

# Environment and Morality

Identities, Conflict and Cohesion  
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To	

American Civil Liberties Union  
Citizens Against Nuclear Trash  
Citizens Against Toxic Exposure  
Council on Environmental Quality  
United States Department of Defense  
United States Department of Energy  
United States Department of Transportation  
environmental impact statement  
Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit  
Environmental Justice Resource Centre  
United States Environmental Protection Agency  
Environmental Report  
Final Environmental Impact Statement  
Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences  
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development  
Los Angeles Metropolitan Transit Authority  
Louisiana Energy Services  
locally unwanted land use  
methyl isocyanate  
Monitored Retrievable Storage  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund  
National Environmental Justice Advisory Council  
National Environmental Policy Act  
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences  
not in my backyard  
non-governmental organization  
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
National Priorities List of EPA Superfund sites  
Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development  
United States Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
polychlorinated biphenyl  
place in blacks' backyard  
polyvinyl chloride  
Toxic Release Inventory

Environmental racism refers to any policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour. It combines with public policies and industry practices to provide benefits for corporations while shifting costs to people of colour. Government, legal, economic, political and military institutions reinforce environmental racism, and it influences local land use, enforcement of environmental regulations, industrial facility siting and the locations where people of colour live, work and play. The roots of environmental racism are deep and have been difficult to eliminate.

Environmental racism is also evident at the global level. Shi

munautés privées de leurs droits économiques et politiques, subventionne la dégradation de l'environnement


mobilisés dans les ghettos des centres-villes, les barrios et les villages. Ces groupes se sont organisés, instruits et armés pour se dresser contre le gouvernement et les pollueurs industriels.

Le racisme environnemental se manifeste dans la façon indigne dont les travailleurs sont traités. Des milliers de travailleurs agricoles et leurs familles sont exposés à des pesticides dangereux dans le travail et sur leur lieu de travail. Ces travailleurs doivent accepter des salaires de misère et des conditions de travail qui ne répondent à aucune norme. Le racisme environnemental se traduit aussi par l'exploitation d









Racism is a potent factor in sorting people into their physical environments. Racism influences land use, housing patterns and infrastructure development (Bullard et al

Despite significant improvements in environmental protection over the past several decades, over 1.3 billion individuals worldwide live in unsafe and unhealthy physical

Environmental racism refers to any environmental policy, practice or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups or communities based on race or colour (Bullard 1993a). Environmental racism is reinforced by government, legal, economic, political and military institutions. This type of racism combines with public policies and industry practices to provide for countries in the North while shifting costs to countries in the South.<sup>4</sup>

Reverend Benjamin F. Chavis, one of the founders of the environmental justice movement, defines environmental racism as

discrimination in environmental policy making. It is racial discrimination in the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in communities of colour. And it is racial discrimination in the history of excluding people of colour from the mainstream of environmental groups, decision making boards, and regulatory bodies (Chavis 1993:3).

Racism is carried out by members of dominant racial or ethnic groups and has differential and negative impacts upon members of

manufactured methyl isocyanate (MIC), which killed thousands of people, making it the world's deadliest industrial accident. It is not a coincidence that the o

Fahrenheit in order to remove the PCBs. The soil was put back in a football-sized pit, re-covered to form a mound, graded and seeded with grass.

The protests also led the Commission for Racial Justice to produce in 1987,  
the first national study to correlate waste facility sites and demographic characteristics. Race was found to be the most potent variable in predicting where these facilities were located—more powerful than poverty, land values and home ownership. In 1990,

A nationwide call for resource policy papers resulted in over 20 resource papers on subjects ranging from childhood asthma, energy, transportation, “dirty” power plants, climate justice, military toxics, clean production, brownfield<sup>8</sup> redevelopment, sustainable agriculture, human rights, occupational health and safety, and farm workers. The resource papers helped guide the workshops and hands-on training sessions.

Women led, moderated or presented in more than half of the 86 workshops and general sessions, and EJ Summit II leaders honoured 12 outstanding “sheroes” (female heroes) of the movement in a Crowning Women Awards Dinner. The awards event was dedic





Elevated public health risks have been found in some populations even when social class is held constant. For example, race has been found to be independent of class in the distribution of air pollution; location of municipal landfills, incinerators and abandoned toxic waste dumps; clean-up of superfund sites; and incidence of



**An estimated 137 American workers die from job-related diseases every day (NIEHS 1996). This is more than eight times the number of workers who die from job-related accidents. Fear of unemployment acts as a potent incentive for many workers to**

Nevada, making the Western Shoshone the most bombed nation on earth” (LaDuke 1999:3). Marshall Islands residents also live under a constant threat of radioactive contamination.

Military activities have also spoiled much of the pristine land in Alaska. Over 648 US military installations in Alaska, both active and abandoned, are polluting the land, groundwater, wetlands, streams and air with extensive fuel spill, pesticides, solvents, PCBs, dioxins, munitions and radioactive materials. Many of these military installations are in close proximity to Native villages and traditional hunting and fishing areas, virtually threatening the quality of life and way of life of countless Alaskan Natives (Miller 2000).

Residents on the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico, have also been engaged in a heated battle against the US Navy. The tiny island is inhabited by 9,000 residents who are bordered on both sides by Navy installations. The navy has used this US commonwealth island as a bombing range since 1941, and as recently as 1999, a stray Marine Corps bomb killed a civilian security guard (Reaves and Thompson 2001). Over 600 protesters were arrested. Opponents contend that the bombing exercises threaten the environment and health of island residents, and several studies highlight health problems directly related to the noise levels of the ship-to-shore shelling of Vieques (CNN.com 2001).

In May 2003, after 56 years of using Vieques as a bombing range, the navy finally left the tiny island. However, it also left behind a legacy of broken promises

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blacks. The high-profile trial, argued by O.J. Simpson's former attorney, Johnnie L. Cochran Jr., began on 8 November 1999. The lawsuit was settled 10 days later for \$2.55 million.

Disparate highway siting and environmental mitigation plans were also challenged by community residents, churches and the NAACP LDF in

(ND Cal. C-93-0721-VRW) involving the reconstruction of the earthquake damaged Cypress Freeway in West Oakland, California. The plaintiffs wanted the  
downed Cypress Freeway (which sp98 Tm(r)Tj9.96 0 0o0 9ew



**Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1970. Title VI of the Civilw**



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Initial 78 sites In	18,722	5,321	28.42
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tion to include only intentional discrimination, which carries a high burden of proof. Title VI prohibits discrimination by entities receive.4403 253.6729 749.12 262.9138 749nTj9.96 0 0 9.96. 9.96 248.8732 1.401



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*(US dollars)*

1. Exxon	305	213,000,000
2. Shell Chemical/Refining	167	140,000,000
3. International Paper	172	103,000,000
4. Dow Chemical	9	96,000,000
5. Union Carbide	140	53,000,000
6. Boise Casca		

Workers of colour are especially vulnerable to “job blackmail” (see Kazis and Grossman 1990) because of the threat of unemployment and their concentration in low-paying, unskilled non-union occupations. For example, a large share of the non-union contract workers in oil, chemical and atomic fields are persons of colour. Over 95 per cent of migrant farm workers in the United States are Latino, African-American, Afro-Caribbean and Asian. Workers of col-46 703.1601 1.99

explained by class factors alone. Whites and people of colour do not have the same opportunities to “vote with their feet” and escape undesirable physical environments.

The environmental justice movement emerged in response to environmental inequities, threats to public health, unequal protection, differential **enforcement** and disparate treatment received by the poor and people of colour. The need for environmental and economic justice d





**The First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit**

**24-27 October 1991**

**Washington, DC**

**Preamble**

We, The People of Color, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth, respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about our natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelid96 0 0 9.96 174.0981047 686 Tj9.96 0 0 9.96 229.96 2T

11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.
12. Environmental justice affirms the need for an urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all the full range of resources.
13. Environmental justice calls for the enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.
14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.
15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.
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.
17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Adopted 27 October 1991





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Robert D. Bullard, October 2004

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Jomo K.S., September 2004

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