



EJ Activist

The Sierra Club Environmental Justice Newsletter

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Environmental justice is not new. Martin Luther King Jr. went to Memphis in April, 1968 on an environmental justice mission: better pay and working conditions for African American garbage workers. In 1967, students at Texas Southern University (Houston) were involved in a campus riot, triggered by the drowning death of an eight-year-old African American girl in a garbage dump, located in the middle of the mostly African American Sunnyside neighborhood. Working class women do not use bureaucratized talk about an environmental issue: they define their environmental protests as part of the work that mothers do. "If Johnny gets a nagging cough, then Mary and then my neighbor's Susan, we try to discover and then fix the problem". The 63-acre Murph Metals (later RSR Corporation) lead smelter is located next door to an elementary school, across the street from the West Dallas Boys Club and the 3,500 unit George Loving public housing project, directly in the path of the prevailing southerly winds. West Dallas was a community of single family homes and renters before the smelter, that never secured proper permits, moved in over 60 years ago. After twenty years of litigation, scientifically valid testing, media attention and federal, state and local governmental shuffling, the smelter was closed.

The story of the West Dallas Neighborhood Committee on Lead Contamination lays out the dominant environmental protection paradigm that (1) institutionalizes unequal enforcement, (2) trades human health for profit, (3) places the burden of proof on the victims, not the polluting industry, (4) legitimates human exposure to harmful chemicals, pesticides and hazardous substances, (5) promotes risky technologies such as incinerators, (6) exploits vulnerability of economically and politically disenfranchised communities, (7) subsidizes ecological destruction, (8) creates an industry around risk assessment, (9) delays cleanup actions, and (10) fails to develop pollution prevention as an overarching strategy.

The old model of environmental activism that focuses on governmental rules and management regimes, lends little help. In many instances, government is the problem. And environmental organizational leadership

unused to listening and unpracticed in loose alliances led by different community members often adds to this problem. Just as the Club's BEC (Building Environmental Community) has engaged activists in their communities who want participatory democracy to work for them, grass-roots leaders demand a shared role in the decision making processes affect their neighborhoods. They are challenging the background assumptions that drive risk-based decisions, industrial policies that pit jobs against the environment and housing policies that force families to choose between lead poisoning or

*justice for some is
justice for none*

"bad" air and homelessness. Activists target a wide range of issues, from toxic waste to urban transit. They borrow their tactics from the civil rights and peace movements

and the environmental and union movements.

The preamble to the seventeen point Principles of Environmental Justice adopted at the First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in October 1991 includes, "to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods"

The Club stepped up to these challenges with our Environmental Justice program that demonstrates what the future of the Club can be. Find out more at www.sierraclub.org/environmental_justice.

For too long environmental crises were blamed on people of the rain forests who burned trees for acreage to graze cattle and natives of the Arctic who bludgeoned seals for fur coats. Quick to identify the problem elsewhere, First World citizens were less willing to challenge themselves about their fundamental lifestyle choices. As long as we continue to blame others and not confront the reality of our own roles in environmental degradation, no movement for change will arise. As long as this dynamic continues, justice advocates and environmental activists will continue to fault each other's perspective for missing the point about the most critical needs of our earth. We must scrutinize the ways our lifestyle belies our beliefs. Only then can the false choices between human justice and environmental integrity be overcome. — Mary Grisco, Activist Editor

"...to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment..."

Environmental Justice Grassroots Organizing Program

Introduction to Environmental Justice Guidelines

The Sierra Club Guidelines of Environmental Justice Grassroots Organizing (“Guidelines”) is a working document adopted by the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Program Site Selection Committee (1999) to define an ethical code of conduct for the SC EJ Program Sites. This document is the culmination of years of conversations between people who live in impacted communities and Sierra Club volunteers and staff regarding how the Sierra Club can support these communities while promoting community self-empowerment. Subsequent experiences within the SC EJ Program have shown the Guidelines to be a successful and effective means of building relationships between Sierra Club volunteers, staff, and environmental justice community representatives. The Sierra Club’s relationship

with the communities it assists will be governed by the following guidelines:

I. We will hire grassroots organizers to serve as a bridge linking the Club to communities fighting for environmental justice; and we will encourage qualified applicants from these communities to apply for these positions.

II. We will enter a community to provide grassroots organizing assistance only when invited to do so by the community.

III. We will respect the right of the community to define its agenda to address its environmental problems. We will not be present to persuade the community to work on “our” issues, but rather provide support to the community as it seeks to define its own issues and lead its own campaign.

IV. Our grassroots organizers will work to link activists from Sierra Club groups, chapters, and Regional Conservation Committees

with the members of the community.

V. We will work as a supporting partner with the community facing environmental injustice. This may mean providing training and support to meet the needs defined by the community.

VI. We will encourage the empowerment of the members of the community and will seek to nurture that empowerment.

VII. We will respect the comfort level of the community in responding to requests for tactical assistance. For example, in providing media assistance, we will strive to avoid even the appearance of making public relations capital out of the community’s misfortune.

VIII. We will seek to foster community self-reliance and will be prepared to leave the community at any time as requested.

Environmental Justice Principles

Remembering that the Sierra Club’s founder, John Muir, said: “Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul alike,” and reaffirming our stated Purposes:

The Sierra Club’s purpose is to explore, enjoy, and protect the wild places of the earth; to practice and promote the responsible use of the earth’s ecosystems and resources; and to educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment; and to use all lawful means to carry out these objectives.

We adopt the following Environmental Justice Principles to provide a vision of how our Club’s Purposes should justly serve the Earth and all of humanity. Through these Principles, we intend that Earth’s wild places should be protected so that all people and future generations may explore and enjoy nature’s beauty; that the Earth’s ecosystems and resources should be used responsibly and sustainably so that all people and future generations may share nature’s bounty; that the natural and human environment should be restored to the benefit of all people and for other living things,

Principios Organizativos

Principios Fundamentales del Programa de Organización de Base de Justicia Medioambiental

La relación del Sierra Club con las comunidades que asiste se gobernará de acuerdo con los siguientes principios:

I. Contrataremos a organizadores de base comunitaria para que sirvan de puente entre el Club y las comunidades que luchan por la justicia medioambiental; y animaremos a candidatos calificados de estas comunidades para que soliciten estas posiciones.

II. Entraremos en una comunidad para ofrecer organización de base comunitaria sólo cuando la comunidad nos invite.

III. Respetaremos el derecho de la comunidad a definir su agenda para atacar sus problemas medioambientales. No trataremos de persuadir a la comunidad para que trabaje en “nuestros” temas, sino que ofreceremos apoyo a la comunidad en definir sus propios temas y liderar su propia campaña.

IV. Nuestros organizadores de base trabajarán para vincular a activistas de Grupos, Capítulos y Comités de Preservación Regional del Sierra Club con miembros de la comunidad.

V. Trabajaremos como socios de apoyo con las comunidades enfrentadas a las injusticias del medio ambiente. Esto puede significar capacitación y apoyo para satisfacer las necesidades definidas por la comunidad.

VI. Apoyaremos la habilitación de los miembros de la comunidad y trataremos de mantener esa habilitación.

VII. Respetaremos el nivel de autonomía de la comunidad para responder a las solicitudes de asistencia táctica. Por ejemplo, al ofrecer ayuda con la prensa, nos esforzaremos por evitar cualquier apariencia de aprovecharnos de los beneficios de relaciones públicas que pueda deparar una comunidad desafortunada.

VIII. Nos esforzaremos por fomentar la autodeterminación de la comunidad y estaremos preparados a abandonar esa comunidad en cualquier momento que ésta lo solicite.

Guidelines and Principles

and their future generations; and that no community should bear disproportionate risks of harm because of their demographic characteristics or economic condition.

1. We support the right to a clean and healthful environment for all people

A. The Right to Democracy

We support government by the people. Corporate influence over governments must be constrained to stop the erosion of the peoples' right to govern themselves and governments' ability to establish justice and to promote the general welfare.

B. The Right to Participate

People have the right to participate in the development of rules, regulations, plans, and evaluation criteria and at every level of decision-making. Environmental decision-making must include the full range of alternatives to a proposed action or plan, including rejection of the proposed action or plan. Barriers to participation (cultural, linguistic, geographic, economic, other) should be addressed.

C. The Right to Equal Protection

Laws, policies, rules, regulations, and evaluation criteria should be applied in a nondiscriminatory manner. Laws, policies, regulations, or criteria that result in disproportionate impact are discriminatory, whether or not such a result was intended, and should be corrected. We support environmental restoration and the redressing of environmental inequities.

D. The Right to Know

People have a right to know the information necessary for informed environmental decision-making.

E. The Right to Sustainable Environmental Benefits

People are entitled to enjoy the sustainable aesthetic, recreational, cultural, historical, scientific, educational, religious, sacred, sustenance, subsistence, cultural, and other environmental benefits of natural resources. However, actions that tend to ruin the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community are unethical.

F. The Right to Equity

Environmentally degrading land uses should be avoided, but when

such uses occur, they should be equitably sited taking into account all environmental and community impacts including the cumulative and synergistic ecological and health effects of multiple facilities. All people have the right to a safe and healthful work and home environment.

G. The Right to Generational Equity

Future generations have a fundamental right to enjoy the benefits of natural resources, including clean air, water, and land, to have an uncontaminated food chain, and to receive a heritage of wilderness and a functioning global ecosystem with all species naturally present.

H. The Rights of Native People

We oppose efforts to dispossess indigenous peoples of their lands, their cultures, and their right to self-determination. We support Native Peoples' wielding of their sovereign powers to protect the environment and to establish environmental justice.

2. We support an end to pollution

The long-range policy goal priorities for environmental protection must be:

- (1) to end the production of polluting substances and waste through elimination, replacement, redesign, reduction, and reuse (zero waste),
- (2) to prevent any release of polluting substances (zero emissions, zero discharge),
- (3) to prevent any exposure of plants, animals, or humans to polluting substances, and
- (4) to remediate the effects of any such exposure.

3. We support the precautionary principle

When an activity potentially threatens human health or the environment, the proponent of the activity, rather than the public, should bear the burden of proof as to the harmlessness of the activity. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

*Adopted by the Board of Directors,
February 17, 2001*

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Profile: Darryl Malek-Wiley

Interview by Phaedra C. Pezzullo
July 15, 2005



Q: A carpenter by trade, you have been involved in environmental, labor, and anti-racist struggles in southern Louisiana for over three decades. More specifically, you have been involved with the Sierra Club since 1972. Can you share how or why you became involved with the Sierra Club as a volunteer?

A: I was a student at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington, and I heard about a Sierra Club meeting; so, I went and started going to meetings. At one meeting, somebody said, “We need somebody to do X”—and I don’t even remember what X was—but, I said, “I can do that.”

Q: You have held several leadership positions as a volunteer in the Sierra Club since then, including the Cape Fear Group Chair, the Delta Chapter Chair, and the Chair of the New Orleans Group. What was your biggest challenge as a grassroots Sierra Club volunteer leader?

A: I think the biggest challenge is trying to get other folks involved. ‘Cause, you know, so many times, we volunteer because we’ve got this passion for a topic and trying to get other folks working with us on that topic is sometimes challenging, because they’ve got their own passion, their own issues.

Q: In the early 1980s, the BASF Corporation locked out workers in Geismar for three years in an effort to bust union efforts. It was the longest “lock-out” in U.S. labor history. At the time, how were you involved in creating a labor-environmental alliance?

A: Well, at that time, I was Chapter Chair of the Delta Chapter. And Richard Leonard—who was one of the OCAW (Oil, Chemical, and Atomic Workers union) organizers on their corporate campaign—he asked me to attend a meeting of the local 4-620. And I did. And I met the guys. And we started thinking. And then I met Richard Miller, who was sort of the key strategist from OCAW.... Since they had been involved in the lock-out for a number of years before the environmental issues started being brought up, they were looking for other tools to use to put pressure on the company to do the right thing.

And, I can remember, we were at a meeting where they brought out an aerial map of the plant and asked everybody who had worked at the plant, “Alright, tell us where you buried stuff.” You know, because that was practice, you’d take two fifty-five gallon drums and you’d bury them here or there. So they documented on an aerial map where they had first knowledge of where they put

what and when. And then they took that map to the State Department of Environmental Quality and said, “We want enforcement. We know stuff’s there.”

And another thing that Richard and myself and another gentleman by the name of Darryl Stevens, who was a worker at the plant, did was we made copies of the air permits for sixteen plants around the BASF plant. We put that information in the computer, because at that time it was all paper copies, and the only analytical analysis we did was addition. We came up with, from those seventeen plants, was 196 million pounds of pollution per year. And then we released that as a joint Sierra Club and labor report and said, “This is a concern.” And we expanded it to two more reports, one on air and one on water.

And, as sort of a side bar, we found one of our colleagues in the environmental sciences—her sister had had a miscarriage. And she knew of other folks in the community who had miscarriages, so we started looking at that. And it finally ended up that we thought it was a significant problem. When we did our press, then, we said, “The problem is, Point A, there’s all these emissions going into the air. Point B is that there are a series of miscarriages. We don’t know if they’re connected, but we want a state study.” And it was pretty hot and heavy for a number of months on that issue.

Q: During the BASF lock-out, you and Richard Miller, found out about state reports and talking with folks in the community about their firsthand knowledge that a range of cancers were an endemic at the time; as a result, you started sending out press releases using the term “Cancer Alley.” This term transformed the way the nation views the area from Baton Rouge to New Orleans and framed the debate about that corporation and others in a way that placed responsibility back on skeptics from corporations and the government to prove it is not a “Cancer Alley.” In the past couple of years, you and other local activists have suggested it is more accurate to call the area “Cancer Death Alley” or “Death Alley”, can you explain the suggested shift?

A: The Tumor Registry in Louisiana does a very, poor job at keeping health cancer statistics, in our opinion—the Sierra Club’s, other environmentalists in Louisiana, and some health professionals’ view. But, the latest report they’ve come out with, they’ve now said that Louisiana does not have a higher cancer incident rate than the national one, statistically speaking, but we have a higher cancer death rate. So, to be statistically correct, it’s “Cancer Death Alley”—because we always want to be statistically correct.

Q: You have been facilitating toxic tours in southern Louisiana since the early 1980s. What difference do you feel toxic tours make as an organizing tactic?



A: Toxic tours help educate folks to reality of what's going on in the communities. Because, if you have like a slide presentation or a video presentation, that's one thing; but, if you actually take people out into the communities, they get out and smell the air or see the proximity to the chemical plants. It really makes an impression and a difference to their understanding of what the reality is in Louisiana. It's one thing to say, "Well, the chemical plant is across the street." It's another thing to come there and see this thing that's, you know, twelve-stories tall and has got a flare that's fifty-foot long right there.

Q: Earlier this year, a long-time friend of yours, William Fontenot, was forced to resign his position as an employee of the attorney general as the result of photographs taken during a toxic tour he helped guide. How do you feel this is a sign of the political times?

A: What we've seen is this paranoia post-9/11—you know, [the idea that] taking students to take photographs around chemical plants, makes them terrorists. And they've used that to take information off the web about chemical hazards. They've used that to try to limit and intimidate the students and others from taking tours. I think it's just outrageous. If we're serious about chemical plant safety—and they keep telling us that they are—then, where's all the research money going into making these chemical plants safer in design and chemical use? We see more guards and fences. But, that doesn't mean we're safer; that means more guards and fences. And we've got 19th century technology out there, as far as the chemical industry goes, when are we going to go to the 21st century? There is a real movement out there for green chemistry, but it's just not funded. The companies have sort of got a process that goes and makes them money, and they're not willing to really rethink and change with the new realities that are out there.

Q: Most people do not realize or remember this, but you were part of one of the most famous moments in the history of the environmental justice movement: you were one of the original signatures on the first letter to the "Group of Ten" major national environmental organizations—including the Sierra Club—written by the Gulf Coast Tenant Leadership Development Project on January 16, 1990. This letter and a subsequent one sent by the SouthWest Organizing Project on March 16, 1990, received national attention for its criticisms of the environmental movement as showing a lack of accountability to communities of people of color and being complicit with institutionalized racism in terms of hiring practices, lobbying agendas, political platforms, financial backers, organizing practices, and decision-making processes. The letter you signed stated: "Racism and the 'whiteness' of the environmental movement is our Achilles heel." At the time, as someone who had worked from within the Sierra Club for decades at that point, why was putting those accusations into writing and publicizing it so important and necessary for you?

A: At that time, I was working on staff at the Gulf



Coast Tenant Association, which was an African-American run organization dealing with housing projects. And they were seeing environmental insults on a daily basis. And I felt, after working with them and seeing how some environmental groups were working on these issues and knowing staff within the environmental organizations, that there was a real lack of people of color within the organizational staffs at any kind of level, other than secretary or clerk or something like that. And I felt it was time—if we were talking for equality and racial and environmental justice—that was one thing the major environmental organizations needed to address: the make up of their staff. I mean, does their staff reflect the communities they are working in?

Q: Since the early 1990s, how do you feel the Sierra Club, in particular, has responded to these criticisms in positive ways?

A: I think the Sierra Club has led the national environmental groups in response to that letter. They've hired additional people of color in staff positions. They've passed the Environmental Justice Principles. You know, they have policy in place. And they've set up the environmental justice organizing concept—which is completely different from any other environmental group out there—where the organizers actually work for the community, not the Sierra Club. It's not, "I'm from the Sierra Club and I'm here to help you." It's, "I'm from the Sierra Club, how can I help you? And what do you feel your concerns are? And how do we build a bridge from Sierra Club activists who have skills and the needs of the community?"

Q: And how do you feel the Sierra Club still needs to change or grow in relation to the environmental justice movement?

A: Well, I think it still needs to have additional training for both staff and volunteers on undoing racism workshops, on really thinking through how racism influences a whole range of environmental issues like lead poisoning in Detroit. I think, we need to really be thinking about how environmental pollutants are devastating whole communities of color, while other communities are reaping the benefits. And that needs to be fully ingrained into our strategic outview of the Club. For example, we've got one that just started on boycotting ExxonMobil; but, I didn't see in that announcement—they talked about global warming, they talked about Alaska—there could just have well been a whole segment on EJ from where ExxonMobil refineries are located. And I raised that issue in a couple of places and it got a little bit in our campaign, but it wasn't one of the issues that was asked up front, "How to we marry this boycott to what ExxonMobil is doing in these communities?"

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Celebrating Juneteenth Building Community Relations in Kansas City

by Elaine Giessel, EQST Liaison

“Clean Air for Kansas Kids” on the handheld fans were much appreciated by the several hundred residents attending NAACP’s 6th annual Juneteenth celebration at Quindaro Park in Kansas City, KS. Developed as part of the Kansas Chapter’s broad renewable energy campaign, the fans promote development of wind and other clean energy sources. The back of the fan lists helpful home energy efficiency tips. As the afternoon grew warmer, these “personal wind generators” were quite popular!

Kanza Group (KS Chapter) members Tom Thompson, Elaine Giessel and her daughter Rachel tabled during the event, providing literature on the Club’s Environmental Justice program and “Environmental Justice Now” buttons along with free handouts from the Environmental Protection Agency about childhood asthma, indoor pollution sources such as tobacco smoke, mold, lead and radon. Funds for reserving a



Congressman Dennis Moore (D-KS-3rd) addressed the audience remarking on the length of time it took for slaves to hear of their freedom. He takes time to pose with Elaine Giessel and her daughter Rachel Voss.

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official Texas state holiday through the efforts of

Al Edwards, an African American state legislator, elevating Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread globally.

In Kansas, Quindaro Park is a truly appropriate area to celebrate Juneteenth. The settlement of Quindaro, founded in December of 1856, as a free port three miles up river from the confluence of the Kansas and Missouri Rivers, provided a “free state” settlement in Kansas, where anti-slavery immigrants could safely enter and leave the territory. The land was purchased from the local Wyandot Indian tribe and the settlement named after Quindaro Brown Guthrie, a tribal member

and wife of one of the town’s founders. The word “quindaro” means “a bundle of sticks”, or “in union there is strength”.

Quindaro became a thriving community which rivaled the nearby pro-slavery settlement of Wyandot. Directly across the river in Missouri was the slave trade settlement of Parkville. Quindaro was a welcome stop for black slaves seeking freedom via the “underground railroad.” Nothing is left of the place today but a few stones and foundations beneath dense brush along the banks of the Missouri River.

Recently through the joint efforts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Unified Government of Wyandotte County of Kansas City, KS and the Kansas City Kansas Community College, a “Save America’s Treasures Grant” has been obtained for development of the “Quindaro Ruins Archeological Park Project.” Preservation of the Quindaro Ruins and creation of a scenic overlook and walking trails with narrative signage will help commemorate the first human rights movement on the Territorial Kansas Frontier, which combined the efforts of Native Americans, African Americans and European Americans to assist escaping slaves. (See www.kckcc.edu/ruins/)

“Beyond freedom for one’s self, Juneteenth celebrates freedom for all, worldwide. Juneteenth promotes unity and builds self-esteem through reflection, education, and through acknowledgement of achievements. Today, people of all races, nationalities and ethnicities join together to support and participate in Juneteenth celebrations — a true testament to humanity.”
(from www.juneteenth.com)

table at the event were provided through the Club’s EJ Program.

This year’s celebration marked the 140th anniversary of the date when the last slaves in America were freed in Texas, almost two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. News finally reached Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865. There are various reports on the cause of the delay, some suggesting it was intentional.

Q: After a lengthy listening process with local communities in the region of southern Louisiana, you were hired as an organizer for the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Grassroots Organizing Program in 2004. This program has had many successes due to its rigorous hiring process involving both local community representatives, as well as Sierra Club volunteers and staff. One of the main voices on the hiring committee that chose you was a remarkable local African American environmental justice leader, Margie Eugene-Richard. What do you feel has been the most important factor for you, a European American male, to work in collaboration with Eugene-Richard, her predominantly African American community, and People of Color more generally living in the region?

A: Well, I think the most helpful thing is: don't assume you know what they know. Don't make assumptions based on your stereotype of what this ethnic minority or ethnic minority is like. Just get to know 'em, as people.

Q: From all your years involved in grassroots environmental activism, how healthy do you think the environmental movement is today? You know, do you believe all those reports about "The Death of the Environmental Movement"?

A: I read the thing about the environmental movement dying, and those guys ain't never been to Louisiana. I mean, environmental activism is at an all-time high in communities that see the reality everyday. And sometimes we get too—you know, these are some of my white brothers—we get too wrapped up in book research and don't get to see the real world. Maybe they need to come down and take a tour of Cancer Alley.

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Racist imagery stereotypes cultures in their environments

Dennis Plank from the Sierra Club Environmental Justice Committee offered these words at the Seventh Annual Conference on Racist Imagery in the Popular Culture sponsored by the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance, with help from the Sierra Club Northeast Ohio Group Environmental Justice Committee, in Cleveland, Ohio, April 10, 2005: "Hello, my name is Dennis Plank. I have been a member of the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance since about 1992. Also, I have been a Sierra Club member since 1988. The Sierra Club started sending me information on Indigenous Peoples shortly after I became a Sierra Club member. It was mostly general information, but when the Committee of 500 Years started their protests, the general information combined with the protests, my attention was grabbed, and I have been working on the racist imagery in the popular culture issue ever since.

Last month I got a letter in the mail from the Sierra Club. The letter asked, "Why won't they leave the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge alone?" At first I could not answer this question, but then because of the work I have done with Indigenous Peoples I realized I was able to answer the question. The reason they won't leave the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge alone is related to the racist imagery in the popular culture issue and related issues. Why? Groups are stereotyping Gwich'in Indians and others for trying to defend their culture, human rights, and environment.

For example, Corporations are stereotyping Gwich'in culture, human rights, and environment when they ignore Gwich'in communication with the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations. In March, 1999 the Gwich'in communicated in writing details of the threat of oil development to their way of life to the 55th Session of the Commission on Human Rights of the United Nations. It called upon the US Congress and

President to reverse the threat of cultural genocide by recognizing the rights of the Gwich'in People to continue their own way of life by prohibiting oil development in the ANWR.

They were ignored and they still are being ignored. To this day the oil industry is continuing the spin that drilling will have no negative effect on the ANWR. However, just 60 miles away west of the ANWR Prudhoe Bay has seen much devastation caused by oil development.

Another example is groups are stereotyping the United American Indians of New England (UAINE) culture, human rights, and environment when they ignore their protests. UAINE states that Thanksgiving should be called the National Day of Mourning instead Thanksgiving because after the early Pilgrims came, Native Americans faced much destruction. The early Pilgrims had many myths and thought Native Americans were devils, savages, ferocious, ignorant, and uncivilized; however, we know that Native Americans are complex, diverse, humane, creative, and democratic.

Finally, one last example, groups are stereotyping the Committee of 500 Years of Dignity and Resistance culture, human rights, and environment when they ignore our protests to stop racism in sports and the media and to change the name and logo of the Cleveland Baseball Franchise. They say we should be honored, we are too angry, we are ignorant, and we should get a job. However, we know that people on the Committee of 500 years and Native Americans are complex, diverse, humane, creative and democratic people (not mascots).

In summary, remember, the reason they won't leave the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge alone is related to the racist imagery in the popular culture issue and related issues. Groups are stereotyping Gwich'in Indians and others for trying to defend their culture, human rights, and environment."



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*Visit the EJ website:
www.sierraclub.org/environmental_justice*