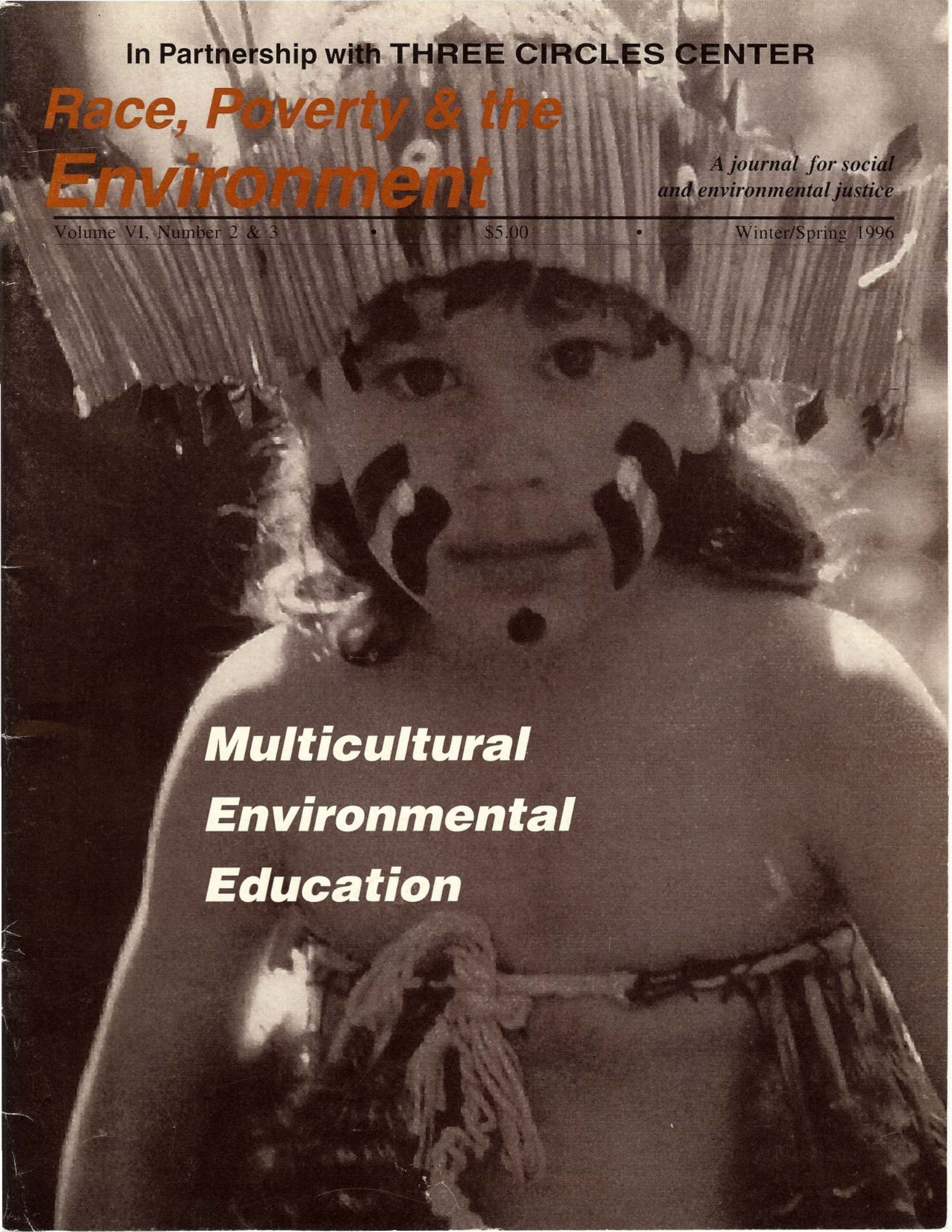
In Partnership with THREE CIRCLES CENTER

Race, Poverty & the Environment

A journal for social and environmental justice

Volume VI, Number 2 & 3 • $5.00 • Winter/Spring 1996



Multicultural Environmental Education

In This Issue

Race, Poverty & the Environment

Editors and Publishers

Carl Anthony • Luke Cole

Managing Editor: Hannah Creighton

Guest Editor: Running-Grass

Editorial Assistance:

Lisa Bertoldi • Munsun Park

Lisa Philippe • Cameron Yee

Race, Poverty & the Environment is published four times a year. Articles are ©1996 by their authors; please reproduce *RPE* by every means and give authors credit. Subscriptions are $15/four issues, $30 for institutions, free for low-income persons and community groups. Send checks to *RPE/* Earth Island Institute, Box 29908 Presidio Station, San Francisco CA 94129.

Editorial Policy

Race, Poverty and the Environment is dedicated to publishing material exploring the intersection of race, poverty and the environemnt. The views reflected in ***RPE*** are not necessarily those of the editors, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation or Earth Island Institute.

Photographs

The cover photo of Justin Williams, a Yukayo Native American, is by Tom Renick and printed with permission of the National Indian Justice Center.

The historical photos on the back cover and page 44 are from the Smithsonian Collection. The U.S. government policy to achieve assimilation by forcing Indian children into boarding schools has been decried by Native Americans and others as cultural genocide. With these photos we remind ourselves that the struggle for multicultural education is not new.

Editor's Notes

The Four Streams of Multicultural Environmental Education

by Running-Grass

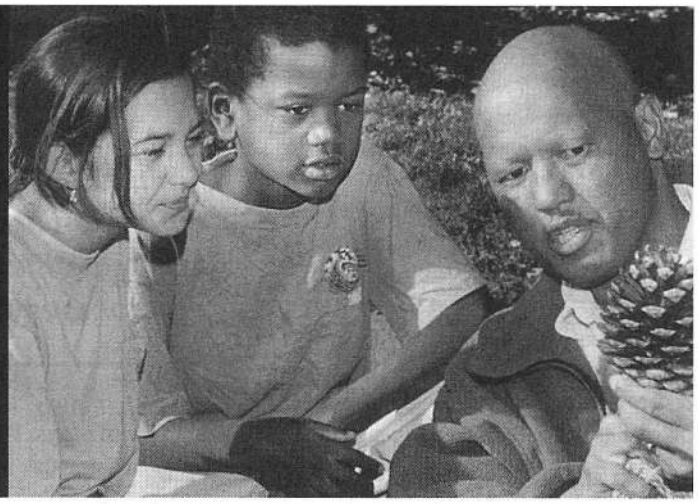


Photo of Running-Grass and children from California Perspectives: An Anthology from California Tommorrow, *Fall 1994, Vol. 4.*

You are holding a powerful tool in your hands. It's a vehicle for voices, a link in a chain, a counter-narrative, an exposé, a source of inspiration and therefore of hope; it is also a continuing sign of the birth of new perspectives and values and a new field of theory and practice within environmental education: *multicultural environmental education.*

Multicultural environmental education is not merely environmental education with multicultural populations or "audiences" nor is it "urban environmental education with multicultural populations." It is rather a very new kind of environmental education, where content is influenced by and taught from multiple cultural perspectives. It is conscious of its own cultural perspectives and of the function that it has in the world and in the lives of diverse students and communities. As the nation's schoolrooms and communities become more diverse and value their diversity, environmental education must evolve as it encounters new cultural realities in specific community contexts.

Four Streams of Multicultural Environmental Education:

In a sense, *multicultural* environmental education is a broad and diverse valley into which flow ideas and influences from four great mountain ranges: environmental education, multicultural education, critical pedagogy and environmental justice. The meeting of these ideas and influences is creating an environmental education for a culturally diverse and interdependent planet — a *multicultural* environmental education.

On perhaps its most basic level, this new field draws from a contemporary social movement, environmental justice, and three educational fields — multicultural education, environmental education and critical pedagogy. Multicultural education was heavily influenced by the Civil Rights movement and is a field committed to educate and prepare all students successfully for an increasingly diverse — and frequently conflict-filled — world. Environmental education, strongly influenced at its inception by the environmental movement, contains the powerful insight that we all need the information and values which help us take responsibility through our actions for the one and only planet we share.

It is rather a very new kind of environmental education, where content is influenced by and taught from multiple cultural perspectives.

The environmental justice movement is the continuation of a number of powerful social movements and the articulation and political practice of a "people of color environmental agenda." Specifically, even as it supersedes categories of ethnicity and class, it approaches a visionary reformulation of what environmentalism and environmental quality is and can be. It likewise challenges us to reformulate what we think environmental education is and can be. It is in communities of color around the country struggling for environmental justice, that new and innovative forms of multicultural environmental education are developing and making a positive difference for environmental quality.

Critical pedagogy contributes a powerful analysis which locates the process of education and teaching in the context of social structures and the forces which restrict or release the human capacity for democratic freedom. Environmental educators need it for the analytical context it provides and the power of teacher introspection which it informs.

This joint issue of *Race, Poverty and Environment* and the *Journal of Culture, Ecology and Community* captures some of this reformulation and challenge to the traditional, or mainstream, discourse on environmental education. Environmental justice activists may find this issue unusual in that political organizing is not highlighted to the extent which they may be accustomed. In fact, some references to environmental justice may seem elementary. But activists will appreciate the variety of innovations and depth of thinking which educators are giving to ideas from activists and the contact with diverse children from disproportionately impacted communities.

Educators, for their part, will find themselves challenged, at times uncom-

that poor people, African Americans and other people of color were less concerned about the environment and less likely to mobilize around environmental issues than middle and upper-class whites. Concern for the environment was linked with participation in environmental organizations, events, education programs, and subscriptions to environmental magazines.[6] There was little serious discussion of the fact that the poor can't afford to join these clubs, can't afford the cost of visiting faraway, wild places, but are aware that the urban and poor rural areas where they live receive scant attention in environmental debates. There was also very little discussion of the way in which interest, concern or knowledge is measured and what biases faulty measurement can add to the results.

One consequence of those one-sided theoretical discussions was that the actions of the well-to-do who joined hunting, fishing, hiking, mountaineering, bird watching and other environmental clubs and societies, were legitimized. Environmentalists were willing to believe that if the environmental movement (and its workforce) and environmental education classes are predominantly white and if environmental conditions are worse in communities of color, its because people of color are not interested in or concerned about the environment. There was little critical self-analysis to identify and understand the root causes of patterns and problems.

Issues of racial and social inequality did not become a part of the environmental dialogue or environmental education process until scholars and grassroots activists of color pushed to make these issues part of the research, policy, and activist agenda. This activism has helped to fuel the growth of the environmental justice movement and has led to the questioning of traditional definitions of environment, environmental issues, and environmental education. This work has also challenged the narrow framework of mainstream environmental discourse. Environmental justice activists have inserted issues of power, domination, racism, discrimination, distribution of risks and benefits, inequality and justice into the debate, agenda and education process.

The increased activism and scholarship of people of color around environmental justice issues coincided with a marked increase in the number of people calling for multicultural environmental education. These people felt it was time for environmental education curricula that would attempt to teach a greater number of students from a wider range of backgrounds. Despite this call for multicultural environmental education, many environmental educators have refrained from making critical analyses of the role of race, social class, social and political inequality, unequal environmental outcomes, quality of life, opportunities, life experiences and the effect these have on the environmental movement and environmentalism.

One aspect of race and class received attention in academic circles — research on differences in perception and support for the environment.

Redefining the Environment

The environmental movement, environmentalism, and the teaching and conceptualization of environmental education are at a critical crossroads. Although the mainstream environmental movement and environmental educators have been slow to accept the expanded definition of the environment and the issues that people of color deem pertinent, people of color have managed to change the way in which the environment is conceptualized, the way problems are identified and solved, and the content and approach to environmental education. This has occurred because people of color insist that they, like other human beings, should be considered a part of the environment. People of color also insist that their communities be included — be they reservations, agricultural fields, urban centers, or the rural hinterlands.

This means more than merely mentioning urban rural poor environments. It means including with the problems that exist in these environments as part of the environmental agenda. It means finding ways of reducing the disproportionate risks and hazards that people of color face in these communities, fighting the environmental racism, discrimination, and job blackmail to win environmental equity and justice. It means examining the politics of siting noxious facilities or hazardous wastes in communities perceived to be poor and powerless. It means halting the degradation of the urban environment and ameliorating other problems like homelessness, unemployment, drugs and crime. It means increasing access to parks, playgrounds, clean air, water, and reducing health problems arising from chronic exposures to toxins.

Students of color, even when they are unfamiliar with the environmental justice movement and with environmental activists of color, define the environment in the broader way espoused by environmental justice activists. Wals, Beringer and Stapp found that the definitions and perceptions of African American Detroit eighth-graders were broader than the traditional conception of environment.[7] As one student wrote:

> Our topic is vacant houses. Because vacant houses can be used for rape, arson, molesting of children, drug dealers, etc. The burned houses should be torn down, built new. They make the neighborhoods look bad. The neighbors can get roaches, and rats. We plan to go to construction places and the police station. And ask people to tribute money to tear down the house.

As the above discussion indicates, many people brought up with traditional definitions and boundaries of environment and environmentalism are not comfortable with the linkages of racism, classism, sexism and environmentalism. Some deny the existence of environmental racism, preferring to categorize issues of homelessness, job blackmail, disproportionate cancers and other

illnesses, as housing, occupational and labor issues, respectively, rather than environmental issues. Full acceptance of this broader perspective will be reflected in a reorientation of the agenda, policies, strategies, actions, and in the written materials from mainstream environmental organizations, and by the incorporation of these issues in environmental curricula.

Multicultural Environmental Education

Multicultural environmental education has to go beyond past attempts which interpreted "multicultural" to mean the inclusion of a few children from different racial and ethnic groups and marginal changes in the curricula, while for the most part continuing the dominant discourse and continuing to represent primarily the viewpoints of a limited sector of the population. For education to be multicultural, it has to include a wide variety of students and perspectives in all phases of planning, development, teaching and learning. Consequently, one has to deal with the question of access. Even in the best case, access to environmental education programs (especially at the pre-college level) is limited for some students. Students of color and poor students have even less access. Any program that attempts to make environmental education multicultural has to have as a major thrust increased access. That means one has to look at the quality of existing programs in an effort to improve and expand their focus and the number of people they reach.

One has to be concerned with other kinds of access too. There is the social-psychological access discussed above. If students do not understand or relate to the materials being taught, they are not engaged by it and can become alienated. Another very important kind of access is access to jobs in the field, career advancement possibilities and research opportunities. Students of color face a bleak employment and career advancement future in the environmental field. It is important for these students to meet people of similar backgrounds and experiences in various positions during various stages in their careers.

To have truly multicultural environmental education, one has to expand the venues and locations where environmental education is taught. Right now there are probably more people of color being educated about environmental issues in informal and non-institutionalized settings than in school rooms, universities and environmental education or nature centers. While the traditional environmental education program has failed to reach people of color either because relevant messages are not delivered or because people have no physical or financial access to the sites, alternative environmental education programs flourish. These programs taught in community centers, homes, churches, union halls and the offices of environmental justice organizations serve to educate environmental justice activists and others about environmental issues, challenges and problems.

Multicultural environmental education has to go beyond past attempts that interpreted "multicultural" to mean the inclusion of a few children from different ethnic groups.

The success of environmental justice activists in reaching people not usually touched by the traditional environmental teaching offers an important message to environmental educators. For environmental education to be successful in reaching a wider variety of people (in terms of age, gender, race, and social class), it must be extended beyond the formal institutionalized settings that characterize the venues for most of these programs. That is, the content of the message and the location of the message has to be expanded to meet the needs of people. Therefore, if some can only make the church hall, community center or a friend's basement, then an effort should be made to educate in those settings too. The key challenge is to build flexibility into the content, location, mode of delivery and target audiences of environmental education programs.

A crucial step in developing an appropriate definition of environment in a multicultural environmental setting is to adopt a definition that includes the life experience and sphere of reference of the students being taught. Start with what's familiar to the student then branch out to the less familiar. Lessons about wildlife should bear in mind that many students from the inner city are more familiar with mice, raccoons, squirrels and common birds like pigeons than other animals. Similarly, for many urban students, the biggest loss of habitat they encounter is homelessness and the most common form of ecological succession they see is abandoned lots being reclaimed by nature. Environmental educators may have to deal with the connection some students make between wildlife and pests. They also need to explain why so much money and time is spend on wildlife habitat loss and so little on homelessness. Such problems cannot be explained away by purely scientific reasoning; social, political, economic, and moral factors need to be included in the explanation.

As the above discussion has shown, poverty, gender, and race act independently and have significant outcomes worthy of serious discussion. The full understanding of environmental problems, and workable solutions cannot be sought without an understanding of these dimensions at the local, regional, national, and international levels. This is a call to reevaluate the definition of environment, the content of environmental education curricula, and the types of environmental education activities in which students and teachers engage. Students of all backgrounds can become interested in this field if they are introduced to it in a way that is sensitive to the environments from which they come. This is also a call to add variables that have been excluded from environmental education discussions in the past. It is a call to provide a meaningful framework with which students can analyze the systems they encounter and understand

how biophysical factors are linked to social, economic, and political factors.

Dorceta E. Taylor teaches at Washington State University in Vancouver, Washington.

Sources

[1]James G. Cantrill, "Understanding Environmental Advocacy...," *Journal of Environmental Education,* (Vol.24, No.1, 1992); Harold Hunger-ford and R. Peyton, *Teaching Environmental Education*, Weston Walch, 1976.

[2]Arjen E. Wals et al., "Education in Action: A Community Problem-Solving Program for Schools," *Journal of Environmental Education,* (Vol.21, No.4, 1990).

[3]Cantrill; Hungerford and Trudi Volk, "Changing Learner Behavior Through Environmental Education," *Journal of Environmental Education*, (Vol.21, No.3, 1990).

[4]Richard Alba, "Social Assimilation Among American Catholic National Origin Groups," *American Sociological Review,* (Vol.41, No.6, 1976); Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology*, University of Chicago Press, 1921.

[5]Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Yale University Press, 1982.

[6]F.H. Buttel and W.L. Flinn, "Social Class and Mass Environmental Beliefs," *Environment and Behavior*, (Vol.10, 1978); G.D. Lowe and T.K. Pinhey, "Rural-Urban Differences in Support for Environmental Protection," *Rural Sociology* (Vol.47, 1982); Paul Mohai, "Public Concern and Elite Involvement in Environmental Conservation Issues," *Social Science Quarterly*, (Vol.55, No.4, 1985); Dorceta Taylor, "Blacks and the Environment...," *Environment and Behavior*, (Vol. 21, No.2, 1989); K.D. Van Liere and Riley Dunlap, "The Social Bases of Environmental Concern...," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, (Vol.44, No.2, 1980).

[7]Wals, et al.

Environment: Where We Live, Work, Play and LEARN

by Charles Lee

Environmental justice is an interactive process where people speak for themselves through community organizing. In 1991, during the organizing for the historic People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington, DC, Jeanne Gauna of the Southwest Organizing Project defined the environment as "the place where we live, where we work, and where we play." This has naturally evolved into the environmental justice movement's definition of the environment.

For the past five years, the life experience of many community groups and individuals related to environmental justice has created a wealth of knowledge and experience. In 1987, the term "environmental racism" did not exist. Now, within people of color and low income communities, there is vibrant activism around environmental issues. The second edition of Robert Bullard's *Directory of People of Color Environmental Organizations* lists 306 organizations, 91 environmental justice resource organizations, 34 legal resource groups, 49 people of color organizations in Canada, and 38 organizations in Mexico.

These organizations are based around activities such as community organizing, research, education, information sharing, lobbying, service provision, voter registration and education, direct action, networking, community health surveys and monitoring, technical assistance, legal action, solidarity, financial development, and government-to-government relationships.

Educators and researchers have much to learn from the remarkable wealth of knowledge and experience which exists in communities.

More important, many of these organizations have achieved significant victories and successes, including the following:

- Relocation of an Exxon tank farm by People Organized in Defense of Earth and Its Resources (PODER) and the East Austin Strategy Team (EAST) in Austin, Texas;
- Winning a $1.1 million legal settlement for the establishment of an "environmental benefits" trust by West Harlem Environmental Action (WHE ACT) in the case of the North River Sewage Treatment Plant;
- Advocacy efforts persuading the Chicago Housing Authority Board of Education to remove asbestos from homes and schools in Altgeld Gardens in Chicago's South Side;
- Historic settlement by Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA) with Jessica McClintock over sweatshop work conditions in San Francisco, California;
- Establishment of a clinic by Tucsonians for a Clean Environment and securing an $84.5 million settlement at the Tucson International Airport/Hughes Air Force Missile Plant #44 Superfund Site in Tucson, Arizona;
- Development by the Kwethluk Joint Group Council of a community designed water and sewage plant in the Yup'ik Eskimo community of Kwethluk, Alaska; and
- The recent victory by Citizens Against Toxic Exposure in securing a decision by the EPA to relocate all 358 families in the African American community next to the Escambia Superfund Site in Pensacola, Florida.

The many successes and victories of grassroots communities did not come easy; they were the product of individual and collective learning. This shared learning process has produced a tremendous body of knowledge, knowledge that makes us see our ecosystem as being composed of four interrelated environments; natural, built, social, and cultural/spiritual. Grassroots organizations have made tremendous contributions to understanding the profound value of public participation and accountability in formulating public policy and environmental decisions.

The many successes and victories of grassroots communities did not come easy; they were the product of individual and collective learning.

The interrelated goals of leadership development, access to information, and the development of technical expertise, have become common elements of all community empowerment efforts. When most communities first discovered toxic pollution and environmental degradation within their neighborhoods, they also discovered that very little capacity existed within government agencies, academic institutions, and health care providers to address their concerns. As a result, local groups began to develop educational programs to promote community empowerment and to address environmental justice issues.

For example, the SALTA Promotoras program in San Diego's Barrio Logan includes the following principles:

(a) **Bilingual/Culturally Appropriateness:** All materials are in English and Spanish and the sessions are designed to minimize the need for reading skills.

(b) **Mentoring:** Great difficulty exists in motivating people to action in the absence of an emergency. Through life experience and stories, a sense of urgency will be built.

(c) **Emphasis on Change:** Being a community toxic organizer poses particular challenges because it takes women outside the accepted role as caretaker. Thus, household materials will be used as a starting point to introduce concepts of risk, toxic use reduction, and pollution prevention.

(d) **Hands-On Experience:** Training including involvement in the planning and participation of community hearings and other events.

Training and education are key factors in increasing the capability to address environmental health problems. Future and present health care providers need more training in the area of environmental and occupational health. Ideally, these programs will adopt broader definitions of training and education. This would include more training in toxicology, as well as participatory research methodologies and participatory prevention/intervention strategies that would make use of legitimate community-based knowledge.

The importance of training is that it leads to empowerment. Therefore, resources and energy should also be devoted to the training of community residents. In fact, every research/intervention effort should be viewed as an opportunity to provide training and empowerment. This needs to be incorporated into protocols and to be an important criteria during peer review.

One particular group which stands out in this process is youth. Young people provide great energy, creativity and a sense of fresh vision, and are beginning to demand that they be involved in public dialogues as well as the decision making process. Angela Brown, winner of the 1995 Reebok Human Rights Youth Award states:

> One of the young people who works with us, a brother, often says that the solutions of today end up being the problems of tomorrow. If young people are not sitting in on the process, are not involved in the dialogue, I can understand how the solutions for today will end up being the problems of tomorrow.

This understanding leads to the need to examine the link between environmental justice and educational reform. Many students reject schools because they fail to deal with the issues relevant to the places where they live, work, and play. Schools do not offer opportunities for students to conduct meaningful dialogues about serious social issues. A critical examination of this connection is needed if we are to reform our educational institutions. Such reform would ensure that future generations have the knowledge necessary to achieve healthy and sustainable communities.

In fact, every research intervention effort should be viewed as an opportunity to provide training and empowerment.

In conclusion, environmental justice is a living process, therefore, it must be a learning process. To achieve truly healthy and sustainable communities, we would do well to heed indigenous teachings about the "circle of life." Only through a process of learning and passing on knowledge and wisdom can we complete that "circle of life." That is why environmental justice defines the environment as the place where we live, where we work, where we play, and where we *learn*.

Charles Lee is Director of the Environmental Justice for the United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice and serves on the National Environmental Justice Advisory Commission.

Instrumental Values of Destruction: The Need for Environmental Education*

by Bunyan Bryant

As we continue to wreak destruction upon the Earth and upon each other, we are reaching a point where our actions are having dire consequences. We have embarked upon a market system that not only ravishes the Earth, but it diminishes the value of the lives of Earth's people. It is an out of control market system — a market system that extends into and shapes our personal lives, our consciousness, and the way in which we relate to one another. In our most intimate relations we often perceive one another as having *instrumental* value. That is, we view our friends in terms of what they can *do* for us—not what we can do for them or what both parties gain from the friendship.

Often we view the world from the shaky perch of the all-important "me": "What can I get for myself, regardless of the pain it might inflict upon others." Society is dominated by such "me-ism," a viewpoint worse even than anthropocentrism. While the latter views humans as the very center of the universe, the former has a tendency to view *me* — not the community or the village — as being primary in the universe. This translates as a formula for unprecedented greed, avarice, and disconnectedness.

Out of control market forces determine our world view; they frame our relations with one another and with nature. Environmentalists do not seem to understand that before we can protect the environment and give authentic reverence to it and to the wonders of nature, a set of core values must be deeply seated to guide our relations with one another. Our instrumental approach to one another and to nature disrupts the connectedness and usurps the responsibility for human and nonhuman life. This disconnection is the basis of the crisis of spirituality we experience today.

Some environmentalists overlook people of color to build a relationship with nature; some have ignored the habitat of homeless people to protect the habitat of the spotted owl. As they diligently work to guarantee the rights of trees and endangered animals, they blindly neglect assigning similar rights to people of color. Although environmentalists claim to champion biodiversity, in practice that concept often seems to stop at the border line of our urban centers.

Although environmentalists claim to champion biodiversity, in practice that concept often seems to stop at the border line of our urban centers.

What Can Educators Do?

Environmental education must play a major role in rectifying this shortsighted and separatist view of humanity and nature. By making students more aware of the adverse effects of an out-of-control market system, environmental education can help students understand market forces and their impact on our personal lives. Environmental education can help us to understand the need to be spiritually connected with each other, as well as with nonhuman life forms. Along with this connectedness comes a reverence for all life forms. The teaching of environmental education helps us move away from *me-ism*, which represents the extreme form of anthropocentrism, toward biocentrism and an understanding that humans are subject to the same laws of nature as other living things.

Environmental education must help us understand that humans are a part of a complex web of life and that our survival as a species depends upon other life forms, even those much smaller than ourselves. To understand our predicament of inhumaness we must not only understand the destructive power of market forces, but we must be willing and able to control such forces. To control such forces will require a new system of relating to one another, a new value system that will extend across multicultural lines, embracing a new or renewed reverence for nature.

Environmental education must help students to search for truth and meaning in their own lives and practices. They must learn the importance of cherishing and extending life-affirming connectedness. To save the global community from wanton destruction, it is important that truth, meaning, and advocacy interface to rekindle our spiritual and life-affirming "connectedness" to the land, to other life forms, and to the world in which we live.

Environmental education can help students to recognize a larger self, one that recognizes the importance of biocentricity and one that believes that the destruction of life at any one place on life's continuum has the potential to significantly alter or destroy all life forms. Truth and meaning represent more than just a cognitive exercise. When used as integral elements of the participatory research process, students and teachers learn together about the connectedness of all life forms. It also forms the basis for personal empowerment and the ultimate realization that *each of us* can make a difference in the world in which we live.

How Can We Be Effective?

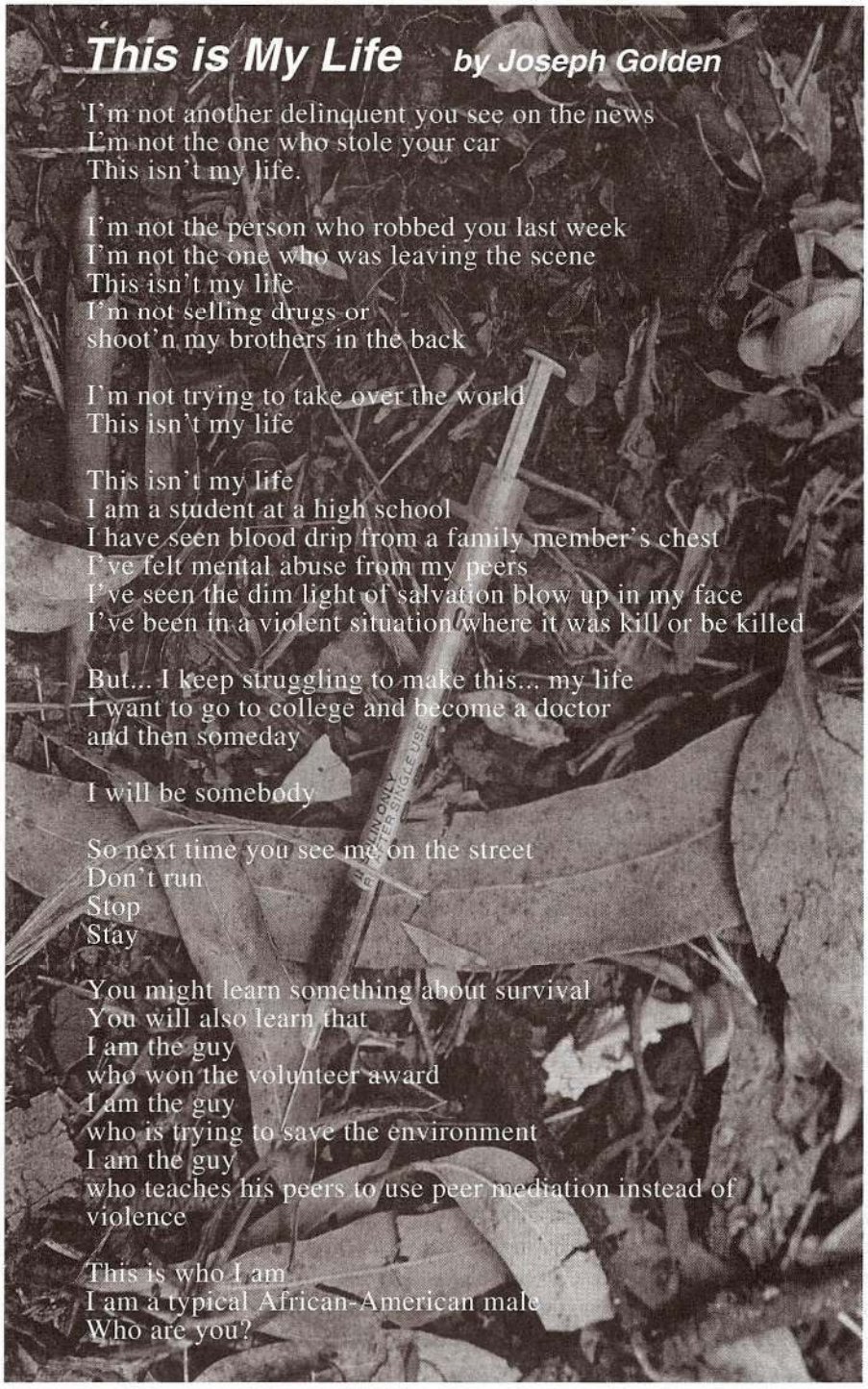
Before all else, we as teachers must free ourselves to be more than technicians constrained by the limited themes and materials covered in textbooks — textbooks that are often

published by distant companies. We must be participatory researchers — not detached from students, but integrally involved with them in the teaching and learning process. To be effective environmental educators may require us to write curriculum materials based upon the students' environment. Producing a curriculum that validates the student's own life situation invites the student to engage in problem solving activities. Such activities include defining the problem, collecting information, weighing alternative solutions, and recommending the most appropriate solution. Below are key issues or themes that should be included in any environmental education curriculum in order to help put the market system in its proper perspective:

1) Cultural and Racial Awareness and Nature. In order to connect with one another across cultural and racial boundaries, we must deconstruct race as a social construct; we must demonstrate the instrumental value of race and how racial differences are used for social, economic, and political gain. Questions to be entertained by students might include: In what ways do instrumental values affect your personal life? What can you do about controlling these values in your life? If you had to be born again of a different color, what color would that be? How would your life be different now than what it was before?

Also, white cultural hegemony must be challenged and critiqued by making it possible for multicultures to be cherished and celebrated. What are the barriers that keep people of different cultural backgrounds from interacting with and accepting one another? What are the barriers that keep people from interacting with and understanding nature? If you had to be born again but as a different animal, what animal would that be? What is unique about that animal? What are its contributions to the ecosystem?

2) Environmental Justice. Environmental education must make students aware that environmental justice is broader in scope than environmental equity. EJ refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities, where people can interact with confidence that their environment is safe, nurturing, and productive. Environmental justice is served when people can realize their highest potential, without experiencing the "isms." Environmental justice is supported by decent-paying and safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision-making and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty. These are communities where both cultural and biological diversity are respected and highly revered and where distributive justice prevails. Students of environmental education must know not only the definition of EJ



This is My Life by Joseph Golden

I'm not another delinquent you see on the news
I'm not the one who stole your car
This isn't my life.

I'm not the person who robbed you last week
I'm not the one who was leaving the scene
This isn't my life
I'm not selling drugs or
shoot'n my brothers in the back

I'm not trying to take over the world
This isn't my life

This isn't my life
I am a student at a high school
I have seen blood drip from a family member's chest
I've felt mental abuse from my peers
I've seen the dim light of salvation blow up in my face
I've been in a violent situation where it was kill or be killed

But... I keep struggling to make this... my life
I want to go to college and become a doctor
and then someday

I will be somebody

So next time you see me on the street
Don't run
Stop
Stay

You might learn something about survival
You will also learn that
I am the guy
who won the volunteer award
I am the guy
who is trying to save the environment
I am the guy
who teaches his peers to use peer mediation instead of violence

This is who I am
I am a typical African-American male
Who are you?

*"This is My Life" is excerpted from **Just Us**, a collection of written work by Natural Guard youth and the Earth Service Corps. Natural Guard is an environmental education and social justice organization for youth, in New Haven.*
Photo by Tanya Zeno, age 12, of the Ernest Fingle Boys and Girls Club, San Francisco.

but they must also understand the symbiotic connection between sustainability and justice. It's this symbiotic connection that is the driving force of environmental education.

3) Participatory Research. Participatory research allows both students and teachers to engage in a process of discovery and reflection. Students are integrally and actively involved in the planning, action, observation, and reflection until understanding or a solution is reached. The research process should help students liberate themselves from the shackles of oppression by actively engaging them. To be an effective research team, both teachers and students must develop problem-solving and group process skills.

Here is one example of participatory research. A high school environmental educator works with students to prepare them for water testing. The teacher then takes the class to the local river to collect water samples and through laboratory testing the students find a high level of coliform bacteria and a large number of water-soluble salts and toxic metals. Some of the questions to be asked are: Who was responsible for the pollution? What is the role of the market system in creating these conditions? What impact is the pollution having upon human and nonhuman life? Are people of color and low-income people differentially impacted? What regulatory agencies are responsible for its cleanup? To solve the problems, student may need to draw upon chemistry, civics, math, computer science, and biology. They may decide to brainstorm strategies for getting the appropriate agency or corporation to engage in cleanup efforts. Ideally, participatory research empowers students by allowing them a chance, often rare in the educational experience, to become actively engaged in education in the roles of both *learner* and *teacher*.

4) Pollution Prevention vs. Pollution Control. Environmental education curricula should tackle the goals of pollution prevention *and* pollution control. If we can reduce fugitive emissions by 90 percent, then why can't we reduce them by 100 percent? The reason is that it may not be cost effective. Controlling emissions completely would increase the cost exponentially, thus cutting into profits. But while a 90 percent reduction might be good enough for some chemicals, it is not an acceptable limit for others, particularly for those chemicals that are fat soluble and persistent in the food chain. Because some chemicals bioaccumulate, amplifying themselves hundreds or even millions of times as they move up the food chain from lower animal to higher animal to humans, they can become a problem of major proportions. Any environmental education curriculum should include the importance of recycling, reducing, and reusing as prevention strategies. At the same time, however, the most important pollution prevention strategy is to refrain from using toxic chemicals in the production cycle.

Students of environmental education must know not only the definition of Environmental Justice, they must understand the symbiotic connection between sustainability and justice.

5) Deep Ecology. Deep ecology maintains that to be detached from nature robs people of their unique and spiritual and biological personhood; no one can be saved on planet Earth unless we save *everyone*, including the grizzly bears, the rain forests, ecosystems, mountains and rivers, and the tiniest microbes in the soil. Some basic tenets of deep ecology consist of bioregionalism, biodiversity, and biocentrism as opposed to anthro-ocentrism. It contends that if people harm nature, they harm themselves. Everything is intricately related; no one has the right to destroy other living things without good reason. Although the supporters of deep ecology do not advocate going back to the Stone Age, they do advocate reverence for the land, for primal people, and for communal societies, based on mutual aid and a bonding with nature.

The question students must wrestle with is: how deep or how shallow can we become and still be able to survive on planet Earth? While some environmentalists take deep ecology to the extreme, most of them do not. Yet the more shallow we become, the more we perceive nature as having instrumental value; the more shallow we become, the less value we place upon human and nonhuman life. The question again is how deep should we go? How shallow can we be without becoming disconnected?

Bunyan Bryant is a faculty member at the School of Natural Resources and Environment, a member of the Urban Technological and Environmental Planning Program, and has an adjunct position with the Center of Afro-American and African Studies at the University of Michigan. His current research interests include corporate, agency, and community responses to hazardous waste sites. He was co-principal investigator of the University of Michigan 1990 Detroit Area Study on Race and Toxic Waste.

Professor Bryant writings include: Environmental Advocacy: Concepts, Issues and Dilemmas, *and* Social and Environmental Change: A Manual for Community Organizing and Action. *He and Professor Paul Mohai edited* Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse. *In 1995 Mr. Bryant edited* Environmental Justice: Issues, Polices, and Solutions *for Island Press.*

Sources

Bryant, Bunyan, *Environmental Advocacy: Concepts, Issues, and Dilemmas*. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Caddo Gap Press, 1990.

Bryant, Bunyan, "Issues and Potential Policies and Solutions for Environmental Justice: An Overview." In Bryant, B. (Ed.). *Environmental Justice: Issues, Policies, and Solutions*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995.

Kendall, Peter, and Manier, Jeremy. "Maybe Animals Do Care,"*The Detroit News and Free Press*, August 24, 1996.

Lerner, Michael, *The Politics of Meaning: Restoring Hope and Possibility in an Age of Cynicism*. New York: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1996.

Lappè, Frances Moore, *Diet for a Small Planet*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1983.

A considerable portion of this article on instrumental values and environmental education was based upon Michael Lerner's book: *The Politics of Meaning.*

Youth Spirit Rising:

Urban Environmental Activists

by Deborah Leta Habib

Young people in cities face the complex social issues of their urban environments as they simultaneously develop their sense of self. They must negotiate their transition from adolescence to adulthood while bombarded with a popular culture rampant with images of violence, greed and sex. To add to this assault on their emerging identities, they are often portrayed as uncaring, apathetic and menaces to society. Rarely does popular media or social research focus on youth who are concerned about their communities and the planet they will inherit.

These youth exist. They are of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds and are emerging as educators and activists in their communities. There are many in urban areas, aware of and actively involved in the environmental and social health of their communities and the world.

My recent research with urban youth environmental activists connected me to many young people actively involved in redefining environmental problems and relating them to social issues familiar to their own lives. Through their diverse voices, I learned what led to their interest in environmental issues and how they translated their concerns into action. I met Charlene at a Boston area conference on urban environmental issues. She described learning about the struggle of the Cree people battling plans for the Hydro-Quebec dam that would result in their cultural and geographic displacement, and how this initiated her involvement in the movement at her school to divest from Hydro-Quebec. Charlene explained that the scenario of exploiting land and people for economic reasons resonated with her experiences as a Black Haitian female immigrant. She explained: "It hit home. Like, *environment* was not those crazy granolas, it was [about] race, class, you know, *power*. So that's me, and I got directly involved."

Fatima and James are African American high school students who live in Baltimore. They worked as counselors at a summer day camp for children run by the parks and recreation department. They described taking a group of children on a hike to see an old mining site. Abandoned for 20 years, it is now, as James described, a "big green pool of water with a lamp post sticking up out of it" where kids sometimes "get up on the side of [an old mining machine] and dive off into the water." Fatima's voice was passionate and alarmed when she described finding the site. "When we first saw it we were like, *What is this doing sitting in this neighborhood?*" They decided to call the head of public works, who told them he had not known that the site existed. Fatima described how they planned to turn their investigation into a series of activities for the children at the camp:

> We're gonna start letter writing on Monday, and we're gonna call the senator and ask him if he knows about that site and also write him. We want [the senator, public works people and district planners] to all come down one day and see this place. It angers me, 'cause I said to myself: in upper class neighborhoods, you have the industrial parks, and they tell you that it's polluted. But then you have this thing sitting here. We don't know if it's polluted or not. There's no monitoring, and there's no way of telling whether this stuff can be toxic.

Stories such as these describe youth making connections between environmental issues and people's lives and communities. The energy, wisdom and commitment evidenced by these and other young people are essential to social and environmental change movements. In addition to adding important perspectives, their stories counter the negative stereotypes of youth and urban environments embossed on the American mindset, which perpetuate negativity, fear, and despair. The actions of these racially and culturally diverse young people serve as models of awareness, hope, leadership and community building for other youth and for educators.

Some of my research findings and its implications are described below. It is my hope that they will inform the development of school and community-based curricula to bridge social justice issues and ecological understandings.

Assumptions that environmental issues are of no concern to youth are irrelevant to city dwellers must be challenged.

Although I did not find that an intimate connection with nature precipitated environmental awareness and activism among these youth, some noted "nature contact" experiences such as tree plantings or camping trips as meaningful. These experiences were not, however, essential to their ability to develop and articulate their current understandings of the concept of environment. All of the youth in this research made reference to interpretations of the word 'environment' that focused on the natural world. However, they did not automatically assume these. Rather, they assigned a meaning to the term that was relevant to their own lives. In fact, several of the youth pointed out that environment is not limited to, as Jessica says, "earth and woods and stuff." Kenya describes her interpretation:

> Usually when I think of environment I think of big forests . . . But then I look around. I guess there's two definitions for myself. There's the stuff that I can't really do directly, like going out to the forest up north or whatever, and planting trees, or cleaning up. And then there's the community which would be like the incinerator and the area around.

Rather than defining environmentalism from a white, middle-class adult perspective, and expecting those who do

not fit this social configuration to participate, this research implies the need to redefine "environment" as a socially constructed concept, one that reflects a dynamic interplay among the social, natural and built world. In this study, those defining the concept of environment and exploring environmental activism were a group of culturally diverse urban young people. Their responses to the task of defining environment demonstrated that they were able to comfortably use vocabulary and articulate their thinking in a way that would make them informed contributors in any of the arenas where adults are currently rethinking and redefining 'environment' as a dynamic, socially constructed concept created and transformed by those who give it meaning.

When environmental problems were seen as relevant to their lives, communities, and cultural experiences, interest in environmental issues intensified.

Eva spoke extensively about how an asbestos problem that delayed the opening of her school initiated a unit on asbestos followed by another on lead poisoning. Kenya's participation in a community protest of a planned incinerator alerted her to the implications of this siting in her neighborhood. Frankie's realization that the storm drains in his neighborhood emptied into the Chesapeake Bay strengthened his interest in water testing research.

Family experiences and interactions with the environment, both positive and negative, affect young people in powerful ways. Kiet believes his father's previous work as a logger in Vietnam contributed to his interest in deforestation. Eva's mother is a factory seamstress in Chinatown, which sharpens her understanding of the complexity of environmental issues in a way that those without such experience may overlook.

> I understand, I mean like factories, they pollute, but I mean if you close down the factories, like where are they going to work? 'Cause my mom, like, she works in a factory, but if you close it down or whatever, then people will lose their jobs. That's why it's kind of difficult, I think, to solve many environmental problems.

Environmental pollution and destruction threatens human health and ultimately our existence. For those without information and resources, this often happens directly and subversively in the form of toxins in and under homes and neighborhoods. Educators and activists must locate the keys that help students recognize the existence of environmental problems in their communities and beyond and how these are connected to their lives. In order to engage more students in environmentalism, educators must be willing to shape programs that reflect the interests, cultures and languages of the youth, rather than fit them into existing models which may not represent their experiences.

More youth from a variety of ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds may become environmentally active if they see environmental issues as pertaining to their own lives and communities, and have a voice and a venue. This implies a need for increased outreach and environmental education to urban communities and school systems. Environmentally active youth and adults from within these communities may be ideally suited to shape and implement such educational efforts.

Many of the research participants were drawn to environmentalism as they sought community.

If youth are looking for community, they will inevitably find it. However, some forms of community may not be healthy, constructive or personally satisfying. There are certainly youth who, for a multitude of complex reasons, will consistently participate in self-destructive actions, individually and in groups, regardless of how many seemingly positive options there are. However, the youth that participated in this research are only a fragment of those seeking involvement in collective, life-positive endeavors.

Being a member of a group noted for accomplishment can promote increased self-esteem, and the experience of being an integral member of an organization can lead to a sense of belonging and efficacy. Jason describes his role in the formation of a neighborhood youth group that remains very active in the community. When he showed me the mural that includes his own image, he was proud and exhibited a sense of involvement and ownership over this visual and public expression of the presence and power of youth in the community.

Many organizations with environmental, community empowerment and justice-oriented agendas are uniquely suited to promote healing and positive action, not only through the work they do, but in their structure. It is crucial to critique and construct these organizations so that they truly embody multicultural, anti-racist practices which engage youth in positive, collective action and leadership.

Young environmental activists can knowledgeably contribute to environmental curriculum development and program design.

With the exception of the two who attend a magnet high school whose entire curricular focus is on environmental studies, most students did not identify school classes as significant to initiating their environmental activism. However, some described school-based extracurricular activities as instrumental to inspiring their environmental involvement. Others clearly stated that their environmental interest and activism was stimulated in contexts completely separate from their school day, and in fact were able to use these significant learning experiences to recognize the ways in which their schools had *not* promoted their environmental awareness or activism.

One result of their involvement in environmental activism is that these youth were capable of envisioning and articulating, without hesitation, what and how they would like to learn in school. Their ideas included classes, workshops and forums where they can gain knowledge, engage in dialogue and participate in school and community based actions.

Across ethnic backgrounds, gender and socioeconomic levels, I heard over and over again the desire to be challenged by teachers whom they respected and who respected them. While experiential learning may not work for all students, depending on personal and cultural learning styles and how educators frame such experiences, these youth all suggested that participatory activities that involve inquiry, dialogue, field research and presentation are of great interest to them.

Youth such as those in this study are in an ideal position to participate in dialogues regarding what young people need and would like to learn. Serving as advisors and working on committees in schools and organizations may validate knowledge and promote leadership skills among already active youth.

Alliances between youth and adults, and schools and community organizations, can lead to mutually beneficial learning experiences and promote links between environmental activism and community service.

In this research, familial and non-familial adults emerged as extremely significant to involvement in environmentalism. Each community has adult resources that are under-tapped as educators. Elders and retirees, business people, politicians, craftspeople, religious leaders, artists and those active in science and environmental fields and community organizations can serve as mentors to young people. Mentor relationships are a real-life way to teach youth specific skills as well as providing them with a non-familial adult for personal guidance and support.

Experiences that promote values of respect and caring may be particularly appealing to youth whose lives and values reflect these qualities, and evoke such values in those youth who have not known loving, caring relationships in their own lives. Many of the youth in this study maintained involvement in environmentalism because it supported caring values and a service orientation.

Forms of activism such as community service learning are appealing and popular among youth and educators in this era. However, approaches to activism in the nineties cover a wide spectrum, ranging from those that nonviolently promote justice and civil rights to those that employ racist, classist, sexist and anti-Semitic practices or incorporate violence as a tool to draw attention to their cause. Educators can introduce, and with their students critique, multiple approaches to activism in order to support students in making well informed, conscientious decisions about issues and actions.

Links between environmental activism and community service may be key to activism, leadership and constructive community involvement. A significant lesson of this research is that such alliances need to be strengthened. We must ask how service learning projects can be structured to include a social and political critique as well as ongoing reflection, so that service-based actions are not construed solely as individual acts of kindness, but as interconnected efforts that are part of a youth movement for social and environmental change.

Socio-ecological literacy grows from education that encourages investigation, reflection, dialogue and making the connection between social and environmental issues.

While it is crucial to involve more youth of color in the environmental movement as professionals, access to learning opportunities that promote socio-ecological literacy should not be exclusively for those interested in environmental careers. All students must have opportunities to examine how social and environmental concerns in their communities impact the health of humanity and nature. Thus they can knowledgeably participate in dialogue and actions that challenge potential and existing violations.

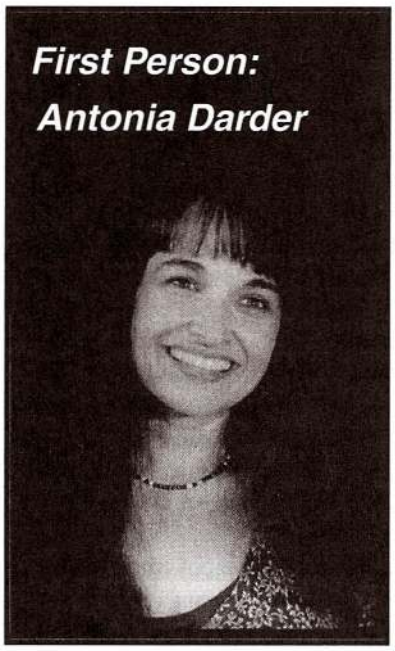
Phrases such as "environmental literacy" and "cultural diversity" have been popping up with increasing frequency in curricular frameworks, albeit almost always under separate categories of study. While the inclusion of this language is important, it is not enough to effectively support educators in translating these words into creative and transformative action. Pedagogy that supports the development of a socio-ecological consciousness and engages students in examining connections and contradictions among personal, historical, cultural and global perspectives on environmental issues, can foster critical thinking, and involve youth in community building, research and activism.

As with most processes of language acquisition, becoming literate about social and environmental issues involves learning basic words, principles and grammatical rules, personalizing and integrating this new information, and practicing with others in an authentic context. These processes can occur through in-school courses, internships or involvement in organizations whose agendas focus on social and/or environmental concerns. Content and pedagogy are equally important to expand knowledge as well as foster research, communication and leadership skills.

The youth who participated in this research, and many others that I have not yet had the honor of meeting, are paving the road to an environmentalism laden with right-of-ways and roadblocks. A metaphor that conjures images of asphalt is appropriate to the lives and experiences of youth coming of age in urban environments. Their path to environmentalism has not generally been through towering trees in silent forests, but of through masses of humanity squeezing into rush-hour subways. Their footsteps have landed on tar more often than pine needles. They hear the chirping of car alarms more than warblers. Like each of us on this planet, cultural and environmental influences continue to shape who these youth are and how they perceive themselves, others, and the places they live. As educators and activists, we can learn from them as we develop curricula and programs that bridge multicultural and environmental education. We can believe in their wisdom and leadership.

Deborah Leta Habib is an educator and activist living in western Massachusetts. She works with the Hampshire Youth 2000 Alliance and is a Field Associate for the National Helpers Network.

First Person: Antonia Darder



Interview by Cristina Valdez

Antonia Darder, an assistant professor of education at Claremont Graduate School, is a registered nurse, licensed therapist, writer, poet, artist, and community activist. She has taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cal Poly Ponoma, and Pacific Oaks College where she established the first graduate program in bicultural studies. The majority of her work has centered on issues related to the social and academic development of children of color, and addresses questions of racism, cultural subordination, and language domination as they surface within the classroom.

I grew up facing many of the painful conditions and realities of poverty. As a consequence, school provided the possibility for a little comfort and escape from the raw edges that living at the fringe of American society brings. From very young, I came to see education as one way to a better life for me and my family. And to a certain extent, this has proven to be so. Yet, in many other ways, the education I received brought a new form of shame and suffering – it reinforced the notion that I, as a poor Puerto Rican child, was somehow less valuable and less intelligent, and therefore, less capable than white students. So public schools were, without question, a mixed blessing in my life. I was constantly burdened with the sense that my education was never good enough. School left me with the feeling that no matter how hard I tried, I was inferior because Latinos were inferior. I can't tell you exactly how I came to learn and believe this, but I did. I resisted this notion by struggling to excel. My painful memories of this struggle and the struggles of others in my community are at the heart of my involvement in the field of education.

I've been formally and informally involved in the field of education for almost twenty years. I came to my current work in critical pedagogy, bicultural development, and cultural studies from many different paths. Unlike many people in the field, I did not begin my work as a teacher or academician. Instead, I began through my work as a peer counselor, school nurse, and psychotherapist. Over the years, I spent a great deal of time and energy looking for ways to positively impact the lives of children and their families. Because of my own childhood, I was very concerned with the social and educational well-being of Latino children in public schools. I was also very interested in ways to strengthen community participation in schools. The more I worked within the community, the more I realized just how important culture is to the well-being of children. In the early days, there was very little talk about multiculturalism in mental health work; and even in education, discussions were superficial and had very little real impact on the classroom and the lives of Latino students.

Over the years, I learned so much from the different kinds of work I did in schools and communities. At one point, I was a community counselor working with students at elementary schools. I conducted "rap groups" with Spanish-speaking 5th and 6th graders. When I observed these students in the classroom, I noticed the difficulty they were experiencing in responding to English-speaking teachers. But when they were working in small groups in Spanish, it was as if a light bulb went on. It was so clear to me that there were many ways in which these students could not express the complexities and nuances of their being in the foreign language (English) of the classroom. I also recognized just how much this kind of cultural dissonance negatively affected the students' academic development – not because they didn't have the capacity, but because they were being forced to learn and perform in a language and culture that was still unfamiliar and unmastered.

Subsequently, I began working as a community advocate with a variety of grass-roots organizations on issues which focused on multiculturalism and education. Through both professional and advocacy efforts, I worked with others to develop and provide information and referral services, educational programs, and social services for Spanish-speaking families in Pasadena and East Los Angeles. Much of the work focused on education programs for children and their families, including focus on development of true bilingual proficiency.

In 1986, I became a faculty member at Pacific Oaks College in Pasadena. The emphasis of my work was primarily on bicultural development which led me to create the first graduate program in the nation that explored human development issues from a predominantly bicultural perspective. The mission of the curriculum was to place the voices and scholarship of people of color and the histories of bicultural communities at the center of the educational discourse, rather than continuing to utilize Eurocentric frameworks, theories, research, and practices to define what it means to be a person of color in the United States. Through such efforts both teachers of color and white teachers, as well as other human services workers, could engage significant personal and social issues that would help them develop the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively serve communities of color.

My work in the field was later expanded and refined during my doctoral studies in education and philosophy at Claremont Graduate School. In addition, I explored the potential of critical pedagogy as a viable educational approach for the education of bicultural students. This work resulted in the writing of *Culture and Power in the Classroom*. In the last five years, my work has been directed toward expanding our knowledge of cultural democracy and its implications in the classroom, particularly in the development of student voices and their participation in schools and community.

Through my work with students and teachers of color, I've

learned that working in the field of multicultural education requires a willingness to deal with issues of power and social injustice. An educator who claims to be knowledgeable in the field must be cognizant of the social, political, economic, and historical realities of people of color. There must be a full understanding of the conditions faced by those who occupy a subordinate cultural position in the United States. It also requires that one be conscious of the institutional mechanisms by which social oppression and injustice are perpetuated in our schools. Such an educator must understand how to examine curricular materials or texts and analyze them for the cultural and social ideological values which inform their production.

I would also argue that a person in this field must hold a concept of culture as an enacted phenomenon. This is to say that it is dynamic and occurs only within the process of human interaction, within the context of community and relationships. How culture develops and evolves is deeply related to the manner in which people survive the historical conditions they face together. Cultural is experienced and cultural knowledge or the process of enculturation begins from the moment we are born. This socially enacted characteristic of culture also suggests that culture cannot be separated from social power. For this reason, educators in the field of multicultural education must recognize how this link between culture and power is at work in the production and legitimation of knowledge in our schools. It is this recognition that can help us to better understand the process of biculturation experienced by people of color as members of subordinate cultural groups.

From birth, students of color must deal with societal forces shaped by prevailing attitudes and practices of mainstream institutions which perpetuate the subordination of those perceived outside of the anglocentric norm. Yet it is important to note that not all students of color survive the social tensions and the dynamics of subordination they experience in exactly the same way. This is to say that students have different ways in which they respond. Some students accept the culturally oppressive views of their teachers as legitimate, while other students adamantly resist their cultural subordination. Often students resist forms of cultural invasion and domination in the classroom by refusing to participate seriously in school work or activities that they perceive as meaningless and purposeless to their lives. As a consequence, this creates academic difficulties for them and interferes with their ability and willingness to stay in school.

Given this, we must focus on educational principles that empower students through assisting them in the production of meaningful and purposeful knowledge so that they may come to discover themselves as active agents of their world, with a growing awareness that they can make a difference in their own lives and communities. We must create the conditions in the classroom so that our students come to realize that they are always involved in producing knowledge and the act of learning, even if it is not the kind of knowledge or learning that traditional institutions consider legitimate or worthy. To accomplish this, we must understand the classroom as the real world. For the more we engage with the histories and lived experiences of our students, the more we are able to assist them in using what they know in order to expand and extend their knowledge of those things which are unfamiliar to them. For me, this is essential to an environment where real learning can take place and where student creativity can flourish.

I've learned that working in the field of multicultural education requires a willingness to deal with issues of power and social injustice.

After more than 30 years of educational research in the field, there still remains an unwillingness on the part of many traditional educators to suspend their disbelief that the curriculum is deficient for meeting the academic needs of most students of color. They refuse to acknowledge the Eurocentric nature of most curricular materials from all disciplines. My experience has been that unless there is some pretty aggressive, assertive, and preserving leadership in communities and schools – leadership that specifically focuses on addressing educational policies and practices related to culture, social power, and the curriculum – transformative input from people of color is seldom sought or integrated into the culture of schools. What is missing are forums for truly democratic participation by communities of color where school issues that affect our children each day can be adequately addressed. Over the years, there have been advocacy groups that have formed in an effort to struggle with the problems our students face in public schools, but usually these efforts have resulted from the community's initiative. It has been a long struggle to bring changes to public schools in the area of multiculturalism. Teachers are frustrated, parents are frustrated, and communities are frustrated with the way in which institutionalized school practices and the curriculum, even when shown to be ineffective, are so difficult to change.

But despite the difficulties we face, there are some hopeful things happening. For example, the California Association of Bilingual Educators has made an effort to support educational transformation through the sponsoring of several critical pedagogy institutes over the last five years. These have been designed to expose bilingual teachers to an emancipatory pedagogy which reinforces the involvement of community and emphasizes the importance of beginning classroom learning from the standpoint of students' lives. The purpose here is to help students build an understanding of their own histories and to see how the conditions they face each day are significant to their own production of knowledge and to the experiences they bring into the classroom. Over the years, I have observed that students, who experience classroom opportunities to develop their voices and participate more fully in

Theory

Understanding Culture, Humanities and Environmental Justice

by Carl Anthony

First, we must recognize that much of the environmental debate has been conducted as if the human community were uniform, without great differences in culture and experience, without differences in power and access to material influence. The perception of humanity as a unified whole has had the value of allowing us to see nature and humanity in a biological context, to trace the manifold connections among people and other organisms so that an integrated understanding of new relationships can be seen. But this perspective is limited. It discourages us from looking at conflicts within communities along lines of race, class and gender. It discourages us from looking at differences within and between groups of people. It discourages us from seeing that not all members of a society or ecosystem agree on its ends, or bear responsibility for or benefit from ecological destruction.

Second, in order to develop constructive strategies and assign responsibilities to our institutions for dealing with environmental problems, we have to learn a lot more about the environmental history and cultural heritage of communities, which has been invisible to us. A culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavioral patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work typical of a given population or community at a given time. It is a pattern of basic assumptions — invented, discovered, or developed by a given group of people as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration — that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members of the community as the correct way to perceive, think and feel. To understand relationships of communities of color to their environments, we should examine each community as a distinct culture evolving out of a specific history in a unique geographic configuration.

• Ever since the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1492, Native American communities have been fighting for environmental justice. Control of the land and the resources within it has been an essential source of conflict for over 500 years. Some of the environmental issues central to the Native American experience include the decimation of large populations from disease, genocide, destruction of sacred lands and abridgement of sovereignty rights.

• The Latino population has a long history in the American Southwest, predating by 200 years the arrival of Anglo populations. After the 1848 Treaty of Hidalgo, many Hispanic and Pueblo Indian communities were stripped of their land base and water rights, leaving a legacy of bitterness and poverty. Today, the environmental justice movement in the Southwest provides a national model, with campaigns around border issues, high-tech industries, farm worker rights, and urban environmental struggles.

• We need an environmental history of the southern plantation system that adequately explores the roles of slaves and masters and poor whites, latter sharecroppers, and industrial agriculture, in reshaping the regional landscape of the South. An understanding of relationships between people, social institutions and the land from the early 17th century would shed a great deal of light on today's questions of social diversity, class and race dynamics, and the environment.

• The long history of exclusion acts has shaped the demographic composition of generations of Japanese and Chinese communities in the United States and their relationships to the land and neighborhoods. Asian farm workers have long been subject to hazardous working conditions. Newcomer neighborhoods have high density housing, high incidences of repository illness, and lack adequate open space.

Ultimately, the adequate construction of such environmental histories depends upon the acknowledgment of the full humanity of communities of color in contemporary society — a step which academics in particular, and society in general, has been reluctant to take. Recognition of this humanity carries with it implications for environmental studies — that every community has both its own aspirations and its unique environmental history, and that the study of such history may cast important light on the understanding of our environmental problems.

Third, we are beginning to understand that the way we live in cities has enormous impact on our global environment. For example, William Cronon in his masterful book about Chicago showed how the development of that city from the Civil War to the turn of the century basically restructured the ecological hinterland from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains, transforming the forests to prairie, the wild grasses to wheat, and the buffalo to cattle. The way we live in cities is destroying rural communities and replacing small scale farming with agribusiness. Spill-over effects and externalities are undermining the health and self-reliance of land based communities

Think of Los Angeles today. The South Coast Air Quality Management District estimates that one percent of global warming comes from the Los Angeles County basin. Sixteen thousand people a year in LA die from respiratory illness directly related to air quality, most of them people of color who live near industry and smoggy freeways. The garbage from urban consumption ends up in incinerator plants, garbage dumps and land fills, sited overwhelmingly in urban and rural communities of color. We need to explore social and environmental landscapes in which power and difference express themselves — highways, inner cities, suburban tract developments, factories, hospitals, corporations, dumps, reservoirs, sewage disposal facilities, military installations – all the many places that give shape to the modern world.

We have developed the habit of thinking of stewardship of natural resources as being a separate and wholly unrelated

responsibility from stewardship of human resources. But we are wasting both human and natural resources in our cities. The environmental movement has taught us that we are throwing away bottles, newspapers and cans that should be recycled. But in Detroit and Chicago, Los Angeles and Philadelphia, and Baltimore and Oakland, we are also throwing away streets and houses, schools, fire houses, and factories. Indeed, we are throwing away whole communities of men, women, and children, who are invisible to us, because they live in other neighborhoods, their skin is dark, or their hair is woolly. But the children in these communities are real. They are hungry when they are not fed, and they bleed when they are wounded.

They are not part of our problem, they are part of our solution. We can no longer afford to view joblessness — which affects young people, particularly young people from racially oppressed communities — as a separate issue from the protection and restoration of natural resources. Our goal should be to put these young people to work, restoring the environment and making our cities safe.

Finally, we must come to terms with the pattern of scientific specialization which makes it difficult for communities to understand and use information made available by our system of professions. "Even now, with the problem only beginning to come in focus," suggests Professor Edward Wilson, speaking about the challenges of protecting biodiversity on a global scale suggests, "there is little doubt about what needs to be done."

The solution will require cooperation among professions long separated by academic and practical tradition. Biology, anthropology, economics, agriculture, government and law will have to find a common voice. Their conjunction has already given rise to a new discipline — biodiversity studies — defined as the systematic study of the full array of organic diversity, together with the methods by which it can be maintained and used for the benefit of humanity. The scope of our current environmental malaise, however, and the realization that causes are woven into the fabric of our modern enterprise, inevitably lead us to the recognition that effective solutions require consideration of socioeconomic and cultural forces as well as professional ones.

Carl Anthony is the founder of the Urban Habitat Program, president of Earth Island Institute and Co-editor of Race, Poverty and the Environment. *He writes and speaks extensively on environmental justice, land use and ecopsychology.*

Essential Reading:

The Racial Economy of Science, Toward a Democratic Future

Reviewed by Carl Anthony

Edited by Sandra Harding. Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1993

In *The Racial Economy of Science: Toward a Democratic Future*, Sandra Harding shows how Western scientific definitions and practices legitimize culturally approved definitions of race difference, racism, imperialism, and racially destructive applications of science and technology in health and reproduction, environment and development. She points to the dependence of communities of color around the world on scientific research agendas which give priority to the requirements of a global industrial elite.

"Western sciences," she writes in her introduction to this valuable collection of 33 essays, "clearly have been and continue to be complicit with racist, colonial, and imperial projects. Not surprisingly, Westerners fail to situate their understandings of both nature and the sciences within maximally realistic and objective world histories."

Harding documents a wide variety of resources for understanding these phenomena, including new social movements challenging the imposition of Western values and standards on non-Western people, social studies of science and technology, natural scientists seeking to situate themselves and their work in more objective understandings of local and international politics, new audiences addressing diversity in US educational institutions, advocates of humanities in science education, and those involved in current attempts to figure out desirable social relations for the world community.

Her commentary provides a framework of six elements useful for constructing less culturally biased tools of science: 1) reviewing early non-Western scientific traditions; 2) examining the role of science in the construction of modern racism; 3) surveying who gets to do and direct science; 4) examining bias in the applications of science and technologies; 5) questioning objectivity, values and methods of science; and 6) looking critically at visions of the future based on science and technology.

She provides a selection of essays on each of these topics and suggests their wide ranging consequences for scientific theory and practice. First, Western science supports hierarchies of race, class and gender as a matrix of privilege to benefit those who identify themselves as "raceless economic men," who are, after all, a tiny minority of the world's people. Second, all science is culturally situated; there is no such thing as "pure science" that can be usefully distinguished from its social origins, meanings, institutions, practices, technologies and uses. Third, despite its Western bias, science is a contested zone, a terrain on which inherited social beliefs may be rigorously challenged and visions for the future debated. Finally, a critique of science which raises questions about the selection of problems to pursue in the first place, and gives priority to perspectives of least advantaged groups, would likely lead to greater objectivity in scientific methods and research results.

This book is essential reading for educators and advocates of sustainability and environmental justice.

Environmental Justice Activism Triumphs

Segregation Challenged in EPA Sponsored Environmental Education Program

by Running-Grass and Max Weintraub

Expanding the Reach of an Environmental Education Initiative

On October 15 and 16 of 1996, a Small Working Group composed of representatives of environmental education programs, the EPA Environmental Education Division (EED), and members of the environmental justice movement met in Washington, D.C. to negotiate an accountable process by which to select one or two new partners for the second year of the Environmental Education and Training Partnership (EETAP).

Representing the multicultural and environmental justice side were Running-Grass, (representing the Coalition for Justice in Environmental Education), Joanne Henry of Alternatives for Community and Environment in Boston, and Cynthia Mendy of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice in New Orleans. Dorceta Taylor and Theresa Cordova, both well known in environmental justice circles, are also environmental justice representatives to the Small Working Group but were not able to attend the Washington meeting. They were both consulted closely during the weeks prior to and after the negotiations.

The negotiations of the Small Working Group resulted in a process to open up the EETAP program to organizations of color and those which are implementing environmental education in environmental justice contexts. Such organizations and programs were not included in the original formation of EETAP, resulting in both a lack of representation of our issues and concerns and a lack of funding to advance environmental education in communities of color.

The EETAP Program, now entering its second year, is a three year $7.2 million cooperative agreement, established by the National Environmental Education Act of 1990 to advance environmental education in the United States. The current Cooperative Agreement is based upon a proposal submitted by the North American Association for Environmental Education, (NAAEE) and its partners and chosen by the Environmental Education Division of EPA. According to an NAAEE briefing paper, it is to:

> [P]rovide training and related support to education professionals. Through this training, EETAP's ultimate goal is to increase the public's ability to make responsible environmental decisions by developing awareness and knowledge about environmental issues, and promoting critical thinking and other skills needed to make sound environmental decisions. EETAP will accomplish this goal by:
>
> • Increasing and enhancing existing training efforts—especially those that are innovative and emphasize education reform—for educators (K-12 and nonformal).
>
> • Identifying, evaluating and disseminating information on superior educational materials, teaching methods, and programs through the development of a Resource Library.
>
> • Strengthening and expanding existing (environmental education) partnerships and networks.

The goals of EETAP also recognize that there are "substantial numbers of educators who are not well served by the existing environmental education structure." These include teachers of color and white teachers who teach in multicultural settings.

Now that the door to the Partner level is open, environmental justice and organizations of color might develop program concepts which generally reflect the goals stated above such as preparing all teachers to teach about environmental justice issues in multicultural public school settings or identifying, evaluating and disseminating environmental education teaching materials which include multicultural perspective and address environmental justice issues.

March 5, 1996 **To the National Environmental Justice Advisory Commission**

Robert Bullard, Richard Moore, and Peggy Saika
Co-Chairs, National Environmental Justice
Advisory Commission
Office of Environmental Justice -U.S. EPA
Washington, DC

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of NEJAC,

Because people of color communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, we in the environmental justice movement nationally have recognized the importance of political action and dialogue as means to mitigate and correct these conditions. We have also, over the last several years, come to recognize that environmental education is a central element in strategies for environmental justice. In the **Principles of Environmental Justice** we sought to infuse that recognition with the core concerns of our movement:

> **Principle 16:** Environmental Justice calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

In diverse communities of color around the country, political action is being combined with innovative educational strategies based on Principle #16, to educate and mobilize residents to effect social change and positively impact environmental quality. These communities are the primary force and context for the development of *multicultural* approaches to environmental education, innovations for which mainstream organizations and individuals increasingly wish to take credit.

Mainstream environmental education, as an educational field of practice, has yet to grasp the opportunities inherent in embracing diversity and incorporating environmental justice principles into its activities; and has yet, politically, to respond to the movement as an equal partner in the development of environmental literacy in communities of color.

This failure to include environmental justice concerns can be seen most recently in the actions of the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), the national professional organization for environmental education. NAAEE recently won a grant of nearly $2 million, (for year one of a three year

Continued on page 21.

Next steps over the coming months will be to participate in and monitor the agreed upon process and successfully guide a consortium of environmental justice groups doing significant educational work, into the EETAP program as fully funded partners.

The Campaign

Nearly a year ago, a group of educational and environmental justice activists, with the leadership of Three Circles Center began monitoring the formation and implementation of EETAP and noticed that not one of the 18 funded partners were organizations of color, environmental justice organizations or environmental education organizations with a consistent history of successfully addressing environmental justice issues or effectively outreaching and allying with people of color in the community context. As we explored the program, further using materials published by NAAEE as well as phone interviews with a number of people close to the project, we found other important environmental justice issues. (See our letter of March 5th to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council. See also the Principles of Environmental Justice reprinted in this issue of our Journal.)

Involving the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Because of the importance of the issues in EETAP, we decided that the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) should be informed and their assistance enlisted. NEJAC is a federal advisory council created by and formed to meet the intent of Executive Order 12898 which requires federal agencies to examine whether their activities result in environmental discrimination.

Prior to the May NEJAC meeting, the organizers of the campaign continued to collect signatures on the March 5 letter and formed the Coalition for Justice in Environmental Education.

After a number of calls to environmental justice leaders around the country, we were successful in getting on the agenda of the NEJAC meeting scheduled in May of 1996. We strongly urged EETAP and the Environmental Education Division to attend and give testimony as well, which they did. (Summary of that testimony is available from the Office of Environmental Justice of the EPA in Washington, DC.)

After EED and EETAP responded to the concerns of the Coalition as presented by Michael Dorsey, now a Ph.D. student at Johns Hopkins University, Running-Grass, Executive Director of Three Circles Center and Max Weintraub of the National Lead Information Center, NEJAC formed a Task Force on Environmental Education that included NEJAC members and members of the Coalition for Justice in Environmental Education. NEJAC also asked EED to report back at the next NEJAC meeting in December about progress made in the following areas:

1) develop criteria that ensure people of color and low income people are involved in environmental education activities;

2) that such activities address the needs of people of color and low income communities;

3) that EED develop the means to evaluate the success of such efforts; and

4) that EED work with the Coalition to discourage the further exclusion of people of color, low income communities and their environmental justice issues.

Significance for the Environmental Justice Movement

The fundamental conclusion of our analysis of the program, was that the lack of organizations of color with environmental justice experience in the EETAP partner group, and other program deficiencies, effectively reduced the access to culturally appropriate environmental education resources and educational opportunities for children and teachers of color in their community context. In as much as access to such resources is essential to immunize these disproportionately impacted people to environmental threats in their community settings, restricted access to environmental information and lack of acknowledgment of their indigenous environmental leadership is, in fact, environmental racism.

The success of this campaign has benefited the environmental justice movement, established that communities engaged in environmental justice struggles are formulating innovative community based approaches to environmental education, opened up those programs to Federal support through EETAP, and successfully engaged "mainstream" environmental education and the EPA in a compelling learning process about environmental justice. This campaign has also increased the visibility of environmental education within the environmental justice movement resulting in the formation of a NEJAC task force and networking among community groups engaged in significant educational efforts in their localities.

The selection of appropriate partners and projects will ensure that children of color (who are at special risk of environmental harm) and their teachers in both formal and nonformal settings will have access to the tools, materials and experiences necessary to support their environmental justice efforts at the community level.

Many people contributed to the success of this campaign: the members of NEJAC and the NEJAC Environmental Education Task Force; the National Office for Environmental Justice; Anne Simon of the Environmental Law Community Clinic; the signatories of the March 5th letter; the Coalition for Justice in Environmental Education; the staff of the EPA Environmental Justice Office in Washington; the environmental justice representatives to the EETAP Small Working Group; the Bay Area People of Color in Environmental Education (an informal group of educators and activists); and the dozens of people who responded promptly with advice and often with funds to bring this issue to a conclusion which benefits the environmental justice movement and our communities.

Running Grass is Executive Director of Three Circles Center. Max Weintraub works at the National Lead Information Center in Washington, D.C.

Letter continued

project not including contributions of partners), from the EPA to develop environmental education throughout the country. The grant has established the Environmental Education and Training Partners (EETAP) to implement the program. We believe that EETAP and the grant itself represent significant opportunities for environmental education, with great potential to move environmental education forward and to innovate in the field. EETAP also has significant potential to benefit communities of color around the country. Such potential could be realized if there were authentic participation of communities of color, nationally recognized leaders of color in environmental education, and regional environmental justice networks.

Unfortunately, as EETAP takes steps to implement the grant significant omissions are evident. We offer the following concerns as examples.

• Their published list of partners and network partners does not include any environmental justice organizations with expertise and interest in environmental education. In fact, there are no people of color organizations or multicultural organizations in their list of partners and network partners.

• No proposals for projects which might be funded through their grant have been solicited from environmental justice organizations nor from people of color, community based organizations or nationally recognized leaders of color in environmental education.

• Proposals that have been solicited and reviewed for funding, and that propose to do urban and multicultural work, have come from mainstream white environmental education programs which have shown limited capacity for authentically reaching teachers of color, children of color or their communities. Historically, these programs have not addressed environmental justice issues in their work.

• No discussions have taken place, nor have any requirements been issued to the partners making them accountable for involving children, teachers and communities of color in all aspects of their work.

• NAAEE has widely solicited information of a conceptual nature on urban environmental education with multicultural populations from a number of programs and people of color around the country, but few, if any, have been informed of or involved in the recently received grant. NAAEE continues to rely on the expert advice of people of color, and even their volunteer work, in formulating and reviewing drafts, to position them as an innovative leader in working with multicultural populations in urban settings. Yet, these people and their grassroots programs are conspicuously absent from the partner list and are therefore not eligible for significant funding from EETAP.

• In sum, we are concerned that there may be discriminatory impacts in the implementation of EETAP. The President's Executive Order on Environmental Justice and the EPA Implementation Strategy are designed to prevent just such impacts. In a recent phone conversation with the Director of the EETAP, he stated that he was not familiar with the Executive Order or the Implementation Strategy.

Over the course of the last six or seven years, as the environmental justice movement has developed, we have come to expect certain kinds of communication and cooperation by mainstream environmentalists and their organizations. These include such points as:

• Environmental justice groups and people of color with a community orientation are at the decision making table, and are included at the inception of major initiatives which impact and involve our communities.

• Resources are shared with people of color organizations which directly serve our communities and articulate and define our interests.

• Existing leadership within our communities locally and nationally are recognized and engaged in projects which impact our interests.

• The principles of environmental justice be acknowledged as central organizing and conceptual elements in projects which impact our communities and as essential for resolution of all environmental issues.

• The spirit and letter of the President's Executive Order and the EPA's Agency Strategy for the implementation of the order be taken seriously and be fully documented and publicly accessible.

We believe there is a need to initiate a conversation with NAAEE and EETAP on these points. Such a conversation should result in a more clear understanding of the points above by NAAEE and make a more cooperative and equal relationship possible.

We are therefore writing the Council to alert them to our concerns regarding EETAP, its implications for our movement and communities, and to inform the Council that we are engaged in a process of inquiry to gather all the facts related to steps now being taken for the planning and implementation of the grant. We trust that this process will lead to and ensure that our perspectives and organizations will be included in this very important and beneficial project. In that regard, we have sent a letter of inquiry to each partner in EETAP to determine the extent to which they have historically made efforts to reach and involve low income and people of color communities, teachers of color and diverse, low income schools.

We welcome your cooperation in obtaining and evaluating information on the implementation of EETAP. In particular, we would like to the Council to request the following documents from the EPA:

• The proposal submitted to the EPA by NAAEE for funding. Having access to and reviewing the winning proposal will allow us to ascertain to what extent NAAEE utilized the work of people of color organizations and individuals in presenting their urban and multicultural work.

• The budget of the Project funded by EPA.

• The EPA approved Project workplan.

• The cooperative agreement EPA has with NAAEE and EETAP. Reviewing the contract will allow us to understand the extent to which the EPA Implementation Strategy is being fulfilled.

• The criteria and narratives documenting the selection of NAAEE by the EPA as the recipient of the grant.

• The criteria and narratives by which the EETAP selected its partners.

• The contracts EETAP has with the Partners it has funded. We are looking for specific references to requirements that the partners actively and accountably involve people of color at all levels of program implementation.

Running-Grass, Executive Director, Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education (Organizer) with Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Oakland CA
Kishi Animashaun, Community Organizer, Atlanta GA
Lisa Maria Bertholdi, Antioch New England Environmental Justice Working Group
Loudovic Blain, Environmental Justice Advocate, New York City
Karen Brown, Public Health Educator, New York City
Bunyan Bryant, University of Michigan
Gina Blyther, Educator, Philadelphia PA
Rona Carter, Greenpeace USA, Washington DC
Steve Chase, Antioch University Environmental Justice Working Group
Michael Dorsey, Environmental Justice Advocate, Yale University
Eric Edgerly, Castlemont H.S., Oakland CA
Allen Edson, African American Development Association, Oakland CA
Jean Frederickson, Consultant in Bilingual, Multicultural and Environmental Education, Running Springs CA
Tom Goldtooth, Indigeneous Environmental Network, Bemidji, MN
Deb Habib, Educator, Amherst MA
Thomas Lee, Asian Community Environmental Educator, San Francisco
Carlos Melendrez, Executive Director, Alliance of Ethnic and Environmental Organizations, San Francisco
Henry Moses, Environmental Justice Initiative, Washington DC
Muhammed Nehru, San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG)
Pacific Energy and Resources Center, Sausalito CA
Janet Phoenix, M.D., National Safety Council, Washington DC
Lynn Pinder, Executive Director, Youth Warriors, Baltimore MD
Elizabeth Tan, Educator/Community Organizer, Berkeley CA
Connie Tucker, Southern Network for Economic & Social Justice, Atlanta GA
Tahnit Sakakeeny, Environmental Educator/ Filmmaker, Boston MA
Marc Spencer, Graduate Student in Multicultural Education, San Francisco Urban Habitat Program, San Francisco CA
Jeanney Wang, Environmental Educator, Berkeley CA
Max Weintraub, Instructor, USDA Graduate School, Washington DC

Place and Diverse Communities:
The Search for a Perfect Fit

by Tahnit Sakakeeny

A Sense of Place

Over the last four years, I've been designing and implementing urban environmental education programs for a New England-based, non-profit, recreation and conservation organization called the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). In the past, we've struggled not only to find the most appropriate participant group for our programs, but more importantly, to find the right setting, or "base," from which to conduct our work. For example, should our programs focus on one particular Boston-area park, or should they incorporate parks across the city? Should we work with one neighborhood in particular, or should we work with community centers city-wide? We've been struggling to define and establish a sense of *place* for our programs within the culturally diverse urban arena.

As perceptions of the "urban environment" have evolved and expanded, so have urban environmental educational programs. Once we believed that the urban environment simply meant green-spaces within the city. Our education offerings mirrored that view. Today we see our program's base and future as resting in what is called "community conservation work." In fact, environmental education and conservation organizations nation-wide are also terming their programs, "community conservation work." Currently, many of these "community conservation" initiatives are struggling through their own attempts to establish a sense of place. Just as definitions and perceptions of the urban environment have evolved, so have the definitions and perceptions of what makes community and what makes for community conservation work.

After all, every community has its own sense of place. For Chelsea it was one of distinct ethnic neighborhoods and a turbulent history.

AMC has a strong history of running outdoor education workshops in the White Mountains of Northern New Hampshire and Maine. The organization has been promoting the protection and responsible use of this region for more than one hundred years. We have overnight facilities and trails in the mountains which give us an actual, physical stake in the region. We have a constituency of members that supports our conservation and research efforts. We also have a strong vision for the future of our programs in the area. Our organization's history, physical connection to the land, supportive members, and a vision for the future have created the solid sense of place from which our North Country education programs can develop and flourish. This sense of place can give any developing program the direction it needs to push past obstacles and succeed.

For over 25 years, AMC had been successfully running the Youth Opportunities Program (YOP), designed to train youth workers in outdoor leadership skills so they, in turn, would be qualified to lead their kids on hiking and camping trips through the mountains. YOP remains a fantastic program. However, its coordinators see in it one significant short-coming: kids have a great time in the woods, but the reality is that most of them live in the city. How can we involve and engage them where they live? The answer: The Urban Trails Program, the program which I coordinate.

Inner-city Youth and Empowerment

It seems as though with each new funding cycle there is a certain key word or phrase that comes into vogue. During the year Urban Trails was conceived, there were two phrases, "inner-city youth" and "empowerment." Thus, Urban Trails was drafted as a program that would help to empower inner-city youth by paying them an hourly stipend to build and maintain parks in and around Boston. On its best days, youth participating in Urban Trails would set stone steps, create water bars and clear trails. These projects worked - when they could be found.

In designing Urban Trails, we were not able to establish a sense of urban place comparable to the sense of North Country place that helped YOP grow. In the mountains, there was always trail work to be done. It was accomplished by a combination of professional trail crews, supervised volunteer trail crews and many committed volunteers who worked on their own. We rather naively assumed that in city parks there would also always be plenty of trail projects at hand, and that the land maintenance agencies would generally be competent and helpful in using the aid of inner-city youth. These assumptions didn't hold. The program depended upon the existence of substantial work projects that challenged youth and taught them new skills. However, in city parks there are not many trails to blaze and bridges to build. In search of new work projects, I was constantly moving from one land maintenance agency to another, continuously reestablishing myself and the program. The program was headed towards failure. This was mainly because we did not begin with a good sense of place. We had no history nor firm understanding of the physical and bureaucratic nature of city parks. We did not have any physical stake in one particular urban area; and with no history or clear fit for this program within our organization, it was a struggle to push beyond obstacles.

The Contradictions of Ownership

At the end of my first summer with Urban Trails, we knew that for the next funding season we would have to focus on the idea of "ownership" for our organization to proceed. What we needed was one particular urban green space. This way, we as an organization could take ownership of the space, along with the young people who worked on the land. Questions arose:

Which green space should we choose? What neighborhood would it be in? Can you just decide to take ownership of an area? Or is ownership something that takes to you?

AMC is a New England conservation organization but because we're headquartered in Boston, we felt an obligation and a commitment to better our city environment. If, for instance, we had been a YMCA located in one particular pocket of the city, then it would have made sense for us to have adopted the nearest park. But we're not located in a small, urban neighborhood; we're located in the center of the city, in its wealthiest, best manicured and most "coalitioned" neighborhood. So I began to look to the surrounding neighborhoods for "ownership" opportunities. We developed a handful of successful projects, such as clearing side lots and planting seeds near our youth centers. Although neighborhood-lot work engaged the youth, it really didn't make sense for AMC as an organization. There were already other city organizations that specialized in turning lots into playgrounds or gardens. They had successful histories and clearly stated mission statements that established them in the urban environment. They had *place*. In addition, vacant lots really didn't fit with AMC's profile. Our mission states that we are committed to the "protection, enjoyment and wise use of the mountains, rivers and trails of the Northeast." Of course we supported efforts to revitalize urban lots; but direct involvement in the process seemed to be outside of our mission.

We needed to take ownership of a place that made sense for our organization. I located an urban riverway, envisioning neighborhood kids building and caring for trails along their river. This is when I received my first real lesson in urban environmental politics. A representative from the local land maintenance agency had been taking me on site visits to the river and helping me sketch plans for trail construction. There was definitely a need for a greenway that could connect neighborhoods and alleviate some of the traffic from other over-used riverways. I had assumed that if no work was being done on the area, we could just jump in and take ownership. I was completely naive as to the amount of time required to secure construction permits (even for trails), and build neighborhood constituencies. Apparently, a major Boston urban environmental organization had already been working on the above. It had just appeared as though nothing was being done along the river. At the same time the representative from the maintenance agency was taking me on tour, he was also negotiating with the other group. When I finally learned of their advanced stage of involvement, we backed off from the riverway. Although I felt discouraged after this experience, I held an underlying belief that when we finally found the right programming place, it would truly be ours.

One person on my community conservation committee asked revealingly, "How do we get them to do what we want?"

Diversity

That season ended by our doing a series of large clean-up and trail building events on Boston's harbor islands. We built these events around the popular concept of "diversity." The trail work days became celebrations with barbecues, games and free T-shirts. Rather than have youth groups work alone as the "janitors" of the city, these events involved people of all ages, backgrounds, and levels of physical and mental ability in discovering and caring for the islands together. This model successfully carried the program through several years. By concentrating our work on the islands, we were no longer moving among various locations and land maintenance agencies. The islands were common ground, belonging to not just one Boston area neighborhood, but all the local neighborhoods.

Despite the growing number of participants at each of these island trail-work events, I still felt as though something was missing. I was sure that if volunteers were working on project sites that were close to them, places they could revisit on their own, we could accomplish so much more. I was still struck by that word "ownership." I wanted a work project with a connection to one particular community.

Chelsea

This time I did a little more homework and found another urban riverway in the city of Chelsea, where no other Boston-area environmental organization seemed to be doing any work. However, after struggling for several years to find a programming place, I was cautious about myself. Communities such as Chelsea have been burnt by the unfulfilled promises of zealous outsiders. They have also grown frustrated by the half-hearted attempts these zealots have made to understand the nature and needs of the community before developing their own agendas. After all, every community has its own sense of place. For Chelsea, it was one of distinct ethnic neighborhoods and a turbulent history.

Chelsea had recently come out of receivership. For the past decade, everyone from state officials to presidents of universities had been trying to tell the community how to right itself. The city had some major economic, social and environmental challenges ahead. However, it also had a new government, some committed citizens, and a determination to make changes on its own.

I began by meeting with people in the various Chelsea government offices including the Department of Planning and Development and Health and Human Services. I met with school teachers and a prominent citizen action group. I just wanted to listen to the community's needs. Had I come in peddling my program's wares and offering our service and advice, I believe my actions would have been aptly interpreted as arrogant. Instead, I demonstrated my sense of respect for Chelsea. I felt privileged that they allowed me to sit in on their meetings. I kept quiet and learned from them; after all, they were inviting me into their home.

I am a woman of color who grew up

in a very urban, blue-collar Boston neighborhood. For this reason, from the start of my work in Chelsea, I never felt superior to my surroundings. Instead, I viewed the city as a place of potential for partnerships and learning. I do not yet believe that all community workers must "match" their surroundings. However, it may be more initially challenging for various racial, ethnic or class groups to set aside certain ingrained missionary sentiments and proceed at a true level of "simpatico." Likewise, it may be initially more difficult for the community to trust the motives of an outsider who does not have any apparent connections to the community.

Community Conservation Work and Community Representation

Shortly after I had begun familiarizing myself with Chelsea, the next key phrase was canonized: "community conservation work." I was invited to join community conservation committees, talk at community conservation workshops and take part in community conservation charettes. I had no idea what "charette" meant, and I was beginning to question my definition of community. The earlier Chelsea meetings had been with people I believed comprised the community — residents, as well as school and city officials. But at these charettes, the residents and local officials were seldom present. Instead, there were non-profit environmentalists (like myself), and public officials, usually from state government. One charette focused on exploring the community conservation needs and opportunities within a largely Latino and southeast Asian city. However, no representatives from these ethnic groups were present. In another community conservation committee meeting, participants had already begun drafting long-term plans for the community's river and greenway before any member of that community had even been notified of the committee's existence.

At the community conservation charette, I asked why there were no Latino or Asian representatives present. Some of the representatives from the community's minority white population said that it was too difficult to get people from those groups to participate. I will admit that it is often difficult to involve recent immigrants in community activities; however, there were Latinos and Asians in this city who were not recent immigrants. The charette organizers could have at least printed outreach flyers in Spanish, Vietnamese or Cambodian. In general, unless a representative from each of the community's population groups is present, plans for community conservation work should not even begin to be drafted. To be successful, the community at hand must "buy-in."

The issue of "buy-in" raises another important question: agendas. Whose projects are really getting done? Whose agendas are really being met? If a community conservation initiative has to work so hard to get a community to "buy-in" to the projects, are those projects really community-based? I admit that at times, communities can lack the needed momentum and clear direction to solve problems. But at what point is the stereotype of "unorganized, uninformed," urban communities challenged? I have participated in community conservation initiatives where outsiders, including myself, have itemized the community's primary environmental concerns. We have then developed, and sometimes begun, rudimentary action plans designed to address these concerns. We should have spent at least as much time thoroughly investigating the community's list of concerns as we did developing our gilded action plans.

I kept quiet and learned from them; after all, they were inviting me into their home.

Sometimes such initiatives are invited into the community by public officials who provide their own panel of community representatives. As the "specialists," we should have the wherewithal to make sure this panel is comprehensive and truly reflective of the community. The belief that outside community conservation workers (public agencies and environmental non-profits) can determine the needs and objectives of a community without first consulting with its members is patronizing at best, and fundamentally racist or classist at worst. I have never heard of outside organizations developing environmental agendas for a wealthy and primarily white suburb.

What if there are environmental concerns within a community that are not being addressed? If the community does not recognize them, are they still concerns? As an outsider, there is a fine line between calling a community's attention to what you believe should be an environmental concern, and being presumptuous or overstepping your place. Community conservation workers are currently struggling to define this obscure line. If a public official has been commissioned to address an environmental concern within a community, but the community has other environmental objectives, to what extent is this official willing to risk her career by challenging the bureaucratic order and altering her agenda? To what extent is a non-profit willing to bend the parameters of their funding? Or is community conservation work just a facade under which an appointed official or a crusading environmentalist can enter a community and fulfill her objectives? One person on my community conservation committee asked revealingly, "How do we get them (the community) to do what we want?"

Because the island trailwork events and several other projects were ongoing, I had the luxury of being able to listen to the Chelsea community without any specific programming agenda or task I needed to accomplish. They told me that they wanted opportunities for their children, an environmental career training program. Their request had created a programming need and base. Finally, I could adjust my program to fit the *place,* rather than continue to look for a place that fit my program.

To be wanted by a community is the ideal scenario. Eventually, it should be the goal of every community conserva-

tion programmer to no longer be needed by the community. The process of moving from the status of an outsider to a useful service provider is gradual. In the meantime, Chelsea and similar communities face certain, immediate, and undeniable environmental problems. In part, these concerns can only be surmounted by the gradual process of community action. Some aspects of these problems could be more easily overcome with the additional expertise and publicity provided by larger, governmental and non-profit "community conservation" initiatives.

The question remains. Will communities prioritize these concerns over their other challenges? If they don't, should outsiders take action anyway? If they do look for outside help, then certain agendas must be set aside and new agendas must be mutually developed. The day when a minority can plan for the majority within a community is no longer. If you hold a meeting and representatives of the community do not attend, then your meeting is null. An outsider's place in community conservation work is to seek out every facet of that community, to listen, and to make yourself available. When they want you, they will find you, and together you will create the right place for your program.

Tahnit Sakakeeny has recently left the Appalachian Mountain Club after coordinating the Urban Trails Program for several years. She plans to pursue a career in film-making.

Puget Sound Youth Stewardship Program

by Lela Hilton

The Puget Sound Youth Stewardship Program, sponsored by the Puget Sound Water Quality Authority and the Environmental Protection Agency, represented a significant regional effort to include youth from culturally and geographically diverse communities in a common effort to promote stewardship of Puget Sound and to encourage them to become leaders in increasing environmental awareness in their communities. The program began in February 1996 by convening more than 50 representatives from 18 participating communities in a day-long multicultural training for youth at Point Defiance Park in Tacoma, Washington. Activities during the training included a trust walk, group visioning, guided meditation and other group-building exercises focused on understanding how to work (and play!) comfortably with people of different backgrounds. Activities also included how to identify and initiate community stewardship projects.

Each of the 18 participating groups represented by the youth — from afterschool programs, home schools, reservations, alternative schools, logging communities, inner cities and science classes from all over Puget Sound — were also assigned "Bridge Partners" to act as co-consultants in developing stewardship projects. Bridge Partners were paired to reflect the greatest geographical and cultural diversity. Beginning at the training and over the subsequent months, Bridge Partners began ongoing collaborations: they visited each other's communities; brainstormed about community involvement strategies; and helped each other with community environmental education and stewardship projects (e.g., tree planting, ambient air monitoring, stream restoration).

Two months later in mid-April, in Pt. Towsend, Washington, the 18 groups reconvened for the Puget Sound Youth Stewardship Conference. The focus of the conference was to build on the connections made with Bridge Partners, to learn more about the Puget Sound ecosystem, and to explore ways to support ongoing stewardship activities. Over the long weekend, 85 youth worked with marine biologists, artists, writers, actors, musicians, environmental educators and community leaders to further understand the Puget Sound ecosystem, to articulate personal connections to their environment and to develop ways to share those connections in community action projects.

As YSP conference moderator Running-Grass said:

> Multicultural environmental education is about seeing the social dimension of environmental issues. It is about creating an inclusive environmental movement that builds on the experience of individual communities and supports their own articulation of community environmental quality.

By offering participants a variety of ways to both connect to their environments and articulate those connections, we hoped to create an atmosphere that was both culturally inclusive and also allowed for different learning styles and forms of expression. The conference began the first evening with a "Culture Contact" activity which challenged groups to create entirely new cultures and then interact with each other. The next morning, participants were addressed by Governor Mike Lowry and urged to get involved in their communities. "There's no action too small — no effort that is not important. Take what you learn here back home with you and share it with your community!"

Afterwards, they were introduced to the concept of a personal, "cultural" watershed where each participant drew a watershed that metaphorically represented their lives and family. Later, smaller groups worked with conference faculty to explore various ways of connecting to their environment. While one group was experiencing its first chance to row a traditional long boat, another group was creating and rehears-

ing a play about an Eco-superhero defending the watershed. Elsewhere, youth were writing poetry, writing songs, working with marine biologists at the Marine Science Center and making masks. Throughout, youth were learning to work together with people who came from cultures and landscapes that were very different from their own. Plays, songs, impromptu performances and rhythm games were shared during a "Night at the Improv" on the last night of the conference. Participants were regularly challenged to apply their experiences to their own communities by participating in group planning and visioning exercises.

An underlying theme of the conference and of the entire YSP was honoring diversity both in the "natural" community and within the community of youth that had gathered for the program. Over the evolution of the YSP — which began a full year before the first meeting in February 1996 — the word "diversity" had been recognized to mean different things to different people. For some of the people involved in the planning and design, this was the first time they had intentionally included marginalized groups in environmental education. For others, it was the first time that environmental education would be incorporated as a central theme into youth leadership programs. Diversity was perceived as an inclusive theme by some groups, as polarizing by others. To some it meant everybody, and to others it meant exclusively people of color. Underlying the discussion were the twin issues of environmental justice and racism. Throughout the planning and implementation of YSP, how these questions were to be incorporated became a challenging and central question.

As is oftentimes the case, some of the most difficult questions can be resolved by simply getting together and sharing stories. At the very first meeting of the groups in early February, a high school senior talking about being arrested for demonstrating against the harvest of old growth forests was met with astonishment from a group of inner-city youth. "You mean you *tried* to get arrested?" When the youth came together for the conference and had more time to share their own experiences, it became clear that the demonstrations to protect the environment were in many ways similar to demonstrations for civil rights, and that many facets of the environmental movement had a direct legacy from the social equity movements of the '60s. As these similarities became clearer, cultural and geographic distances diminished. Youth from Tacoma learned how their concerns about safe drinking water were related to disappearing salmon habitat on the Olympic Peninsula. Similarly, children of displaced timber workers empathized deeply with children whose families in the inner cities had been marginalized by land use decisions that left them living in neighborhoods with degraded environments, rising crime and failing economies.

Youth from Tacoma learned how their concerns about safe drinking water were related to disappearing salmon habitat on the Olympic Peninsula.

As young people and adults worked together during the conference, the barriers and differences between age, experience and culture began to dissipate. Youth spontaneously took over some presentations and adults became peers and co-learners with youth. One group leader said that as a result of the conference, he no longer saw the students as his charges, or even members of an extended family, but as dear friends. And several youth remarked about how much support they felt from the adults and how surprised they were at their own willingness to take risks:

> I'd never written any poetry you know, before, but I wasn't afraid because I knew no one would laugh. I know I can do that now.

Some of the most common sentiments expressed in interviews of participants after the conference and in follow-up evaluations included:

> I learned how important it is to know about what's going on in other places — not just in my own community.

> It wasn't just kids learning from adults — we all learned from each other.

Overall, more than 100 young people representing diverse communities from all over the region participated directly in YSP activities. Many more have benefited from the experience and wisdom of these youth as they have taken what they have learned back to their communities. As a result of participating in YSP, more youth from diverse cultures are cleaning streams, painting murals about the environment and social justice, speaking out at public meetings, and writing poetry. A five minute video of the conference was filmed, edited and produced by high school students. Some groups have continued to maintain their Bridge partnerships and one alternative school in a timber town has made watershed stewardship the focus of its science curriculum. In recent follow-up interviews, many participants emphasized the importance of involving younger children and extended family members. They have also expressed concern about how complex some issues are and how hard it is to stay involved without continuous support from peers and interested adults. At the same time, they feel confident that as a result of their involvement in the program, they know where to go to ask for support and guidance.

For many, the issue of environmental justice continues to be an important and challenging one. One youth, an emerging leader in Tacoma, articulates how this new awareness has affected his own involvement and speaks for many other participants as well:

> As an active participant in restoring the environment in my community, I was already aware of the needs of an urban ecosystem. I was, however, affected by what I learned about environmental justice. I have always been aware of the problems in our low-income areas. Now I am

seeing the problem from a different point of view. I have become more aware, not only of the injustices highlighted at the conference but of the injustices in my own community. We should all be protective of the injustices that are very clear, but we should be just as protective of the injustices that are not clear. It is necessary, whenever possible, to be an advocate for those that, for whatever reason, cannot or will not fight for their own right to live in a community that is not a health hazard to them and the environment.

The Puget Sound Youth Stewardship Program could serve as a model for those communities who are trying to build bridges between diverse communities who are faced with difficult questions about how to balance social and environmental issues. It represented only the beginning step towards crucial work, but it helped open the eyes of all those who participated to the value and strength of supporting diversity in all facets of learning and community action. As one tired but happy participant said as she headed home from the conference, "I didn't realize how connected we all are to each other in different parts of the Sound even though we're so different — or how many ways we can find to work together — or even become involved ourselves. I mean, there was one guy who got so excited about plankton and then wrote a poem about it! I bet he's going to want to be a scientist now. Now that's pretty cool!"

Lela Hilton is Community Education Coordinator at Cooperative Extension, Washington State University, and a consultant in environmental education. She thanks Bree, Robin, Pike, Carl, Marcus, Shakira, Tamesha and Chelsea.

Environmental Justice Education Initiatives:

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Xavier University

by Cynthia Williams Mendy

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) at Xavier University of Louisiana was established in 1992 to address environmental justice issues. Xavier University of Louisiana is the only African American, Catholic university in the United States and has a national reputation for its excellence in providing education in the natural sciences. Through the guidance of its director and founder, Dr. Beverly Wright, DSCEJ has been involved in many educational endeavors to empower communities with ammunition to help them in their struggle with environmental hazards that diminish their quality of life. DSCEJ works with military communities in Biloxi and Gulfport, Mississippi; however, most of DSCEJ's educational activities take place in Cancer Alley.

Along the Mississippi River, Cancer Alley is an 85 mile corridor that stretches from Baton Rouge to New Orleans. Many of the communities in Cancer Alley share the same neighborhoods as chemical facilities. Cancer Alley houses approximately 140 chemical plants and seven refineries that release millions of pounds of chemicals into the air, land and water annually. Many of the residents living within close proximity to these polluting facilities are low-income and African American.

Empowering Cancer Alley residents with environmental education is key to helping them in their quest to improve their environments. Environmental education is essential in heightening one's knowledge of environmental issues that impact both neighborhood and health. Environmental education comes in many forms, ranging from computer literacy, to understanding how siting decisions are made, to locating unwanted land uses in communities.

DSCEJ's approach to providing environmental education is to travel to the community. DSCEJ's educational programs are site-specific; each training program is conducted in environmentally impacted communities along Cancer Alley. DSCEJ's overall goal is to provide environmental education to empower residents with knowledge and skills that will foster effective and meaningful community participation in the environmental decision making process that will promote a better quality of life.

The computer is an essential tool for residents who live in environmentally impacted communities. Combating environmental issues requires an understanding of environmental terminology and computer databases. Environmental terminology and databases are readily available through computers, but computer literacy is essential to getting access to this information. DSCEJ implemented a Computer Ready workshop that provided educational computer training to community residents in Cancer Alley. Through this interactive and hands-on workshop, residents were first taught the basic

Environmental education comes in many forms, ranging from computer literacy, to understanding how siting decisions are made, to locating unwanted land uses.

operational functions of a computer. Subsequent to that, they advanced to learning how to access environmental databases such as the Toxic Release Inventory (TRI) and Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA).

Community residents then advance to a more sophisticated and technical computer program that focuses on Geographical Information Systems (GIS). GIS is one of the most popular computer tools used to produce a visualization of the spatial distribution of pollution sources and socio-demographic variables.

Several of the communities that DSCEJ has partnered with are refinery-fenceline communities. Often times, residents in these communities complain of illnesses from chemical released by the refinery but may not be equipped with information about such toxic releases. A DSCEJ education seminar entitled, Refinery Health Hazards, provided participants with information on chemicals associated with refinery production and health effects from exposure to such chemicals.

A pattern which communities in Cancer Alley have in common is that the people settled in the community first and industry came afterwards. Discriminatory and exclusionary practices in the siting of noxious facilities made this occurrence possible. Understanding the permitting process is important in combating the siting of unwanted land uses. Furthermore, existing facilities that have bombarded residential communities must be held accountable for the dangers they impose on people of color neighborhoods. Often these polluting facilities refuse to buy out the community. Those facilities that agree or that are forced to participate in community buy-out programs often do not adequately and fairly compensate residents who must relocate.

Meanwhile, residents who are struggling for and have little hope of a buy-out, find that their next alternative is to try to develop Good Neighbor Agreements (GNA) with polluting industries. GNAs are implemented between industries and communities. Industries such as refineries agree to reduce pollution and provide resources, such as medical health monitoring, to the community. To address these concerns DSCEJ provided educational workshops on Understanding the Permit Process and Good Neighbor Agreements. The purpose of the training was to provide Cancer Alley residents with information and strategies that allow them to participate effectively in decisions that affect their environment.

In addition to utilizing technical experts and academicians, DSCEJ's approach to providing environmental education is the inclusion of grassroots leaders. Grassroots leaders have frontline experience and first-hand knowledge that academicians and technical experts lack. Grassroots leaders that are members of DSCEJ's Mississippi River Avatar Community Advisory Board (CAB) have participated in the education training not just as attendees, but also as trainers.

Incorporating environmental justice into primary and secondary curriculum is instrumental to knocking down barriers that promote environmental racism.

Besides educating communities, it is critical that other leaders, including educators, be equipped with the same knowledge. Educators play a pivotal role in preparing society for the environmental challenges of the present and future. Incorporating environmental justice into the primary and secondary curriculum is instrumental in shaping the hearts and minds of future generations that are committed to knocking down barriers that promote environmental racism.

DSCEJ recently began the implementation of a primary and secondary environmental justice education program. The purpose of the program is to increase the awareness of primary and secondary teachers about environmental justice issues. DSCEJ's curriculum development team has developed innovative environmental justice education training modules that assist teachers to incorporate environmental justice activities into the existing curriculum. Upon completion of the environmental justice education training programs, participants will have the capacity to train other primary and secondary teachers.

DSCEJ's environmental education training programs are developed into manuals that are disseminated to community residents that participate in the educational programs. The training programs will eventually be developed on CD-ROM. The development and dissemination of the training materials will allow other community organizations to duplicate the educational process, thus creating a multiplier effect. DSCEJ showcased its educational manuals at a national symposium in November 1996. The symposium was a culminating activity for all of DSCEJ's educational programs.

The success of DSCEJ's environmental education programs is attributed to its partnership with the residents in Cancer Alley, experts that conducted some of the of the educational training, and most importantly, the visions of DSCEJ's Director Dr. Beverly Wright, and the dedication of DSCEJ's remaining staff members. Special thanks go to Croscina O. Crockett whose work efforts go beyond the call of duty.

Cynthia Williams Mendy joined the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice staff as a volunteer and then as a Graduate Assistant and is now Program Manager for Research. A native of Charlottesville, Virginia, she is committed and dedicated to trying to improve the hazardous environmental problems that plague people of color, particularly those in Cancer Alley where the need for change is the greatest.

Birth of the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project

by Jo-Anne S. Henry

What is REEP about? Can you send me a curriculum? This was a question asked several times last year, the first active year of Alternatives for Community & Environment's "Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project" (REEP). The thing was, we were creating the curriculum as we went along, partly out of wanting to go with the students' flow regarding which issues to work on and which strategies to use, and partly so we could design exercises and activities in response to where student interests were focused.

This first year of working in public elementary, middle and high schools in Roxbury, Massachusetts has been an exciting and rewarding journey. Out of that journey have grown several environmental justice "works-in-progress" curricula: a general one-session workshop model; a full one- or two-semester curriculum, complete with community service projects; and an asthma education and prevention curriculum. The curricula are works in progress because we continue to build on them as we develop new ways for youth to get hands-on experience in environmental justice work.

Alternatives for Community & Environment (ACE) is a community-based environmental justice law and education center, providing underserved communities in Massachusetts with free legal, educational and organizing support in their struggles against environmental injustice. ACE provides tools and resources to assist neighborhood groups in articulating and actualizing their own environmental agendas for their communities.

ACE chose to site its main office in Roxbury because Roxbury is home to both a thriving culture of community activism and an unacceptable number of environmental and environmental health problems. While ACE works with many community groups in Massachusetts, ACE launched REEP to promote and support local environmental leadership through education and community service projects. REEP brings Roxbury youth and adults together to discuss and implement solutions to common concerns of environment and health.

REEP was first contemplated by ACE's founders, Charlie Lord and Bill Shutkin. As REEP's two main staff members, Klare Allen and I set out to engage young people in environmental justice issues, there was agreement that the fastest way to access young people was to go through the schools. But as we developed ways to introduce the students to environmental justice issues, the educational outreach took on a life of its own and grew into a program where students were engaging themselves in several different environmental justice community service projects.

We initially worked our way into local classrooms by making REEP presentations before principals and teachers at public schools. In the presentations, we explained our basic ideas for our curriculum. We started off with exercises exploring the students' concepts of environment and justice. We then moved on to interactive exercises and activities, expanding the students' understandings of environmental justice issues, the various players and the role of government in the problems and possible solutions. These exercises all have the underlying goal of training students to look at their homes, schools, and neighborhoods as environments that need to be monitored and protected.

The response to our presentations was overwhelmingly positive, and REEP signed on to work with 13 teachers and classes in six Roxbury public schools during the '95-'96 school year, and an additional four groups of kids in summer and after-school programs. By the end of REEP's first year, we had worked with more than 250 young people between the ages of ten and 19 years old! Our work with them ranged from one-time workshops to working during an entire class period every other week.

The contact with the kids came first and the curriculum grew organically as we went along. By the end of the year, REEP had developed a series of exercises, activities, and expeditions to stimulate student interest and an understanding of environmental justice. We also developed a free-standing asthma education and prevention curriculum which encourages students to make presentations to other student. Students pick the vehicle for conveying the asthma information.

A common thread running through REEP's curricula is the effort to immediately apply basic environmental, legal, health and economic information to specific examples that are relevant to what's happening in Roxbury. Following are examples of the tools REEP has developed to teach and involve students in local environmental issues.

Debates before the Zoning Board of Appeals

We wanted to further develop the students' presentation skills and allow them to process some of the sensitive balancing of environmental, health and economic issues inherent in many environmental justice problems. We also wanted to expose them to a real experience of the zoning process which is often a part of Roxbury's land use battles. Following the model of mock trials, we developed two case studies/debate exercises where students are put on either side of a land use dispute and must argue their cases before the Zoning Board of Appeals. They are either split into students versus a local merchants association disputing whether an actual piece of vacant land near the school should become a teen park or a parking lot, or they are students versus business people from outside the neighborhood who want to build a nail salon and liquor store next to the school.

Making City Government Work for You

To familiarize students with the roles and responsibilities of key City government offices, we do the following exercise. Again using a specific piece of vacant land in the community, we teach the students about several departments and agencies in City government that play a part, or should, in local environmental problem solving. Students are then divided into small groups and become one of the city departments discussed — Department of Health and Hospitals, Environment Department, Boston Redevelopment Authority, Law Department, Police Department, Transportation Department, and Neighborhood Services. REEP staff then pretend to be students seeking to establish a teen park and garden on the land. The goal is for each "department" to come up with an impressive list of all the ways it could help us in our endeavor and all the services it could provide. While we make it clear that government agencies are rarely running after residents to serve them, this exercise emphasizes that they are there to serve their constituents, and residents should look to them for anything they can do.

The Asthma Trigger Game

Because asthma disproportionately affects poor people of color in Boston, when we don't run through our complete asthma curriculum we at least play this game to familiarize students with what triggers they should be watching for in their schools, neighborhoods and homes. It's much like the game Pictionary (charades through drawing), during which students divide into two teams and attempt to draw what they have just learned about indoor and outdoor triggers of asthma and other respiratory problems. The teams take turns with one person drawing and their team members guessing the trigger. The team that identifies the most triggers wins.

Start Your Own Environmentally-Friendly Neighborhood Business

Many opponents to environmental justice try to paint the environmental justice movement as anti-business. We feel it is important for students to think about the issues from the point of view of business owners, both to further develop problem-solving and planning skills, and to expose them to real solutions that business owners can implement. Having already spent time discussing which kinds of businesses and industries have a history of worsening environmental degradation, we challenge students to explore what things you need to think about if you want to open a local business. What service will you provide? Where will you put it? What equipment do you need to start it? What environmental problems might you create and how will you address them? REEP staff then act as banks from which students must get loans. The more environmentally-friendly the business and the more it can show community support, the larger the loan.

A core part of the curriculum continues to be having the students come up with their own definition of environmental justice, and then listing what they see as the most critical environmental and health challenges facing their community. We then ask the students to vote on one issue and we work together to identify a project that will address that issue in some measurable fashion by the end of the year. REEP then supports the students in picking strategies and identifying allies and first steps, and the project takes off!

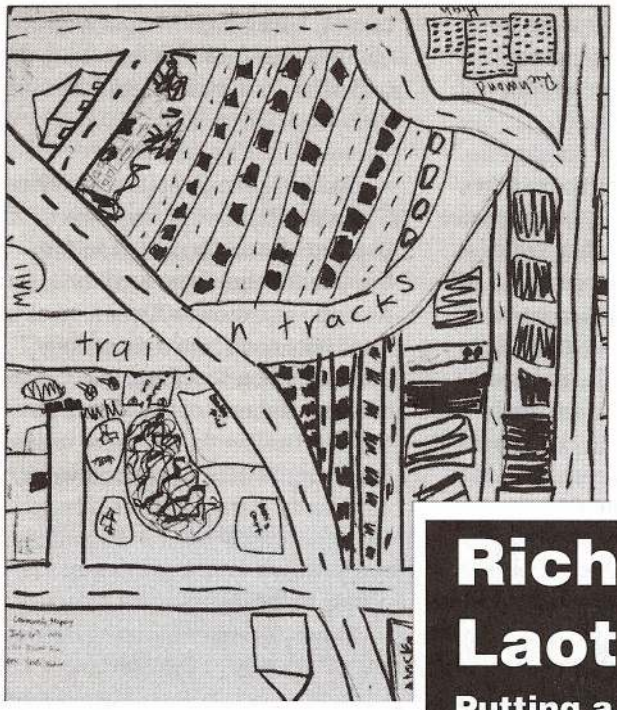
Among the projects chosen by the ten to 19 year olds participating in REEP last year were: putting on an environmental health fair at a middle school; beautifying a run-down traffic island outside another middle school; lobbying the City of Boston for better traffic signage (which they responded to); cleaning up a school yard and painting long-awaited basketball and baseball lines; cleaning up and measuring a nearby vacant lot while surveying neighbors about past and possible future uses; creating landscaping designs for a flower bed at the entrance of an elementary school and planting bulbs; making a presentation to the Boston Police Department on the importance of an environment without guns; adopting a piece of vacant land at the heart of Roxbury, hand painting three garbage cans on it, and planting a flower memorial to a classmate who died of asthma during the school year; and writing several rap/dance pieces on the dangers of cigarette smoking. At the end of the year we held a graduation ceremony at which students from all the schools presented their projects in some manner.

Following the model of mock trials, we developed two debate exercises where students are put on either side of a land use dispute and must argue their cases before the Zoning Board of Appeal.

REEP is excitedly moving ahead with Year Two. We will be working with the same schools, plus two new programs. At least two of the classes will include students who did REEP last year, so we are engaged in the challenge of developing a Second Year curriculum. In addition, we will be starting an after-school program as well as an internship program, at the end of which students will be trained and paid to go out and do asthma/public health/air quality workshops in the community.

We will also expand the use of REEP's key organizing tool for Roxbury's adult population — town meetings. Three groups of students in Year One participated in town meetings set up by REEP. The goal of these meetings was to have students present their project ideas to a group of interested neighbors (two groups from an elderly housing unit across from one school, and one in a public housing development). All three meetings went well and resulted in collaborations between residents and students.

Jo-Anne Henry is Project Director for the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project, Alternatives for Community & Environment, Inc. in Roxbury, Massachussetts.



Richmond's Laotians:

Putting a Community on the Map

by Aiko Pandorf

It seems ironic that in the heart of one of America's toxic "hot spots," a tightly interconnected community is practicing a model of living that is advocated by today's most avid proponents of biodiversity and sustainability. The growing Laotian community in the Richmond area of Contra Costa County (part of the San Francisco Bay "Flatlands") carries with it a way of life acquired from generations of simple living in the hills of their homeland. They garden in small plots to feed their families, take fish from nearby waterways, and practice traditional healing utilizing remedies acquired from their elders. Basically, to translate their lifestyle into eco-speak, they are consuming less, reusing more, gardening on a sustainable scale, sticking together and maintaining a sense of the sacred in their lives.

Displaced but not *De-placed*

In a time when we are struggling to redefine our relationship to the land and its resources within the context of urban living, the Richmond Laotian community exists as a pocket of "displaced" people maintaining "a deep concept of place as a repository of meaning, history, livelihood, healing, recreation, and sacred memory and as a source of materials, energy, food, and collective action."[1]

Displaced – meaning to be physically removed from their home but not necessarily losing the idea of place and home — contrasts sharply with "deplaced" as David Orr defines it in *Earth In Mind*. "De-placed" people are mental refugees, homeless wherever they are, "existing in places that have become the intersection of two lines on the map, suitable for speculation, profiteering, another mall, another factory."

"When the Asian/Pacific Island Environmental Network (APEN) started working with the Laotian community in Richmond, we consciously steered away from the traditional social service model of identifying needs in a community," says Yin Ling Leung, APEN Associate Director. "I found myself having to constantly ask, 'how can we look at this population as more than simply a bundle of needs?' The truth is Richmond Laotians have a lot to teach us."

"The question we had to ask," ponders Leung, "was what happens when you find a group of people maintaining healthy lifestyles in an unhealthy place. The very ground they live on is poisoning them, the air they breathe, the places they live, even how they practice their traditional culture is a risk – workplace exposures, contaminants in the soil where they grow their traditional vegetables, lead in housing, and living in linguistic and cultural isolation impact their daily lives."

Building leadership and community involvement is a crucial piece of APEN's work in Richmond. Through the Richmond Laotian Environmental Justice Collaborative, APEN is partnering with tribal and community leaders to develop a small but growing group of Laotians in Richmond to participate and represent their community. APEN has also launched a Youth Initiative Project to involve Laotian youth in defining their community and identifying environmental justice issues. Targeting the issue of environmental contaminants, APEN has initiated the Lead and Asian Tableware Project which focuses on raising the awareness of sources of lead poisoning, and a Fish Education Project which focuses on spreading awareness of health issues connected to eating fish caught in the San Francisco Bay.

Startling Statistics

When not lumped together with more established Asian Americans as a "model minority," recent immigrants and refugees are too often presented as unskilled welfare recipients not contributing anything to the larger American fabric of which they are now a part. Certainly the statistics look bleak for the newcomers from Laos. This refugee community, which emerged only in the past 15 years, reflects some of the worst socio-economic statistics in the country.

Like their African American and Hispanic neighbors, Laotians are confronted with incredible poverty. Nationally, 41 percent of Laotian families are living in poverty, the highest of any group in the country. In Contra Costa County, the welfare dependency rate for Laotians is estimated to be as high as 70 percent. In addition, 52 percent of Laotians live in linguistically isolated households, meaning that no one in that household uses functional English.[2]

Richmond houses 350 industrial facilities which include waste incinerators, oil refineries, and pesticide, fertilizer and other chemical manufacturers. According to a 1989 report by Communities for a Better Environment, at least 210 different hazardous chemicals are stored and/or released into the Richmond environment.[3]

Consistent with established findings about the dispropor-

tionate impact of environmental hazards on people of color, it is mostly African Americans, Hispanics, and a growing but hidden population of Asian and Pacific Islanders who reside in Richmond.

A review of the literature on toxics in Contra Costa County and on environmental justice studies shows that the situation of the Laotians and Asian and Pacific Islanders is sorely missing in such reports.[4] APEN's work in Richmond takes a very different perspective; instead of re-enforcing a paradigm that has so far left Laotians out of the picture, APEN looks at environmental problems from the viewpoint of those who live in the affected communities.

The meager incomes of Richmond's Laotians force them to live in low-cost, subsidized or public housing. These units are often dilapidated, with peeling paint, leaking ceilings, and other lead hazards. Accustomed to sitting, eating and preparing meals on the floor as they did back in Laos, their exposure to lead dust is heightened. They shop frequently in Chinese grocery stores and buy cheap dishware which is known to contain high lead levels. One other unique source of lead for Southeast Asians is found in their use of folk remedies, namely *Pay-Loo-Ah.*

Practicing the agrarian heritage brought from the hills of Laos exposes them to another source of toxic exposure through the soil in which they grow vegetables. Many open spaces in Richmond are abandoned and poisoned sites of industries — sites with high levels of lead, other metals, and toxic chemicals. In 1988, a Laotian family was found gardening next to an eight year old Superfund site and had no idea they had been living adjacent to an old battery dump, although an English-language sign clearly indicated that it was a toxic site.[5]

Families fish from the local piers along San Francisco Bay exposing them to PCBs, mercury, dioxin, and pesticides. Recently, the California Environmental Protection Agency warned that Bay fish are so contaminated that health officials are issuing an advisory against eating such fish more than twice a month.[6] 6

Forty-four percent of working Laotians are operators, fabricators and laborers, according to the most recent census. Given their limited English abilities, it is probable that many do not understand safety and health hazards at their workplaces.

Toxic Spill

In 1993, a toxic spill at the General Chemical Plant, resulting from a botched attempt to unload sulfur trioxide (oleum) from a rail tank car, renewed attention to Richmond as a toxic "hot spot." On a sunny July morning when San Francisco commuters were fighting rush hour traffic on the Bay Bridge, thousands of residents from neighboring Richmond were fighting for a breath of air. The spill spread a huge toxic cloud ten miles across the community and sent 25,000 people to local hospitals.

It was indisputedly one of the worst chemical spills in California and the worst one yet in Contra Costa County. It served as an alarm to local community organizations, environmentalists and government organizations.

If there is a silver lining to the 1993 toxic poisoning, it will come from the increased cooperation and activism which has followed in the wake of the

On the Laotian Community by Bouapha Toommaly

My name is Bouapha Toommaly. I am from one of the Laotian tribal groups called Khmmu. We are considered the indigenous people of Laos. In fact, when we talk in the Khmmu language about Native Americans, we call them the Khmmu of America.

We have had a hard time moving from the hills of Laos to Richmond. One day our folks were farmers and hunters, just like their ancestors, and the next day we were fighting a war for the United States, running into Thai refugee camps, and then taking a jet plane to the U.S.

As our people moved into many parts of the U.S., they heard through the grapevine about Richmond's weather. They heard about the jobs, and they moved because grandma and grandpa were already living here – the last reason why my family moved from San Francisco to the East Bay. It is important for us to be near our extended family because Laotians are used to living in small villages.

I thought that this situation was unique to my family. Then I learned that across many urban areas around the country, Southeast Asian refugees have settled in the poorest and most environmentally sick areas of their cities and they suffer alongside their African-American and Laotian neighbors. I don't think this stuff happened by chance.

We are overlooked because of our small numbers and because we don't speak English. Don't overlook us, we have lived off of the land for hundreds of years. We know some things about taking care of the land. To this day Laotian women still like to grow their own vegetables in their small yards and men in our community still go fishing in our toxic bay to put food on the table. Richmond should be clean enough so we can continue to think of the land and water as good things, not poisonous things.

I think we have a special role as indigenous people to teach people to respect the land, air, and water so that no matter where we live we can be healthy and happy.

Bouapha Toommaly and Amy Vongthavady, two young local Laotian women, helped APEN shape a major Youth Initiative targeting Laotian girls in Richmond this summer, in collaboration with Asians and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health (APIRH) and supported by the Children and the Environment Initiative of U.C. Berkeley's School of Public Health. As youth counselors, they worked intensively with eleven 13 to 14-year-old Laotian girls from Richmond to develop their skills as community researchers. With the girls, they helped to define the community and environmental justice issues affecting their lives.

Toommaly, a student at Cal Polytechnic-San Luis Obispo, gave the above testimony at a public dialogue on Urban Revitalization and Brownfields sponsored by the EPA. Her e-mail address is btoommal@cymbal.aix.calpoly.edu.

disaster among these minority groups. After the disaster, in response to intense community demands, General Chemical agreed to a $1.2 million financial settlement to fund a health center, a mobile health van, and a warning system to alert the community more efficiently in the event of another disaster.

Environmental Justice Collaboration

The creation of the Center for Health in North Richmond is a unique opportunity for environmental justice groups, community organizations, service providers, and researchers to work together in promoting principles of environmental justice and to alleviate the disproportionate impact of environmental health hazards on this diverse community. With this in mind, APEN, together with indigenous leadership, has focused its efforts on creating the framework for a small but growing group of Laotians in Richmond to participate and represent their community through the Richmond Laotian Environmental Justice Collaborative.

Aiko Pandorf is on staff at Asian Pacific Islanders Environmental Network. Reprinted with permission.

[1] David Orr, *Earth in Mind: On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect*, Island Press, 1995.
[2] Bureau of the Census, "We the American... Asians." Based on the 1990 Census of Population and Housing.
[3] Belliveau, Michael et al. "Richmond at Risk: Community Demographics and Toxic Hazards from Industrial Polluters." Communities for a Better Environment, San Francisco, February 1989.
[4] Charles Lee, "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States," Commission for Racial Justice, United Church of Christ, 1987.
[5] Hytha, Michael. "Toxics Plan for Lot Took Eight Years," *West County Times*, March 22, 1988.
[6] "Warning Issued on Contaminated Fish," *San Francisco Chronicle*, Dec. 24, 1994.

Reflections on Identity, Place and Community

by Elizabeth Ann Hass

Growing up as an adopted person of mixed race in this country has been anything but straightforward. Raised by white parents within the dominant culture, yet always aware that I myself was not white, I often struggled with the dilemma of just where I "fit in." In the following passage, I will discuss how my identity and location in society has affected me, both personally, and in my work as an environmental educator.

When I was old enough to understand, my parents told me I was adopted. They also told me that I was "half black" — that my father was black and my mother was white. Because I had very light skin and only slightly wavy medium brown hair, most people didn't know from looking at me that I was white. Others thought I was Latina, Italian, Middle Eastern, or other backgrounds that tend to have olive skin. As for me, I didn't know quite what being black really meant. I had no mentors or adult role models who were black, and of the black friends that I had, most of them had been adopted into white families as well, so they were in the same boat. Other than watching shows like "The Jeffersons" on TV, my connection to black culture as I was growing up was little more than biological.

On the other hand, neither the European part of my heritage nor my white middle-class upbringing guaranteed my full acceptance or membership in white culture. Although my family and friends have always accepted me as I am, society at large is not as forgiving with people of mixed racial backgrounds. When it comes to racial definitions, it is not in society's nature to see people as unique individuals, but rather as members of a certain group. People of mixed race defy this underlying social structure by the mere fact of their existence. Thus, racial definitions that are little more than a throwback to slavery times are still prevalent when it comes to people who are both black and white. Put simply, by all "standard" purposes, I am black. Being black, I can never be a full member of white culture. This realization has led me to reach out and make connections with other people of color, and learn about the issues that affect us.

My interest in the environment dates back to my childhood rambles, both in the wilderness of the Arboretum and other green spaces in Madison, Wisconsin, and the weekends that I spent on the overgrown farmland that my parents owned in Marquette County. It wasn't until high school in the late 1980s, though, that I came to understand fully that the natural world was in jeopardy. I moved easily from that understanding to further education and action to defend and protect it.

My identity as a person of color and as an environmentalist have come together in my academic work in a graduate environmental studies program where I am working on a Masters in environmental education, with the intention of teaching in multicultural urban settings. To me, the city is an ideal place to live, play, work and learn, especially for someone in environmental education. There is a lot of environmental education work to be done in cities to make them more humane and more sustainable.

After reading books such as Lisa Delpit's *Other People's Children* (New Press, 1995), and Jonathan Kozol's *Savage Inequalities* (Crown Publishers, 1991) it became clear to me

that my role as an urban environmental educator has as much to do with spanning cultural and socio-economic gaps as it does with teaching. This is where I feel my location, with all its confusion and pain, becomes my gift. My racial background and my upbringing allow me to move between cultures with relative ease, relating well to both people of color and white people. In this way, I often am able to act as a bridge between these same cultures. I had an opportunity to do this quite a bit when I was in the Bronx this past summer doing an internship.

I worked with an organization called Bronx Green Up (BGU), which is an outreach program of the New York Botanical Garden. Founded in 1988, BGU's main mission is to serve the residents of the Bronx by aiding in the establishment, growth and maintenance of community green space. BGU currently provides assistance to approximately 225 community gardens in the Bronx. I was one of three summer interns whose main job was to construct free gardening programs for children in six of the community gardens. Most of the children that we worked with were African American or Latino, though a handful were Asian, Trinidadan, or white.

One of the ways I was able to act as a bridge between cultures within the gardening programs was with the Latino children. For one thing, I look Latina and I speak Spanish fluently. Many times I noticed children struggling to understand English. I would ask, "Hablas español?" and their faces would light up with recognition. Because none of the other interns spoke Spanish, I took these kids under my wing and worked closely with them throughout the summer, translating anything they didn't understand.

I found out that a lot of the Dominican and Puerto Rican children had gardened in their countries of origin, and they had quite a passion for it. One little boy even took the initiative to start some bean plants on his fire escape, and brought them down to the garden to transplant once they had sprouted. Another child was so proud and protective of his little plot that he made an elaborate barrier around it with sticks and string and had me help him make a sign in English that read: "Please don't step on the plants."

There were quite a few Latino adults at the community gardens as well. One Puerto Rican man who was the caretaker for one of the gardens didn't speak English very well. The fact that I was able to translate for him endeared me to him, and by the end of the summer he was so sad to see me go that there were tears in his eyes. He gave me some bean seeds from his plant. I keep them in a little basket to remind me of our friendship.

I also made meaningful connections with the African Americans who were involved in the gardening programs. Driven by my thirst to know the community that I had missed knowing when growing up, I took advantage of every opportunity to talk with adults and children, often discovering that this mere act of reaching out served to close the gap between my white middle class upbringing and their way of life in the Bronx.

On the other hand, neither my European heritage nor my white middle-class upbringing guaranteed my full acceptance or membership into white culture.

On the first day of my internship, Kate, my supervisor, took us three interns to a community garden next to the Metro North station that is located less than block away from the New York Botanical Garden. There we did a short gardening workshop with BGU's horticulturist Anne O'Neill which mainly consisted of identifying and pulling weeds. Hanging out by the Metro North platform was a group of young men in their late teens or early twenties who were mainly African American. It was apparent to me that this was their usual hangout, and in that sense we were "on their turf." I felt their eyes boring into the back of my head the entire time. After we were done, and were going back down the tunnel under the tracks back to the Botanical Garden, I forced myself to make eye contact with them and said, "Bye." One of them said, "Will you show me how to garden?" in a half mocking tone.

I just said "sure," and then disappeared down the tunnel. From that day on, each time I went past the garden, which was on the way to and from the subway station, I made a point of saying "Hi" to the guys and gradually I introduced myself to the whole gang.

One day, they were all sitting on old junk chairs underneath a tree next to the garden fence as I was conducting a lesson on decomposers. The children were digging up "roly-polies," potato bugs, millipedes, and other sorts of creatures that live in the soil. Right in the middle of the lesson, one of the young men jumped the garden fence, and started rolling back a half-rotted railroad tie that formed part of a raised flowerbed. To my and the children's surprise, there were tons of three inch striped slugs sliming their way along the newly exposed bottom of the railroad tie. Neither I nor the children had ever seen slugs so big. We were delighted, and we put a bunch of them in to a container to observe. I thanked the young man for helping and he just smiled shyly, and jumped back over the fence to take his place in his circle of friends.

Through my work in the community gardens, I saw a side of people from the Bronx that is seldom shown in the media. The children I met were neither dirty nor belligerent, and the teenagers I met were neither "gangbangers" nor drug dealers. They were, and continue to be, active and participating members of communities that are struggling to better themselves and maintain their dignity in the face of marginalization. As I gardened with, talked to, and listened to these young people, I was amazed at how comfortable I felt, as if for once in my life, I truly "fit."

Elizabeth Ann Hass graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison with a degree in Spanish language and literature. She has a passion for languages and cultures.

The Terrain of Exclusion

Reflections of an African American Woman in Environmental Studies

by Jacquelyn Denise Ruffin

I approached my college experience with enthusiasm, full of expectations of myself and the institution of academia itself. It seemed to be a place full of promise and opportunity, where I could transform my ideals into reality. However, as the four years of my undergraduate experience accumulated, I found myself feeling, instead of the fulfillment I desired, a sense of alienation and isolation. I attribute much of my detachment to the systemic discrimination I experienced there. In this sense, I sometimes felt that academia was a false liberation. Although it did increase the scope of skills I have and exposed me to more knowledge, it is still a place where the same inequities of other institutional structures are perpetuated. I found this pattern to be evident in terms of the biases in the curriculum, the disproportionate composition of students and staff, and the lack of appropriate resources to deal with inequalities. These combined factors contributed to the ignorance of and apathy about social inequality, and specifically, little true consciousness of the integration of social justice and environmentalism.

I was the only person of color on the trip, and in contrast to the others, I had taken a quarter off of school in order to save money to go.

I chose my school because I knew I wanted to major in environmental studies, and at the time there were few renowned options in the field. I made my way through the seven prerequisites to the major, applied to the program and was accepted for my junior year of school. The summer before my junior year, I went on an academic backpacking trip in the Northern Rockies through a well-known wilderness program which is run through the University of California Extension. I was the only person of color on the trip, and in contrast to the other participants, I had taken a quarter off of school in spring in order to save money to go on the trip. There is no financial aid for the program, which may explain why few students of color and low income students are able to have the experience. This fact is not just unfortunate for the students who are not able to go on the trips; it directly affects the way in which environmental issues are addressed and perceived throughout the program.

For example, one night early in the trip, as the group sat together in a circle for our nightly gathering, we began to discuss our ideas about environmentalism, wilderness and the connections between the concepts. One of my friends asserted his opinion that someone who had never been in the wilderness could not possibly be an environmentalist. As a person who never had the luxury of a wilderness experience, I was personally offended by his statements. But more, I attempted to articulate some of my problems with the broader exclusionary implications in his perception of environment and environmentalism. While I got some support from the facilitators, I still had this nagging sensation that, as the only person of color and as the only person from a lower-income background, no one really understood the relationship between social injustice and common notions of environmentalism. Essentially, I am certain that had I not been present, his comments would have gone unchallenged.

This feeling of being somehow disjointed only deepened. Every ten days to two weeks, we would go into the nearest town for food supplies and to meet some of the people involved in the environmental issues we were discussing. On one such trip, we passed through East and West Glacier, the towns outside of Glacier National Park. I remember sitting in the back of one of the two vans, tears silently falling down my face as we passed from one side of Glacier to the other. The Blackfeet Reservation on one side, a resort town on the other, a bridge separating and connecting them. There was an emptiness, an intangibility in the impoverished reservation. As I wrote in a poem that day, many of the people we encountered there seemed "severed from a waking freedom," encased in the system of oppression. The resort town, however, was extremely affluent, luring tourists to several different forms of leisure activities and full of signs boasting "real live Indian crafts for sale." It was the epitome of "wilderness" as an escape for privileged elites. The contradictions were numbing, and through the laughter and chatter of my classmates, I could not articulate my disgust or horror at what I was seeing.

The images of injustice stayed with me, but again, when we got into a group discussion about the events of the day, I felt an increase in my isolation. Only one other person on the trip had noticed the juxtaposition of the two towns, both of which lie below a "wild" area that colonialism had made a living symbol of systemic racism and attempted genocide. For all of the incredible experiences I had on that trip, some of them absolutely sacred, I still feel angered by the fact that we met with all sorts of government officials, several different groups of environmental activists, but not a single representative from any of the tribes whose land we were living in for almost six weeks.

In the following fall, I returned to the conventional academic experience only to find it even more alienating, frustrating and disappointing. In the core class that all environmental studies students have to take, we discussed environmental racism for about two days of the entire quarter, during which most of the other students were shocked by the very

notion and many were skeptical of its validity. Most of them had never heard of environmental racism, or thought about anything like it. The first day of covering environmental racism was spent primarily arguing about its validity as a theory and a reality. Even though many of the statements made that day were problematic, I felt at least some comfort in the fact that they were being discussed. Only in that manner could the subtle or overt racist and classist ideologies be exposed, challenged and reformulated into more sensitive, comprehensive perceptions. However, the conversation was abruptly ended by one of the professors.

On the second day of our short coverage of environmental racism, we had a guest lecturer from an environmental justice group in the Bay Area whom many of the students unduly disregarded as a legitimate source of knowledge because he was a "non-academic." A few of us tried to explain that although there are differences between formal and informal education, one is not necessarily more legitimate than the other. Further, since people of color have not always had access (or equal access) to institutions of "higher learning," they need to be respected for the alternative means of reproducing knowledge that they have developed and sometimes preferred. I felt like my words were so futile; they were often belittled as the ramblings of a black girl trying to justify herself instead of the assertions of someone attempting to expand people's connotations of reality. It was frightening, especially since the teacher's assistants that I approached about the situation either did not see a problem at all, or if they did see a problem, did not want to "cause tension" between the other teaching assistants or with the professors.

Thus, as one of the only students of color in environmental studies, I was consistently forced into the position of "representative" of all people of color (as if I could present the perspectives of all people of color, or even all African American women!). Suddenly, racism and sexism were *my* problems, not *society's* problems. When inquiring about the lack of emphasis on, and

As one of the only students of color in environmental studies, I was consistently forced into the position of "representative" of all people of color . . .

sometimes dismissal of environmental justice in the discipline, I was told to "bring up that issue in section" or to "start a reading group" on the issue. Even when this kind of advice is well intentioned, it is never sufficient. For people of color, the inequalities of colonialism are not things we can reduce to something we'll study at our convenience; they are a matter of our very lives, our very survival. One of the first readings we had about environmental racism dealt with these women in the South Pacific who had been exposed to toxic chemicals from the nuclear industry. These women went through a full nine months of pregnancy only to give birth to "blobs of jelly," masses of substance with no legs, arms or heads. How could you ignore the compelling urgency of stories such as this one? How could the connections between such problems in other animals and in humans be viewed as unconnected or incidental or unimportant?

In essence, I felt like my own identity, as a person of color, was negated. This perspective can be exemplified by an incident that happened in the spring of my junior year, when racial controversy hit the environmental studies program very directly.

I remember sitting in the back of one of the vans, tears silently falling down my face as we passed from east to west Glacier. The Blackfeet Reservation on one side, a resort town on the other . . . a bridge separating and connecting them.

While the incident, which involved racial comments about African Americans, caused a shallow ripple in the environmental studies board, it made a deep impact on me internally. The worst part is that I felt like there was nowhere for me to turn for support, empathy or rectification. There were no people of color on the board, and only a handful of students of color in the program. Even though the issue was addressed by some members of the faculty, I am still disheartened by the fact that the solutions that were proposed were hardly comprehensive and never quite fulfilled. I also find it frustrating that a formal acknowledgment and apology never occurred and that to this day I feel limitations on my own rights in discussing the matter.

I do not wish to imply that everyone I encountered was unresponsive or unconcerned. There were also those few people who seemed genuinely willing to listen and open up some kind of dialogue. They were the blessed few who helped me maintain some faith and assisted me in realizing the effects those of us who were struggling had on the larger structure, even if we could not see the results of our impacts in the immediate sense. These people opened up and engaged in honest, non-defensive communication and tried to establish some level of trust between all of the people involved. They emphasized and acted on the importance of incorporating students' perspectives, and the necessity of delineating the absolute hierarchy of the professor-T.A.- student power structure. One professor advocated the incorporation of a comprehensive social critique into the environmental studies program, as opposed to the addition of a class or two about some of the issues. Another had several meetings over the last quarter of school with graduating seniors in the program in order to discuss what we valued and thought should change in the discipline in hopes that both aspects would be considered in the formation of the program for the following year. I suggest that these tactics be utilized in all environmental studies programs, with honest sensitivity given to students of color involved in the process.

On that note, I would like to address the students of color involved in environmental education. I often felt like I had no resources, and little if anything to counteract the alienation I felt. I was often left wondering, "Where are the positive stories? Where are the people who reaffirm my identity? Where is the tangible validation of my perspective?" Go find them, they are out there. I generally had to find these things outside of the traditional academic setting, through internships and individual studies. Just know that we cannot accept the forced stifling of our livelihoods. Feel the freedom of creating your own spaces; never let yourself be restricted by what is established. Seek the self-empowerment that comes from asserting the validity of your existence and your beliefs. Make sure that you don't let yourself become self-defeated; claim your voice and use it well. As activist Emma Mae Wallace reminds us, "If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything."

Jacquelyn Denise Ruffin is an Americorps worker in Oakland, a volunteer at Three Circles Center, and an editorial intern for Terrain *at the Ecology Center in Berkeley, California.*

BLACK & WHITE

by Jacquelyn Denise Ruffin

sharply divided into good and evil groups, sides, or ideas (Webster's Dictionary)

words create definitions, create discourses, create realities
What is Black?
a culmination of colors? (integration)
an absence of colors? (denigration)
to you, it is the icon of some "innate fear of darkness,"
an ideology that translates into a continuous imperialism,
a collision of epistimo-, psycho-, bio-, socio-, il-LOGICAL violations.

so I ask you,
am I to fear myself?
or, do you fear me because of yourself?

you are caught in this capitalist cage
plagued by the Black Death of the modern day slave trade
where women of color are mere "hot commodities"
where Black Males struggle against the imprisonment of legal Blackmail

these are not simply white lies,
but the transformation of ignorance into the vision of a Blackout,
the realization of your exclusionary "colorblind" fantasy

WATERCYCLES
Learning By Color

by Maya Khosla

Just recently a friend and I went camping in Oregon. We hiked late into the starlight on a dust-thin trail. With our flashlights, we saw that the map said we would cross the Illinois River soon. We kept walking. The hillside was steep, and sometimes we heard the clear roaring of water below. Rapids! Then we would round the edges of the hillside, and the sound was gone. This went on for what seemed like hours. We finally reached a landslide where the trail was washed straight down into the silvery flashes of the Illinois River below. We gave up and camped deep into the trail to the sounds of water. The next morning I awoke thirsty for both the sight and taste of water I had followed, but never reached.

I carried our deepest vessel to a tiny stream, less than a mile away, as it turned out. Time and the constant pouring had carved out a small canyon into the hill. I filled the pot, my hair, my face with the coolness that flowed straight and sharp down into the Illinois River. Carrying the water back was time's purest echo of stories I had heard as a child — women carrying water for miles. I descended from a long line of carrying water, only the shape of the vessel changes.

I descended from a place of belled goats returning from a long drink, their clinks and nasal cries filling entire valleys. One of us, you or I, had a grandmother who watched the years creep into her face in a still reflection of a pool where she filled her tall pots with water. I learned a respect for water long before I learned of its physical and chemical properties, its fauna and flora. My education began with the stories.

One meaning of "to educate," says Webster, is "to stimulate the mental or moral processes." In cultures that live in close touch with the environment, with the annual monsoons and the flooding rivers, with the height of young lime trees and the patterns of rice drawings in front of the house door, the stories of water stimulate and awaken us as we grow up. The riches of those experiences and folklore turn and shift like the Earth where seeds of knowledge grow quietly and steadily. Webster also says that to educate is "to provide with training or knowledge for a specific purpose, as a vocation." The training for a vocation, the watering, the growing, must come from that place that kept the mind full of meaning as a child. Or else, why learn? How else could the vocation possibly reach fruition without the base/soil of cultural learning as its home?

I grew up hearing powerful voices talk about water. Where I grew up, the coming of rain was like the coming of a new year. Inevitably, when I went to college, I studied water resources, their power and depth, and overuse by humans with lives tightly laced with waterscapes. In my masters thesis, I focused on watersheds impacted by humans, the effects on native fauna, and the effects on the watershed as a whole. And my focus of study echoed with the voices I grew up with: they were the celebration of aquatic life; they were the bottom of the rivers I sampled; they were the wet soils beneath reeds that grew wild in the Yamuna River ecosystem. I grew up singing about rivers wild and rushing away from their homes without a thought, their twisting courses and eroded banks. Years later, I was thigh deep in rushing streams measuring bank erosion and vegetation, studying flood potentials and impacts, and of course, pollution.

Rain, the first in a cycle of rising and falling. Rains to rivers to seas. I have learned songs and dances about rain. I have seen it coming in full sheets, sweet monsoon winds cooling the verandah, spilling like beads of a long lost necklace. I have heard feet running out to welcome bishti — the first rains — a new monsoon. Thunder clapped and rain drummed close on our tin roof. My mother felt that there was always music in water,

outside, monsoon winds urge us with their beat
where a tall rain begins
a tall rain smoothens months of dust
outside, the farmers will say leeho, leeho
to ward off blue deer from fields
ripe with seed-swell under dark skies
there will be new shoots, the music of grass
like fireworks lit by cloudburst

outside, you are teaching me to take off my shoes
you are singing, bishti, bishti, rain, rain,
stepping back and forth
barefoot on the wet, on the soaked earth
and your payals "cling, cling"
clapping for rain

The monsoon rains come once a year in India, and they are dramatic. Sweltering hot summers cool to fine breezes that play like lutes among neem tree branches. Flood plains thicken to brown rivulets carrying rich silt down slope year after year. Plants harness the rich nutrients year after year on farm after farm across acre after acre. Growing up, we watched sheets of rain come in — they were at the far end of the playground, and we were dry. Then it darkened around us and they came closer, until the earth around us smelled sweet and full. On some days, we were ankle deep wherever we walked. Little children floated around in old truck tires. Laburnum flowers emerged like yellow lanterns under gray clouds. Nights, I listened to stories of fish dancing on their ears in the rice paddy fields. In the dim light of lamps, my mother taught me old Tagore songs: the laughter of the moon is breaking clouds..

My mother was quite connected with water in her artwork. She was a potter/sculptor, and water taught her patience in

making clay. Her pots of earthenware swelled with the songs we had sung, with the flood and dry heat that had marked their time on the clay like old clocks. On one of her sculptures, she cut waterscapes into wedges of wet clay. She grew tomatoes, and felt that they were spiced with earth and water. "Here," she said once, rubbing a freshly dug out tomato, warm from the mud and sun, "have it like this." If her life were a map, I strongly feel that a watercourse would be close to the lines of her existence, sometimes under it, like ground water, and sometimes surrounding it, like mist. Not surprisingly, in her last summer alive, there was no monsoon in India, and this tormented her through her illness. She taught me a song of hot breezes and eyes sore from a season of dry heat. I was only halfway through learning the song when she stopped singing, and so I don't know if the rains ever came in its last verse.

That summer it was clear we
were waiting for rain
although neither of us said it
you licked a forefinger,
tried to straighten a dusty crease
in your blouse
the winds sweetened,
and monsoon clouds hung low
but did not give.

I returned to learn more than a childhood's worth of water's stories. During and after college, I pursued the study of rivers. I returned to the larger rivers intrigued by the water stories of my childhood that memory had paled and purified. But the rivers I returned to were muddy and raw with affects of human use.

In 1991, I worked for the World Wildlife Fund for Nature in India, on a project monitoring Yamuna River waters. The Yamuna is a massive flood plain River flowing through Delhi, the capital of India. Industrial India has taken so much from the river that it is heavily polluted. Fresh rains dilute the river waters, but there they are burdened with an enormous amount of pollution. As a pilot study, I documented pollution in the Yamuna River watershed, and learned some fascinating stories. Although the lower Yamuna is silty gray and unusable by humans except for the purpose of crop growing, there are sections of the upper Yamuna that are deep, clear swimming pool blue. Peoples depend on these waters, and settle closer to them then they do in the plains. Stories of massive *mahaseers* (migrating salmon native to India) still haunt the fishermen I have met in the upper Yamuna River.

I documented metals, dissolved oxygen, hardness and other chemical qualities of the Yamuna. On one of my surveys, I approached a pump near the river in Delhi. A man ran up to me shouting, "Don't drink the water," *jalan jaisa pani hai* (it is a burning kind of water). I asked him where he got his drinking water and he pointed to a factory where he worked. "That is the only place I can drink water during the day," he said. "I bring some back for cooking." Later I found that this well was particularly high in zinc, and was highly saline.

How else could the vocation possibly reach fruition without the base/ soil of cultural learning as its home?

In other places downstream of heavy industrial effluent entry points, there was much dependence on the river. I watched fishermen take their day's catch home for meals, or even sell them in the market. One fisherman spun a tall net outward with his hands weaving the air into a fine mesh. One person said to me, "you can always drink from the river. If it is too dirty, scoop out a hole close to the river until it fills with water from underneath. This water is naturally filtered and is clean for drinking." Of course there are many dissolved contaminants that cannot be tasted, and can only be filtered out. Most people are now aware of these facts.

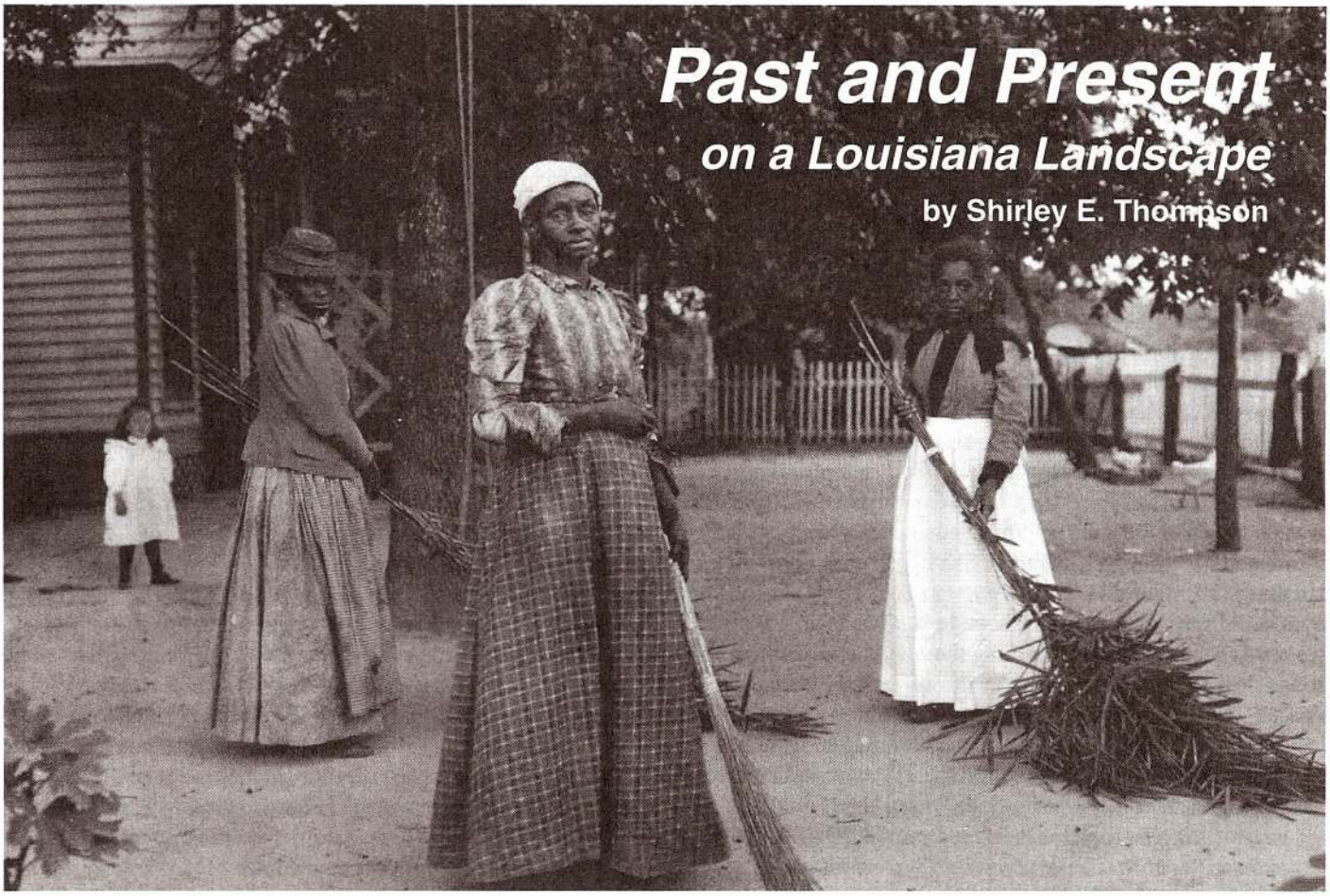
People keep returning to waters to carve out part of their lives from its life forms, to pay their respects, and to walk along its ancient paths. Long pilgrimages are carried out on foot to the headwaters of rivers. My grandmother journeyed far up to the Gagotri (source of the Ganges River) to paint its white headwaters, steep in the Himalayan mountains. Mysterious stories of the sacred Ganges River have been documented. One scientific publication talked of the "self purifying" abilities of the Ganges River. Apparently, water taken from the Ganges was repeatedly low in bacterial oxygen demand tests. For anyone who knows how much human use the Ganges gets, this seems absolutely mystifying. Yet many claim to have drunk straight from the Ganges with no harm to them, including white water rafters from the United States. The Narmada River is also a sacred river, and people have spent a whole season walking the entire river up to its source. From old legends, the Narmada was the youngest of four sisters (including the Yamuna and the Ganges Rivers) and her hair was the river itself. No one is supposed to bathe in her waters. Hiking up to the headwaters, people drink from the clean high reaches, and have been doing so for centuries.

I am grateful to have grown from the water cycle stories. And both my educational and professional lives keep me returning to water resources. The educated side of me feels the need to see people more aware of what they are exposed to when they make use of wild waters. Of course a part of me was educated through making natural processes intrinsically valuable, and integrating these processes into daily life through experiences. It is my hope that one day humankind can declare a greater part of water resources to be sacred and keep our use of them respectful of that sacredness.

Maya Khosla has worked as an environmental consultant for Levine Fricke, in their technical services and eco-tourism groups. She writes poetry and creative non-fiction, and has published a volume of poems, Heart of the Tearing, *with Red Dust Press. Her second book,* Webs of Water: Life at Redwood Creek, *now in press with the Golden Gate National Parks Association, and will be out early next year.*

Past and Present on a Louisiana Landscape

by Shirley E. Thompson



Photographer unknown, "Latimer's place," Belton, South Carolina, 1890, Records of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics.

I hoist myself up into the cabin. The steps have long since fallen away. I steady myself and stand upright, almost filling the whole door frame. The cabin is merely a shell, and through another doorway and window frame, I can see the sugar cane field, which starts right behind the cabin and extends, for what seems like forever, across the low, flat landscape. The cane waves in a breeze from the Mississippi River. I move slowly and tentatively across the dusty floor of the small front room, thinking, "So, slaves lived in here."

In my imagination, I try to transform the empty shack into what it must have been 150 years ago. I have read many descriptions of these places. Frederick Law Olmstead, traveling around the South in the 1850s, describes a typical slave cabin of the rice and sugar districts:

> Each cabin was a framed building, the walls boarded and whitewashed on the outside, lathed and plastered within, the roof shingled; forty-two feet long, twenty-one feet wide, divided into two family tenements, each twenty-one by twenty-one, each tenement divided into three rooms. . . . Besides these rooms, each tenement had a cock-loft, entered by steps from the household room. Each tenement is occupied on average by five persons.[1]

Olmstead's "negro cabin" seems luxuriously large — almost twice the size of the one in which I stand, also a two family dwelling, each half mirroring the other. I close my eyes and for a moment, the place comes alive with the sounds and smells of ten people of varying ages and degrees of health and their chickens. But this image is elusive. This particular cabin has undergone many transformations since the days of slavery. Generations of sharecroppers and farmers have remodeled this dwelling, adapting it to their specific needs. One back room shows evidence of having been an indoor kitchen (rare even in the big house on ante-bellum plantations in the area) with a layer of dingy linoleum curling at its edges and remnants of counters and cabinets. Clipped wires indicate that the cabin was once wired for electricity. Now the cabin, on the grounds of the carefully restored Laura Plantation on Route 1, was poised to undergo yet another transformation, back to a more "authentic" slave cabin, ready to receive and instruct tourists like me.

I almost wish the restoration crew would leave the cabin the way it is now with the layers of one hundred and fifty years of history exposed. It is important to learn about the past, but it is far more important to understand how the past moves forward, changing into the present. The sugar cane fields are still here, but because of mechanical harvesting, their owners do not require nearly the labor force that they needed during slavery. Furthermore, the fields and plantations are no longer the dominant force on the landscape. That distinction belongs to the petrochemical plants and the toxic

waste management facilities which moved into the area after the post World War II collapse of the large sugar plantations. Lured to the area by generous tax policies and lax environmental laws, these corporations literally line the banks of the Mississippi from New Orleans to just above Baton Rouge.[2] Futuristic chemical plants with their pastel colored smokestacks dot the landscape alongside the cane fields and old plantations. Spewing forth toxic mixtures which infect the air, water, and soil, these factories have created the conditions which have earned the nickname, Cancer Alley, for this stretch of the river.

Like the slave cabin on the Laura Plantation, the land of the lower Mississippi has lent itself to a number of uses and abuses. Even during the days of the large sugar cane plantations, this land was not used respectfully. The soil, rich with alluvial deposits from the river, was some of the best in the country for agriculture; however, Louisiana's semi-tropical climate is not ideal for sugar cane, winter frosts destroying most of the crop. As wasteful as the choice to plant sugar cane along the Mississippi has been, at least the planters depended on the area's natural resources. Because the land does not produce anything for the chemical industries, these companies value the land only because it offers them a place to build and a container for their hazardous waste. Many of these toxic landfills leak, the sludge they contain oozing deeper and deeper into the earth, threatening the aquifers which supply the drinking water for many rural residents along the Mississippi.[3] The chemical plants spread cancer-like *across* the land as well. A Morrisonville resident describes the growth of the Dow chemical plant:

> They moved outwards slowly... They weren't always this close. But before you realized it, they were building right outside your door... Suddenly, every blade of grass is important to me. My husband planted those pine trees in the yard. You have to live another lifetime to get all this back.[4]

Abuse of the mostly poor and black inhabitants of the area follows the abuse of the land. Because these people are not a part of the petrochemical industry's capital as slaves were for the slave holders, the chemical plants deem their lives expendable, and they continue to shower the residents of these communities with toxins. Far from being mere neighbors, the chemical plants actually restrict the activities of the residents of the communities in which they operate. Flares from the plants light up the night sky, making sleep impossible. Amos Favorite, a resident of Geismar, describes the fate of his garden: "One night, there was a heavy fog out there. I thought it was a heavy fog. I woke up the next morning, and everything was shriveled up and dead."[5] Favorite insinuates that these new plants are the new masters:

> We are all victimized by a system that puts dollars before everything else. That's the way it was in the old days when the dogs and whips were masters, and that's the way it is today when we got stuff in the water and air we can't even see that can kill us deader than we ever thought we could die.[6]

It is important to learn about the past, but it is far more important to understand how the past moves forward, changing into the present.

This charge that the plants are the new masters resonates strongly when one considers the history of the communities they surround. Morrisonville, Geismar, and the predominantly black communities along the banks of the Mississippi stem from the efforts of freedmen after emancipation to secure economic and social independence from their former masters. Before emancipation, plantation owners tightly controlled their slaves' access to information and education, believing that illiterate slaves would be less likely to consider the injustices of their position. When freedom came, ex-slaves across the South took every advantage to educate themselves and to gain control of their spiritual lives. For example, Robert Morrison, a freed slave and preacher, founded Morrisonville, Louisiana in the 1870s. He and other ex-slaves from the Australia plantation struggled to form a community around the Nazarene Baptist Church.[7] Often, the two activities— teaching and preaching— went together, ministers serving as educators and churches doubling as school rooms. The freedmen considered access to education to be a fundamental aspect of their new freedom. In some places in Louisiana, plantation workers refused to sign labor contracts unless planters supported black education.[8] Northern missionaries, black and white, and agents of the federal and state governments aided the cause of black education; however, when support from outside, uneven in most cases, faltered, the freedmen gathered their resources and knowledge and taught themselves. A Freedmen's Bureau officer describes a common scene:

> A negro riding on a loaded wagon, or sitting on a hack waiting for a train, or by the cabin door, is often seen, book in hand, delving after the rudiments of knowledge. A group on the platform of a depot, after carefully conning an old spelling book, resolves itself into a class.[9]

In short, black education in the South began as a kind of grassroots movement for blacks to secure practical knowledge which would improve the quality of their lives.

To think of the existence of these highly toxic industries in the context of this historic quest for education and independence is to draw Favorite's parallel between the plantation masters and the chemical plants more tightly. The plants rely on the assumption that the residents of these communities are not able to understand what is happening around them. The industry's scientists discount the kinds of common sense observations that the people living close to the plants make of their environments. Elixia Henderson, a

retired teacher living in Mount Airy, Louisiana senses very concretely the changes in her environment.

> I can feel those chemicals in my throat when it is damp and foggy. It's almost like you can taste the odor. I go look at my toilets, and they look like I haven't cleaned them in a month. If that water's settling in toilets and lavatories like that, what's it doing to the bottom of my stomach, to my kidneys?[10]

Wrapped in complex technical and scientific language, the petrochemical industry seems to respect only the testimony of its elaborate computer models— models which have proven disastrously wrong in calculating the durability of landfills. Amidst these observable conditions, the call for empirical proof of contamination seems absurd. An independent researcher realizes the shortcomings of available tests:

> One day, as his assistants were sampling the air north of Baton Rouge, they were overcome by a pungent stench that burned their eyes and noses. Yet in analyzing their samples, they found nothing.[11]

However, the industries continue merely to test, rarely taking the time to include the residents in the process and to listen seriously to their concerns. A resident of Texas describes her experience with a similar plant.

> They did test after test here, but they never studied *us*. They put a fence around the gravel pit next door and a sign saying it was contaminated, yet they'd tell us we didn't have a thing to worry about. Then, they put in some grass sod to cover up the creosote, which lasted as long as a snowball in the oven, and they said everything was just fine![12]

Although the chemical plants attempt, just as the plantation masters did, to restrict the residents' access to information, these residents ultimately are not confined in the same way that the slaves were. They can and do organize around issues which concern them, expressing their knowledge forcefully and in many cases, effectively. Regional groups such as the New Orleans-based Gulf Coast Tenants Association (GCTA) and the Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice draw on the efforts of more local groups responding to immediate crises. Pat Bryant, director of the GCTA, writes "a number of isolated local victories are being stitched together into a powerful multi-racial movement."[13] Beverly Wright, of Xavier University in New Orleans, and the Southern Organizing Committee stresses the need for scientists to value the knowledge of community members:

> At Xavier, we are trying to develop a model for an equal partnership between communities and universities. To do this, we must foster mutual respect for different ways of knowing. Scientists need scientific proof to know things, whereas communities know things by observation and experience. Universities must learn to listen when communities ask, 'Is there a connection between these things we're seeing?'[14]

Drawing on their history of grassroots educational efforts and their traditional quest for social and economic independence, communities in Cancer Alley and around the country have initiated a growing environmental justice movement. Local victories, such as a ban on further medical waste facilities in St. John the Baptist, a parish along the Mississippi, and national victories, such as the U. S. Civil Rights Commission's 1993 acknowledgment of environmental discrimination, demonstrate the power of angry, educated communities.[15] These communities ultimately understand that observation, experience, and a sense of commitment to a place produce the creative approaches to problems that faulty computer models and closed-minded, industry driven "science" can not even begin to fathom.

Shirley E. Thompson is studying for a Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization at Harvard University. In 1992, she was an Environmental Careers Organization intern at the Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education in San Francisco. She currently resides in Portland, Maine.

References

[1] Frederick Law Olmstead, *The Cotton Kingdom*, New York: Modern Library, 1984.
[2] Beverly Wright, Pat Bryant, and Robert D. Bullard, "Coping with Poisons in Cancer Alley," in Robert Bullard, ed. *Unequal Protection*, San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1994.
[3] James O'Byrne and Mark Schleifstein, "Drinking Water in Danger," *New Orleans Times-Picayune* , February 19, 1991.
[4] James O'Byrne, "The Death of a Town," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Feb 20, 1991.
[5] Ginny Carol, "When Pollution Hits Home," *National Wildlife* 29, August-September 1991.
[6] Favorite quoted in Conger Beasley, "Of Pollution and Poverty: Keeping Watch in 'Cancer Alley,'" *Buzzworm* 2, July- August 1990. See also, Beverly Wright, Pat Bryant, and Robert D. Bullard, "Coping with Poisons in Cancer Alley."
[7] O'Byrne, "The Death of a Town."
[8] Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution*, New York: Harper and Row, 1988.
[9] Foner, 97.
[10] Carol, "When Pollution Hits Home."
[11] Carol, "When Pollution Hits Home."
[12] Donald G. Schueler, "Southern Exposure," *Sierra* 77, November-December 1992.
[13] Pat Bryant, "Toxics and Racial Justice," *Social Policy 20*, Summer 1989.
[14] Beverly Wright "Frontline Viewpoint: Beverly Wright" in Robert Bullard "Grassroots Flowering: The Environmental Justice Movement Comes of Age," *The Amicus Journal*, Spring 1994.
[15] Carol, "When Pollution Hits Home"; Bullard, "Grassroots Flowering."

Youth Voices

YOUTH FOR HABITAT 2

by Manauvaskar Kublall

New York City could be referred to as a city with many problems. However, some people might disagree. If you ask me, New York City is a problem waiting to happen.

At this moment, I am a student attending Hunter College in NYC, studying Environmental Science. New York City has environmental problems that could get much worse. As a teenager in New York City, I noticed these problems. If you ever cross over the Queensborough Bridge, not to notice the incredible amounts of smog over the city on a hot summer day is unthinkable!

My interests in Environmental Science may have had its origin with my Environmental Internship at the Children's Museum of Manhattan. Through this program, I learned about environmental problems that we face in an urban setting. There were numerous field trips and workshops which were very informative and not only taught me about environmental studies but also taught me how to work with others, individual responsibility, and job training.

At the conclusion of the program, I wanted to further my involvement with the environment so I joined Youth for Habitat II-NYC. Youth for Habitat II-NYC is a collaboration of youth programs in New York City that participated in the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) Conference in Turkey from June 4 through 12, 1996. Youth for Habitat II-NYC gave me the opportunity to talk to youth from all around the world about similar environmental problems we face, such as overpopulation and shelter.

The purpose of Habitat II was to address "adequate shelter for all" and "sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world," both of which have global importance. Taking what was learned at an earlier United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat), held in Vancouver, Canada in 1976, Habitat II developed an agenda for human settlements titled the "Habitat Agenda."

Countries that participated in the Habitat II Conference have committed themselves to implementing the Habitat Agenda. It is the obligation of any government to provide affordable shelter for its people but governments will need assistance. Care must be taken to ensure environmental issues mentioned in the Habitat Agenda are addressed at every local level. To make this program a reality, the influence and participation of local authorities, non-governmental organizations and community based organizations is very important.

The delegates of Youth for Habitat II-NYC included nine youth representatives and four adults from New York City. Upon arriving in Istanbul, Turkey we went to the NGO forum where all the non-governmental organizations and participants of the conference gathered to discuss and have workshops on such issues as child care, housing in big cities, urban agriculture, and environmental pollution and energy.

When Youth for Habitat II-NYC joined the NGO forum, we became part of the Youth Caucus. The Youth Caucus is where we met with our peers from the other Youth for Habitat II programs from around the world. At the Youth Caucus, everyone had a job because everyone was teamed into different committees. Some of us were placed into the press committee, others were on the Vision Statement Committee, and others were placed elsewhere. I found it incredible how complete strangers from throughout the world could come together and break through language barriers, as well as ethnic barriers, and accomplish so much.

Sunday, June 9 was Youth Day at the conference, and was a celebration of all the hard work completed by the youth who were attending. On this day, the Youth Vision Statement was launched in an official presentation to Dr. Wally N'Dow, Secretary General of the Conference. The Vision Statement was created by Youth for Habitat and describes many socio-economic, as well as environmental problems we face. However, more importantly, it describes solutions and how they can be implemented. Some of the issues that the Vision Statement confronts are adequate shelter, youth in decision-making processes, education, unemployment, equal education for women, health care and the role of families.

I have chosen to conclude with a paragraph from the Vision Statement to give everyone a sense of its richness:

> The more cosmopolitan and diverse the city, the richer its social and cultural fabric. However, for many young people in urban and rural settlements, race, gender, tribe, language, religion, sexual orientation, economic status, and culture continue to act as a source of division. An end to all forms of prejudice is essential to the creation of sustainable and successful communities. To create cities in which young people are not merely tolerant of each other, but appreciate and learn from their differences, we suggest educational initiatives promoting the concepts of world citizenship and cross-cultural understanding. Thus, emphasis is placed not on uniformity, but unity in diversity.

Youth for Habitat II-NYC gave me the opportunity to talk to youth from all around the world about similar environmental problems we face.

Manauvaskar Kublall is a freshman at Hunter College, City University of New York. He has been with the Children's Museum of Manhattan for three years.

The XCEL Program

by Oakland Seligson

I am part of XCEL, the Cross-Cultural Environmental Leadership Program at San Rafael High School in California. This program was founded by Audubon Canyon Ranch (ACR) and the Richardson Bay Sanctuary of National Audubon Society (NAS). Audubon Canyon Ranch observed over recent years that the school children visiting ACR's Bolinas Lagoon Preserve were becoming increasingly diverse. As a result, ACR and NAS began to strengthen its own diversity by creating the XCEL Program to develop leadership and environmental awareness among youth not usually involved in the environmental movement.

The XCEL Program does not focus only on the natural environment. It also embraces the needs and issues of communities of color who have historically been left out by the mainstream environmental movement and have literally been dumped on by government and industry.

Indian girls at the Hampton Institute, circa 1900. Photo courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.

XCEL is a year-long program. It started in the summer when XCEL provided a two-week long residential camp where we developed the tools to teach culturally diverse elementary school students about nature. We ran a day camp located in the most enchanting natural preserves in our Bay Area. In addition to the residential camp and four weeks of preparing and running the day camp, we attended several field trips. One trip was to a giant corporate farm in Salinas. As we drove down the highway, almost every minute we passed buses full of field workers. There were fields of lettuce as far as the eye could see. In the fields, flatbed trucks moved at a walking pace while workers picked, packed and loaded the lettuce. It was like an outdoor factory.

That day, we also visited a United Farm Workers office. I learned that the produce that we find in our supermarkets is there at the expense of immigrant farm workers who have to put up with low wages, bad working conditions, pesticide exposure and have no workers' rights.

Another field trip we took was to North Richmond, a community right next to a giant Chevron refinery. We went on a toxic tour of the many polluted sites in the area, led by the non-profit organization, Communities for a Better Environment. We saw that the poor who live closest to the oil refinery community are most directly affected by the refinery's pollution and its ugliness. We visited an elementary school located downwind from an incinerator that pours out pollutants. The school has been evacuated numerous times in recent years when toxic emissions cause sickness in the children.

My eyes were opened during the summer about what's really going on in our communities and neighborhoods. The mainstream environmental movement doesn't try to reach ordinary people living in the cities, instead they try to "save the whales" and "save the rainforest." These efforts, to most people are like a cruel joke, because no one is saying, "save the children of North Richmond!" Most of the concerns of the environmentalists are the wildlife preserves, whitewater rivers, and cuddly little animals, and not the improvement of the poor urban environment where most people live.

Through the XCEL Program, I've learned that there are many ways to be an environmental activist. I live in the Canal District of Marin County where 9,000 people are jam-packed into one square mile. Recently, somebody stenciled in Spanish and English on every storm drain, "No dumping, flows to the Bay!" with a picture of a fish. It's a very effective way to prevent pollution; this is a good example of environmental activism.

It's the job of the XCELers to go into their communities and try to make changes. For the environmental movement to become more powerful, it needs to embrace the youth and people of many diverse cultures. The XCEL Program is helping to make this happen.

Oakland Seligson is a student at San Rafael High School in California.

SCOOP ON GROUPS

by Deepali Potdar

Scoop on Groups *draws heavily on the experiences of Deepali Potdar, currently a student at the University of Michigan. She helped form an environmental group in her high school. The piece reflects her analysis of the guidelines to follow in order to make a student group run successfully.*

I. Leadership, Group Work, and Diversity

Diversity can be a group's biggest asset. Both leadership and group work are important skills that take years of experimentation and experience to develop, and both of them are *learning processes*, not natural gifts.

Everyone has his or her own unique style of dealing with other people and the world around him or her. Try to understand your own style, and use it to your advantage. In any successful group situation, everyone should be a leader in one form or another, so it is important to let others know where your talent lies, and to learn from their talents. Leadership is something that should be shared as much as possible in group work.

It is important for you to keep a balance of power or leadership in your group as well. If this balance is offset by one person or subset of the group trying to take control, it means that *someone else* is not being allowed empowerment. Without feeling empowered, you or others may feel no motivation to act on an issue.

II. Focusing Your Efforts

I never liked it when teachers and parents suddenly started in with the g-word: goals. Today, I understand how important both goals, and a thing called *scope* are. In other words, it is impossible for your group alone to save the Earth from all environmental hazards. But you can make a noticeable difference if you focus and concentrate your energy and time on one specific area.

The project you work on should be a piece of the larger issue, a piece in which you can answer in specific detail, the who, what, when, and where of your work. Remember, think globally, but the most effective action you can take is that which benefits your own school and community.

III. Organization

Along with focusing your efforts, staying organized is vital to preventing frustration and increasing your effectiveness as a team. If your work is organized, not only will you save yourselves time and headaches, you will present a lot better impression to anyone with whom you work.

IV. Assessing Your Resources

In general, one of the most important things I learned over the years is to learn to ask for help. Asking for help is also an important and exciting way for you to share your ideas with your school and community.

It is crucial at some point to go outside your school and into your community. The folks we worked with were very interested in learning about our efforts, and they also made many donations of trees and money to our project.

Always keep a record of the names and phone numbers of the people you work with, along with a short description of what they do. You never know when they might be able to help you again in the future.

V. Responsibility and Follow-through

If you decide to do something or are assigned to do something, it's important to do it, do it to the best of your ability, and to share with other group members what you have done. Be honest with yourself and with other people you are working with, and don't leave people hanging.

Important details that we never planned for made our project grow and grow until the work seemed endless. I discovered a rather simple technique called *backwards planning*. This is exactly what it sounds like; in this method, you plan an activity from finish to start

VI. Personal Assessment

Ask yourself questions like: Why are we choosing to spend time on this issue? Why do I believe in it? How do I feel my work will benefit my school and community if we choose this issue? If you know yourself and the issue you are working on well enough, then you will be better able to tell your fellow students and community members about your ideas and plans.

From the Worksheet: Backwards Planning

• Draw a timeline on this paper, as well as on a large sheet of newsprint. As a group, choose one student to be the note taker. This student will draw the timeline on the newsprint.

• At the extreme left-hand side of the timeline, write the date and your project idea.

• On the opposite side, write the final outcome, then evaluation and discussion, as separate points on the line. The reason many people plan backwards is because when we think in a forward direction, we may jump straight from the idea to the goal. However, when we trace our steps from the goal to the idea, we often realize there are a lot more steps involved in the process. So, start at the end, and then each student should brainstorm all the tasks that need to be completed to reach the idea.

• Make a list of the tasks that you have brainstormed. Look at and revise your list. Divide and assign the tasks to different group members. Set tentative deadlines for when each person's first task will be completed. Write your own tasks.

The full-length guide, including activity worksheets, can be used to develop your student group. It will be published by Three Circles Center in 1997.

Curricula

An Environmental Justice Strategy Game

by Steve Chase

The students in my environmental studies classes at the Antioch New England Graduate School cannot be easily classified. They are each unique. Yet, looking around the room, it is increasingly clear that these students are predominately white, middle-class, and good-hearted "Sierra Club liberals." They are passionate about preserving wild nature, improving public health, and creating a sustainable way of life. Many of them are also very sophisticated in their scientific understanding of ecology and resource management. Few, however, are very savvy about power, social conflict, oppression, political economy, or the history of people's movements in this country.

This should probably not come as a surprise. A lack of political literacy is common among professionals within the mainstream environmental movement. As feminist geographer Joni Seager notes:

> The physical manifestations of environmental problems are often presented as both the beginning and end of the story... Questions about agency— that is, the social and economic processes that create a state of scorched trees and dead otters — are placed a distant second, if they are raised at all.

Nor are questions of social justice commonly discussed in mainstream environmental circles. This weakens the environmental movement, of course. As Seager argues:

> The real story of the environmental crisis is a story of power and profit and political wrangling. It is a story of the institutional arrangements and settings, the bureaucratic arrangements and the cultural conventions that create conditions of environmental destruction.

Unless more environmentalists learn about this side of the ecological crisis and the power of grassroots social movements, the environmental agenda will increasingly go down in defeat.

In my classes, I try to expose students to such questions and creatively challenge them to expand their definitions of environmentalism. In particular, I try to create learning exercises that will push them to think carefully about coalition-building and developing effective organizing strategies. One of the most effective exercises I have created is a strategy simulation game inspired and adapted from an exercise described in *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution* by Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser, and Christopher Moore (New Society Publishers, 1977). In this article, I lay out the basic structure of the game that can be adapted into a class hand-out.

Unless more environmentalists learn about this side of the ecological crisis and the power of grassroots social movements, the environmental agenda will go down in defeat.

The Setting

The location is in Eastchester County in suburban Greater Metropolis. Eastchester County has only one large town, the county seat of Eastchester (population 85,000), which is mixed in voting records and political opinions. The population is predominantly white. A large percentage of this group works in professional positions in Greater Metropolis. Eastchester has a longstanding African American community, however, making up about fifteen percent of the town. Most of Eastchester's African American residents live near the International Chemical Company (ICC) complex. ICC produces pesticides, lawn care products, and household consumer items. Being the county's only large industry, the ICC holds great influence in the local media, country clubs, churches, and city government. Fifteen to 23 percent of Eastchester's residents are employed either by ICC or smaller companies which depend directly on ICC business for survival. The African American community is particularly dependent on ICC for employment. During the 1960s, the company initiated one of the most progressive affirmative action programs in the state. Currently, 45 percent of ICC's unionized workforce is African American.

The Problem

Many people in Eastchester are shocked and disturbed this morning. Today's *Metropolis Daily News* ran a front page story reporting on a recent study of Eastchester County conducted by the Regional EPA office headquartered in Greater Metropolis. According to the report, the ICC annually pumps chemical pollutants into the air and the Eastchester River at levels well beyond what EPA standards suggest are safe. The report also notes that the public health records on Eastchester residents suggest a much higher than normal incidence rate of leukemia, spontaneous abortion, birth defects, infant mortality, asthma, cancer, and other diseases. The incidence rate was determined to be highest for Eastchester's African American residents. The news story also reports that the water quality in the river is so bad that two species of turtles on the endangered species list are threatened and the fish in the river are likely not safe to eat. An EPA official encourages parents to keep their children from swimming in the river.

The Players

There are four different groups likely to respond to this issue: the local Sierra Club; the local NAACP chapter; the union local of the Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers; and the ICC management team. The class will divide into these four groups for the strategy game.

The Object

Create strategies for how your team of players could best create coalitions with other groups and most effectively organize to achieve your coalition's goals.

The Rules

Each team will meet to reflect on the first round coalition-building questions and come up with a coalition-building proposal. Each team will then present their plan to the other groups and answer any clarifying questions. After these reports, each team will caucus quickly and choose up to two groups they would want to ally with, and up to two groups they would refuse to work with. Any groups that mutually agree to work together will then meet together as coalition partners in the second round to consider the action strategy questions included in this article and to generate an action plan. Each group will then report on their action plans to the other groups and answer any clarifying questions. After these reports, the entire class will discuss the effectiveness of each group's strategic action plan.

First Round Coalition-Building Questions

1) What are your interests and goals? What changes do you want to see in your community? What do you want to preserve? How would you rank your objectives?

2) Who in your town are natural allies? Potential allies? Potential opponents? Likely opponents? How will you relate to potential coalition partners? How do you understand their interests and goals? What will your appeal be to them? What are the most likely social obstacles to building relationships of trust and cooperation?

Also, the complexities of power and conflicts are quickly revealed by enacting this scenario.

How can these obstacles be overcome?

3) What resources does your group have to share with coalition partners? What national organizational resources are available to you? What resources do you hope to gain from other groups?

Second Round Action Planning Questions

1) Who are the primary decision-makers your coalition needs to influence? Who do they depend on? How can you reach and impact these people and institutions in an effort to get them to influence the primary decision-makers to accept your coalition's policy proposals? Who influences these secondary decision-makers? Who do they depend on? How can you persuade or pressure these people and institutions to support your campaign?

2) Given your coalition's resources and goals, what kinds of tactics will your group employ? Are there any tactics inappropriate during the first six months of your coalition's campaign, but which might be appropriate later on? How will you "escalate" your tactics to apply more pressure if you are not immediately successful?

3) What kinds of reactions do you expect from your opponents? How will you respond to their actions and counter-actions in order to further your cause?

Sample Three Hour Class Agenda

Time	*Agenda Item*
5 min	Opening Remarks on Group Process
10 min	Explain Strategy Game and Divide Into Teams
25 min	Team Coalition Building Discussions
25 min	Reports and Clarifying Questions
15 min	Choose Coalition Partners
10 min	Break
25 min	Coalition Action Plan Discussions
25 min	Reports and Clarifying Questions
30 min	Large Group Discussion
10 min	Wrap Up

This agenda can also be expanded by breaking the class into two sessions, giving more time for student discussion and role-playing. My own experience suggests this would be useful. Both the role-playing and discussions have proved engaging and spirited. Students often complain that they want more time for the exercise. It is particularly interesting to expand the time for playing out rounds of strategy moves and counter moves.

Yet, even in the compacted time frame that I have used, the exercise is a success. New insights are generated from looking at the same environmental problem from different angles and self-interests. Also, the complexities of power and conflicts are quickly revealed by enacting this scenario. It is amazing to see the deepened perspectives that emerge from the students as they assess together each group's clarity of goals; plausibility of its coalition-building appeals; targeting of appropriate decision-makers; selection of effective pressure and persuasion tactics; and anticipation and response to opponent's countermoves. Another bonus of this exercise is that students feel more personally engaged in the issues and are more receptive to readings and my presentations on the topics addressed.

This is one effective and creative way to help develop the political literacy of future environmental professionals and activists.

Steve Chase is a Boston-based environmental activist, writer, editor, and teacher who has taught courses on environmental justice and democratic citizen action at the Antioch New England Graduate School in Keene, New Hampshire. Most recently, he guest edited Orion Magazine's *special issue on Nature and Justice.*

UPWARD BOUND Environmental Justice Video Course

by Mark Spencer

The following is a step by step example of a success ful environmental justice video course run by the Upward Bound Project at the University of San Francisco. Upward Bound is an educational outreach program. The principle goal is the preparation of high school students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds for the successful completion of post secondary education.

This type of project can be extremely exciting to do with young people. It's a situation where students encounter tangible results as they progress. This causes a flurry of excitement and motivation. It's also a way for students to creatively express themselves through means that are familiar to them. Video is an excellent way for the students to share what they've produced with others in their family and community. This is also an effective way to spread the word of community environmental hazards As a result of this project, the youth will gain a sense of empowerment and pride, as well as an understanding of the environmental justice issues in their communities.

The steps to develop a student video project are as follows:

1. Contact local environmental justice organizations or activists and arrange walking neighborhood tours and/or interactive classroom activities. This component of the project is the best time to gain the student's interest and enthusiasm for environmental justice issues. Try to have the presenter focus on the student's interests as well as those of their own organization; this aids in validating the voices of the students.

In addition to this presentation, it's important to find additional material on environmental issues that the kids can relate to. Interesting articles can be obtained from colleges and universities, grassroots organizations, newspapers, and magazines. You can also show the students documentaries or taped excerpts from television news, so they get an understanding for the visual expression of such issues. It is your responsibility to sense what type of information your students would benefit from and be interested in.

2. In response to the information that has been presented to them, have the students come up with a list of the environmental justice issues that are most interesting to them. From this list, have students prioritize those issues that they want to focus on for their project.

3. Have the students come up with a list of ways in which they would like to articulate the issues they have decided upon. Encourage the students to include learning styles that are reflective of their own cultural backgrounds. Upward Bound has had students do poetry, murals, speeches, cartoons, dramatic interpretations (skits), raps, and debates on environmental justice issues.

4. Break the class into production crews to document the entire process. Working in groups towards a common goal is great for teaching the importance of cooperation. It is often difficult to edit the accumulated video footage. You may need to hire a video editor. A good place to find someone affordable is at your local university's film department. It would be wise to consult with an experienced video producer before the start of your course.

5. Have the students go back out in the community, to the various organizations that reflect the issues they are focusing on. Within their production crews, have the students conduct interviews, and/or tape footage that relates to the material they are trying to cover. After each shoot, it's a good idea to debrief, view the footage, discuss the information collected, and brainstorm the different ways it can be produced into an effective video piece.

Budget

This type of project can be expensive; how expensive depends on whether or not you have cameras and other video equipment, transportation, an editing facility, and a video editor. Projects such as this can be funded by various means. It would be very empowering to the students to have them raise some of the funds themselves. Upward Bound receives grant money to run their project. It's a good idea to search out organizations that fund environmental activities, for they will be more apt to grant funds.

This project is great fun and covers many academic disciplines. Furthermore, the students develop a sense of empowerment and leadership. They also learn the importance of being able to work in groups. The students may even end up working as interns, volunteers, or paid staff at the organizations that they interact with.

Video is an excellent way for the students to share what they've produced with others in their family and community.

For more information on starting a video project with your organization, contact Marc Spencer at: University of San Francisco, Upward Bound Project, 2130 Fulton St., San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Mark Spencer works for the Upward Bound Program at the University of San Francisco.

Commencement 2000: A Model Education and Career Program at USDA Forest Service

Founded in 1990, Commencement 2000 is a long-term USDA Forest Service strategy to achieve a skilled, diverse workforce. It has now become a program to inform and educate youth about natural resources and environmental science and encourage interest in natural resource and land management careers.

The program works with students from K through 12 as they move through "feeder schools" taking environmental and natural science classes, being exposed to a range of resource management careers, and field experiences. These range from day trips to week-long environmental studies and career awareness trips at national, state and regional parks or national forest land.

High school students who demonstrate an interest are given opportunities to "shadow" a professional in forestry, wildlife biology, fisheries, archaeology, hydrology, ecology or other natural resource occupations during the summer of their Junior year. Feeder schools are linked to universities and colleges to work in collaboration with USDA Forest Service and other agencies and community organizations.

Commencement 2000 was created to bring about long-term change in the relationship between federal land management, natural resource and environmental agencies and the people they serve. It has an emphasis on practical results and the active participation of educators, youth, families and the community.

The project began in Oakland, California, with a focus on disadvantaged, urban schools but is a model for all educators and activists working to reinvent government, national service programs and multiply the impact of limited funding and staff. For further information, contact: USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Region, 650 Sansome Street, San Francisco CA 94111, (415) 705-2604.

RESOURCES
For Multicultural Environmental Education

Organizations

A World of Difference provides trainings and resources for teachers doing diversity work. Contact: Cynthia Esty, 2865-A El Paseo Lane, Sacramento CA 95821.

Amherst Educational Publishing specializes in multicultural curricula, 30 Blue Hills Rd., Amherst MA 01002.

Asian Pacific Environmental Network Preservation Park, Oakland CA 94618, (510) 834-8920.

Cobb and Henry publish a variety of academic works in the behavioral sciences focusing on the African American experience. P.O. Box 4900, Berkeley CA 94704-4900.

Eagle Vision Educational Network is dedicated to sharing the accurate history and philosophy of the American Indian and the concept of Earth Stewardship. 8657 Bronson Drive, Granite Bay CA 95746, (916) 791-7910.

Elisa Adler and Alejandro Jayo publish Spanish language environmental and outdoor education materials. 2968 Ward Creek Road, Taylorsville CA 95983.

Environmental Center for New Canadians is a new organization in Canada which educates Canadians about environmental issues and their health connections and encourages active participation in environmental activities. Contact: Yuga Juma Ouzigs, 20 Dundaf Street West, #1306, Toronto, M5G 2C2, Canada, (416) 392-0099.

Films for the Humanities and Sciences, Multicultural Studies provides a wide selection of videos and videodisks on cultural issues for sale and rent. Box 2053, Princeton NJ 08543-2053.

Poverty and Race Research Action Council publishes *Poverty & Race*.1875 Connecticut Av., NW, # 714, Washington, DC 20009, (202) 387-9887.

National Association of Multicultural Education is the professional organization for multicultural educators.Contact: James B. Boyer. College of Education. Kansas State University. 261 Bluemont Hall. Manhattan, Kansas 66506. They sponsor an annual conference and publish a magazine through the Caddo Gap Press in San Francisco. Contact Caddo Gap at: 3145 Geary, #275, San Francisco, CA 94118.

Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education is a non-profit, membership organization dedicated to assisting environmental organizations, programs and educators in making a successful transition to a multicultural society. P.O. Box 1946, Sausalito, CA 94965, (415) 561-6580.

Together, In Dialogue is a consulting service in bilingual and multicultural environmental and science education from feminist and critical perspectives. Contact: Jeanne Frederickson, Box 758, Running-Springs, CA 92382.

Urban Habitat Program, *Earth Island Institute*, is dedicated to developing multicultural urban environmental leadership for socially just and sustainable communities. UHP publishes *Race Poverty and the Environment*, Box 29908 Presidio Station, San Francisco CA 94129, (415) 561-3333.

The Video Project distributes environmental and social change videos nationwide and many reflect cultural diversity and include multicultural perspectives. Contact: Steve Ladd, 5332 College Av., Suite 1E, Oakland, CA 94618, 1-800-4-PLANET.

Model Programs and Profiles

Kid Heroes of the Environment. The Earthworks Group, 1991. Profiles of kids and groups of kids who are heroes at home, at school and in the community. Also produce *50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth*m available in Spanishas *50 cosas que los niños pueden hacer para salvar la tierra* Contact: Iaconi Books, 300 Pennsylvania. San Francisco CA 94110, (415) 255-8193

The EcoSound Program is a non-profit multicultural environmental education program committed to educating urban youth, particularly youth of color, about environmental issues using the performing arts. Videos, training materials, and curricular materials available. Contact: Liz Thomas, Producer, (206) 296-1675.

Greening the City Streets: The Story of Community Gardens. Huff, Barbara A., 1990. Photographs by Peter Ziebel. Published by Clarion. This book profiles neighbors on Manhattan's Lower East Side, including kids, turning vacant lots into gardens.

It's Our World, Too! Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference. Hoose, Phillip, 1993, Little Brown. Profiles of children in action, from lookouts on the Underground Railroad to today's environmental action, plus good how-to-do-it section.

Rediscovery: Ancient Pathways, New Directions. Henley, Thomas, 1989. Western Canada Wilderness Committee, Vancouver, BC. Provides a detailed description of an outdoor environmental education program developed by Natives in British Columbia.

The Streets Are Free. Kurusa, 1985. Illus., Monika Doppert Annick. Originally published in Spanish in Venezuela by Ediciones Ekaré as *La Calle es Libre*. Case study of children in a Caracas neighborhood campaigning to make a playground.

Resource Guides

Guide to Multicultural Resources. Highsmith Press, 1993. Fort Atkinson, WI. Provides current data on agencies, services, associations, institutions, organizations, activities and resources related to various cultural groups around the nation.

Journal of Multicultural Environmental Education. Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education. Quarterly publication, which includes organizational, community and program profiles, theoretical issues, bibliographies, and letters.

The Kid's Guide to Social Action: How to solve the social problem you choose —and turn creative thinking into positive action. Lewis, Barbara A., 1991. Examples of kids making a difference at local, state and national levels. Contact: Free Spirit Publishing Inc., 400 First Ave. North, # 616, Minneapolis MN 55401

Multicultural Teaching: A Handbook of Activities, Information, and Resources. Tiedt, Pamela L., & Tiedt, Iris M. 1986. Allyn and Bacon, Inc., Boston MA. A practical handbook of activities and approaches to multicultural education. Useful for teachers.

People of Color Environmental Groups Directory, Bullard, Robert B., 1992. Available from: Charles Stewart Mott Fdtn.,505 South Saginaw Street, Flint MI 48502

Books, Essays, and Articles

Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education. Nieto, Sonia, 1992. Longman, New York, NY. Details the foundation of multicultural education. Social reconstructionist in orientation.

Anti-Racist Science Teaching. Gill, Dawn, & Levidow, Les (eds.), 1987. Free Association Books, London.

Black Americans Attitudes Toward Wildlife. Dolin, Eric Jay, 1988. *Journal of Environmental Education.* Vol.20, No. 1. Article reviews literature addressing African Americans' attitudes toward wildlife, describes various theories on why blacks have little interest in wildlife, discusses why this is important, and considers the need for more research.

Confronting Environmental Racism. Bullard, Robert D., South End Press, 1993. Boston MA.

Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality. Bullard, Robert D., 1990. Westview Press, Boulder CO. Describes connections between environmentalism and social justice. Chronicles the efforts of five African American communities to fight environmental hazards. Provides action strategies .

Empowering Minority Students. Cummins, Jim, 1989. California Association for Bilingual Education, Sacramento CA.

Empowerment through Multicultural Education. Sleeter, Christine E., 1991. State University of New York, Albany, NY. Essays on the practice of multicultural education in a variety of contexts.

Environmental Education for Environmental Justice: A Three Circles Perspective. Running-Grass, 1994. Three Circles Center, P.O. Box 1946, Sausalito CA 94965.

Environmental Perspectives of Blacks: Acceptance of the "New Environmental Paradigm." Caron, Judi Anne, 1989. *Journal of Environmental Education.* Vol.20, No.3. Reviews past research that found African Americans to be less supportive of environmental issues than whites and compares to recent attitudinal survey of southern urban blacks.

Environmental Racism: Issues and Dilemmas. Bryant, Bunyan & Mohai, Paul (eds.), 1991. Proceedings from Martin Luther King Day Symposium on race and the incidence of environmental hazards, environmental protection as civil rights issues, and documentation of discriminatory environmental practices. University of Michigan, Office of Minority Affairs,Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

***EPA Journal*, 18(1).** A special issue addressing environmental justice. Topics include defining the issue, expanding the dialogue between communities of color and mainstream environmental groups and government agencies, background research, grass-roots environmental movements, and steps taken at EPA.

Freedom's Plow: Teaching in the Multicultural Classroom. Perry, Theresa, & Fraser, James W. (eds.), 1993. Routledge, New York, NY. A series of essays on various topics, both practical and theoretical, in multicultural education.

From Toxic Racism to Environmental Justice. Grossman, Karl, 1992. *E: The Environmental Magazine*. Vol.3 No.3, 1992. Concise, non-academic summary of the history of the environmental justice movement.

The Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural Literacy. Simonson, Rick, & Walker, Scott (eds.), 1988. Graywolf Press, Saint Paul, MN. Provocative essays on the topic of multiculturalism.

Intercultural Communication: A Reader. Samovar, Larry & Porter, Richard (eds.), 1991. Wadsworth Publishing Company, Belmont, CA. Provides a basic overview of the field of cross-cultural communication and pertinent issues .

Making Choices for Multicultural Education: Five Approaches to Race, Class, and Gender. Sleeter, Christine E., & Grant, Carl A., 1988. Macmillan Publishing, New York, NY. Excellent summaries and comparisons of various approaches to race, class and gender.

Multicultural Education of Children and Adolescents. Baruth, Leroy G., & Manning, M. Lee, 1992. Allyn and Bacon, Needham Heights, MA.

Race and Ethnicity. Rex, John, 1986. Open University Press, Buckingham, England.

Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse. Bryant, Bunyan & Mohai, Paul. (eds.), 1990. Westview Press, Boulder, CO. 16 articles reviewing the differential impacts of environmental insults on people of color. Authors illuminate the failure of traditional, political, economic, and environmental institutions to address these life-threatening conditions and advocate new approaches for creating environmental justice.

Research & Multicultural Education: From the Margins to the Mainstream. Grant, Carl A. (ed.), 1992. The Falmer Press, London, England.

Spinning Tales — Weaving Hope: Stories of Peace, Justice and the Environment. New Society, 1991. Stories contributed by many tellers, with related activities.

Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies. Banks, James A., 1991. (5th ed.) Allyn and Bacon, Needham Heights MA.

Toxic Struggles, The Theory and Practice of Environmental Justice. Hofrichter, Richard. 1993. New Society Publishers, Philadelphia PA.

Toxic Waste and Race: A National Report on the Racial and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites. Commission for Racial Justice, 1987. United Church of Christ, New York NY. First national study of the distribution of hazardous waste sites in the U.S., Shows race as single most consistent factor in siting of waste dumps.

Unequal Protection: The Racial Divide in Environmental Law, a Special Investigation. *The National Law Journal*. September 21, 1992.

Walleye Warriors, An Effective Alliance Against Racism and for the Earth. Whaley, Rick & Walter Bresette, 1994. New Society, Philadelphia PA.

Women, Home and Community: The Struggle in an Urban Environment. Hamilton, Cynthia, 1990. In *Reweaving the World; The Emergence of Ecofeminism*. Irene Diamond and Gloria Feman Orenstein (eds.) Sierra Club Books, San Francisco. Describes the conflict over siting the first incinerator in the Los Angeles City Energy Recovery Project (LANCER) in an African American and Latino community and the successful opposition by community members.

Resource list was compiled by Brian Hallett, Running-Grass, Dr. Katherine James, Nancy Schimmel and Long Beach Singing Rainbows. Published by the National Consortium for Environmental Education and Training (NCEET) and Three Circles Center.

For information contact: NCEET Univ. of Michigan, School of Nat'l Res., Dana Bldg, 430 E University, Ann Arbor MI 48109-1115, (313) 998-6726 or Three Circles Center, Box 1946, Sausalito CA 94965,(415) 561-6580.

Orion: Special Issue on Nature & Justice

This special issue of *Orion Magazine,* longtime publisher of essays, fiction and fine arts celebrating Earth, focuses on the Environmental Justice Movement. It contains a wide range of perspectives — Holly Sklar on the Dudley Street community development project in Boston; "Touching the Earth" by bell hooks (author of *Sisters of the Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery*); Wes Sander's essay on his eco-cabaret creation, "InTOXICating," about toxic waste in poor communities of color; and poet/activist Elizabeth Clare exploring the lessons of the struggle to protect old-growth redwoods in "Clear-cut: Brutes and Bumper Stickers."

"Nature and Justice" is the Autumn 1996 issue of *Orion*, which is committed to continuing to carry voices of the environmental justice movement. *Orion* is available for $8 per issue at 195 Main St., Great Barrington MA 01230.

Multicultural Childrens Books with Environmental Themes

Crow Boy. Yashima, Taro. Viking, 1955. Chibi is too shy to do well in school until a sympathetic teacher helps him show what he learns on his way over the mountains to school. Japan.

Flossie and the Fox. McKissack, Patricia. Illustrated by Rachel Isadora. Dial, 1986. The neighbors' hen house has been cleaned out by a fox so Flossie is taking them a basket of eggs. When an arrogant old fox chats her up along the way, this self-possessed African American girl gives him a little lesson in animal identification.

I Can't Have Bannock but the Beaver Has a Dam. Wheeler, Bernelda, Pemmican, 1984. A Native American boy can't have a bannock because the beaver has felled a tree, knocking the power lines down, and the electric stove won't work.

The Invisible Hunters/Los Cazadores Invisibles. Rohmer, Harriet et al. Illustrated by Joe Sam. Children's Book Press, 1987. The magical Dar plant makes the hunters invisible, but only so long as they do not use guns or sell the meat. When they get greedy, the magic turns against them. Miskito legend in English/ Spanish.

It's Our World, Too! Stories of Young People Who Are Making a Difference. Hoose, Phillip. Little, Brown, 1993. From kids as lookouts on the Underground Railroad to today's environmental action. Good how-to section.

The Legend of Bluebonnet. de Paola, Tomie, reteller. Putnam, 1983. The Great Spirits tells the Comanche People to sacrifice their most precious possession to end a drought that had killed many. When a little girl sacrifices a doll, the Spirits cover the hillsides with bluebonnets and end the drought.

The Lost Lake. Say, Allen. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. Dad says there's a secret lake only he and grandpa know about, but things have changed. Asian-American.

The Mamook Book: Activities for Learning about the Northwest Coast Indians. Mathers, Sharon et al. Illus., Roger Fernandes. United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, second ed., 1979. Historical and contemporary Indian activities and dress, and a board game about salmon migration. Available from: Oyate, 2702 Mathews St., Berkeley, CA 94702, (510)848-6700.

Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters. Steptoe, John. Lothrop, 1987. A snake is well treated by a young African woman who knows he is good for her garden. He turns out to be a handsome prince.

Nine-in-One Grr! Grr! A Folktale from the Hmong People of Laos. Xiong, Blia and Nancy Hom. Children's Book Press, 1989. "That's terrible!" squawked Bird. "If Tiger has nine cubs each year, they will eat all of us!" Can Bird preserve nature's balance?

Ntombi's Song. Seed, Jenny. Beacon Press, 1987. A contemporary Zulu girl's trip through the forest to buy sugar for her mother becomes a rite of passage. A triumphant growing-up story set in South Africa.

The People Who Hugged the Trees: An Environmental Folk Tale. Rose, Deborah Lee, adaptor. Illustrated by Birgitta Säflund. Roberts Rinehart, 1990. Amrita loves the trees that protect her desert village from sandstorms. When a ruler orders the woods cut, she hugs her favorite tree and the other villagers do the same. India.

The Pueblo. Yue, Charlotte and David. Houghton, 1986. Excellent description and diagrams of traditional passive solar construction.

Red Ribbons for Emma. New Seed Press, New Mexico People & Energy Collective. 1981. Emma Yazzie, Navajo sheepherder and grandmother, fights against the coal company that has taken away much of her grazing land. Available from Oyate.

Sadako and the Thousand Cranes. Coerr, Eleanor. Putnam, 1977. The true story of a young girl who died of leukemia ten years after being exposed to radiation when the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima.

Save My Rainforest. Zak, Monica. Illustrated by Bengt-Arne Runnerström. Volcano, 1992. English version by Nancy Schimmel. Spanish version *(Salven Mi Selva)* available from Iaconi Books. Based on the true story of an eight-year-old boy, Omar Castillo, who tried to save the rainforest in Mexico. (He is still trying.)

Shark Lady: True Adventures of Eugenie Clark. McGovern, Ann. Four Winds, 1978. When Eugenie's Japanese American mother worked on Saturdays, she dropped Eugenie off at the aquarium. This started an interest that developed into a career studying sharks.

Song of the Trees. Taylor, Mildred D. Dial, 1975. An African American family defends their forest during the Depression.

The Streets Are Free. Kurusa. Illustrated by Monika Doppert. Annick, 1985. Originally published in Spanish in Venezuela by Ediciones Ekaré as *La Calle es Libre*. Children in a Caracas neighborhood who have no place to play campaign for a playground. Spanish available from Iaconi Books, (415) 255-8193.

Tigress. Cowcher, Helen. Farrar, 1991. A tigress is killing livestock and the herdsmen want to poison her, but the ranger persuades them to use firecrackers to frighten her back to the preserve.

Turtle Watch. Ancona, George. Macmillan, 1987. Two Afro-Brazilian children help scientists protect the eggs of the endangered sea turtles.

This list was compiled by Nancy Schimmel (1639 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94703, 510-843-0533) and Claudia Morrow (Berkeley Public Library). If you have additional suggestions, please send them in.

Community Victories Mark CRPE's Work

The first six months of 1996 has been a busy time for the Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment. Community groups in our client communities have had several notable successes in blocking toxic facilities in rural California. Here are two recent examples from the field:

In Buttonwillow, the group Padres Hacia una Vida Mejor had a major victory this spring when the Kern County Superior Court overturned a County decision to allow Laidlaw to expand its massive toxic waste dump near the Latino, farmworker community. Laidlaw has appealed the case, arguing that its Constitutional right to transport toxic waste has been infringed upon!

In Blue Lake, residents of the Blue Lake Rancheria joined forces with the Blue Lake Neighbors Concerned About Toxic Exposure to call on city officials to reject the burning of tires in a local wood-waste incinerator. Under intense public pressure, the company withdrew its plans.

In the win-some, lose-some department, in Salinas, a Superior Court judge ruled that the California Department of Toxic Substances Control had violated the law in permitting a toxic waste treatment plant just one block from a farmworker apartment complex, but then refused to shut the plant down. Local residents and CRPE are working to close the polluting facility, which has already had a series of incidents in which toxic ammonia clouds have escaped into the community and workers have been seriously injured.

In other news, due to restrictions on the work of federally funded legal services offices by the Gingrich Congress, CRPE has made the unhappy decision that it was time to sever all ties with California Rural Legal Assistance, its home base for the past seven years. We are still a project of the California Rural Legal Assistance *Foundation* but no longer have any legal relationship with CRLA, Inc. We are, however, just down the hall from our old office, at 631 Howard, Suite 330, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Please note our new office telephone (415/495-8990) and fax (415/495-8849).

Cordell Hull Reagon, 1943-1996

Cordell Reagon, who was one of the founders of the Urban Habitat Program, died November 12, 1996. He was a veteran of the Civil Rights Movement, a singer and organizer of the SNCC Freedom Singer. Reagon was arrested 25 times during his work as field secretary for SNCC. A talented community organizer and teacher of nonviolence, he went on to work against the war in Vietnam and for the anti-nuclear movement in New York and the Bay Area. He will be sorely missed. Our hearts go out to his family and his sisters and brothers in the struggle for justice.

Urban Habitat Program News and New Digs

In August, UHP's Social Justice and Transportation Project held a day-long workshop, "Third Street Tomorrow: Bayview Opera House Station Area Design Workshop" which identified key community issues and developed a set of recommendations for a proposed light rail station at the Bayview Opera House. The Bayview light rail project, a three-year project for UHP, was also highlighted as a model of community-based transportation planning at a workshop by UHP's Henry Holmes at the Habitat II NGO Forum in Istanbul last summer.

On September 27th, more than 200 people celebrated UHP's move to the Presidio. Our new offices are in the nation's newest and largest urban national park. The first annual "Flatlands Multicultural Leadership Awards" were presented to UHP allies in recognition of their contribution to environmental justice and sustainability in the San Francisco Bay Area. Awards went to:

Golden Gate University Law Professor ***Anne Eng***, for legal and organizing support to community groups and service on the San Francisco Environmental Commission;

Former Berkeley Mayor ***Gus Newport***, for his work with the Community Consultation Initiative (CCI), the regional network of urban community groups formed to establish the Presidio as a model urban national park;

Professor ***James O'Connor***, for intellectual leadership of the red/green movement and as founder and editor of the journal, *Capitalism, Nature and Socialism;*

The ***National Economic Development and Law Center*** and ***United Indian Nations, Inc.*** for their collaborative work to ensure public benefit conveyance which serves the needs or the urban Indian community in the reuse of the Oak Knoll Hospital in Alameda County.

Sharing our new space is the National Indian Justice Center, which is developing a California Indian Museum at the Presidio and in early 1997 will begin exhibits in our common space. With the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners, the California Native Plant Society and the Park Service, UHP is working on a landscape design for our building, which we intend to be a model of sustainable gardening that can be replicated in other parts of the Park. Be sure and come by when you are in town and please make note of our new address:

Mailing: Urban Habitat Program
Box 29908 Presidio Station
San Francisco CA 94129

Location: Old Red Cross Building #97
Main Post, Arguello & Moraga Sts.,
Presidio of San Francisco

Tel. 415/561-3333
Fax 415/561-3334
http://www.earthisland.org

A Guide to Multicultural Environmental Education

What are some of the guiding ideas of multicultural environmental education? Three Circles Center advances some preliminary ideas for the continuing discussion and welcomes your comments.

Commitment to Education for Action and Action for Justice

• Multicultural environmental education critiques the forces which have oppressed people and nature and seeks their transformation through research, imagination and concerted action.

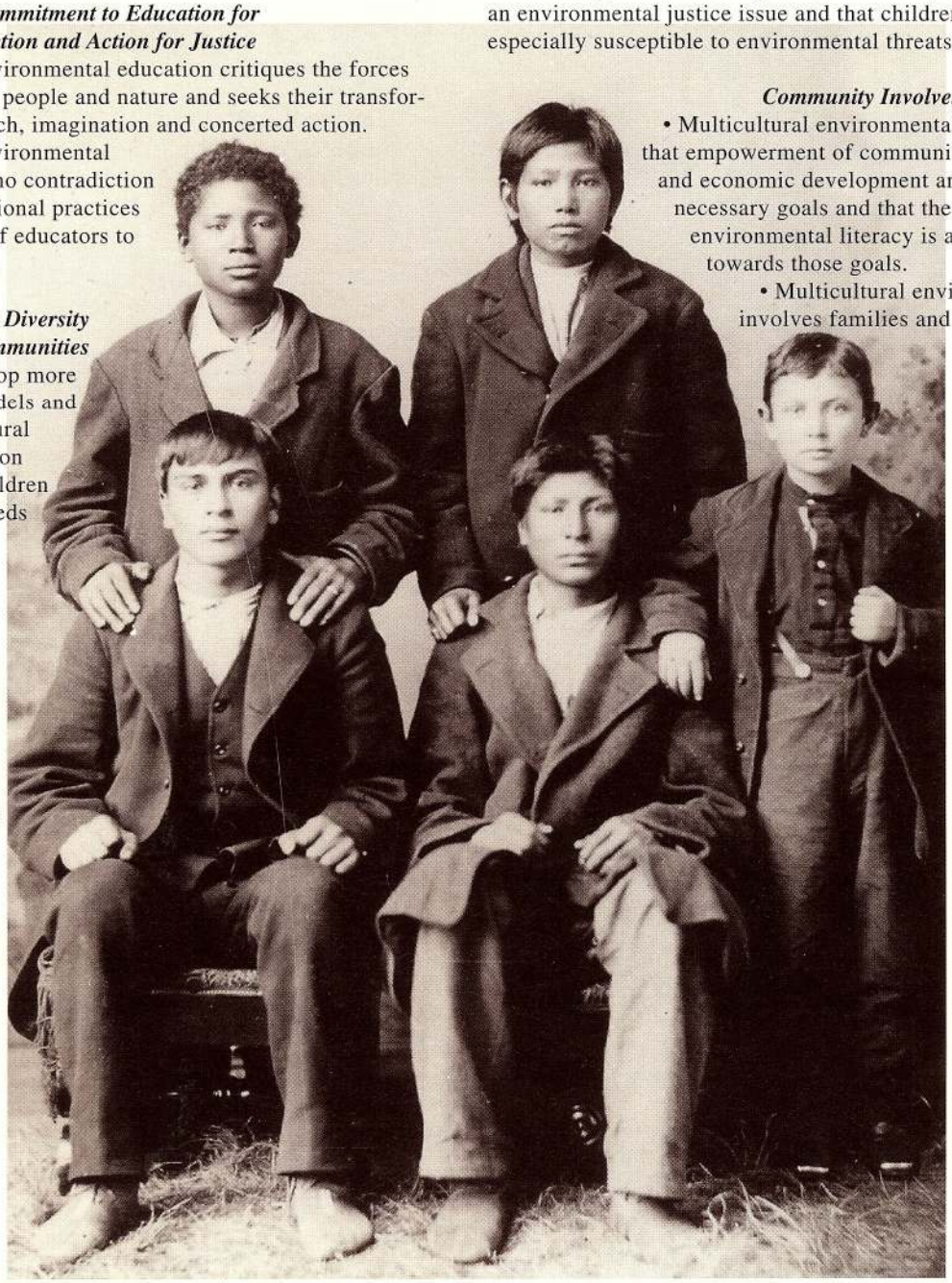
• Multicultural environmental education recognizes no contradiction between sound educational practices and the commitment of educators to environmental justice.

Acknowledging the Diversity of Students and Communities

• In order to develop more inclusive program models and pedagogies, multicultural environmental education acknowledges that children may have different needs for environmental education, shaped by their places and conditions of residence.

• Multicultural environmental education illuminates the idea that all cultures have a relationship with their environments, which they and others can draw upon for understanding and inspiration.

• Multicultural environmental education uses the teaching opportunity to help children become aware of, understand, accept and value other cultures and their environmental traditions.



Indian Boarding School Boys, circa 1891, Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution.

Disproportionate Impacts on Health

• Multicultural environmental education recognizes that ecosystem health and the health of communities and individuals are inextricably linked. It recognizes that health, in a polluted world, is an environmental justice issue and that children in particular are especially susceptible to environmental threats.

Community Involvement

• Multicultural environmental education affirms that empowerment of communities and their social and economic development are essential and necessary goals and that the development of environmental literacy is an important step towards those goals.

• Multicultural environmental education involves families and communities directly and significantly in the development and implementation of environmental education curricula and programs. Such involvement is essential to achieving inclusivity and empowerment.

Vision for a Culturally Diverse Planet

• Multicultural environmental education envisions a multicultural society at peace with the natural world and itself. It is part of the social process of becoming healed, more inclusive, and more just.

• Multicultural environmental education takes a planetary perspective, making the connection between local, regional, national and planetary environmental justice issues.

Race, Poverty & the Environment
Earth Island Institute
300 Broadway, Suite 28
San Francisco CA 94133-3312

Address Correction Requested

Nonprofit Organization US Postage PAID Permit No. 1414 San Francisco CA

RPE is a joint project of the Urban Habitat Program at Earth Island Institute and California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation's Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment.

147 INKWORKS PRESS