation to our issues, we gain a better understanding of the relationships and power plays. Are the policymakers coming from an activist or community background, or do they have another agenda? Do our community leaders know who's who in the policy loop? And how does all of this relate to our status as non-profit organizations?

Upcoming columns will focus not only on the national developments in environmental justice policy, but more importantly on local communities. We all need to watch and learn the next phase — that of policy development. There will also be interviews with individuals who have first-hand experience in policy development regarding environmental and social justice issues. These experiences are valuable to all of us and need to be shared. Most importantly, this column is for you. If you have an example of a hard-fought battle leading to a change in policy, share this experience with us. Our hope is that this column will become a yardstick to measure advances in the policy arena.

Ellie Goodwin is a registered legislative advocate with the state of California.

The songs of Dr. Loco and his **Rockin' Jalapeño Band** confront the **problems** of injustice and oppression in the Latino community. Their music embraces the rhythms of Mexican mariachi, Colombian **cumbias**, Cuban **charangas**, Chicano Tex-Mex, Latin jazz, rock and the blues. The composition of the band reflects their philosophy of music and political struggle. In addition to being talented musicians, every member of the band is engaged in activities which address social conditions in the Latino community. Several members are teachers, in public school, community colleges and universities. Dr. Loco, the founder of the band, is in fact **José Cuellar**, professor and Chair of the **La Raza Studies** program at San Francisco State University. **José's** research, teaching and music reflect his commitment to social justice. Following, are excerpts from an interview I conducted with **José** in early October when we discussed the band's new album.

"It was impressed upon me by Ruben Blades, Willie Colon and others who create music to raise social consciousness in the Latino community that many people in our population are hardly able to read and write — so the primary means of communicating ideas and information comes through the vehicle of music. We use the lyrics to awaken consciousness and keep the movement going by re-energizing people. I think, for example, of the **nueva trova** movement in Cuba and Chile where they'd write a song to get people to cut cane or support a **neighborhood** struggle. Using musical and theatrical **lyrics** to raise people's awareness is part of Latino culture worldwide and the farmworker tradition in the United States."

Dr. Loco's songs address economic and social discrimination, injustice and inequality and resound with **calls** for social change and justice. In their most recent **album** they directly confront the issue of environmental

Dr. Loco and his Rockin' Jalapeño Band Confronting Environmental Racism Through Music

by Raquel Pinderhughes



racism in a song called "El Picket sign." The album, "Movimiento Music," was dedicated to addressing various movements for social justice and peace in the world today. The centerpiece of the album is the song "El Picket Sign," a song that was used by

Teatro Campesino on picket lines and in street theater.

"The notion was that we would use that song to specifically address concerns raised by **Cesar Chavez** and the farm workers, particularly safe working conditions and decent wages and, that we would update the picket sign with lyrics which reflected those concerns and others today. In the grape boycott a central concern today is to end environmental racism. We took the farm workers' struggle to deal with

pollution and pesticides and extended it to also talk about environmental racism in Kettleman City."

"I learned about environmental hazards in the **Latino** community gradually. In the late 1970s I worked with the **producers** of a film called Phoenix **Rising** which focused on **nuclear pollution** in Juarez, **Chihuahua**, across the border from El Paso, Texas. They were shipping nuclear wastes from New Mexico to store in the **junkyards** there. Another **experience** which **led** me to become aware of pollution in the whole Rio Grande Valley borderlands area happened when I joined the faculty at San Diego

"Using musical lyrics to raise people's awareness is part of Latino culture worldwide and the farm worker tradition in the United States."

State. I was interacting with faculty in borderland institutions in San Diego and Tijuana and the issue of pollution kept coming up over and over again. In San Diego we were dealing with the effects of the maquiladoras, hazardous wastes, sewage and pollution all along the border, from Tijuana to Brownsville.

"To me the term 'environmental racism' refers to the concentration of pollutants and toxins in areas/neighborhoods that are disproportionately inhabited by persons of color. Another way to put it is that there's a positive correlation between the darker a person and the more liberty the government takes in locating toxins and pollution where that person lives. These decisions are made by city, county, state and federal officials who concentrate these hazards in communities of color because the residents have less voice and influence in the political decision-making process and whose reaction they

can ignore.

"At the time I was working on the album, I was also working on a research project on alcoholism in the Latino community with Magdalena Avila. Magdalena would bring me literature and information on the struggle to deal with the hazardous waste dump in Kettleman City and the environmental justice movement. Her experiences served as a direct inspiration for me to articulate environmental justice issues; that's why I dedicated the song "El Picket Sign" to her. For me, Magdalena is an example of many women, the unsung heroines, who are working for justice and I wanted to acknowledge her and other women involved in the environmental justice movement and other movimientos for social justice."

Raquel Pinderhughes teaches at San Francisco State University.



El Picket Sign

Some people that I know still eat contaminated grapes
 Gente que conosco comen uvas contaminadas
 Covered with pesticides that poison farm worker children
 Cubiertas con pesticidas que enbenenan do los chiquillos

El Picket Sign, El Picket Sign,
 No compran uvas
 El Picket Sign, El Picket Sign,
 Support the United Farmworkers
 El Picket Sign, El Picket Sign.
 For safe jobs, safe food
 El Picket Sign, El Picket Sign,
 Stop environmental racism

From the fields of California Cesar Chavez has been saying
 De los files de California Cesar Chavez anda diciendo
 That the Struggle is for everyone, but some are acting dumb
 Este luchas para todos pero unos se hacen pendejos

El Picket Sign... .



With a reluctant understanding that graffiti is considered vandalism by most people, particularly property owners, I believe that it is this very issue of ownership that engenders the art form...



Aerosol & the Environment

by Bonnie Maria Burlin

Environment is where you are. Although people carry different definitions of the environment and its scope, they have universally invented ways to make it *theirs*. Some U.S. neighborhoods are marked by the invisibility of their residents, with lawn-side American flags and etched wood plaques displaying a family name, while others are characterized by the complete lack of lawns or vegetation which gives way to people on foot or staircase congregations. These environmental neighborhood traits evoke certain images of lifestyle and community, manifestations of class but also of aesthetics and self-definition. These are all factors which shape our environment, just as much as decisions made by advertisers, land developers and city planners.

In this article I will present graffiti art as an alternative to external definitions of the "inner city." With a reluctant understanding that graffiti is considered vandalism by most people, particularly property owners, I believe that it is this very issue of ownership that engenders the art form. Further, it seems that the anti-graffiti message smacks of material determinism in which property owners essentially argue that public space, your environment, can only be manipulated if it is owned. In other words, if you exert influence on your environment with a spray can or thick stubbed marker, you could go to jail. It is illegal. But if you wear overalls with a company logo and receive a paycheck from the owner of a billboard, painting on the wall a "legitimate" message with the narrow intent of increasing the company's sales, you would be free from police harassment. While buses decked out as 3-D Pepsi ads cruise the streets lined with liquor and cigarette ads,

which mindlessly rely on the maxim that "sex sells," environmental pollution takes on a new meaning. But where is the outrage at this pollution?

Although the Mission District is San Francisco's most prominent arena for public art, it is also stands out an area underserved by banks, supermarkets, and the police. It is an area whose zip code bears the highest auto insurance rates, an area with a large number of liquor stores per person and the city's highest number of lead poisoned children. Apparently, graffiti artists, like the more traditional Mission muralists, appear to have a lot to say about their environment, even if it superficially appears to just add to the deterioration caused by institutional neglect. When a community is ignored, can outsiders make an entrance only to say that the young people cannot express themselves in a way that is *theirs*?

Graffiti Is the child of Migration, Culture and the Urban Landscape

While part of the human experience has been making cities out of deserts or residential communities on the fringes of fertile agricultural land, humans have always been decorative as well. While historically people sought locations suitable for hunting and growing their own food, people now seek access to jobs to have the money to buy that food in a modernized setting. As hunters and gatherers, and as mobile clans, humans decorated and documented their existence on the walls of caves. Today, on the other hand, Twentieth Century humans often end up suffering external, if not mysterious, definitions of the environment. We are subject to the aesthet-

ics of major industries (who give us jobs while ruining our environments), advertisers, city planners, and occasionally artists, unless we engage in community projects ourselves.

As a modern people, we often



choose our environment because of its proximity to employment opportunities. The flight to urban centers, a factor of the western industrial revolution, continues throughout the world as cities like Bombay, Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Los Angeles seem to expand without limits. These migrations, people changing their environments, takes its toll on human traditions which are linked to places of origin. Migration is considered by some to wreak havoc on (folk) cultural traditions. Traditions are "lost," families dispersed, and as a result, people become individualistic, alienated from what they are, their cultural sensibility. This is particularly true if the destination is the U.S., although modern alienation is as much a function of capitalism, as urbanity, anywhere. Urban life seems to demand that your children watch 5 hours of television a day and that you begin to express yourself through consumerism and ownership, as opposed to telling stories and making crafts. This is environmental impact on the human psyche.

But such a negative view of migration tends to romanticize the economic conditions that generate the human flow and is likewise based on the assumption that culture disappears in transit when actually it evolves.. Migration is, after all, often the beginning of new synthe-

sized cultures. The combination of a cultural tradition with new technology or a different medium, gives us new forms of cultural expression, a new way to define and improve our environment. Graffiti is an example of this synthesis of old and new, and is particularly important because it has the dubious honor of being "illegal."

Public Space and Self-Serving Messages

For a moment, let's move back to ideas about the development of civilizations and the human condition, and consider the intrinsic value of wall paintings. Historians have learned much about ancient civilizations from the writing on the wall. Likewise, ancient leaders, like modern politicians, realized that by controlling the messages on the walls, read: public arena, you wielded complete control over the historical resonance of your culture and use of power. Montezuma, as one example, is said to have used murals as the lexicon of his reign. He was able to craft a selective history that justified his actions, vilified his enemies and celebrated his power. For example, conflicts with subordinate, outlying tribes often resulted in mini-slaughters or at least token executions if they were unable to meet the extraordinary demands of Montezuma's tribute collectors. Often, these quasi-tax collectors would ask for more than the tribes were prepared or able to offer according to system of mandated tribal contributions and taxes. Violence was used to crush this disloyalty and intimidate them into handing over more than they could afford in consideration of the needs of the tribe itself. But, the visual history annals characterized these conflicts as situations in which tax collectors were ambushed, a battle ensuing and resulting in the justified deaths of insurrectionist tribal members.

Today, political power today is acquired and sustained in much the same way. with the media serving the

same function, for the majority of the populace, of public wall paintings. Television like wall paintings is accessible whether a person is literate or not. Thus, across history, we see that people have always found it important to control representation in pursuit of power and respect in their environment. To some extent, this is the essence of today's graffiti. It's about asserting a presence when you're invisible and disenfranchised. But it's also about retaining mini-kingdoms on the streets and gaining respect.

Most graffiti artists will tell you that they started as taggers and have years of experience in covert self-aggrandizement. It is exactly this illegal context that distinguishes this self-taught, urban American art form from the "fine art" tradition, and even from folk art traditions. While the majority of the populace considers it aesthetically unpleasing, particularly because of its impact on property values, many graffiti artists will tell you that while the suits and ties consider it an eyesore, they consider their urban environment equally unaesthetic. Poverty, lack of opportunities and the common low-income neighborhood presence of some toxic entity is not exactly utopia. But it is not just dystopia and anger that fuels art, it is a need for self-expression that

The essence of today's graffiti is in asserting a presence when you're invisible and disenfranchised.

is often about cultural pride.

Graffiti affirms our culture in a distinctive way. You will notice that Latino graffiti invariably displays certain symbols and icons. One of my favorite pieces, by some writers in L.A., was a long wall with the names of all their dead friends in old-English style

letters. The narrative was biblical, as we followed their journey through the Judeo-Christian afterlife. But most prominent, was the huge, twenty foot *Virgen de Guadalupe*, who has been an icon for the oppressed since the Revolution, as well as the guiding symbol in many of the marches headed by the United **Farm** Workers. In **Chicano/Latino** graffiti you will often notice the traditional Chicano idols from Zapata to *La Virgen*, to pyramids and adaptations of Aztec and Mayan structural motifs. This conglomeration of ichnography breaks down the actual geographic and chronological relationship of these groups, icons or events. Likewise, this breaking down of **barriers** or categories occurs among the artists themselves. Writing crews are most often composed of **artists** from different racial and cultural backgrounds, which means that this art form is a viable to alternative to the **street** violence that is associated with these **baggy-jeaned**, baseball cap wearing, hip-hop listening "types."

If graffiti brings young people together like no organized after school program has, why is the talent deemed illegal? Or, perhaps another way to frame the question is, why do people accept money as the sole credential for access to their mental environment? Through graffiti art, a **new(er)** hybrid culture is sustained. Graffiti and hip-hop is essentially the nineties version of the *Pachuco* (**zoot** suit) movement of the forties. Then, like now, young men and women of color chose to dress a certain way, dance to a certain kind of music, drive certain cars and hang out, often to the exclusion of whites, because they were not accepted by predominant **White culture**. The thirties and forties saw the "repatriation" of hundreds of thousands of Mexican laborers, the internment of the Japanese, continued segregation in rural and urban areas for Blacks, not to mention **urban riots** in Detroit and L.A. But, the best thing about such subcultural movements is that they are not just about feeling bad and left out. Rather, the disdain of the dominant culture is intensified as the message continues to be about refuting assimilation and displaying pride about being inherently and self-consciously different. It's about reflecting and defining your environment in a way that really just corresponds in its distinction with the all the other disparities in the lives of whites and non-whites in this country. Of course we're going to create our own way of communicating and of course it's going to make people uncomfortable because it is a reminder of our presence and lack of respect for the external forces which circumscribe entire communities of color. After all, how can the **same** people who make urban planning decisions or buy advertising space without consulting the community, expect to be honored by young people who see **art** as a way to **claim** and/or beautify the environment?

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A Tribute to Earnest Witt, Sr.

March 14, 1941 — November 14, 1993



In November, the movement for environmental justice lost one of its long-time leaders. Earnest Witt, Sr. of Richmond, California. Ernie was an activist in Richmond, helping to found the West County Toxics Coalition and serving as President of its Board for many years until his untimely death from cancer. Ernie acted locally, but also thought globally, and served on the national board of directors of ACORN, was a founding member of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, and on the board of the National Toxics Campaign until its dissolution last year. We at RPE mourn the movement's loss — as well as our own personal loss. Ernie was a friend and colleague. We asked Henry Clark of the West County Toxics Coalition to offer a few words of remembrance...

Ernie Witt Sr. was a pioneer in the movement for Environmental Justice. His dedication to, and sincerity in, serving his community in Richmond, and other people throughout the nation, records his place and remembrance in the history and forward movement in the fight for jobs, justice, human dignity and environmental protection. This is what environmental justice is all about — and this is what Ernie Witt Sr. was all about.

The West County Toxics Coalition will remember Ernie Witt Sr.'s example and continue to pioneer the path until the final victory is won for environmental justice.

— Henry Clark

« From **CESAR CHAVEZ**, page 1

in the United Farm Workers office next to Westerfield Park, just like hundreds of farmworkers with whom he held "afternoon counsel." It was a violent summer and although I spent no more than two days there and cannot recall the words of the conversation, I never forgot standing in the early morning picket line in the Riverside County countryside across from Teamster

For my generation of California Chicanos, urban and rural, the farm worker struggle was our civil rights movement. "Viva La Causa" was a struggle slogan of pride and rage and life purpose.

"goons," in the midst of sheriff riot squads — so near **physical** violence. The lessons of risk and political sacrifice for farmworker dignity seemed so clear then.

The lessons have proven indelible as time passed. Perhaps to honor and **thank** the teacher, perhaps to preserve **the** historical moment, I joined the more **than** 30,000 marchers in Delano on **April** 29 for Cesar's funeral. I know there were, among the thousands, many who had been taught these and many

more political and **moral** lessons.

For my generation of California Chicanos, urban and rural, the farmworker struggle was our civil rights movement. "Viva La Causa" was a struggle slogan of pride and rage and life purpose. Racism was real at the local supermarket picket. The streets were for marches of protest. "Social movements" were not things of fiction and history. There was meaning to life larger than your own well-being and future. The expectation that you were to "give back to the community" found a means to do so.

Of **course**, the farm worker vision of a better life was best put before Californians in the '60s and '70s by the UFW **strikes** and **boycotts**. Advocacy groups, like California Rural Legal Assistance, took the example and integrated the union's objectives into their social change agendas. But equally significant was Chavez's inspiration, leaving in its wake a legacy of justice advocates whom he motivated to address the plight of farm workers and others similarly oppressed. The inspired could not accept such injustices in a democracy like ours. I, for one, was moved to **attend** law school with the single purpose of using those legal skills in rural California where I had been born and raised. My legal ambition was simple — to put my lawyering in the hands of either a CRLA or a UFW and **change** the lives of farm workers and poor folk for the better. It changed my life direction forever.

When Cesar died on April 23, 1993, every **farm** worker and justice advocate in this country lost a brother and a member of his or her family. After his death, the media and the pundits have pointed to the imperfections of the UFW movement. But like Martin Luther King before him, the imperfections of **Cesar's** leadership surfaced at death because, after all, he was no less human in pursuing loftier dreams for the **betterment** of the human condition. But the worsening conditions faced by farm workers today cannot be placed at the feet of Cesar Chavez and the UFW. **CRLA's** poverty advocacy over the last

25 years indicates that farm worker conditions would be even worse today but for the threat of unionization Cesar and the UFW posed to growers. In any **final** assessment, we have to add a number of other active factors involved in the debilitation of this particular labor movement **including** the active intervention of state government in the '80s denying, in practice, farmworkers their right to unionize. Before we blame the union, perhaps we also need to ask why sometimes we fail to give or fail to be **instruments** of change.

The Coachella lesson about violence and risk happened for me exactly 20 years ago. Because of it, I have yet to feel grief over the loss of Cesar Chavez. The funeral was celebratory for me, a communal farewell to an extraordinary man who believed that the farm laborer not only had the right to sit **at** the negotiation table with the grower, but that farmworkers had the human right to a just wage and benefits that might possibly keep their families out of poverty.

Cesar Chavez is as close as I will ever come to knowing a man whose humble life fully embodied principles of social justice, Christian and political love for others. Those are values hard to "humanize" in any lifetime. To live them appears more humanly impossible than possible until you see one with vision practice them in the flesh. In the pursuit of that unionization vision, Cesar irreversibly gave faith to **thousands** of **farm** workers who came to believe in this simple cause themselves. That vision, in our lifetimes, taught American labor that the field worker was organizable and entitled to labor law protection equal to other laborers. Neither society nor farmworkers **will** ever be the same after such a lesson.

Thank you, **compañero**, for the political lessons, the justice vision, and the life direction. May your soul rest in **peace**. May we continue your fight **Boycou** grapes. **Adelante y hacia la luz.**

José R. Padilla is the executive director of California Rural Legal Assistance, Inc.

Legislation

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or national origin.

The Executive Order is an important dimension of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate disparate adverse pollution exposures. However, permanent

The Executive Order is an important dimension of a comprehensive strategy to eliminate disparate adverse pollution exposures.

statutory mandates are paramount to any thorough approach to remedying past harm and preventing harmful conduct in the future.

Congressional Action on Environmental Justice

Both Houses of Congress are considering bills that cover issues ranging from lead abatement, siting dumps and incinerators and protecting Native American lands, to prohibiting shipments of hazardous waste to developing countries. In the House, leadership on the issues is spearheaded by influential Democrats of color such as Reps. John Conyers, Jr. (D-MI), John Lewis (D-GA), Cardiss Collins (D-IL), Barbara Rose-Collins (D-MI), and Ed Towns (D-NY). In the Senate, powerful Committee Chairmen, John Glenn (D-OH) and Max Baucus (D-MT), progressive Paul Wellstone (D-MN), and African American Senator Carol Mosely-Braun, are the advance team.

The four pending bills which are solely dedicated to either relieving disproportionate exposures in affected

communities or studying its impact are S. 1161 and HR. 2105, companion legislation introduced by Rep. Lewis and Senator Baucus entitled the Environmental Justice Act; HR. 1924, Rep. Cardiss Collins' Environmental Equal Rights Act; and HR. 1925, Rep. Rose-Collins' Environmental Health Equity Information Act

Companion bills S. 1161 and HR. 2105, both entitled the Environmental Justice Act of 1993, are similar in language and nearly identical in intent. The Act would impose requirements to designate Environmental High Impact Areas (EHIA's), identify and rank adverse health and environmental effects therein, and initiate a health study which would be conducted in EHIA's by the Department of Health and Human Services. Methodology for designating EHIA's would be determined by an inter-agency team led by the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry in coordination with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Institute for Environmental Health Sciences, the National Center for Health Statistics and the Bureau of the Census.

HR. 1924, the Environmental Equal Rights Act of 1993, would amend the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act which governs solid and hazardous waste management in this nation. The bill authorizes citizens to petition EPA or a state agency against siting new solid and hazardous waste management facilities when the facility would be sited in an already "environmentally disadvantaged community." HR. 1925, the Environmental Health Equity Information Act of 1993, establishes requirements to collect and maintain information on race, gender, ethnic origin, income and educational levels of persons living in communities adjacent to toxic substances contamination.

Nine bills in Congress capture certain facets of issues affecting communities of color and low income communities. Rep. John Conyers, Jr. is author of H.R. 3425, which would elevate EPA to Cabinet status. Contained in this bill are provisions which would create a high-level Office of

Environmental Justice responsible for integrating environmental justice objectives into the mission and functional responsibilities of the new Department. On the Senate side, Senator Wellstone amended the elevation bill, S. 171, to step-up enforcement, research, and data collection on disparate health and environmental impact and require an annual progress report to Congress.

H.R. 495 and S. 533 are vehicles sponsored by Senator John Glenn (D-OH) and Rep. William Clinger (R-PA). These are substantially similar bills amending the Solid Waste Disposal Act to require, as part of the permit application process, preparation of a community information statement for new hazardous waste treatment, storage or disposal facilities. Key provisions in the bill mandate assessment of the demographic characteristics of the affected host community according to race, ethnic background and income.

The disproportionate effects of lead contamination on African American children and other people of color is widely documented and Congressional lead bills would provide financing needed to alleviate the causes of some poisoning. HR. 2479, the Lead-Based Paint Hazard Abatement Trust Fund Act of 1993, and its parallel, S. 1347, were introduced by Rep. Ben Cardin (D-MD) and Senator Bill Bradley (D-NJ) to provide federal funding for abatement of lead paint hazards in low income housing and child care centers.

Facility siting, including incinerators, landfills, industrial and chemical production plants (among others), is one of the myriad environmental concerns in the struggle by people of color and those who have low incomes to protect themselves. H. R. 2488, sponsored by Rep. Bill Richardson (D-NM), is the Pollution Prevention and Incineration Alternatives Act. This amendment to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act institutes a moratorium on permitting for new construction or expansion of municipal solid or hazardous waste incinerators until 1997; pending adoption of new permit standards and accelerated rates of

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recycling in the states. Facility proponents must demonstrate that expansion or new construction would not disproportionately affect communities of color or low income communities.

Certain concerns of Native Americans are addressed in two bills, H. R. 1267 and S. 720. Open dumps and waste management operations plague tribal lands and S. 720, the Indian Lands Open Dump Clean-Up Act of 1993, intends to rectify these problems. Pursuant to this mandate, the Indian Health Service would be required to inventory the location of all open dumps; assess associated health and environmental hazards; and priorities closure and clean-up activities. H. R. 1267, the State Status to Indian Tribes for Enforcement of the Solid Waste Disposal Act, also was **introduced** by Senator Richardson. The goal of this bill is providing program grants and other financial assistance to Native American nations to facilitate development of environmental infrastructures.

Finally, recognizing that environmental justice issues span the globe and **threats** experienced by people of color in the United States are the same as those experienced by people of color around the world, Rep. Ed Towns is the long-standing champion of legislation **that** would protect international communities of color by banning the current practice of dumping domestic hazardous waste in developing countries. Within five years of enactment, exports to the 33 industrialized nations which **are** members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) would be banned. Within one year of enactment, exports to non-OECD countries (developing nations) would be banned.

Southern States Pioneer Environmental Justice Law

Mirroring actions at the federal level, states are working on several environmental justice initiatives. While most of the pending state legislation or resolutions are aimed at studying inequities and collecting data, some bills require specific programmatic actions.

In Arkansas, the legislature imposed

a restriction on concentrating high impact solid waste disposal facilities in low income communities and communities of color, creating a rebuttable presumption against locating such operations within 12 miles of each other. Troublesome features of this law permit disposal projects to proceed if economic benefits accrue to the host community (raising concerns about economic extortion), and exempt broad categories of activity, including recycling and waste tire management units, and dedicated industrial waste facilities.

A Louisiana law imposes requirements on the Department of Environmental Quality. Act 767 establishes a schedule for three state hearings after which the Department Secretary is charged with developing policy **recommendations** for the legislature. While the law generated **little** attention during the legislative process, its implications become more important in view of recent finding by the U. S. Civil Rights Commission which revealed that EPA and the State have administered environmental programs in a manner which discriminates against African Americans.' Virginia has passed House Joint Resolution 529, authorizing a legislative audit and review commission to study siting, monitoring and cleanup of waste emphasizing impact on communities of color.

Legislation is pending in other states. In California, AB 2212 requires submission of project site demographics prior to issuance of a permit for a "potentially high-impact development project." The bill **strives** to provide governmental **decisionmakers** with information sufficient to prevent discriminatory siting. It has been passed twice by the legislature, and vetoed twice by Republican Governor Pete Wilson. Legislators in Georgia have introduced a state version of the Environmental Justice Act which is pending in Congress. Tennessee House Joint Resolution 146 directs the Departments of Health, Agriculture, and Environmental and Conservation to evaluate a state version of the Congressional **Environmental Justice** bill.

The New York legislature is **consid-**

ering two bills, one which holds special promise with regard to redressing endemic problems experienced in some communities of color, unemployment and poverty. The **first**, New York A-5192 is a study bill. A task force would be created to research, conduct outreach and education on environmental justice issues. The second, A-7140 attempts to institute maxims for equitable development by (i) directing the Department of Environmental Conservation to survey and maintain an index of "environmental facility" locations; and (ii) requiring facility permit applicants to "submit along with the application to construct or operate any new environmental facility, a plan outlining an economic

Congress is considering bills that range from lead abatement, siting dumps and incinerators and protecting Native American lands, to prohibiting shipments of hazardous waste to developing countries.

development strategy to reduce unemployment rates or [the] poverty rate" in the proposed host community.

North Carolina is considering an Environmental Justice Commission to examine State environmental policies and siting practices based on socioeconomic and demographic (HB-1423). South Carolina's bill, HB-3824, is entitled the Environmental Equity Act of 1993. The State Department of

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Health and Environmental Control (HEC) would be required to "identify environmental high risk areas containing high levels of toxic chemicals." Similar to the Environmental Justice Act bills, HEC is directed to correct significant adverse impacts of toxic pollution on human health. Where measurable health effects are found, a siting moratorium takes effect and demographic descriptions are required in all applications to site new facilities.

Conclusion

The draft Executive Order on Environmental Justice and legislation pending in Congress and the states represent components of a comprehensive agenda to reform environmental programs in the U.S. Legislative mandates are crucial planks in what must be a broad platform to redress existing disproportionate and discriminatory environmental threats and to prevent these effects in the future. Together with actions undertaken by grassroots activists which propel restructuring of existing programs and creation of progressive new ones, government is key to alleviating disparate impact.

Executive and legislative branch actions which (a) impel development of administrative, regulatory, enforcement and research initiatives by federal and state government, and (b) prescribe judicial remedies for those harmed are essential elements of guaranteeing the right to equal protection from pollution for all Americans. Movement activists continue to push for change united behind the principle that reforms to systems which cause environmental problems experienced by affected communities must be permanent and irrevocable.

Deeohn Ferris is Program Director of the Environmental Justice Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law in Washington, DC. She thanks Paz Artaza-Regan and Richard Regan for providing information used in this article.

Notes

'The Battle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana... Government, Industry and the People. Louisiana Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. September 1993.

<< From EDITORS' NOTES, page 2

both urban and rural regions, in all types of work settings, as both immigrants and native born, and with wide-ranging histories and futures. Despite such differences, however, most Latino communities are fundamentally similar in that they lack political and economic power, which often results in Latinos being victimized by many forms of injustice, including environmental racism.

The many stories and examples presented in this issue serve to expand the definition of environmental racism beyond "disproportionate exposure" to include other forms of environmental inequality, such as struggles over land ownership and use and economic development. Nevertheless, because of the overwhelming urban nature of the Chicano/Latino population, the environmental issues with the most direct impact on our population include air pollution, such as in Los Angeles and the South Bronx; inappropriate land use and development, as seen in the expansion of the Port of Miami; Latinos' exposure to lead in San Francisco; and the vast array of occupational hazards Latino workers routinely encounter.

In response to such conditions, Chicanos/Latinos have organized in a variety of ways in an effort not only to improve their local environments, but also with an eye towards building community organization and solidarity. The rationale behind building community organizations is the need for long-term solutions to issues that will continue to reoccur. The fact that Latinos have responded in a wide variety of ways attests not only to the rich history and potential of the Chicano/Latino community, but also suggests the future path of our community and the possibilities open to us in our efforts to bring about social change. Both the specific forms of environmental racism Latinos encounter, and the ways in which they respond, suggest the need for a multi-faceted approaches to countering environmental racism, approaches which resonate with the reality and needs of the Chicano/Latino population, and which help us to build

bridges with other racial/ethnic groups.

In terms of history, we have of course, the venerable legacy of Cesar Chavez which José Padilla addresses. The farmworkers' struggles continue, however, in New Jersey as is described by the work of CATA. But as Betita Martinez warns, the reality of Chicanos/Latinos extends far beyond that of farm work. In fact, the majority of Chicanos/Latinos are urban wage-workers, facing a far different set of circumstances

The reality of Chicanos/Latinos extends far beyond that of farm work. In fact, the majority of Chicanos/Latinos are urban workers, facing a far different set of circumstances.

which require effective organizing and resistance on numerous fronts, including economic, political, and cultural arenas. Only by addressing each of these key forces in the lives of our communities can we build a movement for environmental and social justice. Economic inequality and poverty play a prominent role in Chicanos/Latinos' understanding of their inequality and oppression. In some cases, economic opportunity may be achieved via legislation and affirmative action efforts, but in many other instances, given the complexity of international capitalism, economic struggles take on different forms. We include a commu-

nique from insurgents in Chiapas, Mexico, to remind readers of the impact of racism not only in the U.S. but abroad. and of the different forms response to that racism can take.

In the case of Puerto Rico, Déborah Berman Santana writes of the economic and community development efforts of the community of Salinas, to build a better life for themselves, while Chicanos of Costilla County, Colorado are struggling to regain their land in order to manage it as a common property resource. Jose Morales reminds us of the negative impact U.S. national policy has had on many cities. Against many odds, PODER in Austin worked vehemently against the gasoline tank farm that contaminated their soil and won. In a different vein, the Labor/Community Strategy Center of Los Angeles is seeking to hold corporations accountable for southern California's air pollution by building a multiracial anti-corporate grassroots campaign. For the Strategy Center, air pollution is but one example of corporate America's power; a power which needs to be broken and returned to communities. In all of these cases, the communities in question realize that some degree of economic empowerment is essential to achieving their environmental and social objectives. For some communities, the answer lies not in whether the battles are won or lost, but the longevity of the community which is built throughout the process.

Besides these economic struggles, there are also efforts at creating specific change in formal political arenas. The legislative update offered by Deohn Fems is a testament to the influence of the environmental justice movement. While she is correct in recognizing the limited efficacy of such approaches, we must appreciate these efforts as central to any multifaceted approach. In Texas, new ground is being broken by the Texas Network for Environmental and Economic Justice (TNEEJ), which we hope might provide a model for other activists and states considering such action. The second type of political action of equal if not greater value is the forging of a new politics and identities

between activists and communities themselves. The update on the Third SNEEJ gathering, a binational meeting in Tijuana and San Diego, is a landmark event as the environmental justice movement is recognizing the superficiality of international borders. Similarly, Betita Martinez's piece and the article by Torres and Valle call upon us to

One important topic which is not explicitly addressed in this issue is gender inequality. As activists, we have seen how Latinos continue to be controlled and oppressed by the dominant Anglo society, our own patriarchal culture, and the continued transmittal of sexist traditions and practices, often in the name of "upholding" the culture.

reconsider our traditional thinking about race and Latinos. Effective political action requires new categories of identification which are based more on political agreement than simply on skin color.

Finally, we can also see how Latinos have responded through culture. The work of Dr. Loco and the graffiti artists provide us not only with clear examples of cultural achievements and activities, but show us how power relations seek to limit the expression of oppressed groups. Moreover, these "alternative" forms of expression suggest the need for Chicanos/Latinos to reclaim lost ideas, traditions, and practices. In particular, there is a need to reassert the validity of alternative definitions of the environment, as Bonnie Burlin suggests.

One important topic which is not explicitly addressed in this issue is gender inequality. As activists, we have seen how Latinos continue to be controlled and oppressed by the dominant Anglo society, our own patriarchal culture, and the continued transmittal of sexist traditions and practices, often in the name of "upholding" the culture. Although the environmental justice movement has provided low-income women of color a chance to expand their horizons and test their abilities, we continue to see the role of women, particularly immigrant Latinas, suppressed. This is a difficult issue, made all the more sensitive due to very real cultural differences, that the environmental justice movement must learn to effectively and positively address. However, there is movement towards change as is shown by groups like PODER in San Francisco where it is women leading the battle against lead poisoning in the struggle to improve their communities and families quality of life.

Although we have categorized environmental justice efforts roughly into three categories, economics, politics, and culture, there is obviously a great deal of overlap. In reality, all of the struggles are about economics, politics and culture in our efforts to promote environmental and social justice. This diversity of activity demonstrates that the only way to counter environmental racism is through waging a battle on numerous fronts.

— Leticia Alcántar & Laura Pulido

Arizona

Tucsonans for a
Clean Environment
P.O. Box 1333
Tucson, AZ 85702
602-883-8424

California

AFSC Proyecto **Campesino**
111 N.W. 3rd St.
Visalia, CA 93291
209-733-4844

California Rural Legal
Assistance
211 Mission Street Suite 401
San Francisco, CA 94110
415-864-3405

Center for Third
World Organizing
3861 Martin Luther King Way
Oakland, CA 94609
415-654-9601

Earl Mart Cancer Cluster
Task Force
329 N. Cottonwood St.
Visalia, CA 93291
209-732-0199

El Pueblo para El Aire
y Agua **Limpio**
P.O. Box 387
Kettleman City, CA 93239
209-386-5339 or 209-386-9645

Labor/Community
WATCHDOG
14540 Haynes St.
Van Nuys, CA 91316
818-781-4800

Mexican American Political
Association (MAPA)
Route 2 P.O. Box 225
Delano, CA 93215
805-792-6532

Mothers of East L.A.
Santa Isabel Chapter
924 S. Mott St.
Los Angeles, CA 90023
213-263-8191

Padres **Hacia Una Vida Mejor**
P.O. Box 319
Buttonwillow, CA 93206
805-764-5426

Latino Environmental Groups

This list of some of the many Latino environmental justice groups is drawn from our files and Robert D. Bullard's excellent resource, the People of Color Environmental Groups Directory 1992. For copies of the directory, which includes over 200 people of color environmental groups, send \$10 to "Directory," Department of Sociology, UC-Riverside, Riverside, CA 92521.

People Organizing to Demand
Environmental Rights
1535 Mission St.
San Francisco, CA 94103
415-431-4210

People United for a
Better Oakland (PUEBLO)
3863 Martin Luther King Way
Oakland, CA 94609
415-601-0158

United Farm Workers of
America, AFL-CIO
P.O. Box 62
La Paz/Keene, CA 93531
805-822-5571

Urban Habitat Program
Earth Island Institute
300 Broadway, Suite 28
San Francisco, CA 94133
415-733-3666

Colorado

Citizens Against Contamination
230 W. 6th Ave.
Denver, CO 80204
303-892-1158

Costilla County Committee for
Environmental Soundness
P.O. Box 91
San Luis, CO 81152
719-672-3883

District of Columbia

National Rainbow Coalition
1110 Vermont Ave. NW, #410
Washington DC 20005
202-728-1180

Idaho

Idaho Migrant Council, Inc.
P. O. Box 490
Caldwell, ID 83606-0490
208-454-1652

New Jersey

CATA — Farm Workers
Support Committee
4 S. Delsea Drive
Glassboro, NJ 08028
609-881-2507

GrassRoots Environmental
Organization
P.O. Box 2018
Bloomfield, NJ 07003
201-492-8965

New Mexico

Atrisco Lands Rights Council
1446 Bridge Blvd. SW
Albuquerque, NM 87105
505-243-0863

Gente y Ambiente
P.O. Box 337
Ribera, NM 87560
505-421-7035

Regeneracion Del Norte
P. O. Box 855
Questa, NM 87556
505-586-1843

San Jose Community
Awareness Council
2401 Broadway SE
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-243-4837

Southwest Network for
Environmental & Economic
Justice and
Southwest Organizing Project
211 10th St SW
Albuquerque, NM 87102
505-247-8832

New York

The Toxic Avengers of
El Puente
211 S. 4th St.
New York, NY 11211
212-910-1805

Ohio

Farm Labor Organizing
Committee (FLOC)
507 S. Saint Clair St
Toledo, OH 43602
419-243-3456

Pennsylvania

Norris Square
Neighborhood Project Inc.
2224 N. 2nd St.
Philadelphia, PA 19122
215-426-4631

Puerto Rico

Centro de Investigacion, In-
formacion y Educacion Social
Cond El Centro I, Off. #607
Ham Rey, PR 00918
809-759-8787 or 809-759-8675

Comite **Despertar** Cidreno
P. O. Box 123
Cidra, PR 00633
809-739-6091

Committee Pro-Rescue of the
Good Environment of
Guayanilla
St. 9, G-11 Santa Elena
Guayanilla, PR 00656
809-835-2341

Texas

Centro de Salud Familiar La Fe
700 S. Ochoa
El Paso, TX 79901
915-545-4544

continued next page

Latino Environmental Groups, continued...

Concerned Citizens
102 Vera Cruz
Rosenberg, TX 77471
713-342-5598

Farm Worker Health & Safety
Project, Texas Rural Legal Aid
259 S. Texas
Weslaco, TX 78596
512-968-9574

Gulf Coast Coalition for
Public Health
864 Central Blvd
Brownsville, TX 78520
512-541-5231

Indigenous Women's Network
13621 FM 2769
Austin, TX 78726
512-258-3880

Lower Rio Grande Valley
Nature Center
P. O. Box 8125
Weslaco, TX 78596
512-969-2475

MALDEF Regional Office
140 E. Houston, Suite 300
San Antonio, TX 78205
512-224-5476

People Organized in Defense of
Earth and her Resources
55 North I.H. 35, Room 205B
Austin, TX 78702
512-472-9921

Texas Center for Policy Studies
P. O. Box 2618
Austin, TX 78768
512-474-0811

United East Austin
1000 Glen Oaks Court
Austin, TX 78702
512-477-2352

Letters

Dear Readers:

With this issue and the letter below we introduce our letters column. We hope you will be inspired to write us a letter either about something you read in **RPE** or about some other topic that want to draw to the attention of our readers.

Dear RPE:

I know your commitment to people and the planet, and I have the greatest respect for your intelligence. So I'm asking you to think through a little more deeply your (implied) position that advocacy of population **control** = racism.

It's **true** that overconsumption in the petroleum-based world (not just the U.S.) threatens the future more than population growth does. Wasteful industrial practices actually come second, after consumption, in the hierarchy of earth **destroyers**. But population growth (especially in the North) is still a significant factor. (**ALL** this stuff has been quantified in *Limits to Growth*, and *Beyond the Limits*, by Meadows *et al.*)

Why do you assume that anyone who talks about population always means poor people's babies? This line does not appear in any recent ZPG literature that I have seen. **Ehrlich** certainly doesn't talk this way anymore, though perhaps he did twenty years ago. Responsible population policy **starts** at home. And though Southern population growth is not the main element in environmental decay globally, it certainly hinders attempts to **raise** living standards and protect environments locally.

Please don't forget that "traditional" large family sizes reflect a tradition of male dominance and women's exclusion from economic life. Studies galore show that women worldwide want between two or three children, but they lack the family planning resources and the political power to **control** their own fertility.

Yes, some people are using ecological arguments to attack immigration, a position which is irresponsible, incorrect, and in many cases racist. I know racism among environmentalists holds back our vital unity

with people of color organizations. But when **Cathi Tactaquin** or Luke Cole says even the discussion of population implies racism, who is really driving the wedge between groups?

We desperately need a comprehensive position on population **that**:

- Identifies overconsumption and wasteful **industrial** practices as the chief despoilers of the **Earth**.

- Acknowledges human population growth as a significant environmental **stressor** and developmental inhibitor.

- Recognizes that empowering women to control their own lives and reproduction is the key to achieving sustainable populations.

- Declares that immigration per se is not a population issue.

- Works for policies here and abroad to encourage smaller family size, including economic and educational opportunities for men and women, universal access to birth control, and perhaps reduction of **tax** incentives for having children.

— David Spero, San Francisco

Editors' reply: We never said that anyone who talks about population is a racist. We said that there is a racist social program being carried on by those like FAIR, and environmentalists who use their figures and arguments, who are talking about zero net immigration as a solution to our environmental problems.

We never said that woman shouldn't have access to birth control or didn't want birth control. We did point out that the U.S. has participated in many population control programs that are coercive to women of color.

Far from prohibiting the discussion of population issues, the whole issue of RPE was devoted to having just that honest discussion, bringing into the discussion voices that are not often heard in the population debate— voices also ignored, unfortunately, in the allotment of program money to population issues.

We want to turn the question on its head and ask you and others so concerned with population, why isn't the question: How much consumption can we sustain given the population? Thanks for your letter.

Resources

New Publications

Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement, by Robert Gottlieb. Island Press, 1993. This is a history of the environmental movement and the redefinition of that movement that comes out of environmental justice battles of low-income communities and communities of color.

In the Barrios: Latinos and the Underclass Debate, by Joan Moore and Raquel Pinderhughes, eds. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993.

The New Resource Wars: Native and Environmental Struggles Against Multinational Corporations by Al Gedicks (Forward by Winona LaDuke). South End Press, 1993. Gedicks traces the struggle against the assault on native peoples and the environment from James Bay, Quebec to the Ecuadorean Amazon, and targets governments and corporations as the source.

Not in Our Backyard: The People and Events that Shaped America's Modern Environmental Movement, by Tim Redmond and Marc Mowrey, William Morrow, 1993. This anecdotal account of environmental battles since 1970 contains some accounts of environmental justice struggles and is fun to read.

The Battle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana. . . Government, Industry and the Public published by the U.S. Commission on Civic Rights, September 1993, a review and set of policy recommendations on environmental policies and practices and race discrimination in Louisiana Available from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 911 Walnut Street, R. 3103, Kansas City, MO 64106, 816-426-5253.

"The Threat of Environmental Racism," by Robert D. Bullard, *Natural Resources & Environment* 7(3) 23-26, 55-56 (1993).

Events

March 10-13 — Eugene, OR. 12th Annual Public Interest Environmental Law Conference. Call 503-346-3891 or Fax 503-346-3985.

March 23-27 — Sea Islands, SC. Annual Assembly of the Rural Coalition (designed to launch to "Community-Based Development Movement"). Call 703-534-1845.

April 4-22 — UN Headquarters, New York NY, Preparatory committee for the International Conference on Population & Development to be held in Cairo, Egypt in September 1994. Call 212-297-5244 or Fax 212-297-5250.

October 21-28 — Costa Rica. Down to Earth: Practical Applications of Ecological Economics, Third Annual Conference of the International Society for Ecological Economics. Call: 011-506-69-1600 or Fax: 011-506-37-6868.

October 26-30 — Boston, MA. The Economics of Community Character: The Role of Historic Preservation, 48th National Conference of the National Trust Historic Preservation. Call 202-673-4092 or Fax 202-673-4223.

Book Announcement

Toxic Struggles: The Theory and Practice of Environmental Justice, edited by Richard Hofrichter, has just been published by New Society Publishers. In communities across the country, people of color, the poor, women, migrant farmworkers, and industrial workers are joining forces with activists to challenge corporate polluters. Grassroots organizations are reshaping the environmental movement by forcing it to incorporate social justice issues such as racism, class, gender, anti-militarism and poverty. *Toxic Struggles* explores the crisis communities face and creative approaches in a movement led by people who suffer most — people of color, women, and low-income, working class populations. By building multi-issue, multi-cultural coalitions, they are revitalizing politics, gaining community control and helping to support sustainable communities. Essays address environmental racism, ecofeminism, occupational health and safety, and the exploitation of peoples in developing countries. Contributors include Winona LaDuke, Robert Bullard, Cesar Chavez, Richard Moore and Louis Head, Vernice Miller Walden Bello, Medea Benjamin, Eric Mann and others. Available for \$16.95 from NSP, 4527 Springfield Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143, 215/382-6543.

Environmental Justice Legislation

An Overview of Federal and State Legislation
and the Clinton Administration's Response to the Environmental Justice Movement

by Deohn Ferris

The **struggle** for environmental justice is now inspiring government action at the federal and state levels. Strategies pursued by community-based environmental justice activists and other advocates have catalyzed endeavors by legislatures, government and regulatory **officials**, and the Clinton Administration to evaluate and, in some cases, remedy threats in the workplace, ambient exposures and indoor pollution. Political action in these sectors consists of new federal and state legislation, a draft Executive Order, federal and state inter-agency assessments of programs and policies that result in discriminatory effects, and in increased industry scrutiny of the **environmental** justice agenda.

The House and Senate of the U.S. Congress are **deliberating** over four bills that specifically address environmental justice issues, nine that contain provisions attempting to alleviate certain **risks** posed in communities of color and low income communities and one that bans the current practice by U.S. business of shipping **wastes** to developing countries. At least eight state legislatures are considering bills, and three southern states have enacted laws or resolutions dealing with environmental parity.

At the outset, it's important to note that none of these bills nor the Executive Order either alone or in combination, will solve the complex and wide-ranging environmental difficulties associated with disproportionate exposure. Environmental injustices, incorporating threats to air, land and water, indoors, outdoors and in the workplace are not amenable to resolution by simple means. Nevertheless, in limited ways, each bill engenders solutions responsive to some aspect of these multi-faceted problems by declaring the need to rectify the cumulative hazards **characteristic** in communities of color and low

income communities. Furthermore, a few of the bills recognize the urgency of evaluating synergistic effects, as well as identifying and eradicating deficiencies in the risk assessment process, scientific and health research, data collection and correlation.

The Draft Executive Order on Environmental Justice

One of the earliest signals of successful momentum occurred on **Earth** Day, 1993, when President Clinton announced a **commitment** to pursue a federal action plan to achieve environmental justice for **all** Americans. Within several months, the Administration prepared and circulated for review and comment a draft Executive Order on Environmental Justice. Adopting methods advocated by those in the environmental justice community, the Order would require data collection and **correlation** on disparate risk and **health** effects, environmental program assessments to identify impact on affected communities, and inter-agency coordination on eliminating discriminatory siting of polluting facilities.

Following recommendations contained in Presidential Transition Papers on environmental justice submitted to the incoming Administration in December 1992, the Executive Order would provide an important new tool to remedy inequity by clarifying the applicability of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to environmental programs. Title VI prohibits discrimination in programs or activities receiving federal financial **assistance** and provides judicial remedies for violations. Pursuant to Title VI, federal environmental protection programs and state programs which administer federal funds may not be implemented in a manner which has the practical effect of discriminating on the basis of race, **color**

>> see LEGISLATION, page 41

Race, Poverty & the Environment
c/o Earth Island Institute
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San Francisco, CA 94133-3312

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and Earth Island Institute's Urban Habitat Program.**