



A Statement of Purpose

By Carl Anthony and Luke Cole

The idea for the *RP&E Newsletter* grew out of a caucus of interested people at the University of Oregon's Public Interest Law Conference, held March 14, 1990. Caucus participants recognized the importance of increased attention to the nexus of race, class, and environmental issues, and the need for a forum in which to continue their dialogue. The caucus decided on a newsletter as the vehicle to continue our dialogue, and the two of us were delegated the task of putting it out.

Since the meeting in Oregon, we have circulated questionnaires to the original group, and have talked to a number of people about the *RP&E Newsletter*. Many people around the country are exploring the intersection of race, poverty, and the environment. We come at it from different places. Some of us are environmental designers, some poverty lawyers, others grassroots activists. Some are students; others are part of "mainstream" environmental groups. Some are urban planners, religious workers, health care professionals, government officials. Some of us are low-income, others privileged. Some are people of color, some white, some highly educated, some self-educated. All of us are concerned about the disproportionate impact environmental hazards have on low-income and minority communities. And all of us need information to keep us abreast of activities, articles, events, and people working in the area. We hope that this newsletter will be a source of that information.

This first issue is by necessity a bare-bones model—we are still in the process of working out what the newsletter should be, how grand a scale we want to attempt, how ambitious we can all be. Like the caucus at which the newsletter was born, we would like the newsletter to be a democratic, relatively free-form dialogue, an honest sharing of stories and strategies, resources and relevant events. The success and health of the newsletter will depend on you, the readers—for contributions in the form of articles, book reviews, stories from your community, resources, upcoming events of interest, profiles of activists; for constructive criticism of our communal efforts; for mailing lists of people who should receive the *RP&E Newsletter*; and for creative funding ideas so that we can get this thing

off the ground. It is up to you. We are willing to be the conduit through which your information passes, but we are not willing to do all the work of tracking down articles and contributors. Let us know what is going on out there.

We operate under several premises: First, that poor people and people of color have long been "environmentalists"—people concerned with the health of their communities—but have been defined out of the "environmental movement" by forces beyond their control. This is not to point fingers, but instead to recognize the historical contributions of poor people and people of color to protecting our environment. DDT was first banned from use not by the U.S. government, but by United Farm Workers' contracts with grape growers in the late 1960s—farmworkers who understood the dangers of pesticides and who today continue the fight for their elimination. As one Latina community leader told a group of white, middle class environmentalists recently, "Welcome to the environmental movement!"

To understand the nexus of race, poverty, and the environment, we must be aware of the way people engaged in struggle view themselves, their culture, needs, and priorities. For many environmentalists, success or failure of a project is measured in specialized ways: legislation passed, a project halted. For people living in communities, the connections must be viewed more holistically. How does the project strengthen local leadership? How does it create new opportunities for cooperation? The *RP&E Newsletter* will cover proactive neighborhood revitalization strategies, such as tree planting and creek restoration, as well as protest; what people are thinking as well as what they are doing.

Further, we must continue to build the bridges that



Photo:

Early issues of *RP&E* maintained a balance between rural and urban coverage.

Organizer and UFW Vice President Dolores Huerta organizing grape pickers in the field.

Courtesy of Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University.

have been tentatively constructed in the past few years between mainstream environmentalists and grassroots environmentalists, in a way which preserves the autonomy of community groups. One of our primary purposes is to strengthen the networks between environmental groups and working people, people of color, and poor people. Consequently, we seek articles, book reviews, and stories, which highlight a range of interests, attitudes, and practices within such groups: from established national organizations, such as the NAACP and the Sierra Club to grassroots organizers, cultural workers, and communities.

Finally, this movement is broad enough for each of us to make our own niche, so long as we are aware of what others are doing and we are all working in the same direction. Differences in tactics or style should not divide us, nor should differences in culture, color, language, or class background—if this happens, the polluters win. Industry has been successful at pitting us against each other in the past. We must work together in the future.

Several procedural points:

Time. We are proposing that the *RP&E Newsletter* be quarterly, with the next issue out in July.

Money. This first issue was underwritten by the Earth Island Institute and the California Communities at Risk Project of California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation. Production and distribution of the newsletter is expensive however, and this arrangement is not sustainable. We are currently exploring other sources of funding and your ideas are welcome.

Place. A quick glance at this newsletter will betray its West-Coastedness—many of the events listed and players described are from the Western U.S., specifically California. This is not purposeful exclusion of other regions—it's simply that the two of us are "in the loop" for West Coast events, and don't always hear about what is going on around the country. This is also an appeal for you to send us information.

People. This newsletter began out of a group of about 30 interested people and fell onto our shoulders quite by accident. We pulled together some articles of interest with the help of the original caucus; we now rely on you to send us new stuff. Our initial mailing will be to several hundred people around the country. We need your help in building our mailing list. If we want to expand the scope and distribution of the newsletter, an editorial or advisory board may be an important next step. ■

In 1990, Carl Anthony was a board member of Earth Island Institute and a co-founder of Earth Island's Urban Habitat Program. An architect and development consultant, at that time he served on the board of the Center for Economic Conversion and Urban Ecology. Luke Cole was the staff attorney and coordinator of the California Communities at Risk Project of the California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, where he was preparing a report on the impact of environmental hazards on poor people. Anthony continues to serve as a board member of Urban Habitat. Luke Cole died in 2009.



The EJ Movement

By Robert D. Bullard



It is important for us to talk about the challenges we still face after three decades of the environmental justice movement. When put in context, the environmental justice movement is a very young movement compared to many of the other environmental and conservation movements. The fact that it has evolved over such a short period of time makes it difficult in some ways to compare what it has been able to accomplish over three decades versus the environmental movement, which in some cases is over 150 years old.

But I do think the new challenges that we face today include climate change, especially as it impacts the health and well being of vulnerable populations. As new cli-

mate policy is implemented, we have to make sure that equity and justice are brought to bear, because the communities that are hit worst, first, longest, and hardest in terms of climate change are the same communities that are also hit hardest, worst, and longest by other environmental problems, such as air quality, hazardous waste, pollution and lead poisoning.

Let me give you an example. When we develop our transportation policy, the people impacted by cutbacks in transit are the same people who do not own cars, oftentimes work at minimum wage jobs or are trying to find work, and who also live in cities where nonattainment is a big problem. So, we have to ensure that our climate policy is

based on a good transportation policy and a good energy policy, and also ensure that clean and renewable energy is available to all without regard to socioeconomic status. Just because some people have a lot of money and can afford to install solar panels and retrofit their houses to save energy, they should not be the only ones able to access energy-saving technologies. Those kinds of technologies need to be available across the board, regardless of income, class, or ethnicity.

Robert Bullard is a professor at Georgia's Clark Atlanta University and the director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center. This comment is excerpted from Environmental Justice Journal. ©2010 Mary Ann Liebert.



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RP&E Vol. 1, No.1:
Earth Day

The Need for New Coalitions

By David Brower

Our reckless use of energy is creating acid rain, global warming, endangering the ozone barrier, and we're not doing enough about it. What can we do to be more effective? We can try to build better coalitions among people, among nations, among organizations. We must recognize that environmental hazards affect people as well as wilderness. Toxics, pollution, and pesticides especially affect poor people and people of color. We as environmentalists must build bridges to people affected by those hazards if our movement is to succeed.

We have begun to build such bridges in our Fate and Hope of the Earth conferences. We've had these conferences in New

York, Washington, and Ottawa. Last June, we had 1,200 people from 60 countries at a great conference in Managua, Nicaragua. The next conference will be in Zimbabwe in the fall of 1991. We're trying to get something going in the Soviet Union, Japan, and in other parts of the world. We're trying to get as many different kinds of organizations into this whole act of keeping the earth a livable one.

An enormous amount of good can be done if we have multicultural and multi-racial teams—cross-generational, male and female—going around to various spots in the developed nations, as well as the nations of the South, to help them recover from the damage done by the

industrial revolution. Their work could focus on the out-of-doors, the soils, and the forest. But it could also help to put the cities back together again, to get the hearts of cities that are deteriorated fixed up. It's a great challenge, one of the most important there is, and also one of the most important opportunities. Building organizational bridges is exactly what the International Green Corps is about and Earth Island is doing everything it can to make this project succeed.

David Brower was executive director of the Sierra Club, founder of Friends of the Earth, the League of Conservation Voters, and Earth Island Institute. He died in 2000.

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Editor Emeritus
Carl Anthony

Publisher
Juliet Ellis

Editor
B. Jesse Clarke

Design and Layout
B. Jesse Clarke

Copyediting and Proofreading
Merula Furtado

Publishing and Layout Assistant
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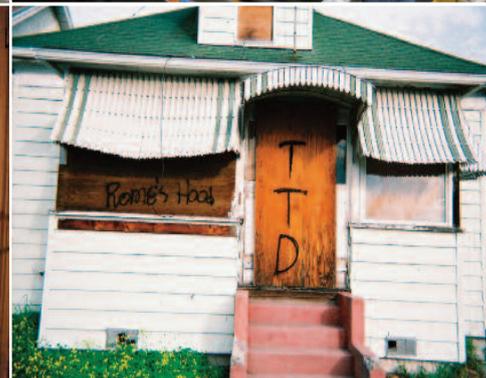
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Economic Justice

Environmental Justice

Transportation Justice



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