

Race, Poverty & the Environment

A newsletter for social and environmental justice

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We have looked in the faces of people of color, we have seen there, in their hearts and in their eyes, a light shining, a light of commitment, a light that is filled with capacity and a light that is filled with love for the Mother Earth, a light that is the same that we have in our hearts.

— Mililani Ti-ask

Koreans for Racial Justice

by Susan K. Lee

The beating of Rodney King and the aftermath of the verdict has left many of us frustrated and angry. Both the beating and the verdict was an affront to our firm and deepest belief in justice and equality. However, this is not the time for a response based upon emotions. We must transform our anger into strength to address the

We must not allow the media and opportunistic politicians to divide us.

fundamental questions of social and economic justice.

The verdict is a result of institutional racism that pervades our criminal justice system. The process not only often deprives victims of redress but also systematically undervalues the lives of people of color. The King verdict joins the long list of unjust verdicts that communi-

>> see RACIAL JUSTICE, page 18

Environmental Justice for Asians and Pacific Islanders

By Pam Tau Lee

During the past decade, the environment has come to the forefront as a crucial issue. But many people have ignored the fact that environmental deterioration does not impact everyone equally. There is growing evidence that persons and communities of color throughout the world are the most frequently and severely affected victims. This phenomenon is called "environmental racism."

In the last two decades, a number of studies have been published which document the effects of environmental racism on the African-American, Native American, and Latino communities in the U.S. In contrast, very little has been written regarding issues of environmental justice in the U.S. Asian and Pacific Islander communities. This article reviews the small body of information which exists.

Asians and Pacific Islanders have settled primarily on the West Coast and in large cities such as New York, Boston, Houston, Chicago and Seattle. The "Model Minority" myth has blinded society to the realities which Asians and Pacific Islanders face in the U.S. This myth stereotypes most Asians as a successful minority group with high incomes, college degrees, and acceptance as equals in society. But many examples contradict this.

One case of blatant racial discrimination emerged at the signing of the 1991 federal Civil Rights Act. In 1974, 2000 Asian, Pacific Islanders and Alaskan native workers filed suit against Alaska's Wards Cove Company for discrimination. The suit charged that the workers "were subjected to various forms of racial prejudice by the all-white management of Wards Cove... Most notably, we worked in racially segregated jobs, were housed in racially segregated bunk-houses, and are fed in racially segregated mess halls." When the case reached the Supreme Court, Justice John Paul Stevens wrote that "the segregation of

>> see ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, page 18

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Special Issue

Asian/Pacific Islanders

Native Hawaiian Perspectives
Toxic Waste in the Pacific
Dangers in the Workplace: Asian Workers at Risk
The Anti-Immigration Environmental Alliance



**New Voices:
RPE's Guest Editor
Program**

With this issue of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* we formally introduce our Guest Editor feature, in

which we bring in a new voice to shepherd an RPE issue (usually devoted to a particular topic) from the idea stage through production. We welcome Pamela Chiang as our first Guest Editor.

Our goals with the Guest Editor program are two-fold: 1) to provide

newer environmental justice activists with an opportunity to expand their networks and expertise, and 2) to provide seasoned activists with a forum. We look forward to your comments, and suggestions for future guest editors.

-- Ellie, Carl & Luke

In This Issue...

Features

Environmental Justice for Asians and Pacific Islanders,
by Pam Tau Lee..... 1

Koreans for Racial Justice, by Susan K. Lee.....1

Native Hawaiian Historical and Cultural Perspectives
on Environmental Justice, by Mililani Trask.....3

Endangering Lives, Contaminating the Environment:
U.S. Burns Chemical Weapons in the Pacific,
by C. Kijang and Lim Poo Kin.....7

Dangers in the Workplace

Asian Workers at Risk, by Flora Chu.....10

Asian Immigrant Women Advocates' Silicon
Valley Project, by Young-Im Yoo.....11

News

Asian Pacific Environmental Network Hosts Charles Lee.....9

Labor Solidarity Bridges Cultures, by Gordon Mar.....9

Spotlight on Bill Lan Lee, by Sam Su.....9

The Anti-Immigration Environmental Alliance:
Divide and Conquer at the Border of Racism, by Luke Cole.....13

Dolphin-Safe Monitoring Program Expanded.....20

Japan to Ban Drift Nets.....20

Departments

Reportbacks.....14

- Art Imitates Life, Dramatizes Environmental Racism.....14
- Urban Habitat Gathering Links Energy, Development.....14
- Sovereignty and the Environment: Protecting Mother Earth.....16

Resources.....22

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Environment**

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Native Hawaiian

Historical and Cultural Perspectives on Environmental Justice

by Mililani Trask

When you ask a Hawaiian 'who they are, they're response is "Keiki hanau o ka aina, child that is borne up from the land." I am a Native Hawaiian attorney. I also have the great honor and distinction, and the great burden and responsibility, of being the first elected Kia'Aina of Ka Lahui Hawai'i, the sovereign nation of the Native Hawaiian people, which we created ourselves in 1987.

It's a great pleasure and honor for me to be here to address a group such as yourselves, such a momentous occasion, the first time that the people of color will gather to consider the impacts on our common land base.

I thought I would begin by giving a little bit of history about Hawaii Nei because many people are not aware of the crisis there and the status of the Native Hawaiian people. As we approach the United Nations' celebration of the discoverers, we are celebrating not only the arrival of Columbus but also of Cortez and Captain Cook. In Hawaii Nei we are celebrating 500 years of resilient resistance to the coming of the "discoverers."

In 1778 Captain James Cook sailed into the Hawaiian archipelago. He found there a thriving Native community of 800,000 Native people, living in balance on their lands, completely economically self-sufficient, feeding and clothing themselves off of the resources of their own land base. Within one generation, 770,000 of our people were dead—dead from what is called "mai haole, the sickness of the white man,"

which Cook brought: venereal disease, flu, pox, the same tragic history that occurred on the American continent to Native American Indians and the Native people of Central and South America.

In 1893 the United States Marines dispatched a group of soldiers to the Island of Oahu for the purpose of overthrowing the lawful kingdom of Hawaii Nei. Prior to 1893, Hawaii was welcomed into the world family of nations and maintained over 20 international treaties, including treaties of friendship and peace with the United States. Despite those international laws, revolution was perpetrated against our government, and our lawful government overthrown. In two years we will mark the hundredth anniversary of when we had the right to be self-determining and self-governing.

In 1959, Hawaii was admitted into the Union of the United States of America. There were great debates that occurred in Washington, DC that focused on the fact that people were afraid to incorporate the Territory of Hawaii because it would become the first state in the union in which white people would be a minority of less than 25 percent. That was the reason for the concern when those debates were launched. In 1959, when Hawaii became a state, something happened that did not happen in any other state of the union. In all of the other states, when the U.S. admitted that state into the union, America set aside lands for the Native people of those states, as federal reserves. Today there is a policy that provides that Native

>> see NATIVE HAWAIIAN, page 4

At the First National People of Color Environmental Summit in Washington, DC, last October, delegates from across the country told of their efforts. Mililani Trask's speech, presented here, was among the most inspiring.

<< from *NATIVE HAWAIIAN* page 3

Americans should be self-governing, should be allowed to maintain their nations, should be allowed to pass laws, environmental and otherwise, to protect their land base. That did not occur in the State of Hawaii. In the State of Hawaii in 1959, the federal government gave our lands to the state to be held in trust, and gave the Native Hawaiian people, of which there are 200,000, the status of perpetual wardship. We are not allowed to form governments if we are Native Hawaiian; we are not allowed to control our land base. To this day our lands are controlled by state agencies and utilized extensively by the American military complex as part a plan designed by Hawaii's Senator Daniel Inouye.

In 1987 we decided to exercise our inherent rights to be self-governing. The Hawaii Visitors Bureau declared 1987 the Year of the Hawaiian for a great tourist and media campaign. We took a look at our statistics: 22,000 families on lists waiting for land entitlements since 1920; 30,000 families dead waiting for their Hawaiian homelands awards; 22,000 currently waiting. We thought to ourselves, how are we going to celebrate 1987? And we decided that the time had come to convene a constitutional convention to resurrect our nation and to exert our basic and inherent rights, much to the dismay and consternation of the state and the federal government, and certainly to the shock of Senator Inouye.

We have passed a constitution that recognizes the right and the responsibility of Native people to protect their land base and to ensure water quality, because Western laws have been unable to protect the environment. We decided to lift up and resurrect our nation in 1987, passing our constitution, and we are proceeding now to come out, to announce that we are alive and well, and to network with other people.

I have come to announce that a state of emergency exists with regards to the natural environment of the archipelagic lands and waters of Hawaii, and also a state of emergency exists with regards

to the survival of the Native people who live there and throughout the Pacific basin. We have many environmental injustices and issues that need to be addressed; most of them have dire global consequences. The expansion of the United States military complex presents substantial threats to our environment.

Right now on the Island of Hawaii and on the Island of **Kauai**, Senator Inouye is pressing for what he calls the "space-porting initiative," which we all know to be Star Wars. It will distribute large amounts of toxic gases, it will scorch the earth beyond repair and, most importantly and offensive to us, the lands that have been chosen are lands set aside by the Congress in 1920 for the homesteading of Hawaiian

Native people are not allowed to fish so that tourists can view through their goggles what remains of the few species we have because their own tourist practices destroyed all the rest of the bounty of our fisheries.

people. These are the lands that are pursued on the Island of Hawaii.

Our response to that is "kapu Ka'u." **Ka'u** is the district; kapu is the Hawaiian way for saying, "It is taboo." We cannot allow desecration of sacred lands, desecration of historic properties that are the cultural inheritance of our people to be converted for the military complex and for the designs of those who would further the interests of war against others. It is an inappropriate use of Native lands.

Other Threats

The United States Navy continues its relentless bombing of Kahoolawe Island. Not only have they denuded the

upper one-third of that island, but as they have blasted away the lands, trees and shrubs, all that silt has come down to the channels between Kahoolawe and **Maui** Islands, the channels that are the spawning grounds of the whales that migrate every year to Hawaii Nei.

We now have information coming from Lualualie on the Island of Oahu that there is very high incidence of leukemia and other cancers among the Hawaiian children who live there. We believe that this is due to **electromagnetic** contamination. In Lualualie the United States military is taking control of 2,000 acres of Hawaiian homelands, lands set aside by the Congress to homestead our people. These lands were taken over and converted for a nuclear and military storage facility. Ten years ago, in 1981, they issued a report saying that there's electromagnetic radiation there. After the report was issued all the military families were moved out of the base, but nobody told the Hawaiian community that lives in the surrounding area. We have taken it to the Western courts, we have been thrown out, because the court ruled that Native Hawaiians are wards of the state and the federal government. Therefore, Native Hawaiians are not allowed standing to sue in the federal courts to protect our trust land assets. We are the only class of Native Americans, and the only class of American citizens, that are not allowed access to the federal court system to seek redress of grievances relating to breach of trust.

Ka Lahui Hawai'i is pleased and proud to join all of the other Pacific Island nations in opposing the federal policy which is being perpetrated by Mr. Bush and Senator Inouye identifying the Pacific region as a national sacrifice area. What is a national sacrifice area? I did some legal research and I found out that national sacrifice areas usually occur on Indian reservations or in black communities. They are areas that the nation identifies primarily for the dumping of toxic wastes. As the Greens celebrate in Europe what they perceive to be an environmental victory in forcing

>> see *NATIVE HAWAIIAN*, page 5

Environmental justice is not a blindfolded white woman, When I saw the woman with the scales of justice in law school, I thought to myself, "You know, if you blindfold yourself the only thing you're going to do is walk into walls,"

We cannot allow desecration of sacred lands for the designs of those who would further the interests of war against others, It is an inappropriate use of Native lands,

<< from NATIVE HAWAIIAN, page 4

America to remove its nuclear and military wastes from Europe, we in the Pacific region have been told that Johnston Island and other Pacific nations have been targeted for storage and dumping. We will not allow that and we will continue to speak out against it.

Tourist Evils

Tourism and its attendant evils continue to assault our island land base. Hundreds of thousands of tourists come to Hawaii every year. They are seeking a dream of paradise. They drink our water, they contaminate our environment. They are responsible for millions of tons of sewage every year, which is deposited into the Pacific Ocean. And, in addition, they are taking lands from our rural communities.

Tourism perpetuates certain Western concepts of exclusive rights to land. Tourists don't like to see other people on their beaches. Tourists don't like to allow Native people to go and fish in the traditional ways. And, because of toxification of the ocean due to release of sewage in Hawaii, there are many places where you can no longer find the reef fish. You cannot go there and take the opihi, the squid, or take the turtle, because they're gone now. So in the few remaining areas where there **are** fish, the state and the federal governments have imposed public park restrictions to prevent Native people from going there to lay the net and take the fish. If the fish are taken out, what will the tourists see when they put on their snorkels? Native people **are** not allowed to fish so that tourists can view through their goggles what remains of the few species we have because their own tourist practices destroyed all the rest of the bounty of our fisheries.

Tourists need golf courses; golf courses need tons of pesticides, herbicides and millions of tons of water. Hawaii is an island ecology, we do not get fresh water from flowing streams. All the water that falls from the rain in Hawaii is percolated through the lava of the islands and comes to rest in a central basal lens underneath our island. As the rains percolate down they bring with

them all the herbicides and pesticides that have been used for years by agribusiness: King Cane, Dole Pineapple, United States military. Already on the island of **Oahu** we have had to permanently close two of our drinking wells because of toxification. Nobody in the State of Hawaii or the Hawaii Visitors Bureau is going to tell you that at the present time there are 30 **contaminants** in the drinking water in the State of Hawaii.

The specter of geothermal development lays heavily upon our lands. For 25 years the United States and its allies have been developing geothermal energy in Hawaii. It is destroying the last Pacific tropical rain forest on the Island of Hawaii, **Wao Kele o Puna Forest**, sacred to the lands of Tutu Pele, our Grandmother Pele, who erupts and gives birth to the earth. This is her home, yet this is the place where they **are** developing geothermal. And as it proceeds, Native people are denied their basic right to worship there. We have taken this case to the United States Supreme Court. It was struck down along with the Native American freedom of religion cases because the court ruled that religious worship in **America** must be "site-specific." If you take the **Akua**, if you put God in the building, American courts will understand. But if you take God and say, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness of it, the Black Hills of South Dakota, the lands and forests of Tutu Pele," American courts do not understand.

This past year we have had two geothermal explosions in the State of Hawaii. Despite the fact that we were in court to stop geothermal development while the Civil Defense removed 1,000 families and a state of emergency was declared, the governor and representatives of these developers issued press statements celebrating the explosion. They said it demonstrated that there was great deal more energy they could harvest than initially anticipated. Their press releases ceased 48 hours after the explosion when it was reported that Hawaii had now recorded its first prenatal death as a result of geothermal

>> see NATIVE HAWAIIAN, page 6

As Hawaiians say, "Keiki hanau o ka cuna, child that is borne up from the land," understanding that there is an innate connection to the earth as the Mother. We are called upon now as the guardians of our sacred lands to rise up in the defense of our Mother. You don't subdivide your Mother, you don't chop her body up, you don't drill, penetrate and pull out her lifeblood. You protect and nurture your Mother.

<< from NATIVE HAWAIIAN, page 5

toxicity. That case will proceed to court but I can tell you one thing: there is no jury award, no amount of **Kala** (the white man's dollar) that will compensate the family that lost that child. There's no dollar figure for that kind of loss.

International fishing practices, gill netting and drift netting, are genocide in the sea. As a result of these practices, the Native fisheries are diminished and depleted. In some areas our marine fisheries are depleted to the point that we can no longer harvest that resource.

What is the appropriate response to this environmental and human outrage? In Hawaii Nei we have undertaken to address these things through sovereignty and the basic exertion of the rights of Native people to govern and control their own land base. These are political issues, certainly. But they spring from a very ancient source, a source within our heart, a source that all Natives and people of color understand: our relationship in the global context.

As Hawaiians say, "Keiki hanau o ka cuna, child that is borne up from the land," understanding that there is an innate connection to the earth as the Mother. We are called upon now as the guardians of our sacred lands to rise up in the defense of our Mother. You don't subdivide your Mother, you don't chop her body up, you don't drill, penetrate and pull out her lifeblood. You protect and nurture your Mother. And the Hawaiian value for that is aloha ai'na, love for the land, **malama** ai'na, care and nurturing for the land. It is reciprocal. It gives back to the Native people. Our people know that the **Akua** put us here on this earth to be guardians of these sacred lands. It is a God-given responsibility and trust that a sovereign nation must assume if it is to have any integrity. And so we in Ka **Lahui** have undertaken this struggle. Environmental racism is the enemy. The question is, What is our response? What really is environmental justice? I'll tell you one thing I learned in law school at **Santa Clara**. Do you know how they perceive and teach justice, the white schools of this country? A blind white woman with her eyes covered up by cloth, holding the scales of justice. And if you look at it, they're not balanced. The Native scale and the environmental scale are outweighed by other priorities.

Well, environmental justice is not a blindfolded white woman. When I saw the woman with the scales of justice in law school, I thought to myself, "You know, if you blindfold yourself the only thing you're going to do is walk into walls." You're not going to resolve anything. And that's where we are with Western law. I know that there are many attorneys here and others who are **working** on environmental cases. I support them. We have received a great deal of support from attorneys **working** in environmental law. But do not put your eggs in the basket of the blind white lady. We must try other approaches.

In closing, I would like to say in behalf of myself and the Hawaii delegation that we are very renewed in coming here, and that when we return to Hawaii in two or three days we will

have good news to share with our people, that we have come ourselves these many thousands of miles, that we have looked in the faces of people of color, that we have seen there, in their hearts and in their eyes, a light shining, a light of commitment, a light that is filled with capacity and a light that is filled with love for the Mother Earth, a light that is the same that we have in our hearts.

I try to do one thing whenever I finish speaking. I try to leave the podium by telling people what the motto of Ka **Lahui** Hawai'i is, the motto of our nation that we're forming now. I find it to be very applicable to the situations that we are in. We are facing a difficult struggle. Every bit of commitment and energy is needed to save our Mother Earth and to insure the survival of our people and all of the species of the earth. It is a difficult row to hoe. There is going to be a great deal of strife and a great deal of pain. But we must proceed; we have no alternative. This is the same position that the native people of Hawaii Nei found themselves in 1987 when we committed to resurrecting our national government. And at the time that we passed that constitution we also adopted a motto. It is a motto that I think you might want to live by as we proceed in this environmental war that we are waging. That motto is: "A difficult birth does not make the baby any less beautiful."

At the time that we passed that constitution we also adopted a motto. It is a motto that I think you might want to live by as we proceed in this environmental war that we are waging. That motto is: "A difficult birth does not make the baby any less beautiful."

Endangering Lives, Contaminating the Environment:

U.S. Burns Chemical Weapons in the Pacific

In March, 1990 the U.S. and German governments jointly announced that some 100 tons of U.S. chemical weapons would be shipped from West Germany to Johnston Island in the Pacific between July and September of that year. The U.S. promised to withdraw all chemical weapons from West Germany by the end of 1990.

This move forms part of an agreement with the Soviet Union that Washington destroy 80 percent of its chemical weapons stocks by the turn of the century.

The U.S. chemical weapons stockpile in Germany included 435 tons of lethal nerve gas GB and VX contained in some 100,000 2.5 inch and 155 mm projectiles. These weapons joined thousands of chemical weapons that are already on Johnston Island.

On June 26, 1990, the U.S. Army began loading 435 tons of chemical weapons into containers for transportation from West Germany to Kalama Island (Johnston Atoll), just 700 nautical miles south west of Hawaii. The weapons were transported from West Germany, by truck convoy, rail and then by sea to Johnston Atoll in the Pacific. The U.S. Army, which is responsible for transporting the nerve gas within Europe and around the world, deemed the route to be taken as secret information. Apart from the army, nobody knows how close they passed to islands like Hawaii, nor will any country know whether the weapons will be passing through their waters (or their backyard) even though they have the capacity to kill everyone in their path.

Disarmament in Europe means new toxic dangers for Pacific Islanders.

by C. Kijang
and Lim Poo Kin

On July 7, 1990 the U.S. army incinerated 15 rockets containing the nerve agent GB during a two and a half hour test burn on Johnston Island. The governments and peoples of the Pacific were never informed of this new development nor was their consent (or even opinion) sought.

Serious Flaws in the Plant

The safety issue was brought to the fore when it was revealed that the controversial Johnston Atoll Chemical Disposal System (JACADS) had been closed twice since the secret test burn commenced on June 30, 1990. The two shutdowns occurred during the burning of the first 600 rockets of the Johnston stockpile which includes 58,000 rockets filled with toxic nerve agent. The test burn was carried out despite the fact that a U.S. army survey team had discovered serious technical and procedural deficiencies on JACADS' facilities during a visit in May, 1990. The survey team found 281 technical and procedural deficiencies, 160 of which had to be fixed before any incineration could begin.

The survey team found that the incinerator, which was designed to burn

non-explosive materials, is accumulating contaminated debris although this incinerator is not functioning yet. Furthermore, the plant's ventilation and air monitoring systems failed when a building used for storing hazardous waste did not meet legal requirements and security and safety operations lapsed.

Greenpeace commissioned two reports and found the U.S. Army's environmental impact statements (EIS) and SEIS deficient in analyzing previous experiences in chemical weapons destruction and the quantities of the substances to be destroyed at Johnston Island. Also not included were the identities and quantities of uncombusted chemicals likely to be produced; the potential impact of accidental releases; the potential overall environmental impacts on the island's bird sanctuary, endangered species and marine life; and the lack of disaster plans to ensure the safety of personnel on the island.

Greenpeace has also pointed out that recent studies of higher temperature incineration have shown that several classes of highly toxic compounds are generated in significant quantities, even in state of the art incinerators. In particular, "highly toxic, bioaccumulative chemicals such as polychlorinated dioxins and furans have allegedly been formed in virtually every incinerator studied, when organic matter and a source of chlorine are burned together."

"New scientific studies have apparently documented the role of the

>> see ATOLL, page 8

sea surface microlayer in concentrating and recirculating such toxic substances, which may find their way into the marine food chain."

Despite the fact that the decision to execute the Johnston plan was **dependent** on meeting environmental and legal requirements, the U.S. army confirmed that the decision to move nerve gas from Europe to Johnston

perform has not yet been proven. "Any commitment for expanded use of the JACADS facility before the testing period is completed is unduly hasty and poses unnecessary safety **risks**," stated Dr. Maragos.

Another retired army colonel, James **Knipp** (former chief of the operations division of the U.S. army's chemical demilitarization office), has opposed the

shipment. According to him, the weapons can be destroyed more **safely** without incineration, **through** a process of **chemical neutralization**. "The army seems to be going for incineration because it is the **cheapest** method. not **because** it is the most environmentally safe," he said.

Opposition to the U.S. Plan

The U.S. incineration plan

on Johnston Island and the move to ship more chemical weapons from Europe has drawn wide ranging protests from the governments and the peoples of the Pacific.

The Speaker of Parliament of the Marshall Islands, Kesal Note, in a letter to President Bush said that the Marshall Islands, which lie 1,300 miles directly downwind of the Johnston Atoll, would be the first to suffer if there is an accident in transporting the **European** stockpile of the toxic nerve agents.

The prospect of such vulnerability recalls the exposure of many Marshall Islanders to nuclear fallout in the course of the nuclear testing program, in which islanders living downwind of the tests were erroneously informed that they were in no danger of the harmful effects of those tests.

Mr. Note is from Bikini where the U.S. tested 23 nuclear weapons, including the 1954 'Bravo' hydrogen

bomb, which contaminated hundreds of downwind islanders. He said, "The potentially harmful environmental impact of the incineration of chemical weapons on the Marshall Islands and the Pacific Ocean, together with the failure of the U.S. to adequately consider the wishes and the needs of the region who stand to be effected most by the destruction of these weapons, conveys a continuing unspoken message to the people of the Marshall Islands and the entire Pacific region."

The Federated States of Micronesia (**FSM**), a group of islands north of Papua New Guinea, sent a 27-page detailed objection to the U.S. program, including the double standard of not subjecting its own citizens in the U.S. to the same dangers it exposes the rest of the world to. The former Minister of Papua New Guinea has accused the U.S. of environmental vandalism and genocide.

The Prime Minister of Cook Islands, Geoffrey Henry, said that the U.S. should not continue with its plan to incinerate chemical weapons on Johnston Atoll, without consulting neighboring Pacific Island states. He said, "**I** have absolutely no information before me as to exactly what is happening on Johnston Island; exactly what the American intentions are."

The Pacific Conference of Churches (**PCC**), representing 26 churches and organizations in the Melanesian, Micronesian and Polynesian Islands, have condemned the U.S. army plan to bring its entire European stockpile of nerve gas to Johnston Atoll for destruction. PCC said the plan would continue "the misuse of the Pacific as a dumping site for nuclear and chemical wastes." The chairman of the conference's executive committee, Bishop Leslie Boseto, of the Solomon Islands, said, "It is harmful to the people, the environment and the whole of God's creation," adding that **environmental** concerns had not been adequately addressed.

The Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific Movement (NFIP), which has member organizations in 35 countries within the Pacific islands, testified at

>> see ATOLL, page 21

The Federated States of Micronesia, a group of islands north of Papua New Guinea, sent a detailed objection to the U.S. program of burning chemical weapons in the Pacific, including the double standard of not subjecting its own citizens in the U.S. to the same dangers it exposes the rest of the world to. The former Minister of Papua New Guinea has accused the U.S. of environmental vandalism and genocide.

Island was made months prior to the completion of the EIS, the public comment period and the final approval process for the incinerations of the weapons as established by law. (Congress approved \$18 million to pay for the shipment of the entire U.S. chemical stockpile from Germany.)

According to Dr. James Maragos, former chief of the environmental resources section of the Pacific Ocean Division, Army Corps of Engineers, the shipment of U.S. chemical weapons from Germany to Johnston Island was "a disaster waiting to happen because of the high risks associated with their transportation." He said that the army's new weapons incineration on Johnston should have undergone its scheduled 16-month testing period before any munitions left Europe.

The JACADS plant is the first **large-scale** weapons incinerator in the world and its ability to safely and effectively

Asian Pacific Environmental Network Hosts Charles Lee

Charles Lee, director of the study *Toxic Waste and Race in the United States*, met with members of the newly-formed Asian Pacific Environmental Network in San Francisco in April to discuss environmental justice issues facing the Asian/Pacific Islander community.

Lee, a first generation Chinese American, felt that addressing the group of 15 Asian Pacific Islander (A/PI) community activists and environmental professionals was like "coming home." He commented on the great lack of A/PI's in environmental justice circles by sharing a story about a jar of jellybeans. The jellybeans represented the composition of those active in the environmental justice movement — all the jellybeans were either white or black with the exception of one yellow jellybean. He frequently has found himself to be that one jellybean.

Presently the Research Director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, Lee spoke of how his 1987 study defined the terms of environmental justice and brought national attention to the need to redirect the focus of the entire environmental movement. Lee suggested that the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, for which he was the Coordinator, demonstrated that the environmental movement can be, and must be, a multiracial, multicultural movement.

Lee stated that despite the doubling of the A/PI population in the U.S. over the last 10 years, no one has done survey studies of the environmental problems in our community. There is a dearth of writing and cataloging on these issues even though the environmental dimension to the struggle for social justice has always been there. Lee believes that such studies should affirm our own historical and cultural perspectives. Lee proposed that the Asian Pacific Environmental Network facilitate A/PIs communicating with each other and explore difficult-to-understand issues as the connections are made between economic reality and environmental justice in the A/PI community.

The Network is based in the San Francisco Bay Area and is comprised of a diverse group of members representing the private, public and nonprofit sectors; who share the common goal of serving the A/PI community and the environment. The Network was formed out of concern that the voices of our community are not being heard in environmental circles. Information about the Network can be requested by writing Jack Chin, c/o The San Francisco Foundation, 685 Market Street, Suite 910, San Francisco, CA 94105.

Labor Solidarity Bridges Cultures

On Monday, April 27, 1992, a cross-cultural sharing of labor solidarity occurred when a contingent of laid-off Mexican American garment workers from San Antonio, Texas were honored at a reception in San Francisco's Chinatown by workers and labor activists from the Asian American community. The Chinatown Workers Resource Project and the International Ladies Garment Workers Union organized the event to lend support to the struggle of the former Levi Strauss and Co. seamstresses.

In 1990, 1,150 primarily Mexican American garment workers were laid off when the San Francisco-based clothing manufacturer closed one of its San Antonio plants and moved production to Costa Rica, where laborers are paid \$26.00 per week with no protections or benefits. Following the lay-off, the workers formed their own organization, Fuerza Unida, to press Levi's for a just settlement and to educate the public about the terrible consequences of plant

closures and runaway shops. The San Francisco Chinatown reception was one of a series of events organized by Fuerza Unida supporters in Northern California to commemorate the two-year anniversary of the closure in April 1992. As

factory worker and CWRP Board member Amy Seto remarked, "The (Fuerza Unida) struggle is inspiring and should be supported by all immigrant workers and those concerned with justice."

-- Gordon Mar

News Notes

Spotlight on Bill Lan Lee of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund

Bill Lee has been a civil rights lawyer since 1974. He has worked on cases pertaining to employment discrimination, school discrimination, housing discrimination, and the death penalty. Over time he has felt the enormity of problems and it is his perception that we think of environmental issues without looking to minority communities. Lead poisoning is a perfect example, as illustrated in the *Matthews vs. Coye* case. Representing the NAACP, Bill sued the state of California Health Department for declining to give blood lead tests to children under five, despite Medicaid regulations which require the state health services to monitor poor children. This case was worked on with other groups, including NRDC, the ACLU and the National Health Law Project.

Bill feels that broad national policies need to do something about lead, since little is being done at the state level. He also believes that civil rights lawyers should face the issues of lead poisoning, NIMBY, etc. When we are concerned about safeguarding minority communities, we need to look beyond school, jobs and housing. We must include the environment, and recognize that the environment means more than wilderness and rural areas. The good thing about the lead issue is that it focuses on environmental issues facing people of color in urban communities.

Bill and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund are following the community organizers. He feels that civil rights lawyers need to help communities of color in their work, acquiring entitlements and helping them gain recognition. He can be reached at the LDF, 315 West 9th St., Suite 208, Los Angeles, CA 90015.

-- Sam Su

DANGERS IN

Asian Workers at Risk

by Flora Chu

In the last decade, the population of Asians in the United States increased dramatically due to the large influx of immigrants. For example, in the Santa Clara County of the San Francisco Bay Area, the Asian population has increased by 162%. These "new" immigrants work predominantly in the electronics industry, cosmetology, **drycleaning**, and clerical jobs. In the "high tech" industries, Asians now hold 20% of all jobs. While Asian managers and technical **professionals** comprise 16% of this workforce, the majority of new Asian immigrants work in low paying and unskilled jobs such as laborers, operators, cosmetologists, and assemblers. The Asian population in some of these work categories is up to 40%.

Are these jobs dangerous? Is the health of these new Asian workers and their children at risk? For most of us, a quick first response would be no. To most workers, jobs involving heavy labor such as building and

construction are the high hazard jobs. We do not think of the jobs in modern, high tech industries as physically dangerous. Unlike traditionally hazardous jobs, the office environment often looks "clean" and there are no obvious physical dangers. Yet workers in these industries are reporting a high incidence of disabling work related **illnesses**. The hazards involved are two-fold. On one hand, many jobs involve the use of and exposure to highly toxic chemicals. These chemicals can cause acute symptoms such as headaches, respiratory illnesses, and skin dermatitis. However, many employers and health professionals ignore these general aches and pains and fail to associate them with hazardous **working** conditions. Even if a worker associates his or her problems with the **working** environment, these acute symptoms of illness and pain are tolerated for the price of a paycheck. Unfortunately, these aches and pains are not the only price that a worker has to pay for the "American" dream as the symptoms are often the forecast of more disabling and chronic illnesses to come.

The scientific data involving the chemicals often used in these industries tell a grim story. Many solvents are associated with long term chronic illnesses such as brain damage, cancers, heart problems, liver and **kidney** dysfunction, skin

problems, and respiratory illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis. One solvent commonly used in these industries can cause reproductive damage. A recent study involving workers in the high tech industry suggested that some **electronic** workers have a higher than normal incidence of negative reproductive outcomes. Studies have suggested that parental exposure to hydrocarbon products commonly used in many of the **industries** where Asian workers congregate **increases** the risk to their children for childhood leukemia. A mother's employment in the cosmetology industry is also associated with the risk of childhood leukemia.

Another work environment that one would rarely think is physically dangerous is clerical and computer work. However, the **fastest growing** type of reported industrial injuries are repetitive motion injuries. With the widespread use of computers and other automated equipment,

Asian workers are particularly at risk. Limited English skills prevent them from grasping the scanty information on health hazards that is available. Many times, as new immigrants unfamiliar with the American system, they are afraid and unaccustomed to speaking out, challenging their employer, and complaining about their work environment and their illnesses.

workers in **unskilled** labor are often required to perform physical tasks repetitively at higher speeds than ever before. The most well known example of repetitive motion injury is carpal **tunnel** syndrome, which occurs often in people who use computers. Computers enable a person's fingers to type at an extremely fast pace with little opportunity for resting. This repetitive typing motion will often cause tendons to become inflamed and nerves around the wrist to be compressed, thus causing permanent damage. Many times, the symptoms come on slowly and workers associate pain in the wrist, arms and shoulders with arthritis. By the time they seek medical help, their condition has become so disabling that they cannot even do everyday chores. These disabling illnesses can be prevented by early diagnosis and changing the design of the work environment—provided that the employee and attending physician are informed about these potential work hazards.

Asian workers are particularly at risk. Limited English skills prevent them from grasping the scanty information on health hazards that is available. Many times, as new immigrants unfamiliar with the American system, they are afraid and unaccustomed to speaking out, challenging their em-

>> see *ASIAN WORKERS*, page 12

THE WORKPLACE

Immigrant Women Find

by Young-Im Yoo

"If our groundwater has been contaminated by the electronics industry, what about our workplace?" an electronics assembler asked recently in a discussion class sponsored by Asian Immigrant Women Advocates (AIWA). This question sparked many more questions and concerns among the Korean electronics assemblers who meet every Thursday evening after work. Wanting to know more about the chemicals they handle at work, these women began investigating their workplace, looking for signal words that they had just learned: hazardous, poisonous, caution, warning. They also began writing down words around them that they did not understand, such as solvent, freon, *flux*, solder, and epoxy resin.

These women also met with electronics assemblers from Korea who were in the U.S. pursuing a lawsuit against Pico Products, Ltd., a cable parts company that had fled Korea owing women backwages and severance pay. What struck one Korean immigrant woman was not so much the injustice of runaway shops, but the similarities in working conditions: poor ventilation, headaches, bloody noses, and memory loss. She never imagined she would find herself in this situation in the United States. "Big houses, big cars -- everyone is rich," one woman commented on her image of the U.S. before coming here.

Is it mere coincidence that immigrant women often find

themselves in low-paying, entry-level, dead-end jobs and unsafe and unhealthy work environments? There are approximately 200,000 people employed in the electronics industry in Silicon Valley. Within this industry, the division of labor is dramatically skewed according to gender and race. Women account for 80-90 percent of the assembly and operative jobs. Among these women, approximately two-thirds are women of color. Among those with assembly and operative jobs, 43 percent are Asian.

The woes and concerns of electronics assemblers arise from personal experiences and the experiences of their co-workers. One assembler was suddenly laid off after complaining about the lack of sufficient ventilation in the workplace. Another woman was laid off while she was ill and did not know that she could not be dismissed for becoming ill. A woman suffering repetitive motion injury received no worker's compensation because the company doctor dismissed her injury as non-work-related. After several surgeries on her *arm*, she resumed work. She did not speak up for fear of permanently losing her job, as well as fear of being labelled a troublemaker. Blacklisting in the industry deters workers from filing complaints. Electronics assemblers experience both emotional and physical stress and strain from irregular work hours because companies demand as much as ten hours overtime and they do not always pay overtime wages.

These electronics assemblers know of no other options. To these and many other immigrant work women in electronic assembly lines, labor laws are useless because of the lack of enforcement and lack of access for non-English speaking immigrant women who are unfamiliar with the laws, procedures and institutions in this country.

Labor unions have not successfully challenged employers who seek to preserve an exploitable, docile workforce. Additionally, unions have not questioned corporate interest in concealing health hazards to avoid "costly" regulations and reprimands. In fact, no union has been able to organize electronics assemblers in Silicon Valley; perhaps, in part, because labor unions have not hired bilingual and culturally sensitive organizers to reach the large and rapidly growing population of Asian immigrant electronics assemblers. Government occupational, safety and health departments have also been ineffective in educating and empowering this workforce.

In its interest to produce the fastest, smallest chip while maximizing production and profit, the electronics industry has

>> see *SILICON VALLEY*, page 12

One Silicon Valley Story...

Ms. Lee (name changed) was an electronics assembler for three years before the day she came home and collapsed in the **kitchen**. That evening and into the night she vomited continuously and was taken to the emergency room at the local hospital. A physician told her family that her brain was not receiving enough blood but did not know why. Ms. Lee had no health insurance and did not know about worker's compensation (which the electronics company did not carry). She was covered by her husband's insurance. After recovering, she worked at the same plant for a year. Then she suffered another stroke. Now Ms. Lee is bedridden and paralyzed on her left side. The electronics company has folded and her husband's insurance refuses to cover her due to the seriousness of her illness. Because their only income comes from her husband's employment at another electronics industry, fear of **blacklisting** prevents the Lees from speaking out.

-- Y.I.Y.

<< from *SILICON VALLEY*, page 11

often compromised the health and safety of its workers. Many of the thousands of chemicals introduced in this industry have not been fully tested for their long-term affects on humans. In fact, by default, the workplace has often been the testing ground, with workers as the guinea pigs.

However, even when unusually high numbers of workers fall ill, company doctors have often argued that there is not enough information to trace illnesses in the workplace. Instead, some scientists and physicians have suggested that genetic factors found in certain individuals or ethnic populations predisposed their illnesses. Such is the case with immigrant assemblers in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where over forty women have cervical cancer, and in Brownsville, Texas, where several babies have been born without brains.

Realizing that we cannot always depend on the so-called "experts," who are often sympathetic with employers, members of AIWA are raising questions and discussing possible solutions. Wanting to educate themselves on occupational safety and health issues, these women will be meeting with an occupational health physician who has been questioning the hazards of solvents used in many workplaces. Some common concerns that they hope to address include those mentioned earlier as well as respiratory problems, eye strain, nausea and repetitive motion injuries such as carpal tunnel syndrome.

In the past, traditional labor and environmental organizations overlooked the concerns of Asian women. Meanwhile, organizations like AIWA have been **working** on these issues long before the traditional groups began. AIWA is part of a larger movement to ensure that the concerns of this population are **heard** and addressed.

"If our groundwater has been contaminated by the electronics industry, what about our workplace?"

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, in 1990 the electronics industry employed 2.5 million workers as compared to the steel, automotive and aerospace industries which employed 2.1 million people. Unfortunately, while electronics has become the largest manufacturing industry in the U.S., it has also become one of the most hazardous for both workers and surrounding communities.

The California Division of Industrial Relations receives three times as many worker illness reports from this industry than the average for the manufacturing industry as a whole. Birth defects, cancer, skin disorders, blood diseases and deaths struck over 200 residents of San Jose, California and led to a successful suit against Fairchild Camera and Equipment Company in 1985. **Fairchild's** chemicals had contaminated drinking water wells. As one local worker asked, "If our groundwater has been **contaminated** by the electronics industry, what about our workplace?"

Working for Environmental Justice

AIWA works with immigrant women employed in the Bay Area electronics, garment and hotel industries. Through workplace literacy and leadership development classes, AIWA seeks to educate and empower Asian immigrant women to collectively address concerns in their lives and ultimately bring about change. AIWA is now:

- **Working** on language and access issues in public hearings held by the Industrial Welfare Commission and in health care.
- Holding a workshop with electronics assemblers and an occupational health physician to discuss occupational safety and health.
- Conducting workplace **literacy/English** as a Second Language (ELS) and leadership development classes.
- Producing multilingual newsletters and brochures.
- Looking for volunteers and donations.

<< from *ASIAN WORKERS*, page 10

ployer, and complaining about their illnesses and work environment. Governmental agencies are inaccessible not only because of the language barrier, but also because of a generalized fear towards the government and officials. Moreover, many Asians work for Asian employers; some feel empathy for employers who take cost-cutting measures and ignore or avoid the alleged "myriad of unintelligible and expensive regulations" imposed by the government. Because of the language and cultural barrier which leads to **unfamiliarity** and fear of American society, many Asians are unable to assert the limited rights that are afforded them such as the right to know about the hazards in the workplace. This is particularly tragic since in many cases, long term disabling illnesses can be avoided if the worker and his or her doctor can identify the source of the problem and work with the employer to eliminate or reduce harmful exposures to chemicals.

The Santa Clara Committee on Occupational Safety and Health (SCCOSH) is a community organization dedicated to worker education, advocacy and empowerment in the area of safety and health, with an emphasis on prevention of injuries and illnesses and compensation of those harmed by the workplace environment. SCCOSH develops and disseminates materials on specific job, health and safety issues and participates in public debates on health policy issues, with a special interest in prevention of cancer, reproductive harm, and other long term debilitating conditions. We also provide job health and safety training courses to immigrants with limited English skills and workers with limited literacy skills.

The Asian Workers' Health and Safety Project of SCCOSH seeks to empower Asians in the workplace through education and advocacy. We provide information, training and materials in Vietnamese, Chinese, Korean, and English on job health and safety. We work with Asian community organizations to develop culturally sensitive methods and solutions to fight unsafe work conditions. For more information, please contact SCCOSH at 760 N. First Street, San Jose, CA 95112, 408/998-4050, fax 408/998-4051.

There is a new xenophobia and nationalism growing in the U.S., and it is parading under the unlikely banner of environmentalism. I received a letter several months ago from Californians for Population

Stabilization, urging me to join its efforts to protect our California environment. Being an environmentalist, I was interested in how they proposed to push for that protection. I read on to find that the group advocates *immigration control* as one strategy to protect the U.S. environment. I took the letter as an anomaly, albeit a disturbing one, until I received similar, but more subtle, *fundraising* appeals from the Carrying Capacity Network and Zero Population Growth, groups based in Washington, DC. Then an op-ed piece appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* blaming immigration for the riots in L.A. And then, to my great surprise, the Sierra Club announced that it had joined right-wing anti-immigration groups such as the Federation for American Immigration Reform (*FAIR*) to form the California Coalition to Stabilize Population.

This new anti-immigration "environmental" alliance is a frightening sign of our times. It takes the familiar population control argument a step further, including in its *anti-immigration* pitch the very arguments that opponents of population control have long made. And it threatens the necessary and growing dialogue between the environmental movement and communities of color, at a time when we must reach across a growing divide rather than further exacerbate tensions among these groups. The new anti-immigration alliance, based on flawed logic, is strategically and morally a mistake.

The latest call for immigration control is an ironic twist on the well-worn population control argument. A reductionist version of the argument goes like this: there *are* so many people being born every day that we are going to outstrip the planet's ability to provide for them all. By overtaxing the planet's resources, we are destroying the environment and ultimately ourselves. Therefore people need to stop making babies.

Now, this argument (which I've grossly oversimplified) has a central logical flaw. The problem that population control folks are trying to combat is resource exhaustion — that is, using everything up so the earth and all of us die. Simply controlling population is one way to do that. But it doesn't look at who is using the resources, and in what quantities.

When population control advocates such as Paul Ehrlich, honorary president of Zero Population Growth (ZPG), began their crusade to save the environment by stopping population growth, many people looked on with skepticism. "You are telling people in the Third World to stop having babies," they said, "but it is in fact your own behavior and consumption in the United States of the earth's natural resources that is driving the earth toward ecological disaster."

The Anti-Immigration Environmental Alliance: Divide and Conquer at the Border of Racism

by Luke Cole

The skeptics had a point: Although the U.S. makes up only five percent of the globe's population, we consume energy at 11 times the world's average, using almost 40 percent of all energy produced worldwide. We also use six times the steel, and four times the grain. Further, although the U.S. is responsible for more than 25% of all emissions of carbon dioxide — the primary source of the "greenhouse effect" and thus global warming — it was the only country which was unwilling to pledge concrete reductions in carbon dioxide emissions at the recent Earth Summit in Rio. We routinely use the natural resources of other countries — oil, wood, minerals — and then dump the unwanted *byproducts*, such as toxic waste, back on those same countries.

Activists in this country thus questioned how groups like ZPG could blame the Third World population growth for the earth's environmental crisis when it was *clear* that those of us here in the U.S. were largely responsible for it. Where people rightly say population control arguments *are* racist is where those making them ignore that their standard of living is based on resource extraction from other countries. Then, the population control can be read as saying "We've got ours, now you guys stop procreating so we can keep it."

Implicitly responding to the skeptics' charges, the new immigration control proponents turn the over-consumption argument on its head: it is precisely *because* we consume so much more than everyone else, they argue, that we need to keep other people out. "Because of such heavy consumption of resources, even small population increases here can adversely affect countries around the world," says Zero Population Growth.

This argument is a thinly disguised attempt to pull up the ladders after we have climbed to a comfortable standard of living; conveniently overlooked is that we have climbed to that level on the shoulders — and natural resources — of the rest of the earth. The U.S. consumes some 30% of the globe's resources. Many of these resources come from underdeveloped countries; \$50 billion a year is moving from poor nations to rich nations. Residents of underdeveloped countries can easily see what wealth their resources have brought to the U.S., and thus desire to emigrate. As long as we are extracting huge percentages of the natural resources from these countries, it only stands to reason that the people whose resources we are taking are going to follow.

>> see IMMIGRATION, page 20

REPORTBACK...

"Heroes and Saints," a play by Cherrie Moraga, San Francisco, CA, April 1992.

Art Imitates Life, Dramatizes Environmental Racism

On April 12th and 30th the Berkeley Coalition for Environmental Justice coordinated benefit performances of Cheme Moraga's play *Heroes and Saints*. Proceeds from these performances went to the Kettleman City group *El Pueblo Para el Aire y Agua Limpio* and to the West County Toxics Coalition from Richmond. At the Thursday showing the playwright was on hand to answer questions and held a discussion on her work. Members of *El Pueblo* were also present and discussed the value such drama held for them in light of their struggle against environmental racism in Kettleman. Currently they are opposing the building of a toxic waste incinerator proposed by Chemical Waste Corporation. People of Kettleman have faced blatant racism from county supervisors who have a vested interest in the seven million dollars per annum revenue which the incinerator will bring to the county coffers. It is estimated that even with its 99.99% efficiency, the incinerator will still emit 20 tons of toxic air contaminants per year in emissions over the local town and farm areas.

Heroes and Saints was inspired by the similar plight of farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley town of **McFarland**, CA which faced magnified cancer risks because of exposure to pesticides. With her artistry Moraga is able to touch all

her audience with the powerful turmoil of emotion, tragedy and human striving for basic rights of self expression and fulfillment. The play deals with many issues of family, community and culture as they are exacerbated by the particular morbidity of toxic pollution, a sort of racist chemical warfare waged on the play's characters.

The reach of the play is to move the audience to an awareness of human resilience, as its characters struggle within a circle of family and friends to affirm their identities amidst those common tendencies which act to alienate people. In this case, cultural prejudices concerning sexual preference and division were salient to the characters' relationships. In one of the most powerful scenes of the play, the gay son pleads for acceptance from his own mother who is immobile in her views of gender roles and sexual identities. This

THEATER

same immobility strains her relationship with a childless longtime friend. All along they are also alienated from the Earth as it becomes increasingly deadly to them. Despite these adversities they resolve to fight to claim their unique places in the world.

Perhaps most importantly, *Heroes and Saints* provides for us that image of human pathos which cannot be obscured by the pollution industry's double speak. In *Heroes and Saints* we find resolve to continue the struggle not only for environmental justice but also for interpersonal acceptance of that which we must validate, not only within ourselves but within those around us. The drama shows us that without this human connection, no struggle will be successful. Cheme Moraga reminds us of this commitment.

-- Alberto Rivas

Conference on Energy Policy and Community Economic Development, San Francisco, CA, April 20, 1992.

Urban Habitat Conference Links Energy, Urban Development

On April 20, 1992, the Urban Habitat Program (UHP) hosted a working conference on energy policy and community economic development in San Francisco, with about 40 participants attending. The working conference was part of a study being undertaken by UHP (with a grant from The Energy Foundation) called *Energy Policy and the Urban Predicament*, which probes the connections between current energy policy in the United States, the public energy debate and social and environmental issues as they impact urban communities of color and low-income communities.

Participants were provided in advance with a draft copy of a paper entitled *Energy Policy and Community Economic Development*, soon to be published by UHP. The paper served as the basis of the day-long roundtable discussion of the environmental and social justice dimensions of energy policy and their relation to community economic development opportunities, as well as other community issues and priorities. It describes the socioeconomic and environmental impacts of U.S. energy policy on people of color and poor people in urban central cities. It also discusses potential ecologically-sustainable and socially-responsible community economic development opportunities that can arise out of an

>> see ENERGY, page 15

<< from *ENERGY*, page 14

environmental justice critique of energy, transportation and land use policies.

Conference participants included representatives of several Bay Area community development corporations (CDCs) from the African American, Asian American and Latino communities, in addition to the scientific, **financial/foundation** and environmental communities. Representatives from the Public Utilities Commission, the California Department of Transportation and other public agencies also attended. (Pacific Gas and Electric Company, the major utility serving the Bay Area, was invited to participate. However, despite repeated phone calls, and despite having participated in the interview phase of UHP's study, no response or follow-up input was provided by PG&E.) Participants were asked to come with critiques, ideas and suggestions, and to be prepared to focus on strategic initiatives for **energy**-related, ecologically-sustainable community economic development.

The morning session focused on housing development and energy efficiency. Thomas Mills, Executive Director of the Local Initiative Support Corporation in San Francisco gave an overview of issues facing CDCs and nonprofit housing developers. He highlighted the economic **constraints** of building affordable housing and the fact that

energy efficiency is not a priority

in housing development. The cost of building energy efficient housing is more expensive than building energy *inefficient* housing even though building

energy efficient housing from the start would eventually provide tenants with substantial savings in the amount of money spent on energy bills. Current financial institution lending policies do not allow efficiency costs to be **amortized** over time. Thus, affordable housing developers must trade **long**-term energy efficiency and money savings for initial short-term lower costs for housing construction.

Several studies have documented that **low**-income households bear a **disproportionate** burden of residential energy costs, paying nearly 33% of household income on meeting basic energy needs. Because current energy policy and housing priorities do not consider the life cycle costs of energy efficiency, residents of central cities continue to pay disproportionate amounts of money for basic energy needs. High energy costs drain money out of the community; the money is not retained or recycled in the community. Thus, unabated energy expenditures for inner city residents is a net loss to such communities. Participants stressed that ways need to be found, through policies and practices, that incorporate energy efficiency into affordable housing development. Economic spin-offs, such as local employment, small business

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

opportunities and support of **neighborhood** infrastructure, **are** central concerns for residential energy efficiency in inner city communities.

Transportation, land use and energy was the focus of the afternoon session. James Head, Executive Director of the National Economic Development and Law Center in Berkeley, gave an overview of how these policy areas have an impact on communities of color and low-income communities. He stressed that greater attention needs to be paid by policy makers to community perspectives, social equity and the

Several studies have documented that low-income households bear a disproportionate burden of residential energy costs, paying nearly **33%** of household income on meeting basic energy needs.

urgent priorities of the **social/economic** needs of inner city residents. The process of decision-making needs to look at the Bay **Area** as a whole; grassroots community voices need to be a central part of the debate and **decision**-making process. Transportation and land use policies need to emphasize opportunities for local community economic development. Mr. Head spoke briefly about recent discussions regarding the fate of the Cypress Freeway in West Oakland, which collapsed in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Most of these discussions focused on how to rebuild and/or reroute the freeway, rather than how to use the opportunity for local economic development and community **empowerment**.

Deborah Gordon, Senior **Transporta-**

>> see *ENERGY*, page 16

<< from *ENERGY*, page 15

tion Policy Analyst for the Union of Concerned Scientists gave an overview of current transportation policy trends and appropriate technologies. She discussed the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act and the fact that nearly \$62 billion are available as "flexible funds" for local communities to decide how to spend. In the Bay Area, some \$1.5 to \$2 billion will be available, with as much as 50% of the funds earmarked for mass transit. The economic, social and environmental impacts of this funding for communities of color and low-income communities is substantial. It is critical that social justice and equity be central components of local efforts to allocate and use these transportation funds that meet the needs of local communities of color and low-income communities.

Other important points made by participants include:

- The need to better understand linkages between and broaden access to decisionmaking;
- The need to improve public participation in the planning, decision-making and implementation processes;
- The need for immediate policy changes on local, state and federal levels to counter policy perspectives biased by groups like the Bay Area Economic Forum that favor business and industry while ignoring poor communities and communities of color;
- The need to envision transition and to imagine people doing things differently (what will the culture of change be?);
- The need to develop common "language" (cultural, technical, developmental, environmental, scientific) and to communicate information in other languages besides English to respect the tremendous cultural diversity that exists in the San Francisco Bay Area;
- The need to rehabilitate the image of diverse urban neighborhoods;
- The need to expand support for community organizing as a means to support change;
- The need to integrate energy,

transportation and land use policies with larger goals and community needs;

- The need for sustainable energy systems and job creation/local business opportunities that support sustainable culture; and
- The need to recycle money in communities.

Many issues were discussed, as well as ideas about how to bring about change to enhance community well-being through energy-related community economic development. Participants welcomed the opportunity to interact with people they otherwise might not have occasion to speak with. The working conference emphasized the need for on-going cooperative and collaborative efforts between community based organizations, the finance and scientific communities and environmental groups, as well as public agencies and the private sector where appropriate.

UHP will publish *Energy Policy and Community Economic Development* in the summer of 1992.

UHP will also be exploring the feasibility of establishing an environmental justice council/task force on energy as an on-going mechanism for diverse communities to discuss the issue and work together to achieve greater energy efficiency, social equity and environmental justice.

— *Henry Holmes*
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The Indigenous People's Conference on Development and the Environment, June 4-7, 1992, Celilo Village, OR

Protecting Mother Earth III: Sovereignty and the Environment

The third annual Protecting Mother Earth Conference took place in Celilo Village, Oregon late this spring. Hundreds of Native Americans joined environmental and community activists in a four-day workshop to explore their struggle for sovereignty and the problems they face with corporations

that insist on **destroying** the environment for a profit.

"We come together to speak in one voice that the health of our Mother Earth, our people, water, animals and communities are not for sale for corporate profits or unsafe jobs," was the recurrent theme throughout the conference. More than 300 people attended, with representatives of at least forty different Indian tribes from around the U.S., including the

Western Shoshone (Nevada), Los Coyotes (California), Mescalero Apache (New Mexico), and the Chickaloon (Alaska), to name only a few. Also in attendance were indigenous people from Ecuador, who experience problems similar to those Native Americans face in the U.S.

The principal goal of the conference

>> see *MOTHER EARTH*, page 17

Participants stressed that ways need to be found, through policies and practices, that incorporate energy efficiency into affordable housing development. Economic spin-offs, such as local employment, small business opportunities and support of neighborhood infrastructure, are central concerns for residential energy efficiency in inner city communities.

<< from MOTHER EARTH, page 16

was to join Native Americans and activists to focus on areas of common concern and shared interest: to protect Mother Earth. Plenary speakers included Grace Thorpe of the Sac-Fox Nation, Chief Johnny Jackson of the Columbia River Defense Project, and David Harrison of the Chickaloon Tribe. Keynote speakers recounted their struggles against corporations who want to place toxic waste dumps in Indian communities, appropriate Indian land, and use Indian resources such as water and minerals.

Conference planners sought to combine the experience and expertise of grass-roots, state-wide and national organizers to create a link between communities, issues and organizing strategies. Workshops included "Monitored Retrieval Storage: Nuclear Threat to Indian Country," "Sovereignty in Action," "Water Rights," "Nuclear Waste Dumps," "Human Rights Issues," "Issues and Strategies Development," and many others. Workshops focused on building basic skills such as educating the community, working with the media, and developing leadership and strategy skills. **Sover-**

INDIAN RIGHTS

"We come together to speak in one voice that the health of our Mother Earth, our people, water, animals and communities are not for sale for corporate profits or unsafe jobs."

eighty of indigenous people and the right to a clean environment were the consistent themes of the workshops, presentations, and plenary sessions.

Monitored Retrieval Storage. (MRS) surfaced as the most critical issue discussed in the conference and was the focus of a number of workshops. MRS is the term used for a nuclear waste dump. The federal government has targeted Indian tribes to host disposal sites for high-level nuclear waste. To date, 15 of the 19 sites being considered for MRS are on Indian Reservations. MRS dominated the conference because of the great dangers nuclear waste dumps pose to the environment and ultimately to the

people who live on the reservations. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) is

dangling the carrot of thousands of dollars in front of tribal councils, and some have gone for the bait, apparently not realizing that most of the grants from the DOE will simply be passed through the tribe to consultants from the nuclear industry. The DOE figures that since many of these Indian Reservations have high unemployment, the temptation to have a nuclear waste dump on the reservation will be high. However, two tribes and one county have already withdrawn, and activists from the other targeted tribes have formed a network to beat back this radioactive colonialism. Workshops presented local strategies being undertaken in those tribes who have withdrawn to inform tribes that are directly affected by the MRS.

Although some tensions and

disagreements arose during the discussions, the conference closed with renewed commitment, complete consensus on the devastating conse-

The federal government has targeted Indian tribes to host disposal sites for high-level nuclear waste. To date, 15 of the 19 sites being considered for Monitored Retrieval Storage (MRS) nuclear waste dumps are on Indian reservations. The U.S. Department of Energy is dangling thousands of dollars in front of tribal councils, and some have gone for the bait, apparently not realizing that the money will simply be passed through the tribe to consultants from the nuclear industry.

quences of dumping on Indian lands and the importance of united response to stop it.

-- A. M. Cristina Viesca
California Rural Legal Assistance
2111 Mission Street, Suite 401
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/864-3405

MRS Network Forms

Tribal members from reservations across the country that are facing Monitored Retrieval Storage (MRS) nuclear waste dump proposals have formed the Native American Energy Network to share strategies and information. The network is opposed to MRS siting on any reservation or trust land, and also opposed to the production, storage and transportation of nuclear materials and waste in communities of color. The Network is working to ensure that tribal governments that have accepted MRS "feasibility study" grants now reject any further involvement with the nuclear dumps. Contact Wilbur Slockish, Jr., PO Box 184, The Dalles, OR 97058, 509/748-2043.

<< from *RACIAL JUSTICE*, page 1
ties of color have been asked to swallow. This applies to the sentencing of killers of Vincent Chin, who was beaten to death in Detroit in 1983 and of Latasha Harlins, who was shot by a shopkeeper in Los Angeles. We must all speak out against a racist system and demand justice and equality for all people of color.

Although the injustice of the verdict sparked riots in Los Angeles, we must also address the question of economic lock-out that has led to the exclusion of the African American community and other communities of color from

We must also address the question of economic lock-out that has led to the exclusion of the African American community and other communities of color from meaningful participation in the economic mainstream. This economic lock-out has also led to resentment toward the Korean community from the African American community. However, neither community is responsible for the economic policies of the past decade that ignored and to some extent aggravated the dire situation of the inner cities.

meaningful participation in the economic mainstream. This economic lock-out has also led to resentment toward the Korean community from the African American community. However, I must point out that neither community is responsible for the economic policies of the past decade that ignored and to some extent aggravated the dire situation of the inner cities.

In addition, both communities have very little knowledge about each other.

The Korean American community knows little of the long history of oppression against which the African American community has struggled. Moreover, the Korean American community has a relatively short history and consequently has not developed the sophisticated understanding of race relations in the U.S. On the other hand, many in the African American community have yet to recognize the limitations that force many Korean Americans to pursue inner city small businesses that are high risk and labor intensive.

Media portrayal of gun-toting vigilantes on the one hand and of African Americans as irresponsible vandals on the other has only aggravated the problem. Such irresponsible coverage diverts attention away from the complex questions of race relations and economic fairness that all of America must face and answer.

I express sympathy and support for all communities for their tremendous loss and their efforts to rebuild what was lost.

However, our concern should not end with emotional responses or even with sympathy.

Our concern should be manifested by efforts to recognize our own and each other's inadequacies as well as the realities of our individual and collective experiences. We must not allow the media and opportunistic politicians to divide us. We must pull together to address the real causes of the problem so that all communities can build upon a renewed and shared sense of hope.

<< from *ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE*, page 1
housing and dining facilities and the stratification of jobs along racial and ethnic lines bear an unsettling resemblance to aspects of a plantation economy." But in a last-minute amendment to the 1991 Civil Rights Act, Alaska's two senators successfully proposed that the still-pending Wards Cove case be exempted from the provisions of the new bill. The law now specifically excludes these 2,000 Asian Pacific and Alaska native cannery workers from Civil Rights Act protection and allows Wards Cove to operate above the law and continue its discriminatory practices.

Hate crimes against Asian and Pacific Islanders are dramatically increasing. Incidents include the brutal murder of Jim Loo, a 24-year old Chinese American from Raleigh, North Carolina. White men, screaming, "gook" and blaming him for the deaths of Americans in Viet Nam, beat him to death in the parking lot of a restaurant in 1989. Hate crimes may have reached a record high in 1991.³ Asians and Pacific Islanders are especially nervous since politicians, auto corporations, and the media are now whipping up anti-Japanese hysteria as a response to U.S. economic hardship.

While many Chinese, Pilipinos, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Koreans, and Laotians are farmworkers, the majority live in cities. They live in overcrowded apartments or public housing in low rent neighborhoods. In the majority of these neighborhoods, housing was built before 1950, and thus many families are exposed to toxic lead paint. These neighborhoods have heavy automobile traffic causing pollution and accidents involving pedestrians. Neighborhoods also lack space for open air recreation. Asians have the highest rates of tuberculosis in the U.S. Sadly, their suicide rate also exceeds that of other communities.

Like African-American and Latino families, Asians and Pacific Islanders also live near Superfund⁴ sites and factories that spew thousands of tons of toxics into the air.⁵ In 1987, a Laotian

>> see *ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE*, page 19

Who's for Real?

Look out for copycat "environmental" groups... There has been a flurry of activity by organizations claiming to be proponents of something called "wise use." This movement believes that natural resources and wild spaces are for humanity's "wise use" and therefore subject to exploration and development. These groups are often backed by logging and timber interests, petroleum companies and other major multinational concerns. They have names such as People for the West, Alliance for Environment and Resources, and the National Wetlands Coalition, and they are being created by industry public relations specialists all over the country.

A good guide to Green Imposters is *Masks of Deception: Corporate Front Groups in America*, by Mark Megalli and Andy Friedman, available for \$20.00 from Essential Information, PO Box 19405, Washington, DC 20036. As always when considering joining any group or organization, if you have questions or concerns, feel free to ask for a copy of their annual report. It could prove quite interesting.

<< from IMMIGRATION, page 13

Basically, the anti-immigration approach says, "we want your oil, your tropical hardwoods, your rubber, bauxite, gold, all your natural resources — but we don't want you." This approach threatens the tenuous bridges that have recently been built between the environmental community and communities of color.

The mainstream environmental movement has come under fire in the last several years from civil rights leaders and other people of color for focusing on "white" environmental issues such as wilderness or wildlife preservation, at the expense of dealing with problems that affect people of color and poor people, such as lead and pesticide poisoning. Many of the major environmental groups have taken this charge seriously, engaged in agonizing self-reflection, and begun to forge links with people of color groups.

They have seen this outreach as not only morally right, but as politically expedient: white enviros correctly recognize that any winning political coalition around environmental issues in California must include the state's growing Latino, Asian and black populations. California is currently 25% Latino, and projected to be 33% Latino by the year 2000. Environmentalists are well aware that they have lost major ballot initiatives, such as "Big Green" in 1990, because of only tepid support in communities of color.

Strategically, the environmental community must reach out to people of color in order to survive. The Sierra Club's alliance with anti-immigration forces — many of whom use xenophobic or outright racist appeals — will set back the efforts of the broader environmental

movement to reach out to Latinos and other people of color in California and elsewhere. **Attacking** new immigrants — ironically probably those contributing the least to our environmental problems while being exposed to the most environmental dangers — threatens coalition building between environmentalists and people of color groups and communities.

Perhaps the most troubling development in the anti-immigration campaign is the attempt to divide African Americans from other people of color. This tactic was apparent in a May 19, 1992 op-ed piece in the LA *Times* in which Otis Graham, a board member of Zero Population Growth, argues that immigration hurts blacks the most by taking away low-paying jobs from Blacks. "Affirmative action and other remedies, originally intended to redress two centuries of discrimination against blacks, now must be shared with recently arrived, foreign-born people that outnumber them," he argues. Revealing the true nature of ZPG's approach, Graham would have us pull up the ladders in what he coyly calls a way to help the inner city.

This is but the latest attempt to point the finger of blame for environmental problems away from their source — it is clear that environmental problems are caused by U.S. corporations such as DuPont, Exxon and Dow Chemical, not newly-arrived immigrants — and onto another powerless community. And it is dangerous and divisive for us in the environmental movement to allow others — even our friends at the Sierra Club — to lead us down this low road.

Population control may or may not be a good idea; consumption control would probably go more to the heart of the problem. Immigration control is not a good idea, and environmentalists of all colors need to resist the new xenophobia growing in our midst.

Japan Bans Drift Nets

Ending the use of open-ocean driftnets has been stymied for the past decade by pressure from Japan, which operates the world's largest driftnet fleet. Last November, in a dramatic reversal, the Japanese government agreed for the first time to phase out half its fleet by June 30, 1992 and to halt all the use of high seas driftnets by the end of 1992. Japan's move came only days before a United Nations vote to renew its call to end the use of driftnets. Two previous UN resolutions deploring the destructive and wasteful effects of driftnetting had called for a global moratorium by June 30, 1991. More than 25,000 miles of driftnets — about equal to the circumference of the Earth — are released into the world's oceans each night.

Data gathered in 1989 and 1990 by a team of multinational observers placed on a small portion of the Japanese, Taiwanese and South Korean driftnet vessels in the North Pacific recorded the startling impact of these nets (some of them 30 miles long) on dolphins, seabirds, sea turtles, sharks and many other fish species. In 1990 alone, U.S. government monitors placed on only 10% of the vessels in the Japanese squid driftnet fishery (one of the four driftnet fisheries) documented the killing of 1758 whales and dolphins, 30,464 seabirds, 253,288 tuna, 81,956 blue sharks and more than 3 million additional non-target fish. The United Nations has estimated that hundreds of thousands of dolphins are killed each year in the nets.

In response to the widespread use of this wasteful and indiscriminate fishing practice, the U.S. Congress passed legislation outlawing the use of driftnets longer than 1.5 miles in U.S. waters and preventing the importation of drift-net caught products into the United States.

<<from ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, page 18
family living in Richmond, California discovered that they were being poisoned by toxics. They were part of a Southeast Asian resettlement program administered by the Contra Costa County Public Health Department. An alert public health nurse visited the family and noticed that their home was located next to an abandoned factory designated as a Superfund site. Along the fence which separated the home from the factory, she spotted a hole leading to the family's vegetable garden on the factory side. On the factory wall a sign was posted warning of toxic dangers present in the soil. However, this sign was printed in English.

A blood test indicated that their children had blood lead levels of 25 micrograms per deciliter. In 1987, federal law considered such a level allowable (although it is certainly not desirable). At present, federal law considers 10 micrograms per deciliter the threshold of danger. On the other hand, the blood results for the men in the family showed lead levels of over 50 micrograms per deciliter. They were not only poisoned by the lead at home, but they were also being poisoned at the auto radiator repair shop where they worked.

The Occupational Connection

In 1988, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) studied 83 auto repair workers doing radiator repair or working near such operations. In many instances their lead exposure was found to be ten times higher than the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) permissible limit.⁶ The high levels were a result of the lead fumes produced when workers soldered radiators, and from the lead dust present when radiators were cleaned.

Dr. Wendell Bruner, Director of Public Health of Contra Costa County, cites the Richmond example as a good reason for investigating the workplace as well as in the neighborhoods. James Robinson⁷ found that the average Black worker is 37% to 52% more likely to

sustain a serious job-related accident or illness than the average white worker. Davis and Rowland⁸ noted that statistics for Latino, Asian, and Native American workers are incomplete, but the same can probably be said for their experiences as well. All these researchers trace the problem to the fact that workers of color usually have access to only the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs.

Young Hi Shin, director of Asian Immigrant Women Advocates, reports that the rate of occupational illness for electronic assembly workers, predominantly Asian and Latino women, is three times higher than for workers in other manufacturing industries. Incidents of headaches, nosebleeds, vaginal bleeding, and difficulty in breathing are common.

Asian workers make up 53% of the San Francisco Bay Area garment industry. Most are women. Asians (along with Latino and African-American workers) still work in 19th century sweatshop conditions in many U.S. cities. Many of the conditions are identical to those in New York's Triangle Shirtwaist factory of 1911, where a tragic fire killed 146 immigrant women. The present day shops continue to be inadequately ventilated, poorly lit, and overcrowded. Exposure to fiber particles, dyes, formaldehyde, and arsenic used to treat the fabric causes high rates of byssinosis⁹ and respiratory illness among garment workers. All too often children accompany their parents and spend their days in these hazardous environments, since adequate child care is seldom available.

Asians, especially Pilipinos and Southeast Asians, also work on farms. These workers and their families are exposed to pesticides since they work in and live near fields where these chemicals are sprayed.

Many small dry cleaning stores are owned and operated by Asian families. Chemicals used in dry cleaning, such as perchloroethylene¹⁰, are known to be especially harmful to children. Children of Asian families often accompany their parents to work in these small shops.

As awareness of the issues surrounding environmental racism increases, so does the need to involve Asians and Pacific Islanders in the development of policy strategies, and educational programs. Asians and Pacific Islanders need to be included in organizations which can effect change. Thorough research also needs to be conducted which includes the active participation of the Asian communities. Outreach into communities should be initiated which is culturally appropriate and which involves Asians and Pacific Islanders in creating safe, healthy environments in both their neighborhoods and their workplaces.

Pam Tau Lee is the Labor Coordinator for the Labor Occupational Health Program, University of California at Berkeley. She is also on the Coordinating Council of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, and a Board Member of the National Toxics Campaign and the Chinese Progressive Association. "Asians in America 1990 Census," Asian Week (1991).

² William Wong, "Anti-bias bill hurts Asians," *Oakland Tribune* (November 20, 1991).

³ Larry Tye, "Hate crimes increase, may hit record in '91," *Boston Globe* (May 14, 1991).

⁴ A Superfund site is a contaminated area containing hazardous materials which pose a threat to the public or the environment. The U.S. Congress established Superfund in 1980 for the cleanup of these dangerous sites when the responsible party cannot be located or refuses to pay the costs. The Superfund legislation is known as CERCLA (the Comprehensive Environmental Response Compensation and Liability Act of 1980).

⁵ A major report by the Commission for Racial Justice of the United Church of Christ found that "race consistently proved to be the most significant among all factors tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities. Communities with the greatest number of commercial hazardous waste facilities had the highest composition of racial and ethnic residents." C. Lee, *Toxic Waste and Race* (1987).

⁶ *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, >> see ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, page 21

<< from ATOLL, page 8

the public hearing in Hawaii on the EIS and the effects of chemical burn at the Johnston Atoll in March. They raised several questions: Have the countries geographically closest to Johnston Island apart from the Hawaii Chain (namely the Republic of Kiribati, western Samoa, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tahiti-Polynesia) been consulted? What precautions have been taken for those who live downwind of the burn site? What does it mean that the U.S. federal environmental laws do not apply to Johnston Island because it is "not a state"?

The Pacific Concerns Resource Center (PCRC) which is the Secretariat of the NFIP, condemned the U.S. for secretly beginning its destruction of chemical weapons at the JACADS facilities without informing the governments and the peoples of the Pacific. It has called the U.S. government's decision to test nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands in the 1950s a "premeditated act of environmental terrorism...waging a war on the people of the Pacific and the waters of Te Moana Nui a Kiwa on which Pacific people are dependent for life and sustenance. The destruction of these weapons must be carried out in an agreed and environmentally-proven safe process and location."

The PCRC added that "there are eight facilities on the U.S. mainland that fit the above criteria, but because of pressure from the U.S. public, the U.S. government has in its wisdom, decided (yet again) that the people of the Pacific are expendable."

In August 1990, the South Pacific Forum (a grouping of 15 independent nations), which met in Vanuatu, declared that Johnston Atoll "should not become the permanent toxic waste disposal center of the world." (The Forum would have **explicitly** opposed the shipping of chemical weapons to Johnston Atoll but for **Australia's** support for the U.S. plans. Australia's Prime Minister, Bob Hawke presented three unpublished Australian scientific reports based on U.S. data at the Forum meeting. Australia's performance has

been called "two-faced" by the Deputy Prime Minister of the Solomon Islands and the PNG Minister Namaliu who said, "We suspect very strongly that there is some kind of collusion going on between the U.S. and Australia."

In the same week that the 15-nation South Pacific Forum was meeting, the U.S. Congress was discussing an amendment providing for a feasibility study on transporting the eight main chemical weapon stockpiles now in the continental U.S. to "less densely populated sites."

Thus pressure from public interest groups in the U.S. against the dangers of chemical weapons incineration at home will make the Pacific the dumping ground for other wastes, **confirming** fears that Johnston Atoll could be used to dispose of other hazardous wastes from the U.S. military and private corporations.

Secret Stockpiles

In another development, new information came to light during the Forum meeting that the U.S. had no binding commitment to destroy chemical weapons coming from Germany to Johnston Atoll. According to press reports, a U.S. army general told a closed meeting of the Senate Armed Forces Committee in June 1989 that "virtually all the munitions... in Germany are maintained in a fully serviceable combat ready condition. This portion which is the most modern of our military stock, will likely be the last demilitarized. Storage at Johnston Island will be required for these munitions... partially from the point of view of when the facilities become available for demilitarization and partially depending on the world situation."

It would appear that chemical weapons from Germany will be stored at Johnston Atoll indefinitely. Thus these weapons will be stockpiled and remain available to the military for retaliatory use for at least four years, and probably much longer since the new agreement with the Soviet Union allows storage outside national boundaries until the year 2002.

In the recent Gulf Crisis, information

describing Pentagon plans for European weapons stored at Johnston was deleted from the published version of the Congressional Record, leaving open the suggestion that they will be in a full state of readiness for deployment, particularly by the US Pacific Command (PACOM) forces.

Reprinted from Third World Resurgence.

Editor's Note:

The ash from the incinerated chemical weapons is loaded on cargo ships at Johnston Atoll in the South Pacific, and shipped through Hawaii to the Port of Los Angeles. Its ultimate destination is a tiny farmworker town in California's San Joaquin Valley, Kettleman City, where Chemical Waste Management runs the largest toxic waste dump west of Louisiana. Kettleman City residents have been fighting the dump and a proposed incinerator for almost five years. Becoming aware of, and understanding, the links between dumping on Asian-Pacific Islanders at Johnston Atoll and the dumping on Latinos in Kettleman City is a step toward environmental justice. Stopping the production and ultimate destruction of chemical weapons themselves will be a further step in the right direction.

<< from ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE, page 19

Vol. 40, No.8, (March 1, 1991).

⁷"Racial inequality and the probability of occupation-related injury or illness," *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly/Health and Society*, 64(4): 567-590, (1984).

⁸Davis and Rowland, "Problems faced by minority workers." In Levy, B.S., Wegman, D.H. (eds), *Occupational Health*, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1983.

⁹Byssinosis is often called "brown lung disease." Symptoms include chest tightness and wheezing. Over a long period of time, the worker ends up continually short of breath and has distended lungs.

¹⁰Perchloroethylene is used as a dry-cleaning solvent. It is an irritant to eyes and skin. Other symptoms of exposure include dizziness, lack of coordination, drowsiness, unconsciousness, and death. Recent studies also indicate that perchloroethylene is a suspected carcinogen.

Resources

General Articles and Publications of Interest

"Bhopal: a Test Case of Toxic Industries for UNCED, Paper No. 7." Briefing paper submitted for UNCED by the Third World Network analyzes Union Carbide and the Indian government's responses to the December 2, 1984 disaster. The paper reminds us that Union Carbide's toxic gas leak in Bhopal, India in 1984 is an event not to be forgotten. The 40 tons of toxic gas that leaked from the pesticide plant killed thousands and left many injured. Contact: Third World Network, 87 Cantonment Road, Penang, Malaysia. Tel: (60-4) 373511. Fax: (60-4) 368106.

Civil Rights Issues Facing Asian Americans in the 1990s, is a report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights. Published in February 1992, the report comments on civil rights issues pertaining to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. The 233-page document highlights three broad factors that contribute to civil rights problems facing Asian Americans. The report finds that Asian Americans are victims of stereotypes; the "model minority" stereotype is the most damaging because it "leads Federal, State, and local agencies to overlook the problems facing Asian Americans." Additionally, cultural and linguistic barriers hinder equal access to public services and from political participation. Lastly, the report addresses the lack of political representation by Asian Americans as another civil rights problem. Overall, the report discusses a wide range of Asian American civil rights issues and provides a brief analysis of the problems. General issue areas range from "Bigotry and Violence Against Asian Americans" to "Access to Education Opportunity." To obtain a copy of this report, write to: United States Commission on Civil Rights, Washington, DC 20425.

Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women. Edited by Asian Women United of California. An excellent compendium of several dozen articles on a wide array of topics, from immigration to work, injustices suffered by Asian women to activism. Beacon Press, Boston, MA. \$16.95.

Pastoral Letter on Contemporary Racism and the Role of the Church. A pamphlet published by the United Church of Christ which examines contemporary racism in America. Most useful are the references listed in the back of the pamphlet, indexed by ethnic and racial groups. Available through United Church of Christ, Commission for Racial Justice, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115, 216/736-2100.

"Bad Habits. Worn Traditions." *Landscape Architecture*, Feb. 1992. A panel discussion with five African American landscape architects who describe their experiences and share their insights into the future of this career path for people of color. For subscription information, call or write to *Landscape Architecture*, 4401 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 5th Floor, Washington, DC 20008-2302, 202/686-2752.

"Environmental Protection — Has It Been Fair?" *EPA Journal*, March/April 1992. The entire issue of the *Journal* focuses on environmental justice. Inside are articles by Dr. Robert D. Bullard, Paul Mohai and Bunyan Bryant, Ivette Perfecto and Baldemar Velasquez, and many others. For copies or more information, write to The Editor, *EPA Journal* (A-107), Waterside Mall, 401 M Street, SW, Washington, DC 20460.

Global Village Action Network— A Guide to Community-Based Sustainable Groups and Centres, Falls Brook Centre. A compilation of some of the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have sustainable development as their prime concern. Copies are \$25 for individuals and NGOs, \$45 for governments and institutions. For more information, contact Falls Brook Centre, Rural Route #2, Glassville, N.B., Canada E0J 1L0.

Indochina Interchange, a quarterly publication of the Fund for Reconciliation and Development, Inc. A newsletter of events, jobs and opportunities in the Indochina region. For more information, contact the Fund for Reconciliation and Development, Inc., 220 West 42nd Street, Suite 1801, New York, NY 10036-7202, 212/764-3925.

UC-Davis Study of Farmworkers. The UC-Davis Pesticide Farm Safety Center Advisory Panel has recently issued an excellent report. The report notes that agriculture "is as dangerous as mining," but that there "is a glaring gap in federal funding spent per worker" for agricultural health and safety protection as compared to other industries. The federal government spends \$30 annually on employee health protection in agriculture compared to the \$4.34 it spends on other industrial workers. The panel also found the difference in workers compensation benefits to be "stark." For example, in agriculture the average benefits for a fatality were \$606.25 per worker, as compared to an average of \$39,769.57 per worker for all other industries. The report is available from Bea Bobotek at MLAP, 2001 S Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009.

— *Migrant Legal Action Program*

Nature Education in the Urban Environment, Proceedings of the 1991 Forum sponsored by the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, the Central Park Conservancy and the Bank Street College of Education. The environmental education debate examined from an urban point of view. For more information, contact William Sharp, Director of Education Programs, Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History, 110 Marvin Parkway, Jamestown, NY 14701.

Organizations

Bhopal Action Resource Committee. A principal group in the United States working on Bhopal followup. Contact: David Dembo, 777 UN Plaza, Suite 3A, New York, NY 10017. 212/972-9877.

The Chinese Progressive Association (CPA) is a 20 year-old grassroots group based in San Francisco Chinatown. CPA empowers the community through three ongoing programs: Alternatives for Chinatown Youth, the Chinatown Workers Resource Project and the Immigrants Rights Program. In July 1992, CPA will coordinate two forums to promote environmental activism among Chinatown residents, one on occupational health and safety issues and the other to foster youth leadership around community environmental issues. For more information, call 415/391-6986.

Legal Resources: Lead Poisoning

- Lucy Billings, "Development of Safety Procedures for Abatement of Lead-Based Paint," *25 Clearinghouse Review* 1540 (April 1992). 22 pp. Discusses Bronx Legal Services' suit against the City of New York to **compel** the city to comply with federal and state requirements for lead removal from residences, and proposes new regulations governing abatement issues.

- Perry Gottesfeld and Nancy Humphrey, Occupational Knowledge, **Inc.**, "Lead Regulatory Overview" (April 1991), 10 pp. An annotated list of federal and state lead statutes.

- Pat **McElroy**, "Lead Poisoning Under Attack from Many Angles," *12 Youth Law News* 1 (November-December 1991). 5 pp. An overview of the lead issue, including federal regulations, recent lawsuits, and community **mobilization** efforts.

- "Lead-Based Paint Alert: Legal News for Property Owners, Managers and Builders" (January 1992). 8 pp. This newsletter, put out by San Francisco environmental defense **firm Landels, Ripley and Diamond**, surveys lead hazards, laws, abatement and litigation.

- Kathryn **Mahaffey** and I. Arthur Michaelson, "The Interaction Between Lead and Nutrition," in H. Needleman, ed., *Low Level Lead Exposure: The Clinical Implications of Current Research* (1980). Nutrition plays an important role in susceptibility to lead poisoning. Children at most risk of lead poisoning also at most risk of malnutrition.

- Herbert Needleman, "Why We Should Worry About Lead Poisoning." *Contemporary Pediatrics* 34 (March 1988). 10 pp. The medical effects of lead paint poisoning.

- Jane **Perkins**, "Lead Poisoning Problems Challenged on Many Fronts," *25 Clearinghouse Review* 13 (May 1991). 4 pp. Overview of lead problem and prevention and abatement.

All legal resources listed in this column are available from the Environmental Poverty Law Work Group, c/o CRLA Foundation, 2111 Mission Suite 401, San Francisco, CA 94110, 415/864-3405.

Legal Resources: Toxics

The Environmental Law Program of South Chicago Legal Clinic publishes the following excellent resource:

- K. Harley, *Not-for-Profits Beware: The Property You Acquire May be a Toxic Trap* (59 pps., 1992). A resource for not-for-profit organizations interested in **understanding** environmental issues in property acquisitions. This **guide** has sections on common environmental problems, important environmental laws, and steps you need to take to protect your organization.

The program also publishes two useful manuals:

- G. Prichard and K. Harley. *How to Find Out What Toxic Chemicals are in Your Neighborhood* (111 pps.). An easy-to-read guide to toxics research.

- K. Harley and G. Prichard, *What You Should Know About Toxic Waste* (88 pps.). An easy-to-use manual that has sections on how to identify a toxic waste **dump**, who to contact for help, and how the process works.

While written for use in Chicago, the manuals have good information for activists and attorneys nationwide. Both manuals are available as a single publication. *The Chicago Community Environmental Law Handbook*. The ELP also publishes a quarterly newsletter, *The Chicago Environment*, with local news and features. **Contact** Keith Harley. South Chicago Legal Clinic. 2938 E. 91st St. Chicago. IL 60617.

CBE South Bay Fishing Survey

Citizens for a Better Environment is conducting a survey of fishing in the South San Francisco Bay in order to **determine** how many people are **fishing** for significant amounts of their diet from this polluted part of the estuary. The survey area specifically targeted is south of the Dumbarton Bridge, where the South Bay city sewer plants of San Jose, Sunnyvale, and **Palo Alto** dump the toxics from industries into the Bay. The South Bay is designated by EPA as a toxic hot spot and requires clean up. However, the Regional Water Board is threatening to change standards which will allow continued toxic dumping. In order to demonstrate the current fishing value of this part of the Bay and to educate Bay users about

Sierra Club to help fight lead poisoning in San Francisco's Chinatown

More than 230,000 houses and apartments in San Francisco were built before 1950 and covered with heavily leaded paint. Over **40,000** five-year old children live in these houses, with thousands more born each year to live in them. But paint is not the only source of lead in the City's Chinese community, for lead is also used in Chinese medicine and ceramicware.

In an **innovative** new program, the Sierra Club San Francisco Group will research existing data on lead poisoning, particularly as it relates to the risks presented by various Chinese medicines and ceramicware. It will then organize roundtable discussions with medical and environmental experts about the data and develop bilingual education materials to be distributed through the Sierra Club and **NICOS** Chinese Health Coalition. For more information contact: Terry Ow-Wing at 415/673-7093.

potential health threats **from toxics**, CBE seeks assistance from multi-lingual volunteers to survey the **fishing** piers near the Dumbarton Bridge on weekends. Many low income residents and people of color are believed to fish for significant portions of protein for their diet from the Bay. Since health warnings are seldom very visible and are printed only in English, these fishers are probably unaware of potential health impacts. Also, they are probably unaware that agencies are considering allowing toxic dumping to continue rather than clean it up. Hearings of the Regional Water Board on toxic standards are expected this summer. For more information call Denny **Larson**, Campaign Director, Citizens for a Better Environment, 415/243-8373.

Notes from the Guest Editor...

Who are Asian Pacific Islander Americans (API) and what are the environmental problems facing this particular group? These are challenging questions which are difficult for me to answer definitively. The issues covered in this edition of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* help provide answers. I will say that we cannot begin to know of environmental concerns in the API community without recognizing the cultural diversity within and across API cultures. Not all API have the same environmental experiences. For example, Korean immigrant electronics workers in Silicon Valley California are fighting for better occupational health and safety standards, while Korean immigrant store owners in South Central Los Angeles are working to break cultural barriers that divide them from the African American community. What connects these two groups of Korean immigrant Americans when their concerns uniquely differ? Better yet, what connection do they have with

other APIs? Can they relate with native Hawaiian struggles for indigenous land rights? The fact remains that people originating from Asia and the Pacific Islands are thrown together as one large ethnic group. The long history of Asian exclusion acts in America shows that APIs are revered as a simple, seemingly

In this issue, we introduce our readers to the people and the problems of the Asian-Pacific Islander community.

homogeneous group. We need to continue to have our cultural differences recognized, but we also need to create unity within the API community and beyond. Unity and relating with one another challenges the feeling of isolation. Very often I feel that I am alone when I attend environmental

conferences that lack strong representation by API. In pulling this issue of *RPE* together, I have come to feel less alone as I meet other APIs involved in environmental justice work. Finding these people was the challenge, and it depended entirely on how "environmental justice" was defined. Thus, in this issue, we attempt to introduce our readers to the people and the problems of the API community. Climb inside the pages and meet these people and then ask yourself if you have been looking in the right places to find API environmental concerns and activism.

The wonderful mixture of articles provided in this issue would not have been possible without enthusiastic support of contributing writers and brainstorming sessions with my peers. Thanks for keeping the candle burning.

For environmental justice,



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