

About This Issue

Climate change threatens all forms of life on planet Earth, but when it comes to human life, it is the poor communities that will be hit first, and hardest. Human-caused climate change is now accepted as a reality, even by the mainstream media. But the effects of climate change on our communities are still covered only intermittently by the media; and ideas about how we can organize for positive change are almost never covered at all.

In this issue of *Race, Poverty & the Environment* we strive to draw a picture of the imminent challenges we face from global warming, and sketch some routes toward survival, justice, and health, using the principles of green economics. We are joined in this effort by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, which is pioneering a new project called Reclaim the Future. The project seeks to create green job opportunities for the urban America that is constantly kept out of economic recoveries.

The impacts of Hurricane Katrina paint an all too vivid portrait of how the response to weather disasters by government and corporate actors aggravates the already disastrous challenges faced by urban communities of color in the United States. The negligence and profiteering directed at our most vulnerable communities is yielding a harvest of wealth for the few, while increasing the suffering of many. The lesson from New Orleans is stark: Unless we act in defense of our own communities now, the rising tide of global warming is more likely to drown us than to lift our boats on a new wave of economic activity.

In order to advance this defense, we publish adaptations of several papers that contain core findings on climate change: Winona LaDuke's examination of indigenous power and J. Andrew Hoerner's synthesis of the numerous climate impact studies undertaken by Redefining Progress.

From New Orleans and Gulf Coast studies, we publish a synopsis of a major paper sponsored by the Russell Sage Foundation, detailing the racial basis of the ongoing human environmental crisis. We also offer an excerpt from Eric Man's new book, *Katrina's Legacy: White Racism and Black Reconstruction in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast*, an analysis of structural racism by Maya Wiley, and a call for green reconstruction aid by the People's Hurricane Fund. Rita King examines the role of corporate contractors in the toxic clean-up.

We also present a roundtable discussion with members of the Sustainable Metropolitan Communities Network, a group coordinated by Earth House and convened by Carl Anthony of the Ford Foundation. Robert Bullard, Manuel Pastor, Don Chen, Paul Epstein, Michel Gelobeter, and Lynn Wolf describe the tensions in reconstructing New Orleans as a sustainable, equitable community.

While clear-cut solutions are in short supply for the Gulf Coast, other areas of the country are taking actions that could begin to turn the situation around.

Two of the pieces we present here are based on a Solutions Salon held by the Ella Baker Center to spur positive thinking about Oakland's future: Economic theorist Paul Hawken examines the economic watershed that is a city and suggests ways we can plug the leaks; and Majora Carter, who heads Sustainable South Bronx, looks at one real city, New York, and the attempt to shift it toward sustainability.

We also share case studies of green economic projects from Venezuela, Berkeley, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Oakland, Richmond, New York, Minneapolis, and American Indian reservations. And on a cautionary note, we present a profile of one solution that no longer looks truly green—corn based ethanol.

Archer Daniels Midland (ADM) Corporation is one of the many that have been capitalizing on the desire to find fuel alternatives for existing internal combustion vehicles. Not surprisingly, beneath the apparent green sheen of ethanol is the darker hued green of money: billions of dollars in subsidies are being given to a this well connected agribusiness giant.

Even as rational capitalists turn their attention to the challenge of building a "green" economy, we find that popular organizing at all levels, from city neighborhoods to the United Nations, is the real solution to problems of equity and racism. And we hope that this issue can play a small part in that solution.

Ben Jesse Clarke
Editor

Race, Poverty & the Environment

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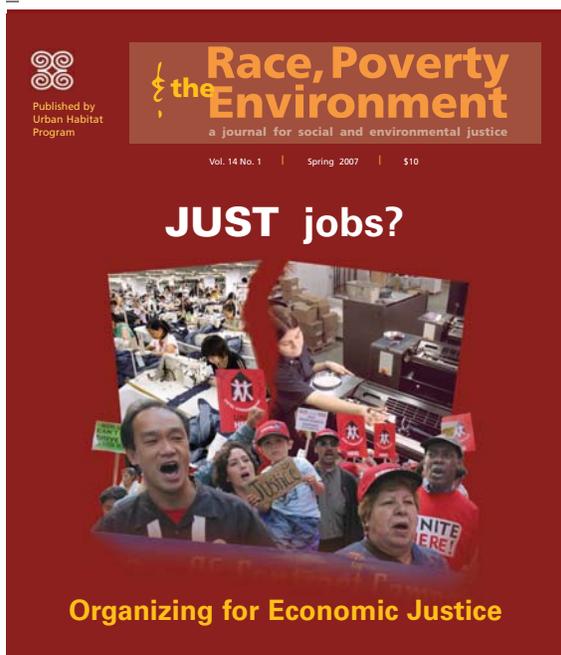
a journal for social and environmental justice



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