

The Cultural Politics of Environmental Justice Activism:

Race-and Environment-Making in the Contemporary Post-Civil Rights Period

Kimberly Renee Allen

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the
Department of Anthropology.

Chapel Hill
2009

Approved by,
Chair, Dorothy Holland
Arturo Escobar
Karla Slocum
Charles Price
Kia Caldwell

© 2009
Kimberly Renee Allen
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ABSTRACT

**KIMBERLY RENEE ALLEN: The Cultural Politics of Environmental Justice Activism:
Race-and Environment-Making in the Contemporary Post-Civil Rights Period
(Under the direction of Dorothy Holland, Arturo Escobar, Karla Slocum, Charles Price,
and Kia Caldwell)**

This dissertation treats the environmental arena as a new terrain of racial struggle in the contemporary post-civil rights period. Increasing numbers of Americans are organizing in defense of the health and well being of their communities in the name of environmental justice as they contribute to its formation as a social movement. In the United States, particularly in the southeastern region, the focus of the environmental justice movement is ‘environmental racism’. Coined by activists, environmental racism refers to racism in environmental decision-making. Collectively, environmental justice proponents have refashioned environmental discourses to reflect changing awareness of how air, water and soil are subject to institutionalized racial discrimination. Using material generated principally from ethnographic participant observation and interviews, this dissertation describes how meanings of ‘environment’ and race-based identities in the contemporary period are being shaped in the environmental justice movement as it is in dialogue with the “mainstream” environmental movement, but not, surprisingly, one of the best known civil rights organizations.

This dissertation points out how race forms in particular sites—in this case, the environmental justice movement. It argues against deterministic theories that claim social position, namely race, accounts for why blacks and other people of color maintain an

environmental justice perspective. Instead, it advances a social practice approach to explain why for example, some African Americans act from an environmental justice perspective while others tend toward a view common in the general American public—environmentally concerned, but inactive. At the collective level environmental justice groups are primary sites where black Americans develop environmental concern, action and environmental identities. At the personal level of self-making, environmental justice proponents, both black and white, attempt to make sense of their relationship to the environment as they actively figure themselves in relation to collectively produced racialized environmental concerns, actions and identities. The ongoing, changing environmental justice movement is a medium in which personal affect, racial meaning and understanding, and action toward the environment develops for growing numbers of Americans.

For Allen's Children's Children and All Others Who Fight Justice

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I thank Dottie Holland for believing in me! I owe Professor Dorothy Holland a debt that I can never repay. From the first day she spotted me meandering about the halls of Alumni Building pondering graduate programs, to late night phone calls to help relieve my anxiety, through intellectual slumps and bumps, all the way to the bittersweet end; she saw potential in me and never gave up on me. She has been incredibly patient and giving beyond compare. She is a wise and loving ancestor; she is a blessing. Allen and I thank her for it all.

Professor Holland's theoretical contributions in the areas of identity and agency and history and person are the bedrock of this dissertation. I am especially indebted to Holland and her colleagues: Drs. William Lachicotte, Jr., Jean Lave, Debra Skinner and Carole Cain for the groundwork they laid by expanding Social Practice Theory to various figured worlds. I further extend that debt to my contemporaries whom Holland has likewise inspired: Drs. Vinci Daro, Erik Reavely and soon-to-be Drs. Gretchen Fox and Dana Powell. For your encouragement, support and even your words when mine escaped me—thank you! To the members of my wonderfully supportive writing group—Vinci Daro, Lili Lai, and Ana Araujo—thank you! Despite the many and varied contributions of all these wonderful people, I take full responsibility for all the shortcomings of this dissertation.

Next, I owe another debt that I can I never repay. Thank you Gary Grant and members of the Concerned Citizens of Tillery. You are among the most gracious and

fiery people in the world. Rest assured God is on your side. I am grateful to the many other participants in my study, among them are the member groups and individual members of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, the Sierra Club, and the NAACP. I thank them for being patient with me as I learned to see things from their point-of-view. The research for this dissertation would not have been possible without their hospitality and goodwill. Although I take full responsibility for all the shortcomings of this dissertation, I am grateful for their insights that without a doubt enriched this work.

I am also grateful to the many funders whose desperately needed dollars made my research not only possible, but the most fun I have ever had. These include, but are not limited to: the National Science Foundation; the Aspen Institute; the Anthropology Department, and The Graduate School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

I am also thankful to my dissertation committee members. In the midst of it all they made time to read my work and provide counsel. Thank you especially to Ms. Suphronia Cheek, the bedrock of the anthropology department at UNC. For so many years she has been helpful, and always has an encouraging word; she is an angel.

Finally, thank you Mr. Allen Kwabena Buansi and thank you Mr. Patrick Bouvier Johnson. In spite of it all, you were patient and supportive. You gave me the confidence to make good and finish this dissertation. The two are among my greatest teachers.

I thank everyone who has offered me an encouraging word or an opportunity to contribute to the expansion of one of the most dynamic social movements of our day. Because of you I have a better understanding of the meaning of ‘scholar activist’ and an appreciation of the fight for environmental justice. I will never forget you.

PREFACE

During 1994-95 I was an avid hiker and helped clear hiking trails after storms along the Blue Ridge Parkway in western Virginia, and although I thoroughly enjoyed myself, I longed for the familiar company of other black people. To my dismay, none joined with us to clear trails. Other than my son Allen, I rarely saw another black person on any of my weekly hikes; I was disappointed *and* curious. If not as hikers or trail clearers, in what ways did African Americans express their concern for or enjoy nature?

During my hiking days I equated the environment with nature. For me, nature was rivers and hiking trails; wilderness, open spaces and endangered species constituted the environment. I understood *environmental* actions to be conservation and preservation activities such as recycling, bird watching, hiking, canoeing, clearing trails, and fish restocking. Because I had not observed African Americans engaged in these activities, I concluded that they were not concerned about the environment and that they were not environmentalists. But then I began to wonder whether I was wrong. If African Americans were concerned about the environment, how did they act on this concern? What actions, beliefs, and identities did they attribute to the environment? My initial reason for pursuing graduate study was to determine what I then called an African American *environmental* ethos. I wanted to find out what meanings African Americans associated with the earth or 'the land'. As former enslaved agricultural workers, I felt certain that African Americans held nature/environment in some regard; my job was to

uncover it. I was really curious about why more of them were not ‘environmentalists’; that is, members of environmental organizations like the Sierra Club.

Before enrolling in graduate school I was a project assistant on a research team headed by Professors Dorothy Holland and Willet Kempton. Their project, entitled “The Environmental Movement as a Context for Behavioral Change,” attempted to explain why more people were not environmentally active although they expressed concern for the environment. Only when I began reading literature on the environmental movement did I find the black people that had eluded me on the trails. My reading revealed that black people did care about the environment and did act on their concerns for the environment. But rather than hike, buy ‘eco-friendly’ products, or campaign to ‘save the whales’; the Blacks I encountered in my readings were fighting North Carolina state officials that were intent on locating a landfill containing toxic-laced soil in their neighborhood. The black people I found were in Tennessee fighting the Federal Highway Commission against the disparate impact of a highway bypass in their community. They were acting on their concerns for the environment in the context of the *environmental justice* movement. The literature on the environmental justice movement chronicled the activism of black people and other racial minorities in place-based struggles to defend their health and well being from threats to their environment. Up until then I had not considered these kinds of actions to be expressions of environmental concern and a form of ‘environmental’ activism.

After reading some of this literature I was ready to begin my fieldwork. I was new to the field of anthropology and ethnographic field methods, though from my work as a social worker for geriatric patients I had developed an appreciation for interviews as

a source of knowledge. With a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) grant from the National Science Foundation, I began my study of what I then referred to as ‘black environmentalism’. Then, as now, I use the term black environmentalism to refer to the various ways that black people, at least in the United States, express concern, identify with, and take actions in the name of the ‘environment’, in whatever ways that environment is conceived. I planned to conduct fieldwork in an environmental justice community and had read that North Carolina was considered one of the birthplaces of the environmental justice movement. I felt fortunate to be working on a research project that was based in North Carolina and expected to find plenty of environmental justice groups from which to choose my field site. However, my efforts to situate myself in one community and begin my research activities were thwarted. I could not find a single group that referred to itself as an environmental justice group! Unlike what I found for environmental conservation groups like the Sierra Club, in 1997 no directory, telephone or Internet listings of environmental justice groups existed in North Carolina¹.

A large part of my research activities entailed trying to find the environmental justice movement! I spent months following what would become dead-end leads in search of a single environmental justice group. Eventually I was given home telephone numbers of several participants in the landmark 1982 Warren County protests, some of whom were by then organized into a public/private partnership with the North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources to detoxify the PCB-laced landfill in their community. What was in 1982 a community-initiated and self-organized protest

¹ Over a year after beginning my study I happened upon a directory of people of color environmental groups. Robert Bullard at the Environmental Justice Resource Center at Clark Atlanta University had compiled information for the 1992 directory. It contained groups from 45 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. Two hundred groups were listed, 13 were located in the state of North Carolina.

movement had become a state-sponsored public/private partnership that was considering what to do with the landfill site once the soil was decontaminated. Residents wanted to commemorate it as the birthplace of the environmental justice movement. A community member told me that potential plans also included setting up a playground on the decontaminated landfill. When I first heard this I was astounded. Why would folks want their children playing in a former toxic trash heap? Did they trust that the site would be free of danger? Years later as I write this dissertation, I can acknowledge the value of their attempts to turn the landfill, which had for many years been viewed by them as a source of shame, into a source of pride and a site of victory. One resident had reported to me that the young people of Warren County had begun to negatively identify with the landfill site; some had considered themselves “trash too”. To their dismay, Warren County had become known as ‘the place with the toxic landfill’: who would want to live near a cancer-causing landfill. Commemorating the site was an opportunity for residents to collectively reclaim their dignity. The 25-year Warren County anti-landfill struggle demonstrates how former farmland can become an ‘environmental threat’, and how that threat can become a source of hope. ‘Nature’, ‘environment’ and ‘environmental threats’, I learned are produced in collective action.

Gradually I began to identify other environmental justice groups. Through my Warren County connections I met a group of residents in Durham who were working with a professor of environmental sciences at North Carolina Central University on a lead abatement project. Through another connection I met a group of concerned citizens in Tillery and through them met members of several other concerned citizen groups across eastern North Carolina. None of these, I noted, had the words ‘environment’ or

‘environmental justice’ in their group names. As is the case of many environmental justice groups, their names reference the place where residents live or the focus of the group’s work. In North Carolina the names of environmental justice groups included: the Concerned Citizens of Northampton County, the Concerned Citizens of Tillery, Concerned Citizens of Vance County-Hwy 54, Black Workers for Justice, the Committee for Women’s Economic Empowerment, and the Committee for Racial Justice.

Slowly I began collecting contact information on and for these groups. When I began my research in 1997, groups who worked on environmental justice issues were mostly concerned citizen groups that worked on a host of problems and issues that affected their communities. Their activities included conducting health-related surveys, providing health care services, advocating for educational programs and services for school-aged youth, running youth empowerment and job training programs, establishing a community center, assisting workers with job-related complaints, and coordinating black history month programs.

Over the last decade, these disparate groups, together with various state agency officials, university-based researchers, funding agents, and environmental nonprofits have organized what has become known as North Carolina’s environmental justice movement. I assisted in this effort by co-founding in 1997, an environmental justice non-profit organization. At the time, it was the only group in the state of North Carolina that explicitly identified itself as an environmental justice group. Though it lasted for little more than two years, Enviro 1st² administered environmentally related educational and

² Now defunct, Enviro 1st worked with communities to develop brochures, flyers and survey, wrote reports and working papers, identified technical and legal assistance, conducted research, and advocated for environmental policies.

training programs. Its mission was to foster safe and healthy environments for residents of low-income communities and communities-of-color. Working with Enviro 1st I assisted in organizing statewide environmental justice conferences, educating others about environmental justice, and otherwise encouraging the development of North Carolina's environmental justice movement through statewide conferences for example. Since Enviro 1st folded in 2000, I have seen more groups form in North Carolina that explicitly take up environmental justice issues. Perhaps the most significant among these is the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network⁴ (NCEJN). Other environmental justice groups such as North Carolina Fair Share, Black Workers for Justice and the Concerned Citizens of Tillery have prioritized environmental justice among the many issues that they address. It is more likely the case that these latter groups will focus their efforts on environmental justice for a designated period, turn its focus to another perhaps more pressing issue, and then return months or even years later to tackle an environmental justice issue more explicitly. My REU-sponsored research included identifying these groups and collecting information on them. As a researcher/activist in the movement, I used information gathered during my research activities to produce North Carolina's first-ever-environmental justice directory and resource guide.

Two years later when I enrolled in graduate school my initial efforts to find the environmental justice movement in North Carolina expanded into a multi-sited study of environmental justice activism and its constitution as a social movement. This

³ My volunteer work with Enviro 1st informed my research questions and areas of inquiry. This work included developing programs, participating in meetings with state officials, non-profit professionals, community activists, and organizing workshop panels and conferences.

⁴ NCEJN was formed in 1998 as a result a community-wide call for a network organization at North Carolina's first-ever community-initiated environmental justice summit. This organization ended up becoming one of my field sites for my dissertation research.

dissertation attends to both my research interests and activist commitments. As an activist, I am committed to advancing the environmental justice movement's contributions to the formation of non-racist, multicultural democratic societies in which all people live, work and play in clean safe environments. As a researcher, I am interested in explaining how the environmental justice movement produces racial identities and meanings on one hand, and environmental identities and imagery on another.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xvii
---------------------	------

CHAPTER

I. RACE-MAKING AND ENVIRONMENTALISM.....	1
Becoming Aware of Environmental Racism.....	4
The ‘Feel’ of Environmental Justice.....	5
The Movement for Environmental Justice.....	8
Political Ecology in Anthropology: The Environmental Arena as a Site of Cultural Production of Race and Class.....	14
Broadened Ideas of Environmentalism.....	17
Race and Class Identity in the Environmental Justice Movement.....	18
Racial Ideology in the Contemporary Civil Rights Period of Black Activism.....	20
What Does Race Have to Do with the Environment: Social Movements, Identity and the Question of Black Environmentalism.....	23
Black/White Differences in Environmental Concerns and Actions.....	25
Approaches to Social Movements and Collective Identity in Anthropology.....	27
The Social Practice Theory of Identity Formation.....	28
Research Methodology.....	30
Site Selection.....	31
Research Activities.....	33

Chapter Overviews.....	34
II. RACE AND CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICS: TRADITIONAL BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.....	37
The Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 2002.....	38
Environmental Justice and Traditional Civil Rights in the Black Public Sphere.....	46
The Traditional Civil Rights Community and the Environmental Justice Movement.....	48
Analytic Dimensions of the NAACP and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network	51
Getting Down to Business: Routine Meetings.....	51
Observational Notes on the Differences between the Two Meetings.....	60
Organizational Focus: Advocacy vs. Community Organizing.....	62
Differences in Membership and History of the Organizations.....	65
Humble Roots of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network....	68
Class Matters in the Black Public Sphere.....	70
Social Class and Black Racial Identity in the Contemporary Period.....	72
Imagining Blackness.....	74
Social Images in the Literature of the NAACP.....	74
Solicitation Materials of the NAACP.....	74
Literature of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network.....	78
Conclusion	80
III. BECOMING AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST.....	85
Figuring the World of Environmental Justice.....	88

People of Color Relate Differently to the Environment: Naming the Difference.....	96
Emerging Racialized Identities.....	98
Pathways to Environmental Activism.....	101
Dollie Burwell's Path to Environmentalism: Redefining Environment.....	103
George Garrison's Desire to Remain Distinct from Environmentalists..	105
S.H.I.T. Versus H.E.L.P: Awareness of Inequality and Injustice.....	107
An Environmentalism of Ever Present Danger.....	110
The Story of Pastor Wilson: Continuing Developments.....	113
Conclusion: Blackness and the Figured World of Environmental Justice.....	116
IV. THE FIGURED WORLD OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE SIERRA CLUB.....	121
An Anti-Racism Workshop for Environmentalists.....	123
The Development of White Racial Identities in the Environmental Movement.....	130
Figuring the World of Environmental Justice in the Sierra Club.....	132
Karen's Path to Environmental Justice.....	131
V. FIGURING WHITENESS AND PATHWAYS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE	143
Labor Organizing: Another Path to the Figured World of Environmental Justice Activism.....	145
Being White and An Environmental Justice Activist.....	149
The Literature on White Ally Identity Formation.....	153
With Privileges Come Responsibilities.....	156
Learning to Lead from Behind.....	157

Growing into the Figured World of Environmental Justice.....	160
‘Doing Something’: Leading from Behind and White Skin Privilege.....	162
Being an ‘Environmental Justice White Ally’	165
Environmental Justice Spaces within the Sierra Club.....	166
The Significance of an Environmental Justice Community of Practice to Being an Environmental Justice White Ally.....	168
Tema: A Particular Kind of Environmentalist.....	171
Raising Racial Awareness.....	173
Racial Awareness in a Community of Practice.....	177
Challenges of Multiracial Organizing.....	179
Conclusion.....	182
VI. CONCLUSION.....	187
Environmental Justice Activism Adds to the Heterogeneity of the Black Public Sphere.....	187
My Speaking Engagement with the NAACP.....	187
Raising Awareness of Environmental Justice.....	191
Possibilities.....	194
Appendices.....	201
References.....	210

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page Number
1. Services and Support Provided.....	57
2. Richmond Branch Charter Membership by Occupation.....	61
3. Accomplishments of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network.....	66
4. What People of Color Want From White Allies.....	149

CHAPTER ONE

RACE-MAKING AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

This dissertation centers on people's cultural lives and everyday practices and their lived class and racial experiences as they engage with environmentalism in the United States. It focuses on the changing meanings of race-based and environmental identities in the United States as they are being shaped in the environmental justice movement. I ask the following questions, *how is the environmental justice movement attracting participants and producing a context for the production of race and class-based identities?* Similarly, *how are racial identities related to environmental behaviors and cultural practices?* Though it examines the experiences of both black and white environmental justice activists, it focuses principally on those of African Americans.

My research explored how individuals perceive and classify particular actions, concerns, and identifications, as they become identified with and part of the environmental justice movement. I offer a theoretical perspective and an analysis of qualitative data on how it is that individuals become active in the environmental justice movement. To explain this form of environmental activism, I emphasize the significance of identities—durable subjectivities of self, both collective and individual—that develop through participation in cultural activities within the “figured world⁵” of environmental

⁵ A figured world is a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation and signification—a horizon of meaning—in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to

justice. I argue that a personal identity forms and becomes embodied as one grows into a figured world, participates in meaningful action in that world, and over time develops dispositions, sentiments, and concerns relevant to that world.

This dissertation joins with anthropological studies of environmental justice by Checker (2005) and (Gregory 2001) as it highlights the experiences of African Americans who are engaged in environmental justice activism. It adds critical insight into how the environmental justice movement has become a critical discursive space in which new forms of political agency and new social subjects are being fashioned. It furthers this area of inquiry by examining how new forms of state governance in the form of statutes and legislation are emerging as environmental justice, as an idea and social movement, has become institutionalized. Different from Checker's (2005) case study of one black community's efforts in Georgia, this dissertation examines how race-based and environmental identities are forming in practice in the broader environmental justice movement.

Black and white identity is often talked about as though they were singular, as though there is a singular black identity or a singular white identity. Instead, my examination of the cultural production of blackness and whiteness proposes that racial identities form in different sites, there is no overarching black or white identity out there that is being (re)formed. Social practice theory pays attention to the formation of racially marked identities as a component of the larger topic of black and white identity. It focuses on identities-in-practice and looks at the formation of racially marked identities

certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others (Holland et. al. 1998, 52). The subject of chapter three of this dissertation is the formation of environmental justice activist identities on personal terrain.

in different sites. This dissertation examines the formation of environmental identities that become racially marked in a specific site, the environmental justice movement.

This dissertation presents the environmental arena as a new terrain of racial struggle in the contemporary post civil rights period. African Americans across the United States are organizing in defense of the health and well-being of their communities. In doing so they have made significant contributions to the formation of the environmental justice movement, which in the United States is largely aimed at ending the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste landfills and other polluting industries in low-income and minority communities (Bullard 1993; Taylor 1995; Cole and Foster 2001). Collectively, environmental justice activists have refashioned environmental discourses to reflect changing awareness of how air, water and soil are subject to institutionalized racial discrimination. One phrase coined by activists is *environmental racism*, which refers to racial discrimination in environmental decision-making. In this process of cultural production, environmental justice activists have redefined the environment to mean *where we live, work and play*. For them the environment has become both social and ecological (Checker 2002). Yet, how do these struggles, which involve the defense of place and the formation of new analytic frameworks such as environmental racism, shape racial identities in the contemporary period?

Furthermore, scholars have given scant attention to the exact dimensions of the relationship between the environmental justice and civil rights movements: no studies have attempted to explain the role and significance of traditional black civil rights organizations in the environmental justice movement. Likewise, few studies have explicitly examined the extent to which environmental justice—as an interpretive

framework and a mode of political activism—has altered the ways that communities organize against longstanding problems of racial discrimination in the fields of education, housing, labor and criminal justice. And furthermore, few have examined the extent to which environmentalism is affecting how black people in local communities in the United States see themselves in relation to environmental struggles in an international context.

Becoming Aware of Environmental Racism

From my research, I have learned that people become aware of environmental racism principally through word of mouth. Those in the general public who are most acquainted with the term environmental racism are likely to have learned about it as a result of being involved in a neighborhood-based campaign against a local environmental threat. I found that people who live in communities where landfills, oil refineries and other polluting facilities are located are more likely than the general public to have heard the term environmental justice. One family who lives in one such community is featured in the 2008 video entitled, *Contamination and a Crusade*. The video tells the story of black residents of Dickson, Tennessee. Sheila Holt-Orsted, one of the town's few black residents believes her family was not properly informed of the drinking water's dangers and that the toxins from the family's well led to family illnesses, including her own cancer. Ms. Holt-Orsted, like other activists I studied, don't start their campaigns believing that theirs is a case environmental racism, but come to this particular understanding in the course of their struggle to learn about what's making them sick and why. After Ms. Holt returned to her hometown of Dickson, TN after living for a number of years in Virginia, she discovered that members of her family had cancer. Her father

eventually died from cancer. Soon after, she discovered that she too had cancer. In the video clip Ms. Holt-Orsted tells why she thinks her community is experiencing environmental racism:

The reason I believe that this is environmental racism is because every single Caucasian family in this county that was found to have trichloroethylene, TC, in their water, according to state records, took them off the water and informed them of what they had been drinking and they provided them with a alternate water source. [However] with the whole family they wrote us letters telling us it was okay to drink it and that it wouldn't cause any adverse health affects. I believe that if my father had know that his well water was contaminated with the 15th most toxic chemical known to man that he would've gotten hooked up to municipal water. But the County of Dixon and the city of Dixon and the state of Tennessee and the EPA failed to warn him that his family was drinking trichloroethylene.

Like Ms. Holt-Orsted, other environmental justice activists attribute racism to why black communities like hers are suffering these environmental threats. She came to understand the differential treatment her family experienced from government officials as a case of environmental racism. Environmental justice activists like Holt-Orsted are introduced to the phrase environmental racism in the course of their local campaign; they learn its meaning from those who claim to have experienced it and from members of those communities who fight against it. The environmental justice movement spreads principally through word of mouth: one community educates another and one person tells a group of people. Because of racism, Ms. Holt-Orsted figured, a toxic dump was located 57 feet from her family's farm. It is the reason why government and corporate officials failed to inform them of the dangers of drinking and using contaminated water from their wells.

The Feel of the Environmental Justice Movement

When I talked with her in 1999, 17 years after her leading role in a landmark environmental justice campaign in Warren County, North Carolina Dolores Baker (a pseudonym⁶) only reluctantly called environmental justice activism a *movement*. In my informal talks with Baker, she told me that environmental justice activism didn't "feel" to her like a movement; I organized her response into three reasons. First, according to Baker, the environmental justice movement did not have high profile leaders who were national spokespersons. Second, not all environmental justice struggles were about the "same thing". Third, looking back in time, environmental justice to her did not feel like a movement because environmental justice campaigns were isolated, scattered and uncoordinated.⁷

In 1997 Baker contrasted the environmental justice movement with the civil rights movement. She pointed out that unlike the civil rights movement of the 1960s; the environmental justice movement lacked a national presence with charismatic leaders such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For her, environmental justice activism also lacked the energy and the sense of urgency that characterized the 1960s era civil rights movement. Then, she said, there was widespread and shared anti-racist commitment; Blacks, in particular, were united. People participated in mass demonstrations and orchestrated acts of civil disobedience. Baker reminisced about the days when musicians, singers and

⁶ In some cases I use the real names of persons who participated in this study and obtained written permission from study participants to do so. Although I may have obtained permission to use a participant's real name, in most occasions I chose to use pseudonyms for the sake of consistency. Where indicated I use a pseudonym.

⁷ In 1999, at the time of my informal and formal interviews with Ms. Baker, the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) was only in its formative stages. The NCEJN has, I would argue, facilitated the development of North Carolina's environmental justice movement. Prior to the NCEJN no central coordinating body existed to unite or bring into dialogue the discrete struggles that were being waged in the name of environmental justice across central and northeastern North Carolina. While Ms. Baker's characterizations of environmental justice struggles as scattered and uncoordinated may have been valid during my period of research with her, the NCEJN now serves a coordinating, unifying and facilitating role in the ongoing production of North Carolina's environmental justice movement.

other civil rights activists crisscrossed the U.S. South in buses, delivering the message of racial equality that drew her into singing freedom songs. She added that people all over the country knew who the movement's leaders were. In environmental justice, she countered, there are no national leaders. Instead, she explained, in the environmental justice movement, a lot of different people represent their own local-based groups. She and others maintain what can be characterized as a nostalgic perspective that emphasizes the importance of "great" leaders.

Further evidence for Baker that environmental justice activism didn't feel like a movement was what she characterized as its lack of focus. She noted that not all environmental justice groups and proponents share a common purpose. Not all were allied in defense of 'Mother Earth' or were in solidarity with Native American struggles for sovereignty. These two dictums—protecting Mother Earth and working for Native American sovereignty—are among the *17 Principles of the Environmental Justice Movement*, a key document that outlines the movement's philosophy and commitments that Baker helped craft during the landmark 1991 People of Color Environmental Summit in Washington, DC.⁸ Baker added that some environmental justice struggles are about landfills while others are about hog lagoons. According to environmental justice proponents such as Baker, environmental justice issues include a host of societal ills. Among them are houses and drinking water infested with lead, school-aged children forced to consume toxic behavior modification drugs like Ritalin, and mountain tops

⁸ Though the 17 Principles may not function as a unifying document in 'feeling' as Baker thought it should, it nevertheless is a unifier of environmental justice struggles in principle. See Appendix 1 for a list of the 17 Principles.

blown off to retrieve coal. In contrast, the civil rights movement had the single aim of ending segregation⁹.

The question of whether environmental justice is a social movement speaks to the two main points of this dissertation: as a movement, environmental justice is a site of cultural production that has fashioned racial and environmental identities and meanings. According to activists such as Baker, the environmental justice movement felt different from the civil rights movement, a social movement in which many members/activists in the environmental justice movement were active and which has become a prototype movement that serves as a standard of comparison for social activists, lay people, and scholars alike.

The Movement for Environmental Justice

Characteristic of many current popular movements, as Baker concedes, struggles waged in the name of environmental justice are grassroots and place-based. During the 1980's and much of the 1990's environmental justice activism consisted of discrete local struggles in different parts of the country. They were uncoordinated and unorganized on a national level, and at the time of my 1997 interview with Baker, they were uncoordinated on a state level as well. Other activists I interviewed explained that environmental justice struggles tended to spring up and then quietly and sometimes quickly fade. Baker added that environmental justice problems and issues are rarely resolved. It is true that some struggles, like her community's landfill issue, have been

⁹ Baker's comment overlooks internal struggles within the civil rights movement over what its dominant aim would be. Various interests and groups that came to constitute the civil rights movement stressed particular aims and strategies ranging from black separatism to full integration. The hegemonic discourse in the civil rights movement called for an end to Jim Crow desegregation and for full integration and equal rights for blacks. See Carson 1986, Eagles (ed.) 1986, and Bush 2003, for a discussion of the internal struggles within the civil rights movement for control of its aims, goals and leadership.

waged for decades. However, unlike 1960's era civil rights struggles, which also occurred in disparate parts of the country, environmental justice protests and vigils are not publicized nationally, nor are they presented in popular media as a unified national effort to improve the lives of poor and minority people.

Baker's comments mirror scholarly debates about contemporary social movements and help explain the lack of academic consensus over what constitutes a social movement. According to a growing community of critical scholars of social movements, contemporary movements operate at various spatial and organizational scales and do not always have a centralized structure. Nor do proponents of many contemporary movements necessarily share a common set of political commitments or have a common focus; rather, contemporary movements are pluralistic and multifocal (see Wofford 2008). Baker's comments also draw attention to a relatively unexplored dimension of social movements, the affect or *feel* of movements (see Satterfield 2002 for an exception.)

Baker's affective experience of the environmental justice movement as different from that of the civil rights movement is worth noting. Her comments suggest that the civil rights movement comes to mind when she thinks of a social movement; many activists and scholars of social movements regard the civil rights movement as a prototype movement as well¹⁰. Although the global justice movement and before it, the so-called 'new' social movements have expanded the field, many scholars would say that the civil rights movement defines the contemporary academic field of social movement

¹⁰ See Alden Morris' 1987 study of the Civil Rights Movement entitled, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* in which he characterizes the Civil Rights Movement as the "mother of other significant forces including the student movement of the 1960's and the Anti-Vietnam and Women's Movement." p. 21

studies. In some ways, the civil rights movement takes the “space of the imaginary” social movement¹¹.

It matters that the civil rights movement is regarded as the prototypical social movement because the histories and narratives about it provide a powerful image, set of memories, ideas about goals, strategies, impacts, *and* a set of feelings against which contemporary movements are compared. When the feeling of a movement like environmental justice compares differently, and sometimes unfavorably, popular perception is that the movement doesn't quite match up or 'count' in the same way as does the civil rights movement. Proponents of other movements then have to create new feelings (and in the case of environmental justice, new terms and institutions) against a very powerful and well-defined feeling that is socially reinforced in public discourse about what constitutes a social movement. Baker's keen insights echo comments I heard from both environmental justice movement proponents and those blacks that are not politically active. In black churches, barber shops, at community fairs, and family functions I heard repeated exhortations: “We need another King!” “Where are our leaders?” “Black folks aren't united!”

Despite it not *feeling* like the civil rights movement, the environmental justice movement, like the civil rights movement seeks racial justice. Its aims are similar and it has made significant institutional gains in advancing a civil rights agenda in the environmental arena. Since the mid-1980s the environmental justice movement has become a site of cultural production with national and international reach. For example, in 1991 and 2002, National People of Color Environmental Summits were convened in

¹¹ In a way similar to how the space of imaginary environmentalism is being 'occupied' by preservation groups like the Sierra Club.

Washington, DC. In 2001, I heard speakers from the United States, Africa and Mexico emphasize environmental justice at the United Nations-sponsored ‘World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia, and Related Forms of Intolerance’ held in Durban, South Africa. Over the last decade, statewide and regional environmental justice networks and organizations such as the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network have been established. Pressure from environmental justice proponents at the federal and state levels has resulted in environmental justice statutes such as Executive Order 12898 signed by President Bill Clinton in 1994 that outlined federal actions to address environmental justice in minority and low-income neighborhoods. More recently, presidential candidate Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton issued a press statement during the 2008 presidential primaries in support of the Environmental Justice Renewal Act¹². The Environmental Justice Renewal Act is federal legislation intended to address environmental racism. Federal and state government environmental justice offices and working groups now operating did not exist two decades ago. There are environmental justice movements across the globe in South Africa, Mexico, Canada, and Latin America. Though hesitant in 1997 to characterize environmental justice activism as a social movement, Baker, now like many other environmental justice proponents, regards environmental justice activism as a movement.

Baker’s comments hint at reasons for the shape of the movement. Environmental justice activists have deliberately chosen to further a decentralized, non-hierarchical

¹² According to the candidate, the Environmental Justice Renewal Act will address the rollbacks that have taken place during the second Bush Administration, and once again focus federal attention and resources on environmental justice. (A summary of the Environmental Justice Renewal Act is located in Appendix 1 of this dissertation.)

structure of the environmental justice movement that results from deliberate actions by environmental justice activists. For example, at the first National People of Color Environmental Summit in 1991, conference conveners and participants declared that they would return home and direct their energy toward building local and regional environmental justice networks and organizations, rather than national ones. The movement, they declared, should be led from the ground up rather than guided from the top down. And, environmental justice organizing remains focused at the local, state and regional levels despite the formation of a few national network organizations (e.g., the African American Environmental Justice Network) and national recognition of a few local and regional environmental justice leaders (e.g., Richard Moore of the Southwest Organizing Project and the late Damu Smith formerly of Greenpeace). Activists' insistence on a decentralized organizational structure contributed to the movement's lack of national presence and multi-focus, observations that punctuate Baker's commentary. My attempts to find out why activists' preferred a decentralized organizing structure and strategy yielded no formally enunciated reason. By the time of the 1991 Summit, according to Conrad, one of the activists I interviewed, environmental justice campaigns had their own (local) leadership and organizational structures. Like others, Conrad had concluded that environmental justice activism needed to be grounded in the local—people have to know how to combat racism in their daily lives. A national organization, that determined, couldn't do the work of organizing local people and developing local campaigns. Summit attendees opposed having a supranational structure overlay these local efforts. They did not want to supplant local efforts with a national agenda, so

groups and individuals were encouraged to build the movement's capacity up from and through these local efforts.

Baker notes that environmental justice struggles are local and community-based. These factors, I argue, contribute to the movement's different feel. Anthropologist Steven Gregory (1998) reasons that the internal differences within communities are what makes them distinct from one another. That is to say, an environmental justice struggle is shaped by a community's specific history and experience of race, racism and classism, and by how individuals within these communities are differently positioned within these systems. Thus, a community's experience of what comes to be known as an 'environmental threat' differs from another's. In the course of collective action, members develop frameworks of meaning that speak to these particularities (Pulido 1998; Kempton 1995). Yet, what unites these otherwise discrete struggles is the discourse of environmental justice. In the course of a community's local struggle, that struggle can become allied with and orchestrated alongside similar struggles that comprise the environmental justice movement. During an anti-landfill environmental justice campaign in Northampton County, North Carolina for example, a landfill was transformed from simple garbage heaps to a site constitutive of the environment. For black residents of Northampton County, the presence of trash became evidence of environmental racism. Likewise, people's understandings of themselves in relation to trash and environmental racism can change, as it did in the 1982 Warren County Anti-PCB Landfill campaign. What's more, people can become environmental justice activists (the subject of chapter three of this dissertation); and white people can become what they themselves refer to as 'white allies' (the subject of chapter five of this dissertation).

The remainder of this chapter is divided into four sections. The first introduces the two main themes of this dissertation, which center on the formation of racial and environmental identities and meanings in the context of the environmental justice movement. Next, I introduce the theoretical framework that guided this research. I apply a *social practice theory of identity formation* to demonstrate *how* social and personal identities are forming in the environmental justice movement. This discussion of theoretical focus is followed by a description of the research design and types of data collection that took place over the period of research and concludes with a brief overview of the chapters, locating them within the questions, interests and themes that frame this dissertation.

Political Ecology in Anthropology: The Environmental Arena as a Site of Cultural Production of Race and Class

Political ecology draws attention to the sociopolitical and economic conditions in which relations between social classes, between social classes and the environment, and between nature and society are embedded. These historically contingent relations, as they show up in the environmental justice movement, are the focus of this dissertation.

Included in this approach are anthropological studies that examine the environment and environmental discourses theoretically and ethnographically through the study of ‘ecological conflicts’ or ‘ecological resistance movements’ (See Little 1999; Taylor 1995; McCay 1998; Martinez-Alier 2002). These studies draw on theoretical debates in poststructuralist theory, cultural studies and political economy, and engage debates in transnationalism and globalization to reveal the assumptions, agendas, and ideologies that are taken-for-granted in many academic discussions of the

human/environment relationship. Studies in this approach draw on these debates as they explore “the role of power relations in determining human uses of the environment” (Bates and Lees 1996:9) and “the relations between human society, viewed in its bio-cultural-political complexity in a significantly humanized nature” (Greenberg and Park 1994:1).

This dissertation joins with these studies as it attends to issues of power and inequality in the environmental movement. As retold by several of my research participants who played pivotal roles in the landmark Warren County anti-landfill protests, activists first coined the term “environmental racism” while protesting to characterize what they considered racial discrimination in the siting of the PCB-laced landfill in a black community. Since 1982 when the phrase was first used, environmental racism has come to refer to racial discrimination in the placement of environmental hazards in low-income and minority communities and to the exclusion of black and other people-of-color from environmental decision-making. This research also joins with others that demonstrate how ‘nature’ is strategically remade to serve sociopolitical projects; the environment and nature are neither purely autonomous nor objective realities; instead, they are culturally produced (See Escobar 1996; Ingold 1992; Braun and Castree 1998). Environmental movements are sites of knowledge production wherein cultural practices, identities and beliefs are invented and/or made over (Kalland 2001; Ellen, Parkes and Bicker 2001; Parkes 2001).

Recognizing such movement as sites of cultural production, anthropologist Peter Brosius (1997), for example, examines the power of environmentalist discourse to inculcate and change identity and behavior. His work reveals how environmentalists

from western countries have used aboriginal Penan medicinal plant knowledge to construct representations of Penan cosmology. These transnational environmental discourses have in turn been picked up by the Penan themselves and incorporated into their speech and other representations of self and culture. According to Brosius, Penan beliefs and knowledges have been influenced by globally circulating environmentalist discourses about Penan beliefs and knowledges; thus, they mutually informed one another. This ‘nature’ centered view of the environment differs from an environmental justice one. Not environment as wilderness and non-human nature, in the environmental justice view, the environment is about people and the places they live, work and play.

This dissertation contributes in two ways to the literature and approach of political ecology. It demonstrates how environmental justice—a human-centered environmental perspective—is an environmentalist discourse that addresses issues of race and class. The environmental justice movement is producing new identities and changing people’s awareness and behavior. First, this dissertation addresses the cultural specificity of the ‘environment’ and environmentalism as it focuses on how black Americans and other people-of-color in the United States have redefined the environment to mean “where we live, work and play”. This view of the environment is distinct from that espoused in mainstream environmentalism. There, an ecological- or bio-centric view of the environment is emphasized. Proponents of an ecological view emphasize the intrinsic value of non-human elements of the environment and believe that people should safeguard nature. They call for the preservation and protection of ‘wilderness’, ‘green spaces’ and the protection of ‘endangered species’. On the other hand, proponents of environmental justice argue that people need protection from threats in the environment.

A button at an annual summit of black farmers in North Carolina read, “Black Farmers are an Endangered Species”. These black farmers figured the issue of black farmland loss as an environmental justice issue. Another environmental justice activist who participated in this study, Liz Sessoms of the Center for Women’s Economic Alternatives in eastern North Carolina, likewise called for the protection of black women workers from on-the-job assaults. In our interview she asserted, “Black women are an endangered species too!” Second, this dissertation adds to an emerging body of anthropological literature on the environmental justice movement. I treat the environmental justice movement as a process, a sociopolitical project in which new knowledges, cultural practices, and identities are forming. In particular I examine how the environmental justice movement is a site of race-making, and I look at how this particular form of environmentalism is producing distinct environmental concepts and identities.

Broadened Ideas of Environmentalism

A growing number of anthropologists are critical of ecological-centered environmentalism, or what some refer to as “Euro-environmentalism”. This dominant form of environmentalism, they claim, ignores local knowledges as well as social and political issues of sovereignty and land and resource rights which are of chief concern to peoples of the global south (Broad 1994; Guha 1989a). Instead, they call for anthropological studies that examine the processes by which discursive and institutional connections are forged between what come to be called environmental concerns and ‘enduring historical struggles’ or “long, complex, social, political and economic struggles” (Holland and Lave 2001:3). The black freedom struggle in the United States is an example of an enduring historical struggle. It is an ongoing struggle for black self-

determination that takes on new meaning and significance in different historical periods and can be traced from the period of African enslavement and European colonization and occupation of what came to be the Americas to the present. This dissertation considers the environmental justice movement a contemporary expression of the black freedom struggle that explicitly addresses environmental issues.

In the contemporary post civil rights period, I argue, the black freedom struggle is articulated around struggles for clean, safe ‘environments’ wherein environmental justice activists call for an end to “environmental racism”. For example, anthropologist Melissa Checker (2005) demonstrates how black neighborhood activists, working with white environmentalists in Augusta, Georgia, shifted their thinking and talking about toxic releases from a nearby thermal ceramics factory. Residents of Hyde and Aragon Park claimed that their environment was poisoning them and that corporations and government permitted this poisoning because the residents are black. For these environmental justice activists, these releases have become one in a long list of racial justice issues that for them proves that black life is devalued. In this process toxic releases became environmental issues as well as racial issues.

Race and Class Identity in the Environmental Justice Movement

This dissertation contributes to scholarly debates on the social construction of race by examining how racial identities are being constructed in the contemporary period in black politics. It implicitly agrees with Omi and Winant (1993) whose studies attempt to “grasp the process-oriented and relational character of racial identity and racial meaning... [And attends to the role of] historicity and struggles over it in the study of racial phenomena” (1993:6). Following their lead, I demonstrate how black racial

identities are forming in the present sociohistorical context. By examining how racial identities have developed in the environmental justice movement, I highlight how blacks and whites have developed distinct racial identities in relation to the environment. In the context of environmental justice activism, Blacks have become ‘black environmentalists’ and whites have become what I call ‘environmental-justice, anti-racist white allies’.

Two themes that are particularly relevant appear in the literature on race in the United States. First, constructions of race serve as rationalizations for social inequality (Fredrickson 1988; Williams 1991; Smith 1995). Race continues to matter in the distribution and allocation of public goods such as education (Jacobson *et al* 2001), housing (Iceland, Weinberg and Steinmetz 2002) and employment (U.S. GAO 1994). Sociologist Robert Bullard (1997) has extended the scholarly study of racial matters to the field of environmentalism. Yet systems of racial privilege, what Omi and Winant refer to as ‘racial formations’, are inextricably linked with class inequality. Class-based interests and political alignments affect the construction and content of black racial identities (Feagin and Sikes 1994; Segal 1998): meanings and experiences of blackness have been affected by the increased class stratification among Blacks that has occurred over the last 30 years (Gregory 1992, 1994 and 2001). Social practice theory pays attention to different sites—racial identities can be site specific and diverse in analogous sites. Chapter one addresses how class affects black racial identity in two different black activist sites—the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and the NAACP.

A second theme, influenced by postmodern critiques, focuses on the performative aspects or the lived experience of race as people struggle to define race and racial identity in various social arenas. Rahier (1999), for example, argues that individuals and groups

represent blackness in a variety of ways and perform it differently. Examples of these studies explain how black students who achieve academic success are viewed as ‘acting white’ (Fordam 1993; Cousins 1999; Ogbu 1978), or demonstrate how notions of black authenticity play out in different musical genres and art forms (Lusane 1993; Mahon 2000). Moreover, like Winant, this dissertation “recognize[s] the importance of historical context and contingency in the framing of racial categories and the social construction of racially defined experiences” (Winant 1994:18). It expands the literature on racial and class identity formation by examining how the environmental justice movement is contributing to the formation of black racial identity in recent black experience. It also demonstrates how white racial identity, namely the identity of ‘white ally’ has been forming in the environmental arena since the 1990s.

Racial Ideology in the Contemporary Civil Rights Period of Black Political Activism

Further contributing to Delores Baker’s sense of the different feel of the environmental justice movement are changes in the social, political and economic landscape in the U.S. in the 30 years following the civil rights movement. These changes situate the contemporary period in what is commonly referred to as the post civil rights era. In this period, forms of racial exclusion are characterized by a system of racial hegemony rather than one of racial domination (Winant: 1994). The current racial regime is marked by what sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues is a system of *colorblind* racism that codifies white supremacy while denying the existence of race, racism and racial power. One example of this is California Proposition 209, the euphemistically entitled Civil Rights Act that amended the constitution to prohibit public institutions from considering race, sex, or ethnicity, while it denied racism and sexism.

Colorblind racism, according to Bonilla-Silva, aims to make race and racism unrecognizable as it entails the following: the avoidance of racial terminology; claims by whites that they experience “reverse discrimination”; and the invisibility of the mechanisms of racial inequality. Unlike Jim Crow era racism, against which the civil rights movement activists fought, colorblind racism asserts that color is not important and should not be the basis for social judgments (Bonilla-Silva 2001).

Yet social (e.g. racial) judgments, practices and policies, such as locating polluting industries in poor and minority communities continue through the contemporary period. The ideology of colorblind racism as opposed to Jim Crow, contributes to the different feel of the environmental justice movement. While Baker rightly observes that the issues addressed in environmental justice campaigns vary, this variety is not reason enough to discount it as a movement. Environmental justice struggles are not fought solely in defense of the sovereignty of Native American people, as Baker’s reflections on the 17 Principles attest, but also in defense of the health and well being of black and brown people whose backyards border oil refineries and other environmental threats. The U.S. environmental justice movement has become a multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-issue coalition movement that addresses such issues as abandoned industrial sites, childhood asthma, air pollution, and pesticide exposure. (It is also the case that not all struggles involving these issues explicitly ally themselves with the environmental justice movement.) And not all environmental justice struggles advance all 17 Principles of Environmental Justice simultaneously; different struggles are rooted in their particular histories and locales. This multifocality of the environmental justice movement is what

distinguishes it from the achieved unity of the civil rights movement, which became principally about ending legalized racial segregation.

New forms of anti-racism activism have emerged in the post civil rights period. Environmental justice is one that in some ways is emblematic of social movements in the post civil rights period. This period is also marked by increased awareness of environmental damage and its disproportionate impact on people-of-color and lower-income communities (Bullard: 1990, 1993, 1994; Bryant: 1992). There has been increasing internationalization of consciousness of environmental degradation as well as its disproportionate impact on third world peoples who fight in defense of their livelihoods. Since the mid-seventies there has been an upsurge in what Martinez Alier (1997) refers to as 'environmentalisms of the poor'. In these environmentalisms, people's experience of race, class, gender and other social divisions is the lens through which conflicts over control and access to natural resources are seen, understood, and made meaningful by activists to themselves and others. These contests are conjoined with both historical and other currently situated struggles over natural resource allocation throughout Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Activists acting locally, nationally and increasingly internationally together have created a dynamic and critical public space in which to restate, rearticulate, and draw attention to persistent themes and forms of social inequality. As a critical public space in which questions of justice and equality are articulated, and in which coordinated collective action occurs, the environmental justice movement is a collective response to newly recognized forms of institutionalized exclusion that are extended into the environmental arena. The discursive practices engaged in by actors in the movement, like

their invention and deployment of the concept *environmental racism*, draw attention to the *process of how* communities construct environmental projects. Cultural frames and identities are engaged, changed, and are contested in collective action; and power is infused in these systems of representation (Alvarez and Escobar 1992). The environmental justice movement is thus a significant site of black political activism and cultural production. It is characteristically a cultural-political project yielding identities and practices that reflect a changed terrain for activism.

This dissertation presents the environmental arena a new terrain of racial struggle in the contemporary post civil rights period. African Americans across the United States are organizing in defense of the health and well-being of their communities. In this they have made significant contributions to the formation of the environmental justice movement, which in the United States is largely aimed at ending the disproportionate siting of hazardous waste landfills and other polluting industries in low-income and minority communities (Bullard 1993; Taylor 1995; Cole and Foster 2001). Collectively, environmental justice activists have refashioned environmental discourses to reflect changing awareness of how air, water and soil are subject to institutionalized racial discrimination. Yet, how do these struggles, which involve the defense of place and the formation of new analytic frameworks such as environmental racism, shape racial identities in the contemporary period.

What Does Race Have to Do with the Environment? Social Movements, Identity and the Question of Black Environmentalism

Black Americans are concerned about environmental issues. Since the late 1980s, studies suggest that black Americans are as concerned as white Americans about the environment, but differ in how they express environmental concern and act on it.

Researchers have primarily used one of two conceptual approaches to understand black Americans' environmental sentiments. The first assumes a “historical formative” and the second, a “structural” approach to understand black/white differences in environmental concerns and actions. In the first, researchers connect black Americans' environmental concerns and actions to their history of forced labor *on the land* during slavery and of coerced, often illegal seizure of their privately owned land afterwards. In this approach, most notably advanced by Taylor (1989), black Americans' limited participation in national environmental groups can be attributed to their collective memories of these past racist experiences. The history that counts for Taylor is the history of slavery and its aftermath. The second, more dominant structural approach correlates environmental perspectives with a group's contemporary structural position(s)—their race, class and/or gender. Structural positions are believed to determine how individuals interpret environmental issues. According to this approach, black Americans adhere to the “environmental justice” perspective, with its attention to racial inequalities in the distribution of environmental hazards, because as Blacks they experience racial discrimination in many arenas, including the environmental one (Bullard 1993).

While both approaches potentially explain something of why black Americans' perspectives on the environment may differ from those of Whites, they provide little explanation for the more dynamic individual and collective processes involved in *how specific racial meanings develop in relation to the environment*. This dissertation goes beyond explaining black/white differences, and focuses instead on how black and white racial identities are developing in the environmental arena. What's more, neither the

structural or formative historical approach explains *how* individuals form environmental identities and perspectives and how these might change over his/her lifetime.

I propose a third approach to address the above inquiries. I argue that black Americans' environmental perspectives and concerns are neither timeless nor unchanging as suggested by the "formative historical" approach of Taylor (1989). And that structural position does not fully determine an individuals' environmental perspective.

Alternatively, a *social practice approach* would explain that while positions and collective historical memories affect people's environmental perspectives, concerns, actions and identities, these perspectives, concerns, actions and identities change in social interaction over time, especially in the context of social movements.

Black/White Differences in Environmental Concerns and Actions

Research interest in black environmental concerns and actions, or what I more broadly refer to as 'Black Environmentalism', has grown substantially over the last two decades. Researchers who attempt to explain black/white differences in environmental concern and action primarily ask, 'Why do Blacks have environmental concerns and actions that are distinct from those of Whites?', and use a structural approach to explain these differences. For example, researchers have found that while environmental concern cuts across social class and race (Jones and Carter 1994; Freudenberg and Steinsapir 1991), not all social groups express the same environmental concerns and actions (Baugh 1991; Bullard 1993b; Mohai 1990; Taylor 1989). This literature describes Blacks as less active than Whites in national environmental groups and notes that they participate in fewer outdoor recreational activities like hiking and camping than Whites (Baugh 1991; Parker and McDonough 1999). On the other hand, this literature also describes Blacks as

more likely than Whites to participate in local grassroots groups and campaigns that focus on protecting public health, cleaning up contaminated dumpsites, and stopping the construction or expansion of polluting facilities (Arp and Kenny 1996; Bullard and Wright 1987a, 1991). These primarily sociological studies attribute an individual's particular environmental concerns, actions and perspectives to their structural position, that is, their race and/or social class.

The efficacy of a structural approach can be seen in a parallel case. Geographer Laura Pulido (1996a) and sociologist David Pena and Pulido (1998) examine the 1965-71 pesticide campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee to demonstrate how Chicano farm workers in the Southwest experienced pesticides as an environmental justice issue. According to the authors, the subordinate class position of the farm workers determined their view of pesticides. As low-wage agricultural laborers, they were in daily contact with pesticides, experiencing first-hand their negative health effects. Their environmental concerns reflected their economic and political marginalization, their structural position. Chicano farm workers held a view of pesticides different from that of environmentalists, who were chiefly concerned with how pesticides negatively affected wildlife—while ignoring farm workers' living and working conditions. Pulido and Pena maintained that the structural position or race and class of Chicano farm workers explain why their environmental concerns were different from those of mainstream environmentalists.

Notwithstanding these contributions, this literature only partially accounts for racial differences in environmental perspectives. Sociological literature on the environmental justice movement consists of case studies of low-income and people-of-

color communities who've waged environmental justice campaigns. These studies celebrated community victories, but revealed little of the social and intimate or personal processes involved as activists' environmental and racial identities changed. In my earlier work, I demonstrated how environmental justice activists appealed to racial identity to mobilize constituents (Allen 2001). This dissertation builds on this previous work and joins with Pulido (1996b) who asserts that the environmental justice movement is a key site in which the people-of-color racial identity gains currency as Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans and other racial minorities work in coalition to create safe, clean environments. Although Pulido's work focused on Chicano, not Black Environmentalism and hints at the significance of racial identity for particular forms of environmental activism, it does not explain the process of how Chicanos came to identify themselves as people-of-color in the course of the pesticide campaign.

Approaches to Social Movements and Collective Identity in Anthropology

Anthropological studies of contemporary social movements are attentive to the discursive practices of movement actors and draw attention to the processes by which they become constituted as such. For example, Brosius (1997a, b), Fisher (1997) and Turner (1991) describe how transnational environmental discourses are introduced, taken up, transformed and circulated in local campaigns. The anthropological literature on social movements, notably those studies that focus on the Latin American context, addresses the social construction and politics of collective identity (Alvarez and Escobar 1992; Lipschutz and Conca 1993; Taylor 1995). In these works, collective identities play a significant role in mobilizing collective action (Escobar and Alvarez 1992). As activists are called on to defend their actions they act in the name of a social identity

(Daro 2000). In this view, identities are both a source for and a product of collection action. However, the process of identity formation requires further elaboration to explain for example, how individual actors come to declare for example, ‘I am an environmentalist’ (Holland and Kempton 1999). This dissertation addresses the need for additional ethnographic attention to the processes of identity formation for a more comprehensive understanding of the relation between identity to new social movements (Holland et al 1998; Johnston et al 1994:28). The work of Holland (1998; 2001) builds a theory of identity formation that explains how actors construct identity as a psycho/social formation in ways that are mediated by collective representations on the one hand, and actions that individuals undertake on the other (see also Holland and Kempton 1999 and Satterfield 2001, 2002). This dissertation builds on these critical insights by extending the authors’ claim that environmental justice identities have developed in the context of collective action within the environmental movement. Different from them, I argue that the environmental justice movement is also a site of environment- and race-making in the contemporary period.

The Social Practice Theory of Identity Formation

The work of social practice theorists such as, Jean Lave, Ole Dreier, Terre Satterfield, Dorothy Holland, and William Lachicotte among others, offers productive theoretical resources for making sense of collective and personal identity processes generally, and in the context of social movements, specifically. Their work focuses on the ways in which identities are dialogically produced through ongoing historically specific and often contentious processes of orchestration of multiple voices and valuations. I use their social practice theory of identity formation to demonstrate how the

racial and environmental identities of environmental justice activists form *in practice over time*.

A social practice approach directs attention to meaning making and identity production as they occur over time in multiple sites (Holland *et al* 1998; Holland and Lave 2001). I consider the formation of Black Environmentalism and Black Environmentalists in two generic sites: collective and individual. Both involve collective and interpersonal processes of race- and environment-making. First, the collective level is one in which beliefs and images are culturally produced and circulated in socio-historic time/space. I examine how groups collectively (re)create and employ constructions of blackness, whiteness, racism, environment, environmentalist, environmental concern and environmental action in their activism. A second is the personal level where individuals draw on these collectively produced and publicly circulating images, beliefs, concerns, and actions to construct their personal identities.

Framed by the works of Bakhtin, Vygotsky, Bourdieu, and G.H. Mead, Holland et al's (1998) social practice theory of identity formation posits that the social and historical formation of self and identity occurs in the context of cultural production and practice. While individuals' structural positions and collective memories certainly do affect their environmental perspectives, importantly, environmental identities and meanings form in contentious social interaction and cultural production over time. Social movements such as the environmental justice movement are especially potent contexts for the transformation of identities.

Kitchell, Holland and Kempton's (1992) research on the U.S. environmental movement suggests that an individual's developing sense of self as an environmentalist

develops in practice and affects changes in behavior vis-à-vis the environment. They concluded that if a person forms an environmental identity he or she is likely to support, encourage and engage in group-defined environmentally friendly behaviors like recycling, buying ‘green’ and ‘eco-friendly’ products, supporting environmental legislation, and/or protesting against sitings of environmental hazards. My research suggests that there are increasing numbers of black Americans who call themselves environmentalists, though of a particular kind.

I extend the work of Kitchell, Holland and Kempton to the figured world of environmental justice. I maintain that environmental justice groups play pivotal roles in producing and determining an individual’s environmental perspective *once the person becomes engaged in an environmental justice group*. Building on Kitchell et al 1999 and Kempton et al 2000, I maintain that at the collective level environmental justice groups are primary sites where black Americans develop environmental concern, action and environmental identities. At the personal level of self-making, environmental justice proponents attempt to make sense of their relationship to the environment as they actively figure themselves in relation to these collectively produced environmental concerns, actions and identities (Holland 2004; Holland, Lachicotte and Kempton nd).

Research Methodology

Research for this dissertation focused on two types of action—the actions and interactions of individuals and those of groups—and their roles in fostering racial identities and meanings on the one hand and environmental concerns and actions on the other. I focused my research activities in eastern North Carolina, as the region has one of the longest histories of environmental justice activism in the United States. In addition,

the region includes Warren County, which is considered by many scholars and activists to be the birthplace of the environmental justice movement. I compared activists and their activities in three organizations that present distinct environmental and racial perspectives. These are: the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN); the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Program; and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

I made two comparisons between the organizations. First, I compared the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) as a new site of black political activism to the older NAACP. I found that racial meanings and the concerns and actions of black people that were developed in the newer NCEJN were not developed in the older NAACP. Second, I compared environmental justice activists in the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network to environmental justice activists in the white-dominated Sierra Club. As expected, I found differences in the concerns, actions and identifications of members of these different organizations.

Site Selection

In line with arguments for multi-sited ethnographies (Marcus 1998), I assumed that the sites of environmental justice activism are multiple and that the links among them must be researched rather than taken for granted. To accomplish this, I focused my research activities on the following three groups:

1. The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) has played a significant role in bringing together the different community groups, non-profits, academics and government personnel who addressed environmental justice issues across

North Carolina. In doing so, the NCEJN has played a key role in fostering the development of North Carolina's environmental justice movement.

2. Since 1909 the NAACP has advanced the cause of racial justice for black people in the United States. It is a national organization with local branches in most urban areas that contain a sizeable black population. Organized under state offices, branch units of the NAACP address local issues and concerns under the direction of the national office. At the time of this research, the national office of the NAACP had no initiatives that were identified as environmental. While there is variation among branches, nevertheless, the national NAACP has not addressed environmental justice as a national priority. The branch in which I was a member had no recent history of involvement in an environmental campaign and had no structure within it to address 'environmental' issues as such¹³.

I included the NAACP as it is typical of black civil rights organizations in the contemporary post civil rights period. It is the oldest, most active, most visible civil rights organization, and is lauded as the voice of black people in the United States. Further, while all NAACP branches may not be elitist in material terms, most tend to use imagery that emulates the lifestyles, tastes and aspirations of richer people.

3. Since the early 1990s, the Sierra Club—an organization founded in 1892—has made concerted efforts to incorporate environmental issues of concern to low-income and minority communities into its priorities and programs. In the year 2000 it developed a

¹³ To form an environmental committee would involve a lengthy and bureaucratic process. An active member must seek permission from members of the local branch, identify at least five (5) people willing to serve on the committee, complete an application for a committee that is issued by the national office, and then petition to the state chapter for approval. After approval from the state chapter, the application is forwarded by them to the national office for approval.

national environmental justice grassroots-organizing program. As of early 2003, that program still provided seed grants to local volunteer-led projects to support environmental justice education activities. In addition to its grassroots environmental justice program, the Sierra Club created a national environmental justice committee comprised of Sierra Club volunteers that develops and governs the organization's grassroots environmental justice program.

All three organizations addressed issues of racial justice, and with the exception of the NAACP, addressed what they considered 'environmental' issues.

Research Activities

I used the anthropological fieldwork techniques of participant observation and interviewing including:

1. Key Informant Interviews. These interviews provided accounts of various facets. These include information on: how the organization formed; its mission and goals; recruitment and retention efforts; current and past programs; and information on how programs, services and other priorities are determined. As anthropologists argue that textual interpretations are most useful when employed with traditional methods of participant observation and in-depth interviewing to learn participants' own interpretations, I also consulted group literature, videotapes, and media accounts as additional sources. (These interviews were conducted with members of all three groups.)
2. History of Involvement Interviews. These narratives provided self-reported data on how respondents' environmental identifications and actions developed over time. I asked individuals how they were recruited into an environmental group and whether they considered themselves environmentalists. I also asked respondents about perceived

differences in the environmental concerns and actions of blacks, whites and other people-of-color. (These interviews were conducted with members of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and the Sierra Club.)

3. Participant Observation. I participated in meetings and other activities of the three organizations at different times over the course of the research period. I identified myself as a researcher while participating as a member of each group. Across groups, I looked for shared versus unshared topics and for how groups position themselves *vis-à-vis* the others.

Chapter Overviews

In chapter two I argue that the environmental justice movement has developed as a distinct arena of black political activism. The environmental justice movement addresses issues of racial and social inequality outside of traditional civil rights organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization. The chapter compares and contrasts the institutional practices and cultural representations—including racial identities and meanings—that developed *in practice* in an environmental justice group and in a traditional black civil rights organization—the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and the NAACP. This chapter draws on participant observation of meetings of the two groups and reviews their membership solicitations and other literature that each group produces to suggest that groups like the NAACP appeal and attend to the more elite segments of the black public. The NAACP's appeal to the interests and concerns of a black middle class elite explains in part why the environmental justice movement has developed a different set of institutions and cultural

practices to address the environmental concerns of low-income minority communities, those considered most vulnerable to environmental threats.

Chapter three examines how individuals become environmental justice activists. Chapters four and five examine the contentious relationship between the environmental justice movement and the environmental movement in the United States. The dynamics of this relationship suggest another part of the explanation for what the environmental justice movement has developed alternative institutions and practices to address the environmental concerns of minority and low-income communities. Though this dissertation principally focuses on how race and class shape Black Americans' perspectives on the environment, it also attends to the experiences of white Americans, such as those in the Sierra Club who identify as environmental justice activists.

Thus, chapters three, four and five demonstrate how environmental justice groups and their meetings, rallies, campaigns, and summits were *local contentious practices* (Holland and Lave 2001). These refer to those spaces where people struggled—personally and collectively—to refigure themselves and their actions as meaningful in the *figured world of environmental justice activism* (Allen, Daro and Holland (2007)). Specifically, chapter three examines the experiences of black activists, while chapter five examines the experiences of white environmental justice activists. This distinction is significant because in the environmental justice movement Whites are developing racialized identities, such as 'white ally', that reflect a more critical perspective of the role of race and class than in what is considered mainstream environmentalism. Chapter four recounts a version of the story of how environmental justice has developed within

the Sierra Club. In these three chapters I draw principally on material from extensive interviews of those who self-identify as environmental justice activists.

Chapter five summarizes the main points of this dissertation. First, that the environmental justice movement is a site of race making, in which environmentally marked racial identities are forming. Second, the environmental movement is a site of environment making, in which distinct notions of the environment and environmental practice are forming. Future research may build on insights from this dissertation and from the anthropological literature in political ecology that reveals how constructions of nature and environment reflect the specific racial histories and experiences of people at particular moments in time and space (Moore, Kosek and Pandian 2003; Wade 2002). Although this dissertation focuses only on the environmental justice perspective, it suggests that no one construction of nature or environmentalism is specific to all black Americans. There are at least two other perspectives: environmental conservation/protection and environmentally concerned, but inactive (a stance predominant in the general population). Future research may seek to explain these variants as well as explore notions of nature that are specific to black Americans. Future research may also examine the extent to which gender shapes both racial and environmental identities as they develop in the environmental justice movement.

CHAPTER TWO

RACE AND CLASS IN CONTEMPORARY AFRICAN AMERICAN POLITICS: TRADITIONAL BLACK CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Activists, scholars and government officials consider environmental racism, with its focus on racial discrimination and disproportionate effects on people-of-color, to be an important civil rights issue in the contemporary post civil rights period¹⁴. Yet, environmental racism and its remedy, environmental justice—safe, clean environments for all—have not developed as a concept and movement inside of traditional black civil rights organizations like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Instead, alternative organizations such as the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network have emerged at local, statewide and regional levels, as opposed to the national one, to raise awareness of the issue of environmental racism and otherwise aid in the dissemination of an environmental justice perspective. These newer groups, organizations and networks have been instrumental in producing a social movement that addresses environmental racism, which is considered to be racial discrimination in environmental decision-making, believed to principally affect those communities-of-color who are economically vulnerable, and significantly, less engaged

¹⁴ Racism continues to exist in contemporary American society even after over thirty after civil rights gains of the late 1960s. Authors like Robert C. Smith (1996) note the continued practice of white supremacy. Empirical studies like Smith and Seltzer's 2000 work entitled Contemporary Controversies and the American Racial Divide, highlight differing opinions between blacks and whites on contemporary controversies. Such differences are explained in terms of the distinctive historical and cultural experiences of different racial groups and the disparities in their contemporary social and economic conditions.

in electoral politics. Black people who are most affected by environmental racism are not typically the black middle class constituents of traditional black civil rights organizations like the NAACP. The environmental justice movement has become, I argue, a site of black political activism, separate from traditional black civil rights organizations, one in which distinct black racial identities are forming. This chapter examines the extent to which environmental justice concerns and actions are affecting formations of blackness in the contemporary post-civil rights era.

The U.S. environmental justice movement is largely, though not exclusively, a movement to end environmental racism. It was born of two major social currents—the U.S. environmental movement and the U.S. civil rights movement (Cole and Foster 2001). It has, as is clearly evident in my research, developed as a distinct arena, separate from, though at times in its sociohistoric development, in dialogue with, both the traditional black civil rights community and the mainstream environmental movement. Despite the initial involvement of the traditional civil rights community in early environmental justice campaigns, including the landmark 1982 Warren County Anti-PCB Landfill campaign, little in the way of a dialogic relationship between the traditional black civil rights community and the environmental justice movement has developed. In contrast, the environmental justice movement *is* forming in dialogue with the rest of the environmental movement. I address these latter developments in chapters three and four.

The Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, 2002

Several incidents I observed during the 2002 Second People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit (Summit II) in Washington, DC led me to consider not only the state of relations between environmental justice and mainstream

environmentalism, but between environmental justice and the traditional black civil rights community. Ten years after the first summit, environmental justice proponents hailed Summit II as a momentous occasion. At the time, it was hailed as a time to assess the environmental justice movement's accomplishments, to strengthen the movement's grassroots organizations, and to advance new strategies to address environmental injustices in order to improve people's lives over the next ten to fifty years. The first day of the summit featured a plenary session entitled *Developing Ethical Alliances with Mainstream Environmental Groups*. Summit organizers had convened representatives of five of the major mainstream environmental organizations to give an update on progress made by them over the last 10 years in addressing issues of staffing, diversity, and policy and program orientation with respect to the environmental concerns of low income communities and communities of color. Panelists also addressed the challenges of collaborating with environmental justice communities and organizations. They included representatives from the following mainstream environmental organizations: the Natural Resources Defense Council, the Sierra Club, Environmental Defense, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, and the National Wildlife Federation. Richard Moore, coordinator of the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice, outspoken critic of mainstream environmentalism and an author on the historic "Letters to the Big Ten" presented on behalf of the environmental justice community.

There were tense moments throughout the two-hour session as community members and environmental justice proponents posed pointed questions to representatives of the environmental groups. They demanded to hear concrete steps that had been taken to hire more people of color and to include them on their boards of

directors. Environmental justice proponents appeared skeptical of the progress reported by the environmental groups on their efforts to support ‘from behind’ rather than “take the lead” on community-initiated environmental justice campaigns. The panel was the most racially diverse of all the summit panels that I observed; three of the eight panelists were people of color. I sat in awe as hundreds of people of color (and a handful of white environmental justice proponents) demanded accountability from the five people who represented the elite of the nation’s environmental organizations. Their angry, defiant mood was palpable. And that’s when it dawned on me—where were representatives of the traditional civil rights community? If environmental justice developed from the convergence of both environmentalism and civil rights, why were the environmental movement, and not the civil rights community being called to account for its role in addressing the environmental concerns of communities of color and low income communities?

I leafed through the summit program, but did not find one plenary or workshop session in which representatives of the NAACP, Rainbow PUSH, the Urban League or the Congressional Black Caucus would face the environmental justice community to account for their activities over the last ten years in addressing environmental racism. To me, their absence at the Summit was worth noting. The only official presence of what could be characterized as civil rights organizations were remarks given by a representative of the Justice & Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ (UCC) and a workshop presentation by the Children’s Defense Fund, neither of which is considered a traditional black civil rights organization. The Children’s Defense Fund and the United Church of Christ also maintained information tables in the exhibition area

among the many vendors of Afro-centric garb and artwork and environmental and community groups. Where, I asked myself, was the table for the NAACP, the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization? Where was the official representation of the NAACP in the fight against environmental racism? In contrast, staff and volunteers of the Sierra Club sat on panels and attended workshops. Environmental organizations like the National Resources Defense Council, the National Park Conservation Association, and Environmental Defense were recognized financial supporters of this watershed event.

In comparison to the Sierra Club, for example, the NAACP has played a minimal role in the development of the environmental justice movement. The NAACP's principal role in the environmental justice movement has been to raise awareness of the issue of environmental racism. As president and chief executive officer of the United Church of Christ Commission on Racial Justice when it issued its influential 1987 report, the Rev. Benjamin Chavis became known as the voice of the black community on the issue of environmental racism. When he became the executive director of the NAACP in 1992, he made environmental justice one of the major causes that the organization would advocate.

From 1992 to 1994 Dr. Ben Chavis was the youngest Executive and CEO of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). A fiery, sometimes polarizing anti-racism critic, Chavis commented on his appointment in a 1993 article in *Ebony* magazine¹⁵: "It is not so much about a change in direction, for the NAACP got on this road in 1909, and we are still on that same road. I have come to

¹⁵ Lynn Norment "Ben Chavis: a new director, a new direction at the NAACP
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1077/is_n9_v48/ai_13947854/

accelerate the pace.” And to help accelerate the pace he introduced environmental justice among his priorities.

Environmental racism, a phrase Chavis is credited with coining in 1983, "is racial discrimination in environmental policy making," he explained. "It is the deliberate targeting of people-of-color communities for hazardous waste facilities, such as landfills and incinerators.” He added, “One of the responsibilities of the Civil Rights Movement is to define the postmodern manifestations of racism. We must not only point to overt forms of racism, but also to institutionalized racism.” “Racism is still here,” he added. “They may have taken down the signs, but discrimination is still very much prevalent.” Chavis’ contributions while at the helm of the NAACP were curtailed. After a brief tumultuous, eighteen-month tenure, the NAACP Board of Directors ousted Chavis, accusing him of using NAACP funds for an out-of-court settlement in a sexual harassment lawsuit. Chavis’ predecessors, Kwesi Mfume and Bruce Gordon, did not make environmental racism a central focus during their tenure. More recently, in the fall of 2007, *twenty-five* years after the landmark 1982 Warren County protests, the NAACP took up the topic of environmental racism in an issue of its bi-monthly magazine, *The Crisis*.

There have been a few other notable efforts by the national office of the NAACP to bring attention to the issue of environmental racism. For example, in the early 1990s the national office of the NAACP maintained an Office of Environmental Justice that provided legal counsel in environmental justice lawsuits filed by community groups. It also listened to environmental justice activists entreat it to undertake such activism: in 2007 representatives of the National Black Environmental Justice Network traveled to

Detroit as part of a delegation to call on NAACP leaders who were attending its national convention to take on environmental racism as a national campaign. To help raise awareness, during the convention the National Black Environmental Justice Network conducted a “toxics tour” that took NAACP delegates past chemical plants, steel mills, automotive factories, abandoned industrial sites and waste incinerators. Leadership has not developed in the NAACP; instead the environmental justice movement has developed its own organizational structure and leadership to address environmental racism. This is the case despite the fact that environmental racism, characterized as racism in environmental decision-making and the disproportionate siting of environmental hazards in communities of color, is commonly spoken of as a civil rights issue.

Scholars and activists refer to environmental justice and environmental racism as a civil rights issue. So do government agencies. Since 1994, for example, when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency established the Office of Environmental Justice, the federal government has treated environmental justice as a civil rights issue as well as an environmental policy issue. Likewise, federal legislation such as Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act is evoked in environmental justice lawsuits to validate cases of alleged discrimination by government agencies that receive federal funding. Veteran civil rights activists who participated in my research, such as Pastor Leon White (not a pseudonym) with the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice, played pivotal roles by helping to strategize and implement protests during the 1982 landmark Warren County campaign. Pastor White has also characterized environmental justice as a matter of civil rights. Although at the time of my research Pastor White was no longer involved in environmental justice activism, he was continuing his commitment to civil rights and

racial equality through his work with the United Church of Christ's (UCC) Commission on Racial Justice¹⁶, now called Justice and Witness Ministries¹⁷.

The United Church of Christ is a civil rights organization that addresses environmental justice issues. In 1987 the UCC's Commission on Racial Justice produced the landmark report, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*. Authored by Charles Lee, this was the first national study to document the disproportionate impact of hazardous wastes on communities of color throughout the United States. Twenty years later, in July 2007 the UCC released a follow up to its landmark 1987 study. The 2007 UCC-commissioned study, "Toxic Wastes and Race at Twenty, 1987-2007" concluded that environmental injustice in minority communities was even more prevalent in 2007 than in 1987. It continues to play a significant role in the dissemination of an environmental justice perspective. For example, the Reverend Adora Iris Lee, Minister for Environmental Justice for the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries participated in planning the Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit as a member of the summit's executive committee. As a civil rights organization, the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries is in some respects similar to the NAACP in its relation to the environmental justice movement: it spotlights the issue of environmental racism.

¹⁶ The Commission for Racial Justice was the national civil rights agency of the then 1.7 million-member United Church of Christ. It was established in 1963 by the General Synod of the United Church of Christ in response to the assassination of Medgar Evers, the Birmingham church bombings, and the heightened racial tension then gripping the nation, the CRJ has been at the forefront of the civil rights movement as a church-based agency of a major U.S. Protestant denomination. The agency has been actively involved in the civil rights movement of the 1960's, in such racial injustice cases as the Wilmington Ten in the 1970's, in issues related to racially motivated violence, and in the anti-apartheid movement of the 1980's. During the 1990's CRJ also published *Civil Rights Journal*, a weekly commentary written by then director, Dr. Chavis, which focused on national issues affecting African Americans and other persons of color. The Journal was carried by over 300 newspapers and by six national radio networks, as well as by numerous other stations around the country.

¹⁷ The Justice and Witness Ministries is one of four Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ. It helps local congregations respond to requests for assistance on campaigns for economic justice, human rights and gender equity, racial justice and peace.

Like the NAACP, it does not provide hands-on organizing assistance to local groups and campaigns.

Efforts by environmental justice proponents in the last decade have attempted to articulate environmental justice as an international human rights issue. In 2008, North Carolina Fair Share, a health care advocacy organization and member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, hosted a daylong symposium on environmental justice as a human rights issue. The theme of environmental justice as a human rights issue was also explored at the 2001 United Nation's sponsored World Conference Against Racism, at the 2002 Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, and during workshop sessions of several of the annual environmental justice summits organized by the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. Yet it is the emergent environmental justice community, not the traditional black civil rights community that is reformulating this important civil rights issue—environmental racism—as an international human rights issue.

Like the NAACP, environmental justice movement organizations and networks have spotlighted the issue of environmental racism and at times helped secure legal counsel for local campaigns. They, however, not the traditional civil rights community, have grown the environmental justice movement. They have actively incorporated communities and local and regional groups into the movement as they provide ongoing hands-on organizing assistance to them. As will become clearer, these environmental justice structures are cultivating an awareness of and sensitivity to *environmental* issues of concern to low-income communities and communities of color. Significantly, perhaps as a result of the differences in the lead organizations, distinct black racial identities are

forming in this newer arena of black political activism. These identities are characterized by concern for and attention to environmental issues. In this arena a new social identity has formed, that of an “environmental justice activist”. Those blacks who have developed this identity act on concern for, and in solidarity, with lower-income communities of color considered to be less economically and politically influential than the black elite represented by civil rights organizations such as the NAACP.

Environmental Justice and Traditional Civil Rights in the Black Public Sphere

A salient aspect of the environmental justice movement is its contribution to the heterogeneity of the black public sphere. Scholars characterize the black public sphere as an interrelated set of institutions and cultural practices including the Black Church, black civil rights organizations, black performing arts and popular media (Brown 1995; Gregory 1995). In this conceptual sphere of concern and action there is elaboration and debate on issues relating to the black community broadly conceived, and from which blacks direct anti-racist critiques and articulate distinct styles, tastes, images, identifications, and other cultural expressions of black life and politics¹⁸. It is in the black public sphere that black Americans have provided essential leadership in the formulation and advancement of environmental justice both as a concept and as a social movement. Inspired by the discourses of the civil rights movement (as well as those of the environmental movement), environmental justice proponents have created a new arena in which to assert 'environmental' dimensions to longstanding grievances against race/class discrimination. Coining the term ‘environmental racism’ in the early history of the movement is but one example.

¹⁸ See the journal *Public Culture* vol. 7, No. 1, 1994 for a more rigorous interrogation of the conceptual Black Public Sphere.

For the purposes of this analysis, I identify two principal ways that environmental justice activism is distinguished from the work of traditional civil rights organizations. One is through institutional practices; the other is through the cultural representations that are (re)produced in the two arenas. I use the term 'institutional practices' to refer to 1) the internal organization of these groups, including governance, membership and committee structures; and 2) the legislation that is advanced, programs and forums developed, and funding streams accessed by them. These practices also include the ways that work is performed and refers to the governance styles and forms of political organizing specific in the two arenas. On the other hand, I use the term 'cultural representations' to refer to the interpretive frameworks, rhetoric, and images that construct racial identities and the environment. These also develop *in practice* in the two activist sites. To reiterate, while environmental justice is often characterized as a civil rights issue, I argue that rather than developing within established traditional civil rights organizations, it has alternatively developed within and as a set of institutions and cultural practices both outside of and alongside traditional civil rights organizations. These new, alternative institutions and networks have developed environmental justice as a distinct arena of black political organizing within the black public sphere.

In this chapter I discuss several differences between the NAACP and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network in relation to social class aspects of black racial identity. To do this I build on the work of two noted anthropologists of race/class formations in the contemporary U.S.—John Jackson’s exploration of the performative aspects of black racial identity, and Steven Gregory’s discussion of how the increase in

class stratification among blacks contributes to the formation of different black racial identities.

The Traditional Civil Rights Community and the Environmental Justice Movement

Despite its 25-year history, environmental justice is not on the agendas of traditional black civil rights organizations. For example, among the 11 resolutions¹⁹ approved and ratified in its constitution in 2005, the NAACP did not include environmental justice. Instead, the fight against environmental racism has taken place in newer anti-racist organizations within the emergent environmental justice movement.

By 2002 the environmental justice movement had expanded beyond issues at the neighborhood, municipal, state and national levels to include international or global environmental issues. In attendance at the milestone 2002 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit were representatives of conventional environmental groups such as the Sierra Club, the National Resources Defense Council, the National Wildlife Federation and Greenpeace, as well as regional environmental justice network organizations like the Southwest Organizing Project and the now defunct Southern Organizing Committee. Importantly, community representatives, activists, environmental professionals, and scholars from all across the United States participated in roundtable sessions and workshops with the goal of forging an agenda to improve the lives of black people and other people of color for the coming decades. Attendees

¹⁹ The 11 included resolutions to endorse the placement of a commemorative memorial to Black Veterans; to effect a moratorium on the use of Taser guns; to end predatory mortgage and payday lending practices; to support universal health care; to effect legislative changes in the bylaws of the NAACP; to oppose proposed changes to social security; to support a national holiday for farm worker Cesar E. Chavez; to determine any disproportional effect on poor African Americans or other minority youth should the draft of males and females ages 18-26 be issued; and to reaffirm support of full-voting for all citizens of the United States including the residents of the District of Columbia (November/December 2005 issue of *The Crisis*).

engaged in long-range thinking and strategic planning on environmental issues as they were specifically affecting minority and low-income communities.

Unlike representatives of conventional environmental groups who financially supported and participated in this historic celebration of the accomplishments of the environmental justice movement, representatives of civil rights organizations such as the NAACP, the Urban League, and Rainbow PUSH were not among the listed financial contributors or the summit presenters. Neither did these groups nor other traditional black civil rights proponents—the Black Church, the Congressional Black Caucus, or the Leadership Council on Civil Rights has an organizational presence at the historic Summit. (It is worth noting that the Children’s Defense Fund, although not known as a traditional black civil rights organization hosted Summit workshop sessions that addressed the issue of childhood asthma at the Summit.) The avant-garde²⁰ UCC played a less prominent role in the 2002 Summit than in the first 1991 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, which it sponsored. Although it did have an information table in the Summit II exhibition area, none of the conference plenary or workshop speakers represented the organization. To me, the fact that significant discussion and activism against racism and its affects on African Americans was occurring without the input or direction of the traditional black civil rights community is worth noting. It points to the emergence of environmental justice as a distinct and significant arena of political and cultural activity within the black public sphere.

²⁰ The Commission on Racial Justice is the national civil rights agency of the nearly 2 million-member United Church of Christ. It has played an out front role in the history of the environmental justice movement including sponsoring the 1991 First People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, providing leadership and resources in the 1982 Warren County Anti-PCB Landfill campaign, and developing important studies such as the 1987 and 2007 “Toxic Waste and Race” studies that documented the disproportionate impact of hazardous wastes on communities of color throughout the United States. The 2007 study found that people of color make up the majority of those living within 1.8 miles of the nation’s hazardous waste facilities.

Notwithstanding an initial period in the 1980's and a few recent cases wherein civil rights advocates assisted local organizers in environmental justice campaigns, the environmental justice movement has received little material and symbolic support from the nation's traditional black civil rights community. In part, this may be because traditional civil rights organizations have tended to neglect concerns that explicitly address the needs of poor people, instead favoring and advancing middle class concerns and interests such as affirmative action in higher education and the corporate workplace (Gregory 1998). At 2006 monthly meeting of the Richmond, Virginia branch of the NAACP, for example, a representative of the branch's Labor and Industry Committee, in collaboration with the Legal Redress Committees of NAACP Area 4²¹, stood to give a report of its most recent activities. Earlier that year committee members had conducted a study of the hiring practices of public and private employers. The objective of the study was to a) identify potential employers and employment opportunities within the public and private sector; and b) to determine and identify hiring and promotion practices and where warranted, discriminatory complaints, practices and reported biases. In short, the goal of the committee, I learned, was to determine if there existed racial disparity in the pay of top-level municipal and county government employees.

As I listened to the committee report and leafed through the detailed and elaborate documents produced by the committee, I noted the great interest and indignant responses of the branch members to the committee's findings of racial disparity in the pay of these well-compensated government employees. I recalled what anthropologist Steven Gregory wrote in 1992, about how in the present post-civil rights era, race and class have

²¹ Area 4 branches of the NAACP include those in Chesterfield County, Hanover County, Henrico County and Richmond City.

been articulated in black electoral politics in ways that disproportionately assist middle-class blacks that have been able to translate economic gains into political power.

Traditional black civil rights organizations have not embraced environmental justice, but expend considerable time and energy in addressing claims of racial discrimination as they affect a black middle class elite. Instead, new local, regional and national environmental justice institutions, network organizations, and spokespersons have emerged within the black public sphere to challenge racial bias and discrimination in environmental matters, particularly as these are affecting lower income African Americans.

Analytic Dimensions of the NAACP and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

The research design for my dissertation called for comparison between the newer North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) and the older National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). I found that the NAACP's organizational structure, advocacy focus, and policy areas, shaped as they are by social class interests and identifications, help to explain why grassroots organizations like the NCEJN have developed separately from both the national and branch offices of the NAACP to address environmental racism. As a starting point to explore these differences, I begin with observational notes from monthly meetings of the NCEJN and the NAACP to provide the reader with a sense of the organizational styles and areas of interest of the two organizations.

Getting Down to Business: Routine Meetings

Observations at a Quarterly NCEJN Meeting at the Forsythe County, NC Community Center

As we arrived at the Forsythe Community Center, the mood was upbeat, warm, and inviting, despite the cold, icy January 2004 weather. To our delight we were greeted in the converted downtown department store with hot coffee and tea, biscuits and pastries and fresh fruit. The 25 or so of us packed the storefront community center dressed in Saturday afternoon attire—jeans, casual pants, sweatshirts, and sweaters over t-shirts. After a bit of mingling and eating, George Garrison, NCEJN's de facto head, called the meeting to order. George wore his customary khaki pants, baseball cap, sneakers and a slogan bearing t-shirt. His always-colorful t-shirts either said something about protecting black farmers, stopping racism, or supporting a union drive. We stood as we were able and held hands in a circle. Chatter stopped as George solemnly led us in prayer.

Meetings of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network always begin and end in celebratory, if not fervent prayer. They pray for people's safe arrivals and departures, good health, and local victories no matter the size. They pray before eating. During presentations people are likely to shout “amen” if they’re in agreement with someone’s critique of the role of county officials in “poisoning us”. Those present at meetings exercise no regard for religious differences or separate religion from politics; they invariably invoke religious symbolism such as the name of "Jesus Christ" during prayers. No one seems to mind enough to register an objection or complaint.

After a round of "amen's" at the end of his opening prayer, George distributed copies of the agenda, minutes, and event announcements. While we reviewed the agenda someone suggested that the meeting time, typically five hours, be shortened because of the weather. It was continuing to snow and driving on icy roads was a growing concern.

Folks agreed, and all but the community group presentations were reassigned to the next meeting's agenda.

Business continued. We reviewed the minutes. Someone made a motion to approve them and they were quickly seconded. After attendees made a few announcements about an upcoming workers' rally and dates for next year's statewide environmental justice summit, we prepared to eat lunch. Meetings always feature a hearty meal. This time there was baked and fried chicken, string beans, potato salad and rolls. About two years after the group began meeting, a demand for a vegetarian option was made by a few of the white university-based researchers in the group. So we also had the obligatory meatless spaghetti dish. Before we headed for the food tables, George asked the minister of the host group's church to bless the food. About 20 minutes into our meal, George asked for our attention as he introduced guests from Duplin County who would give the first scheduled community presentation. Many of us had not yet finished eating, but then eating during formal presentations is common practice at NCEJN meetings.

George had invited folks from downstate Duplin County to attend the quarterly meeting to introduce themselves and their community's issue—intensive livestock operations, hog factories—to the NCEJN membership. George had met the two at a meeting of the North Carolina Hog Roundtable, an informal group of North Carolina government officials, community residents and industry officials. George's group, The Concerned Citizens of Tilden (a pseudonym), convened The Roundtable as part of its efforts to prevent large-scale hog farming from "invading and dumping on" their predominantly black and overwhelmingly poor rural town. The Duplin County group

wanted to learn what "George did" because they aimed to "stop the hog industry from taking over Duplin".

The two members of the group, both middle-aged white women, seemed to fit right in. Together we were a mix of white and black people with a few Latinos (a university researcher and two representatives of a farm worker group). After their presentation, NCEJN members pledged support to the Duplin group in "any way we can". They were invited to keep coming to NCEJN meetings and to participate in the upcoming seventh annual Environmental Justice Summit. The two ladies thanked George for inviting them and said they would surely come again; they'd "felt welcomed".

We quickly moved to the next agenda item, another community group presentation. This time, Fred (a pseudonym), a retired white man and self-professed "hell-raiser", talked about the "prison situation down in Greene County". George called for a note taker; I volunteered because I was anxious to hear how Fred was going to tie in prison construction with environmental justice. As Fred spoke, I took notes on butcher-block paper at the easel that stood outside the group's ring of tables and chairs. As one sheet filled, I'd tape it to the wall, and continue writing in big enough print for all to see, especially the senior citizens who'd always complain that they can't read fine print. The gist of Fred's comments was that Greene County commissioners were promoting prison construction as economic development much like they had promoted landfills three years earlier. Landfills were the issue that had first brought this concerned group to the NCEJN's annual summit. With no manufacturing industry and family farming on the decline, Greene County commissioners, like those in many rural poor North Carolina counties are looking to "dirty industries" to fuel the local economy. Fred reported that in

this latest scheme, private prison interests had bought acres of forested and farmland for very little money. Meanwhile owners of the prison promised residents jobs that they desperately need. The promise of well-paying jobs as deputies, guards and other prison staff overrides residents' fears of prison breakouts. Fred lamented; blacks and other poor people will likely fill prison beds, not prison jobs. The confluence of racism with the wanton destruction of trees and the conversion of farmland to prison yards, according to Fred, make prison construction in Greene County an environmental justice issue. Every head in the room nodded in agreement.

On that note the meeting winded down. We joined hands as we stood to form a circle. George asked Sandra, the host group's leader, to "take us home", at which time she said an earnest prayer for our safe return "until we meet again". At this, as in all NCEJN meetings, we went around the circle, each repeating the refrain, "I am a link in the chain, and the chain will not be broken." Amid goodbye hugs and wishes for safe travels, we departed for what was for most of us at least an hour and a half drive home.

Observations at an NAACP Monthly Branch Meeting at the Exclusive Club 533

The meeting must have been called to order promptly at 7:00 pm because I was only five minutes late. I entered just as "Madam President" instructed us to stand and bow our heads as she issued the invocation. The invocation, a fixture of all NAACP meetings, was not an elaborate, lengthy or especially inspiring prayer, but one that nevertheless called on "Father God" to preside over our gathering as "we champion for justice and equality". I stood with bowed head, said "amen" like the others, and then sat in one of the upholstered chairs tucked under one of the large round tables in the grand ballroom. In total we were only about 30, and the ample, finely apportioned ballroom

dwarfed our presence. We were all dressed neatly in professional attire, as if we'd just left our professional nine-to-five jobs. The men, if not dressed in business suits, wore shirts and slacks. No one wore jeans or casual wear. Even the stay-at-home mom with whom I sat wore a dress and low heels.

We sat scattered in the ballroom, facing front where Madam President stood behind a microphone and podium. From there she delivered the invocation, read the previous month's minutes, issued her "President's Report", and called on the other officers and committee chairpersons to give their committee reports. Someone passed me the branch's meeting log that I failed to sign when I entered from the foyer. When I entered Club 533, I was struck by the opulence of the private social club. Chandeliers hung and plush green carpeting covered the foyer and ballroom. The ballroom contained large movable round tables and lush floral upholstered chairs. Potpourri and hand lotion were available in the brightly lit, newly apportioned restrooms. This was my first time inside Richmond's oldest, most exclusive, black male social club. It was also my first NAACP meeting. Although I had been a dues-paying member in my local branch for three months, no one telephoned or wrote to welcome me. When I entered, no one seemed particularly interested in who I was, an unfamiliar face in such a private elite place. There was no roster of new members, and I learned months later that the branch did not maintain an up-to-date member roster.

After reading the minutes, Madam President directed us to the next item in the order of business, Officer Reports. We listened first to her President's Report: 11 items that included a mixture of mundane updates and celebratory announcements. First, she gave an update on the relocation of the branch office. Madam President reported that

she'd rejected a potential spot in the black poor and working class populated Highland Park section of town because she considered it "too dangerous to be out at night after meetings". I noted several head nods in the affirmative. Without any discussion of the matter she made another announcement: the speaker for the next branch meeting would be either the newly elected Sheriff of the Richmond City Jail or Gayle Townes, a Richmond City School Board member.

Other announcements concerned the impending due date of committee quarterly reports; they were now due to the State NAACP office. The branch had received an invitation to attend an awards reception for the founder of one of Richmond's two independent black owned newspapers, The Richmond Free Press. Mr. Boone would receive an award in honor of the famed civil rights attorney Oliver Hill's 99th birthday. Everyone seemed to know, and I later learned, that Mr. Hill had led the legal team on one of the five cases decided under Brown v. Board of Education. Tickets for the awards ceremony were \$50 per person and would be held in what many at the meeting considered the "swanky" downtown Bank of America building. Madame President then announced yet another fundraising dinner. This time the Henrico County NAACP branch was having its annual fundraiser dinner and tickets were \$35 per person. The Richmond branch's Founder's Day Prayer Breakfast fundraiser had been held in one of the city's oldest, and arguably most prosperous black churches. Likewise, the Henrico County branch's fundraiser was to be held at the oldest and largest black church in Henrico County. Madam President concluded her report with an announcement of a voter registration drive scheduled at one of the city's high schools, but not before making an

announcement that the NAACP had won its legal case to have the dictionary definition of the "N" word revised²².

After the long presidential report, reports were received from several committee chairpersons. The Education Committee chairperson announced that it still needed committee members and that it must have at least five before it can submit an application to the national office for official recognition as an NAACP branch committee. This application is initiated within the branch, routed to the state chapter who then forwards it to the national office. Although already listed among the 18 branch committees, until the completed application is submitted and official designation as an active branch committee is received, it cannot perform its duties as proscribed in the 200 plus page, national Education Committee manual. These duties include implementing the NAACP's annual Back to School/Stay in School Program and acting on citizen complaints of an educational matter. For example, before the NAACP can help someone with a discrimination complaint, whether they are a NAACP member or not, the person must engage the organization's formal complaint review process. In order to file an education-related complaint with the NAACP, the complainant must first contact their local branch and fill out a "Complaint of Discrimination in Education" form. Upon receiving the complaint form, the local branch initiates an investigation by seeking a meeting with the accused. If the accused agency is unwilling to meet, the local branch

²² In July 2007 a local Tennessee branch of the NAACP in partnership with the Michigan State Conference of the NAACP vowed to get environmental justice on the national NAACP's radar. Although an environmental justice resolution was passed during the 2007 convention, Jimmie Garland, president of the Tennessee branch commented "We now have to put some teeth in it and follow through." One Tennessee resident at the convention whose father and neighbors have been stricken by cancer after drinking water for over 40 years that had been contaminated with a carcinogen, trichloroethylene by the Dickson County landfill said the following: "I am in Detroit seeking the support of the national NAACP on our case." She continued, "Where we applaud the NAACP's symbolic gesture to bury the N-word, we also want it to join our fight to bury environmental racism that is causing too many fence-line communities like mine to bury their family members and neighbors."

may assist the aggrieved party with filing the complaint with the state or federal Office of Civil Rights (OCR). If the OCR has not responded to the complaint within 180 days, the complaint is to be submitted to the NAACP National Director of Education through the Regional Director with a recommendation for action.

Although no one knew who I was at my very first NAACP meeting I was recruited to serve on the branch's education committee. (When I introduced myself to those seated at my table, I had included the point that I was a substitute teacher at one of the city's notoriously poor achieving middle schools²³.) I learned later during one of our committee meetings that the education committee, like most of the branch's 18 committees, was chronically undermanned. A couple of weeks later at my first committee meeting, Diana, our committee chair, shared with us a letter that she'd received from Madam President for the education committee to follow up. The letter was from a disgruntled parent of a child in elementary school. The mother claimed that her child was not receiving the educational support services that her disabled child was entitled. Members of the committee did not investigate the complaint or forward a recommendation for further action to the branch executive committee. Diana did agree to contact the parent, but to my knowledge no further action was taken, and the letter was 'filed away'.

The next item of business was a report from the Freedom Fund Committee. The committee chair announced that its annual fundraiser, the Founder's Day Prayer Breakfast, was a success. Members had raised sufficient funds to award its annual

²³ After presenting a letter of request to the branch president and receiving verbal approval to conduct research activities, I attended my first meeting. At that meeting and in all subsequent meetings and gatherings I kept visible a summary of my research study which alerted readers that their activities were being observed. In addition, I obtained written permission from each individual member of the branch that I interviewed for this study.

scholarship to a college-bound senior. As in previous years, the Prayer Breakfast was held at Cedar St. Baptist Church, Richmond's oldest and purportedly wealthiest black church. It is long rumored that the church congregation has the highest per capita income as well as the highest paid minister of any black church in the city.

The last agenda item was a report of the activities of the Labor and Employment Committee. The committee was still working on its self-assigned study of top-level state employees, namely state department and agency heads. The aim was to determine if there were racial discriminatory patterns in the pay of these heads. During the meeting I raised my hand to ask the committee chairperson what prompted the study and what were some preliminary findings. I was admonished for being “out of order”. Such questions, I was told, should be directed to the committee at its monthly meetings. The monthly branch meeting, on the other hand, was the time when committee reports were issued, not discussed. Shortly afterwards Madame President, not the committee chaplain, ended the meeting with a prayer.

Observational Notes on the Differences Between the Two Meetings

The above observational notes of the NCEJN and NAACP reveal differences in the style, content and structure of routine business meetings of the two organizations. On one hand, meetings of the NCEJN are characteristically warm and friendly. As in the case above, which occurred on an icy wintry Saturday morning, members travel long and sometimes arduous distances to attend to the business of the organization. There is often a pervading sensitivity to the needs and feelings of individuals who are present as in the heartfelt concern expressed for host leader Sandra's health.

Meeting protocol tends to be unceremonious. Although agendas are made ahead of time, anyone present can propose changes, which are likely agreed upon, as was the suggestion to eliminate some agenda items and end the meeting early. There is an emphasis on food and fellowship and a preference for "hearing from the community" as was reflected in the decision to have lunch and entertain community group presentations. Meetings of the NCEJN are a time for sharing tactics and strategies, receiving updates on the status of campaigns, and visiting with "old friends". There is an air of informality, reminiscent of friendly family gatherings.

In contrast, meetings of the NAACP are ritualized and formal. Monthly branch meetings are run according to Roberts Rules of Order²⁴, and are not, as I was admonished, times when questions can be asked of those giving committee reports. There is little deviation from the standing agenda, which consists principally of committee reports and announcements made by Madam or Mister President. There are 10 officers on the branch's executive committee including a first, second and third vice president, a secretary and an assistant secretary, a parliamentarian, sergeant-at-arms, and a chaplain. The executive committee itself is comprised of 30 individuals and as of 2005 the Richmond branch lists 18 standing committees, not one of which is an environmental justice committee or that readily lends it to addressing environmental issues. When I inquired whether the branch maintained a committee that dealt with environmental matters, I was told no, but I should feel free to petition the national office and organize a branch one. And, what of a complaint about environmental discrimination? Should a community or group approach the NAACP for assistance with such a matter, there's no

²⁴ All meetings of NAACP branch, state and national offices are expected to be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, since 1876 the leading manual of parliamentary procedures.

committee designated to route the proper Complaint of Discrimination form. There's no established way for any one to raise an environmental justice issue.

The content of meetings of the NAACP likewise differs from those of the NCEJN. Although announcements and updates about campaigns are issued, such as the "N" word campaign, these struggles are waged 'at a distance' in national or state headquarters, rather than 'in our backyard' as are the struggles characteristic of NECJN member groups. (Recall the presentations given by the Duplin County group whose campaign was targeted against hog factories and the efforts to halt further prison construction in Greene County.) NAACP meetings also reveal an emphasis on money and fundraising. Meetings and events took place in posh facilities like wealthy church halls and the ballrooms of private social clubs, rather than in a public community center as was the case of the NCEJN.

Organizational Focus: Advocacy vs. Community Organizing

The focus of the NCEJN is strikingly different from that of the NAACP. The NAACP maintains an advocacy focus. The NCEJN advocates on behalf of disaffected communities, but crucially, it also provides crucial community-organizing assistance. Used here, advocacy refers to pleas or arguments made on behalf of a particular issue or person. Advocacy activities of the NAACP include writing letters to the editor, contacting political representatives, sending representatives to community meetings, distributing public education materials, participating in public protests, and engaging in other means to communicate its views for the purpose of policy and social change. Principally, the NAACP provides legal assistance and releases press statements on behalf

of individuals or in support of an issue. In contrast, it does not provide hands-on, guided assistance to help communities organize or initiate new issues.

Alternatively, the NCEJN aggressively engages in hands-on community organizing. Used here, community organizing refers to a process by which people are brought together to act in common self-interest. Although community organizing entails the advocacy-type activities listed above, community organizers create social movements by building a base of concerned people. They mobilize members to act, and develop leadership and facilitate relationships among them.

Distinct from NAACP advocacy, NCEJN community organizing entails ushering individuals and groups through a process of coming together to work in solidarity or unity on an issue or campaign. Although municipal-level branches of the NAACP vary in the types of campaigns they conduct, most local branches and state chapters are consistent in providing *advocacy* as opposed to *community organizing* assistance. While these differences may be viewed as either complimentary or contrasting, they do highlight differences in the foci of organizations and movements within the black public sphere. Table 1 below lists some of the distinctions I found between the services and support provided by the two organizations.

Table 1: Services and Support Provided

NAACP Richmond Chapter	NCEJN
Issue action alerts	Assist a community to define goals
Issue press statements	Issue action alerts
Conduct research on pay disparities	Assist groups in developing campaign messages
Provide legal assistance	Attract media attention
Send representatives to city council or county commissioner meetings	Identify, train and mobilize individuals in disaffected communities
Call Press Conferences	Hands-on assistance in passing an ordinance, bond or bill

	Assist with developing strategies to defeat a proposed waste incinerator, landfill expansion project, or other lulu ²⁵
	Help with defeating a member of city council or the county commissioners
	Block a bill or road project
	Implement a review process or program
	Support in winning a lawsuit
	Negotiate or petition a corporation to clean up its factory or institute safer working conditions

Unlike the NAACP, environmental justice campaigns are typically local, neighborhood based protest movements in which grassroots community organizing is the prevailing form of activism. Specifically, community or grassroots organizing involves hands-on support in building stronger organizations, defining goals, developing campaign messages and attracting media attention. This involves identifying, training and mobilizing community members.

In contrast, the principal methods for advancing the NAACP's civil rights agenda are advocacy activities that include: conducting research, training committee-level members on internal procedures, calling for a march, boycott or rally, issuing press statements, conducting press conferences, lobbying legislators, publishing quarterly and semi-annual periodicals, and significantly, filing lawsuits. Although these activities are also used in environmental justice campaigns, they are implemented towards a different aim—empowerment and support of local campaigns. In the environmental justice arena, communities typically receive hands-on assistance from regional, state-level, and/or other locally based environmental justice groups, such as the North Carolina Environmental

²⁵ Lulu is an acronym for local unwanted land uses.

Justice network. By providing this kind of community-organizing assistance, environmental justice groups extend the performance of the figured world of environmental justice thereby aiding in the spread and development of an environmental justice perspective. At times, an environmental justice group or community group may call on the NAACP to assist in a local effort. The response may be to issue a press statement or attempt to secure legal assistance for a possible lawsuit.

Generally, the NAACP does not provide organizing assistance to communities. Unlike the NCEJN, the NAACP offers no assistance to community groups or individuals in writing press releases or statements, soliciting door-to-door or securing meeting space, refreshments, or strategizing with community, neighborhood or coalition groups.

Differences in Membership & History of the Organizations

A Brief Chronicle of the Formation of the NAACP

For nearly 100 years the NAACP has struggled for the civil and political liberties of African Americans. The Association, as it was originally called, was founded in 1909 in response to the 1908 race riots in Springfield, Illinois. A mob containing the town's "best citizens", raged for two days, and killed and wounded hundreds of African Americans and drove thousands more from the city. Conveners issued a call on Abraham Lincoln's birthday for a national conference on the "Negro question". The purpose of the conference was to initiate a nation-wide discussion of the "present evils, the voicing of protests, and the renewal of the struggle for civil and political liberty" (How the NAACP Began, 1914) for African Americans. Russian-born newsman William English Walling wrote a news article in which he issued a plea for a national and concerted effort to advance political and social equality for African Americans. Inspired by his news article,

African-American Mary White Ovington met with Walling and along with Dr. Henry Moskowitz and penned 'The Call'. Jane Adams, founder of the famed Chicago Hull House, signed it along with black anti-lynching activist and journalist Ida Barnett Wells, Rabbi Emil G. Hirsch, noted abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, the venerable W.E.B. DuBois, and President Mary E. Wooley of Mt. Holyoke College.

Primarily from New York City and Chicago, in total, fifty-seven of the country's "forward-thinking men and women" signed the call. Over a thousand people were invited to this invitation-only event in New York City, which ended up being the first conference of the NAACP. Those present formed a committee of forty who would carry out the "important national work" of what was to become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Among its six-member governing body was William English Walling, the initiator of the news article plea, and Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, who would become its Director of Publicity and Research²⁶.

In Richmond, Virginia fifty of the city's most notable black citizens mirrored the National Association's grassroots efforts. In 1917, the citizens "having met and discussed the aims and accomplishments of the National Association", applied for the privilege of association with the growing national effort led by the NAACP, to "eliminate racial discrimination and segregation from all aspects of public life in America, to end mob violence and police brutality, and to secure a free ballot for every qualified American citizen" (Madame President, February 2006 Prayer Breakfast address). This group of concerned citizens was comprised of many of Richmond's most well to do African Americans, and included persons of various high-paying and middle-class professions

²⁶ See Mary White Ovington's detailed accounting of the origins of the NAACP in a tract entitled "How the National Association of the Advancement of Colored People Began", first printed in 1914.

(see Table 2 below for a breakdown of the Richmond Branch charter membership). I examined a copy of the original application for charter and discovered that the address of each charter member is located in what remains the historic neighborhood of Jackson Ward. In its heyday, Jackson Ward was known as the hub of "Black Capitalism of the South" and was widely regarded as the cultural mecca of southern black society²⁷. Under the auspices of the Richmond branch of the NAACP, activities of these select citizens became subject to the approval of the 'National Association'. Since 1917, according to Madame President Francis Robinson in her February 2006 Prayer Breakfast speech, the NAACP in Richmond has "marched toward victory over racial hatred, bigotry and poverty".

Table 2: Richmond Branch Charter Membership by Occupation

5 Insurance Agents	1 Druggist	1 Carpenter	6 Physicians
1 Banker	1 Tailor	3 Secretaries	3 Contractors
1 Nurse	2 Bookkeepers	6 Lawyers	1 Clergyman
1 Stenographer	4 Real Estate Professionals	2 Cashiers	2 Undertakers
1 Clerk	4 Housekeepers/Domestics	3 Dentists	1 Optician

I was unable to secure an accurate count of the Richmond branch's current annual and life memberships. However, of the branch's 367 life members, 246 are individuals, 34 churches, and 87 are social organizations such as fraternal orders and social clubs. From an informal poll I conducted of members who attended branch meetings over the course of the year 2006, all appeared to be professionals of at least middle class status. Before and after meetings and other branch events, I would ask them, "What do you do for a living?" or more informally "How do you pay your bills?" Respondents included

²⁷ Currently, the Jackson Ward neighborhood is undergoing urban gentrification with many longtime black residents becoming displaced by young upwardly mobile Richmond newcomers. The close proximity of the neighborhood to downtown Richmond, which itself is undergoing urban renewal to financial services corporations, to Virginia state agencies and state capital offices, along with its distinct architectural styles, have made Jackson Ward an attractive place to live for northern transplants to the city.

municipal and state administrative employees, schoolteachers, college administrators, business owners, attorneys, accountants, physicians, and engineers. The professional attire of those in attendance and the bevy of late model luxury cars parked in the lot at the monthly branch meetings likewise signaled that branch members were among black Richmond's social and professional elite.

It is likewise the case, I surmise, that branch members' access to the meeting rooms of the exclusive Club 533 was facilitated by their organic links with those in Club 533 who share the same social class position. From what I learned through informal interviews, many Club 533 members attended the same high schools and colleges, grew up in the same neighborhoods, and attend the same three or four churches in the city. Membership in the club is capped at an undisclosed number and only when a current member dies can a new member join. Rumors convey the prestige of the Club. I heard that some members spent upwards of 20 years on the new member waiting list. Indeed, it is likely the case that some branch members are themselves Club 533 members.

Humble Roots of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

Like the NAACP, the NCEJN developed as a grassroots effort from a call issued by a group of concerned citizen activists, academics and lawyers. Though in contrast to the nationally organized NAACP, the NCEJN began and remains a much more locally focused effort. The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) began in 1997 following a meeting of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee²⁸

²⁸ In response to public concerns, EPA created the Office of Environmental Justice in 1992, and implemented a new organizational infrastructure to integrate environmental justice into EPA's policies, programs, and activities. An Executive Steering Committee made up of senior managers represents each headquarters office and region. It provides leadership and direction on strategic planning to ensure that environmental justice is incorporated into agency operations; the most active group is the Environmental Justice Coordinators Council which serves as the frontline staff specifically responsible to ensure policy input, program development, and implementation of environmental justice through the Agency. This new

(NEJAC) held at North Carolina Central University in Durham, North Carolina. At this impromptu meeting, which followed the NEJAC meeting, concerned citizens, activists, academicians and attorneys gathered to discuss the possibility of establishing a statewide collaboration to address environmental justice issues in North Carolina. After this initial meeting, a statewide summit followed in 1998. It was called the *1st North Carolina Community-Initiated Environmental Justice Summit* and was held at the Historic Franklinton Center at Bricks in rural Edgecombe County, North Carolina. At its close, attendees called for an organization that would link the various community groups, agencies, researchers and concerned citizens who were then working in isolation of one another against environmental injustices. Thus, the NCEJN was born. In the wake of its formation, the network organization has been the catalyst behind the development of North Carolina's Environmental Justice Movement.

During my research and continuing to today, the NCEJN partners with many statewide and local community organizations. Its mission is *to promote health and environmental equality for all people in North Carolina through community action for clean industry, safe work places, and fair access to all human and natural resources*. According to its literature, it seeks to accomplish these goals through “advocacy, and research and education based on principles of economic equity and democracy for all people”. Below in Table 3 are some of NCEJN’s accomplishments that were posted in 2008 on its website (www.ncejn.org, 05/26/08).

structure has established a clear commitment from EPA's senior management to all personnel that Environmental Justice is a priority. NEJAC Fact Sheet (<http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/nejac/index.html>)

Table 3: Accomplishments of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

1. On February 21, 2007 sponsored the first Environmental Justice (EJ) Day held in the state capital with more than 300 people in attendance from across the state who spoke to legislators about environmental justice issues in their local communities.
2. In 2006 produced a DVD entitled, "The Rest of the Story: Corporate Hog in North Carolina."
3. In 2007 organized community groups and nonprofit organizations to hold the first-ever overnight vigil on the Halifax Mall of the North Carolina General Assembly. The 51 Hour Vigil called for an end to industrial hog lagoons and spray fields.
1. In 2006-2007 and still ongoing, the NCEJN convened a "collaboration" of republicans and democrats to develop a policy to do away with industrial hog lagoons and spray fields introduced in the North Carolina Assembly. The result was a " <i>No New Lagoons and Spray Fields</i> " bill.
2. In 2006 the NCEJN secured a 12-month moratorium on new landfill construction in North Carolina (August 2006-August 2006) and established a new policy that helps prevent poor and "minority" communities from being dumped on.

Those who attended the quarterly meetings of the NCEJN during my research were college students, university researchers, community residents, non-profit professionals, and occasionally government agency personnel. Many community residents who attended were retirees and blue-collar workers. Among those present at the meetings I attended were: poultry; paper mill, and other factory workers; a seamstress; a teacher's aid; several small family farmers and farm hands; and domestic and service workers, many of whom have also become paid community organizers of nonprofit member organizations of the NCEJN. What unites these professionals, residents, and blue-collar workers across occupation and status is a unity of political purpose that has been achieved in recent common struggle. Over the course of their 10-year history, I suggest that members of the NCEJN have forgone class divisions in favor of common social values.

Class Matters in the Black Public Sphere

My use of the concept of social class incorporates two related dimensions. To a lesser extent, I attend to class in terms of economic stratification based on individuals' relationships to the means of production. Sacks (1989) clarifies the nature of this relationship in her examination of feminist Marxist treatments of class where embedded in the notion of class "is a definition of the working class in which membership is not [solely] determined by wage labor, but that is [recognized as being] unable to subsist or reproduce by such labor alone" (Sacks 1989:543). According to Sacks, traditional Marxist treatments did not address the role of gender in class formations.

In her reading of traditional Marxism, workers sold their labor power to capital as individuals. From workers' similar (unequal) relationship to capital they developed common interests, perspectives and opposition to capital. Only could women as wage laborers, not unpaid domestic labor, develop the necessary class experience from which to develop class-consciousness. Thus, according to Sacks, women lacked class identity as previous Marxist theories failed to "explore the social relations by which the working class made itself a class able to reproduce itself daily and over generations" (Sacks 1998:537). A feminist perspective adds the point that women's unpaid domestic labor is essential for households to subsist solely upon waged labor. Like men's waged labor, women's unwaged domestic labor and is similarly exploited by capital. Sack's expanded view of the social relations that underpin class formations draws attention to a second, related feature of class, which characterizes my research and that of other studies of black racial identities. I have found that women maintain a dominant presence in the environmental justice movement as both community organizers and paid staff members

of environmental justice organizations. Sacks' analysis of the gendered dimensions of class is particularly relevant to this study as this presence and the critical role that women play is greatly pronounced in the environmental justice movement. Women are among the first to raise issues related to the health and well-being of their families and the larger communities in which they live and work. As these issues get rearticulated as also environmental justice issues; women have emerged as spokespersons of the movement.

Social Class and Black Racial Identity in the Contemporary Period

The post-civil rights era has witnessed the growth of the black middle class and with it an increase in class stratification in African-American communities (Gregory 1992). Class-based interests are playing an increasingly important role in defining a range of black identities in the post civil rights era (Gregory 1992). Civil rights era reforms of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have disproportionately empowered the black middle-class, and enabled them to translate economic gains into political power (Gregory 1992). While anthropologist Steven Gregory is careful not to suggest that race has lost significance for the black middle class, he has found that race has diminished as a political organizing tool, at least in one New York City neighborhood, and that social class has become a more salient feature among African Americans (Gregory 1992).

Gregory's practice-based approach to examining black racial identity formation resonates with mine. In his 2001 chapter entitled "Placing the Politics of Black Class Formation," Gregory situates his analysis of class in the everyday context of a community-based struggle over the Port Authority's plans to install elevated rail tracks to LaGuardia Airport over an East Elmhurst neighborhood. Residents of this section of the railway were upset. Their quality of life would severely diminish from increased noise

pollution and lowered property values resulting from railway construction and operation, and they argued, they would not even have access to the railway. In the course of this struggle, black homeowners contested and rearticulated racial ideologies and meanings, as they constructed new political subjectivities and alignments that in the end privileged those of the black middle class (Gregory 1992)²⁹.

Through this kind of participation in everyday events individuals formulate and become constituted as class subjects (de Certeau 1984). Gregory looks beyond socioeconomic variables such as occupational status, income and homeownership, to consider how these variables are inter-related and mediated by "*relations of power and processes of political struggle*" (Gregory 2001:141, my emphasis). Gregory's practice-oriented approach to examining class formations among Blacks demonstrates how class interests and class identities are produced through political struggles that are embedded in multiple relations of power at the individual level and institutionally.

In his 2001 study entitled Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America, anthropologist John Jackson likewise explores how social class as well as race is constituted in everyday social practices. Jackson's study of social life in Harlem examines how social class is enacted and performed through the everyday practices of lifestyles, dress, speech and occupation of African Americans. My comparison of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) with the NAACP reveals what Jackson refers to as the "class variegated landscape of black America" and builds on Gregory's work as it demonstrates how class-based interests are incorporated into local

²⁹ In Gregory's chapter in *History and Person* (2001), the multiple neighborhoods were at first united under environmental justice rhetoric by their leaders, but agents of the Port Authority managed to shift the terms of debate away from environmental justice to a narrower class-based one that privileged homeownership.

practice to contribute to distinct black racial identities, interests and solidarities in contemporary Black America.

Imagining Blackness

Social Images in the Literature of the NAACP

The literature produced by the two groups, the NAACP and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), reveals differences in the interests and lifestyles of their members that to me suggest class variegation among African Americans. Membership solicitation brochures, flyers and other materials produced by the NAACP can be characterized as appealing to a middle-class, college-educated, elite sector of the black public. In comparison, brochures, flyers and newsletters of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network in contrast, have what one of my research participants called a 'home-grown' feel. The NCEJN's materials appear lackluster; different from the glossy professionally produced literature of the NAACP.

Solicitation Materials of the NAACP

One piece of literature produced by the NAACP is a membership renewal post card. The solicitation is a 5.5"x8.5" sized, custom-designed post card printed on glossy, smooth card stock. Covering nearly half of the backside of the card is a photograph of a young adult African American female with freshly braided hair extensions neatly pulled back in cheekbones, and gray colored conservative business attire suggests that she is an upwardly mobile college educated twenty-something year old. In the background of her headshot, which captures her in an engaging confident outward gaze, is a moving crowd of animated young people of similar age dressed in t-shirts emboldened with the words "NAACP" and the scales of justice, the organization's logo. Pressed together, their raised

hands, buoyant smiles, and forward boisterous movement suggest that these young people—college students—are rallying or marching. Some are carrying band instruments—drums, a tuba and trombones. Others are carrying colored, custom made signs that read, "My Voice is My Vote". Their signs suggest that they are voting-eligible, college-age students. Others in the picture wave raised banners that bear the NAACP logo, which spells out the organization's acronym and features the scales of justice in the middle of which reads "NAACP founded 1909". The text at the top of the front cover of the membership renewal postcard reads in extra large bold print, "Reminder". On the bottom in smaller print are the words, "Renew. Revive. Do more. The NAACP".

Other literature produced by the NAACP also looked like it was making an appeal to the black elite. The front side of another membership solicitation card is divided into two sections. On one side are a pre-printed addressee label, a pre-printed postage stamp, and the NAACP logo under which is the address for the national office in Baltimore, Maryland. The other half of the card features three smaller images of people, what I call 'middle-class types' who are smiling and engaging with the camera. One image features a couple, 40ish, seated on a lush green lawn. Both are wearing white dress shirts. The bald man is wearing eyeglasses, and but for a thin mustache is cleanly shaven. The woman is snuggled in the man's sideward embrace and is also wearing a broad smile. Her pearl white necklace matches the color and evenly spaced rows of her teeth. A second image is of three men of various ages, perhaps representing three generations of black men—father, son and grandson. They are standing against a white backdrop and are all wearing neckties and dress shirts (the oldest gentleman is also wearing a suit jacket). They are embracing one another and are laughing aloud. In the third image,

which is a bit larger than the other two, is a young black man who looks to be about 20 years old. He is pictured in a sweaty gray t-shirt playing basketball on a neighborhood court. His sweat glistening face smiles broadly and brightly for the camera. These apparently happy and content looking people are pictured under text that reads, "We've come a long way together, but the journey continues." Additional text reads, "The NAACP needs your voice, your power, your generosity", "The NAACP needs you", and "Renew Online! Go to www.naacp.org". This last admonition, to renew membership online suggests that members have safe access to a computer that is Internet capable, and that they have a credit card that allows them to make online purchases. I would argue that poor people and others who are struggling to meet life's necessities are less inclined than those in the middle class to engage in discretionary purchases of online membership renewals.

Another membership solicitation document worth noting is the welcome letter sent to new members. The letter contains an affixed plastic membership card to the NAACP. After I mailed in my \$25 dollar student membership fee I was sent this welcome letter from the national headquarters. (During the period of my research and the period thereafter, I have received no mailings from my local branch.) The letter was printed on high-quality paper that contained a watermark and the type was printed in colored font. The letter thanked me for joining "the nation's largest, oldest, and most influential civil rights organization in America!" Its network, the letter informed me, "consists of tens of thousands of members and volunteers that make up the NAACP's 2,200 local units across the country and abroad." The letter urged me to give a gift membership to a friend, family member, co-worker or student," and "for [my]

convenience, provided a pass along application on the back of this letter." The completed application and payment could be taken to my local branch unit or mailed to its national office in Baltimore, Maryland. People could also purchase memberships on the Internet at www.naACP.org. The "Time is Now," the letter urged, to continue the fight for equality. The letter informed me that the NAACP was working on several "Call to Action" initiatives that included: a Call to Action on Education; a Call to Action on Health Advocacy; a Call to Action on Social Security; a Call to Action on Police Brutality; and a Call to Action on Economic Sanctions in South Carolina (in protest of the state's decision to continue to fly the confederate flag on state government properties). Members were encouraged to refer to its website for further information on these initiatives.

These stylized glossy publications suggest that highly skilled people who are proficient in marketing and public relations produced them. The sleek appeals to "Renew, Revive and Do More" depicted vibrant upwardly mobile confident looking black people who, although they were marching and rallying, did not appear angry or weary, but upbeat, energetic, youthful, carefree, and in the midst of enjoying life. No one in the images looked downtrodden, angry, or agitated. The rallying scenes depicted in the cards and flyers were not reminiscent of images from civil rights protests of the 1950s and 1960s in which police dogs and fire hoses assaulted college-age students. The membership solicitations contained no calls to protect African Americans from e-coli contaminated well water or from noxious and health endangering chemicals and fumes from hog lagoons and paper mill factories. Instead, materials highlighted events of the NAACP's nostalgic past—hard won legal battles.

Instead of just the black elite, I thought poor black folks would also appear in the pages of *The Crisis*, the NAACP's sleek glossy bi-monthly news magazine founded in 1910, one year after the organization was established. I searched issues in 2005 and 2006 and instead found articles about trend-setting blacks in Europe. One was about a "new crop of black Americans" that called Paris, France, home. Another was a feature story of black Londoner architect David Adjaye. Other feature stories included a back-to-school article entitled, "Parental Guidance: Mom and Dad Have a Role to Play in Student Achievement", and a tribute to Ebony magazine founder and editor, the deceased John H. Johnson. The 2005 anniversary issue of the magazine featured a tribute to departed civil rights heroine Rosa Parks and legendary African American photographer Gordon Parks. Another issue paid tribute to fallen heroine, Coretta Scott King, dubbed by the magazine as the 'first lady of the civil rights movement."

Literature of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network

At the time of my research, the design and layout of materials of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network were produced in-house by volunteers, many of whom were college students. After crafting a document they would then take it to a copy shop for duplication and affix a postage stamp on each. The process was labor intensive and the quality varied. Imperfections included omitted or incorrect information and misspelled words. One document regularly produced by the organization is a "Save the Date" notice for its annual environmental justice summit. "Save the Date" cards are typeset on one-half of an 8 1/2x 11 piece of colored cardstock. The front half has the return address and logo of the organization in the top left hand corner with the words "Save the Date!" in large bold font. The recipient's address is printed on a computer-

generated label and as is the case with all mailings from the organization, a stamp that features some aspect of African American history or culture is affixed in the top right hand corner. The stamp always appeared slightly askew. The backside of the card lists pertinent information for the upcoming event: dates, location, workshop topics and contact information. What also gives the card its “home-grown” flavor is the rough textured recycled paper that the card is printed on, and the organization’s logo. An area college student designed the logo in 1999. It features two large hands that remind me of two hands clasped in prayer, although in this case the palms of the hands face outward and are touching at the pinkie finger. The fingers of the hands are colored a soft honey brown and the palms have a burnt yellow and orange hue. Across the palms of the hands is a map outline of the state of North Carolina. Inside the graphic of the map are the letters “NCEJ Network” in large yellow bold print.

Meeting announcements, brochures, flyers and conference programs are produced in similar fashion by volunteers. Like the cards, they had been designed on a home/office computer and photocopied them at a local print shop on colored, discounted store-bought paper. Additional copies had been made on office copiers of the member groups. Photographs and other images were rarely used because they did not reproduce clearly on office machines. The NCEJN produced no membership solicitation materials as the organization makes no mass appeals to potential members, but instead grows through word of mouth. Community residents who have been similarly affected by environmental threats are invited to attend the organization’s meetings. There is no joining fee or application to complete.

Other materials produced by the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network are its quarterly meeting announcements. Announcements are printed on 8 1/2x11" paper that varies in color depending on what's left over from other projects. Gold, green and lavender are common colors; the more expensive white laser copier paper is never used. The meeting announcement flyers have the same format that includes the organization's hand logo in the top center of the page, and sometimes contains a picture of residents or the neighborhood of the host group. Because images do not duplicate clearly on office photocopiers, these blurred darkened images contribute to the flyers' home-made or home-grown quality. The flyers contain standardized information: the name of the host group; a list of presentation topics and speakers, usually 5 or 6, the date, time and location of the meeting, along with information on how to register—call or mail in the enclosed registration form. Folks are encouraged to register mainly so that enough food for a continental breakfast and lunch will be available. Text on the flyer reminds folks that breakfast and lunch are provided at no cost. The location of quarterly meetings rotates among member groups of NCEJN and are often held in church basements and public places such as community centers and libraries. Directions to the meeting are printed on the flyer and an admonition to "Pass the Word", "Invite Others to Join Us" and "We look forward to seeing you" is printed on the bottom of the flyer.

Conclusion

Class divisions have long been a feature in black communities in the United States. I have provided an analysis of two different types of political organizations in the black community—the NAACP and the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. Descriptions of materials produced by them, along with observational notes of their

meetings highlight two important points concerning class heterogeneity among African Americans in the contemporary period. First, as black political culture has become more class-stratified there has been a shift away from fighting racial segregation to combat the hegemonic pre-civil rights era ideology of racial domination (Gregory 1998). In its place has been a steady move toward eliminating *institutionalized* forms of racial inequality that have become characteristic in the current post civil rights era racial ideology of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva 2001; Winant 1994). Notwithstanding academia's contributions over the last three decades to our understanding of the constructed nature of racial categorization, race in the United States remains a persistent and salient feature of everyday life. The fight against racial domination and the more covert forms of institutionalized racism continues as was evident in the 2004 and 2006 presidential voter disenfranchisement campaigns of the NAACP and the Congressional Black Caucus. New forms are emerging such as environmental racism that environmental justice proponents are addressing in new anti-racist organizations within the black public sphere.

A second point is that state-sponsored reforms that have resulted from civil rights activism have in the current era restructured political power in many black communities. The focus of traditional black civil rights organizations like the NAACP has shifted away from strategies that emphasize a race-based definition of political interests and identity toward those that privilege the discourse and interests of a black elite (Gregory 1992). In the contemporary period commentators have lamented the NAACP's neglect of concerns that specifically address the interests of black working class and poor people. Although the civil rights organization claims to work for racial justice on behalf of *all* African Americans, not all African Americans experience racism the same way. Instead, social

class has become a key feature in distinguishing how black people are affected by racism. According to Gregory (1998), in the present era race and class have been rearticulated in black politics in ways that disproportionately assist middle-class blacks. These middle-class black have been able to translate economic gains into political power including increased residential mobility, such that those Blacks who are able to move away from environmental threats are able to do so, leaving the more economically vulnerable behind. In the contemporary era, class represents a crucial political dimension of social difference in black politics.

Unlike traditional black civil rights organizations, the environmental justice movement calls attention to the racial dimensions of environmental decision-making and the disproportionate burden that lower-income communities of whatever race bear. Environmental justice proponents articulate a politics that integrates working class and poor people's issues and concerns for healthy residents and pollution free communities into black identity and cultural politics. The environmental justice movement operates within a fractured space of black political activism in the black public sphere wherein proponents have created a public space where there is association, deliberation, and engagement in collective action not only against racism but in defense of poor people *and* the environment.

In contrast, the traditional black civil rights community privileges middle class issues; the interests of poor black people are marginalized. Poor black people do not constitute the membership of the NAACP, and the NAACP does not appeal to them (as a class) to join the organization. The fundraising and elitist orientation of its programs and events like its annual televised Image Awards and annual banquet fundraisers leaves out

interests specific to the black working class and poor. Likewise, in the mainstream environmental movement, the ‘environmental’ concerns of black people and low-income communities of color remain peripheral, as described in chapter 3, despite provisions and concessions by a handful of environmental groups. Counter to both the environmental movement and the civil rights movement, the environmental justice movement has emerged as a third space that activists have created as an alternative to civil rights and environmental publics who exclude the interests of potential participants, namely poor people of color.

The dramatic social, political, and economic transformations in U.S. society since the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s civil rights era have been marked by a retreat from racial and socio-economic justice. In part, the environmental justice movement can be viewed as a response to this retreat. Scholars have noted that until the mid seventies there had been an unprecedented level of cohesion among various sectors of the black public sphere (Black Public Sphere Collective 1995). The vision of racial equality articulated by the early Martin Luther King, Jr., the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the NAACP emerged as the ascendant form of black oppositional politics. More radical, i.e. less accomodationist notions of black liberation, such as those articulated by Malcolm X, Stokely Carmichael and the Black Panther Party were superseded by an agenda that favored racial integration. As the 1980s progressed, black activists who had orchestrated the electoral rise of black mayors and other elected officials were unprepared for the retreat from a progressive black agenda that typified most urban political regimes (Wilson 1979). In the wake of these developments, class has emerged even more strongly than before as a key marker of social difference within black communities

(Wilson 1979; Gregory 1992). The black public sphere appears not just as a highly politicized space, but a more fractured one in which distinct black identities and interests form.

CHAPTER THREE

BECOMING AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTIVIST³⁰

The people who hug trees don't usually hug people. That is another environmental problem. (George Garrison, environmental justice activist)

Do I belong in a dump ground? Am I trash too? (Dollie Burwell, environmental justice activist)

White people can be environmentalists and racists at the same time. (Pastor Wilson, environmental justice activist)

In this chapter, I present an analysis of the interviews and the participant observation research that I did with North Carolina environmental justice activists and groups. The ethnographic research that I summarize here was primarily carried out from 1996 to 2005. I offer a theoretical perspective and an analysis of the qualitative data on how it is that people become active in the environmental justice movement. To explain environmental action, I emphasize the significance of identities—durable senses of self, both collective and individual—that develops through cultural activities within “figured worlds” of environmental justice and environmentalism and through dialogues with people and groups both inside and outside the movement.

Against models that attribute the causes of collective mobilization to knowledge, beliefs, and values (e.g., Stern et al 1999), on the one hand, and models that postulate a threshold of tolerance for resource deprivation or economic conflict, beyond which

³⁰ This chapter appears in modified form courtesy of Allen, Daro and Holland in Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement, Eds. Sandler and Pezzullo, 2007, pp 105-134.

material or structural conditions provoke collective mobilization (e.g., Skocpol 1979; see Flacks 1988 for a related analysis), my framework theorizes the importance of identity and the relationship between identity and action that emerges in the context of a figured world. Activities, events, practices, personalities, and material and semiotic artifacts are interpreted against the horizons of meaning of these “as if” worlds. While figured worlds are not prescriptive sets of rules that people are supposed to follow, they mediate behavior: they inform outlooks that become salient and more durable for individuals over time with continued participation in them (Holland et al 1998:52).³¹ They structure the orchestration of social discourses and practices that become resources for the crafting of identity and action, including responses defined, in part, by the standpoints of others in a figured world (Holland et al 1998:272; Holland and Lachicotte 2008).

Insofar as environmental justice proponents are dialogically engaged—directly and indirectly—with self-identified environmentalists, I consider environmental justice to be a form of environmentalism. Amidst the dialogic tensions and bridges between these figured worlds, in which different histories are salient, different social divisions are prominent, different cultural activities are relevant, and different forms of organization are valued, the cultural production of new narratives of blame and responsibility and new conceptions of both ‘the environment’ and *environmentalism* are ongoing. Dialogues between “mainstream environmentalism” and environmental justice were generated originally with more intensity by environmental justice communities than by mainstream

³¹ A survey instrument was devised from the ethnographic research with the local environmental groups and their members and administered to three national samples. Consistent with a social practice theory of identity, Holland, Lachicotte and Kempton (N.D.) report strong, statistically significant relationships between strength of environmental identities and environmental action. Moreover, indications of an environmental identity turned out to be better predictors of reported action than environmental knowledge, beliefs and values.

or dominant environmental groups. More recently there is some indication that dialogue may be evolving to a more two-sided, or multi-sided, conversation through which mainstream environmental discourse and agendas are being refigured by environmental justice concerns. (For example, chapter 4 reviews how an environmental justice perspective has developed within the Sierra Club.) As is clear from my research, the process of environmentalist identity-formation for individual environmental justice activists has been problematic; the expressed ambivalence, contradictory experiences, and internal struggles around whether or not to consider oneself an environmentalist are evidence of the contested boundaries of environmentalism. The perception, expressed by many of my research participants that environmentalism is ‘occupied’-- or already determined-- by the concerns of white environmentalists and the interests of wealthy people affects the development of both environmental justice and mainstream environmentalism. In my ethnographic work, I traced the meaning-making that shapes the dynamic boundaries between these two environmentalisms, with a focus on how environmental justice events and activities are made meaningful within the figured worlds of each.

As I emphasize later, local groups are conceptual spaces where identities and actions are shaped and woven into situated practice in connection with the particularities of these figured worlds. For example, environmental justice groups have been organized with a more grassroots, local, and horizontally networked approach than many large national, membership-based, environmental organizations. In addition, race, class and other social divisions figure much more prominently in the narratives and activities of environmental justice than in many other forms of environmentalism. Also distinctive is

the powerful role that histories of environmental justice efforts play in the development of both collective and individual identities—and in guiding the cultural activities that are valued—in the figured world of environmental justice.

My “identity trajectory” interviews began with two structured questions. The first asked the interviewee to respond to the question, “Who am I?” and the second asked whether the interviewee considered himself or herself to be an environmentalist. Environmental justice activists, had a particular sort of problem with the question of whether they considered themselves to be environmentalists: they faced the challenge of being at odds with the popular and media images of “the environmentalist” and environmentalism. They recognized that their views and sentiments set them apart from the mainstream movement and that they either did not wish to, or could not, even if they wanted to, occupy the space of the imaginary environmentalist.³²

What an ‘environmentalist’ is within these different contexts is contested in many ways, and part of the cultural production of these figured worlds is in response to the stereotypes and negative images of environmentalists that circulate in public discourse. Research participants reported encountering, and in some cases concurring with, many negative descriptions of environmentalists before they became active in environmental work, for example: “radicals,” “crazies,” “starry-eyed,” and people who “had the idea they were doing something right but they really didn’t know their ass from a hole in the ground.” Answering to stereotypes and negative images of environmentalists such as these was an integral part of developing an environmentalist identity for many of those interviewed. People who become involved in environmental justice work are often

³² Holland (2004) describes another group from the larger study, one composed of hunters and their supporters that faced somewhat similar dilemmas with the dominant image of environmentalists.

familiar with stereotypes of environmentalists and must answer to these potential identities, additionally complicated by inflections of race and class, as they negotiate new understandings of who they are. In this chapter I explore the identities that are cultivated within the figured world of environmental justice, partly in dialogue with these popular images. I show how local environmental justice groups are spaces where people struggle—personally and collectively—to refigure themselves and their actions as meaningful within the figured worlds of both environmental justice and environmentalism.

Figuring the World of Environmental Justice

The environmental justice movement has emerged from over 25 years of collective struggle. Here, in my brief telling of its emergence, I highlight the development of racialized and ecological discourses and recount the significance of meetings of activists and researchers and of legislation and research findings from conferences such as the historic 1990 “Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards Conference” hosted by the Michigan Coalition.³³ I identify these not to provide an ostensibly accurate historical account of the movement, but rather to introduce the events that my research participants told me in accounting for redefinitions of cultural meanings of the ‘environment’, and their changing ecological awareness and self understandings in the worlds in which they “live, work and play”.ⁱ

³³ Under the leadership of Bunyan Bryant and Paul Mohai, the conference brought together academics and activists. The “Michigan Coalition” (an ad hoc group formed during the conference) met with William Reilly (EPA) and Michael Deland (CEQ). These meetings resulted in Bush EPA administrator William Reilly establishing the Environmental Equity Work Group and further meetings between grassroots leaders and EPA Administrator Riley.

I concur with Cole and Foster (2001) who contend that the environmental justice movement is composed of tributaries of which the civil rights movement is one, the anti-toxins movement is another and Native American struggles, the labor movement, traditional environmentalism, and the findings of academics are others. Yet unlike these authors who liken the movement to a river, I treat the movement as a figured world to highlight the contingent and often contentious processes of meaning-making that make it possible to think, imagine, and act as environmental justice activists. For me, the environmental justice movement continues to produce a collective meaningful world of environmental action--a horizon of meaning against which experiences are interpreted, plans are made, and actions are taken and evaluated.

Environmental justice activists have reshaped environmental politics by producing distinct discourses and practices. For instance, in one well-known version of the movement's origin—the Warren County, North Carolina protests against the siting of a toxic landfill—activists refigured cultural meanings of the taken-for-granted concepts of racism and environment. In this origin story protestors invented a new phrase to describe their historical experiences of racism—one that connected their civil rights era anti-racist protests with their present experience of barking police dogs and the governor's alleged racist decision to bury PCB-laced soil in a poor black county. That expression, 'environmental racism', reflected an ecological dimension to black people's enduring struggle against racial oppression. Coined in the midst of collective action, it has since become a shorthand reference to racial discrimination in environmental decision-making processes. (For a more detailed account of the Warren County protests, see Pezzullo 2001.)

What is not highlighted in this often told story is the contingent nature of the collective work that went into figuring a world of meaningful action. During the protests, concepts like racism and images of barking dogs and billy-club-waiving police that circulate in the public sphere were drawn in, translated and made meaningful in relation to environmental hazards as people struggled to have their concerns addressed. It was not inevitable that the new phrase, 'environmental racism', would emerge, much less that it would find resonance in struggles since. Yet the Warren County protests and the phrase environmental racism became seminal in the figuring of the incident.

One of my research participants, activist Glenice Baker, describes the 1991 People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit as another watershed event in the history of the movement. Baker, among others of my research participants, told me how hundreds of Blacks, Native Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans and other people of color spent days developing what became the 17 Principles of Environmental Justice (see Appendix 1 for a list of the 17 Principles). Before the 1991 Summit, Baker noted that dozens of local groups scattered across the country struggled in isolation. It was the Summit that brought together over 600 people from virtually every state in the United States, several US territories and other countries to participate in sessions on topics such as law, media, land rights and sovereignty, and occupational health and safety. Like many in my study, Baker credits the Summit with firmly establishing environmental justice as a movement and with refiguring the meaning of the environment. In our 2002 interview, according to Baker, until the Summit

The word "environment" had been more or less co-opted by the environmentalists. But people [racial minorities] began to see their environment completely differently. And the idea that the environment was, in the holistic sense, you saw it in terms not of wilderness, and not of whales, but the air over

your head and the asthma patient down the block and the kid who died, or the old person who died.

Movement leaders defined and/or solidified several trends at, or soon after, the Summit. For one, environmental justice activists made an explicit decision to organize along a network structure; local campaigns would receive support from regional network organizations rather than a national organization. Using these networks, proponents established the Environmental Justice Fund in 1995, which connects six regional environmental justice networks with a goal of supporting grassroots environmental justice organizing. Some of these networks, such as the Northeast Environmental Justice Network (NEEJN), were created specifically to address environmental justice issues. Formed in 1992, NEEJN is a Boston-based multiracial organization composed of veteran organizers and environmental justice advocates and member organizations. In contrast, other networks like the Atlanta-based Southern Organizing Committee for Economic and Social Justice have a 25-year old history of social justice work that pre-dates environmental justice activism in the area. Through the efforts of these organizations, as well as statewide and race-based networks such as the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and the African American Environmental Justice Action Network, proponents have organized the movement horizontally, rather than reproduced the hierarchical structures of other types of environmental organizations and national civil rights organizations. The movement continues to devote a good part of its effort to developing local grassroots groups through community organizing, and to developing networks among them through such events as summits. Because of its rootedness in community and everyday life, the movement has developed what one of my research

participants, Conrad Ratcliffe³⁴, called a “homegrown” flavor”. In his estimation, this local focus is necessary: “Organizations at a state level could not provide the man-hours and those day-to-day grind routine things that I hope would be taking place in the community or would save us from the industries inside the community”.

Notably, since the initial Warren County protests and the watershed 1991 Summit, government actions and legislation, although sometimes characterized by activists as environmentally racist, have further shaped the figured world of environmental justice. Particularly helpful federal legislation includes the Environmental Justice Act, reintroduced in 1993 by Georgia Congressman Lewis and Montana Senator Baucus and the 1998 Florida Environmental Equity and Justice Act. Likewise, local proclamations, such as those issued in North Carolina in 1998 for Environmental Justice Awareness Week and Environmental Justice Awareness Month have also resulted. Moreover, legal precedents utilized in the movement include Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1979 *Bean v. Southwestern Waste* legal decision. The history of the movement is conveyed through these latter legal decisions even though they pre-dated and were not associated with environmental justice when initially issued.

The figured world of environmental justice activism also incorporates government agencies and bodies. Considered among them are the EPA’s Office of Environmental Justice, formerly the Office of Environmental Equity and the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) formed in 1993. Activists have moved from an early preoccupation with equalizing the siting of environmental burdens to a stance focused on a larger scale vision of justice. In the late eighties amid pressure, the Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Environmental Equity was established to address activists'

³⁴ Ratcliffe is a pseudonym.

concerns that communities of color and lower income communities housed polluting industries in disproportionate numbers as compared to affluent white communities. Since then, activists have called for an end to all polluting production practices, not just equity in siting environmental burdens. ‘Not in anyone's backyard’, as opposed to ‘Not in my backyard’ has become a movement slogan. This shift from equity to justice is reflected in the renaming of the EPA Office of Environmental Equity to the Office of Environmental Justice. In addition, environmental justice leaders have drafted position papers for government officials and served as advisors to presidential teams³⁵, administrations, and other public officials who, pressured by activists, publish reports such as the EPA’s 1992 “Environmental Equity: Reducing Risk of All Communities,” one of the first comprehensive government reports to examine disparities in the citing of environmental hazards. Amidst the critical and essential work of local communities’ struggles, commitments from a sympathetic first term Clinton-Gore presidential administration, for example, helped push forward a national agenda on environmental justice. While many theorists of social movements would understand the endorsement of environmental justice concerns by Clinton and Gore as a “political opportunity” that launched the environmental justice movement into its status as a legitimate national project, my point here is that because of the way environmental justice concerns were figured as a confluence of racial justice and environmental issues within the emerging cultural imaginaries, these concerns were *compatible with*, rather than mobilized by, the figured world inhabited by Clinton and Gore.

³⁵ For example, in 1993 Benjamin Chavis and Robert Bullard were appointed to the Clinton-Gore Presidential Transition Team in the Natural Resources Cluster and Deeohn Ferris coordinated a national campaign that drafted the “Environmental Justice Position Paper” submitted to the Clinton-Gore Transition Team.

Environmental justice is becoming further institutionalized both as a concept and a social movement through new forms of state governance. Through public/private partnerships, for example, governments and private foundations have made funds and personnel available to carry out work *in the name of* environmental justice. These contributions have been used to extend the figured world of environmental justice—both its meanings and its practices in time and space. For example, the Concerned Citizens of Thornton (North Carolina) secured grant money to hire a health educator to travel the county to conduct health education workshops and to teach residents about environmental racism--drawing people into the figured world of environmental justice by encouraging them to reframe what they originally considered health issues as also environmental justice issues.

Since the late 1980's legislation and funding resulting from environmental justice campaigns have come to populate the public domain, becoming available for environmental justice proponents to recall and refer to as they figure themselves and their worlds. They cite these precedents as well as previous anti-racist struggles as they conceptualize environmental justice as a distinct world of environmental action. For example, when some in my study compared their 1990s campaign against expansion of the Westchester St. (a pseudonym³⁶) landfill in Fayetteville, North Carolina to the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers strike led by Martin Luther King, Jr., and cited Executive Order 12989 signed in 1994 by President Clinton, they were actively (re)figuring themselves, contemporary events, and their campaign as they constructed interpretations of the movement and its history.

³⁶ I promised anonymity to those interviewed and groups studied. Unless otherwise indicated, names are pseudonyms.

Other inputs into the figuring of environmental justice come from scholars studying the movement and from transnational connections. When researchers like myself cite the participation of environmental justice activists in major world forums such as the 1999 World Trade Organization protests in Seattle, the United Nations sponsored 2001 World Conference Against Racism, and the 2002 Rio+10 Earth Summit, we author versions of the movement's history that point to how it has become international and pluralistic (see for example Di Chiro 2007 and Roberts 2007). Through such gatherings, according to these histories, the movement addresses an array of class, multi-ethnic and racial concerns within alternative framings of struggle that go beyond the problem of racism. Interpretations built through these transnational relationships create and emphasize commonalities. For instance, for South African environmental justice activists, environmental justice is explicitly related to the anti-apartheid movement and to critiques of the country's spatially segregated and unequal development of capitalism. Despite differences in the histories and trajectories of environmental justice movements in South Africa and the United States, activists simultaneously articulate concerns for social justice and the environment; for them, the environment is both social and ecological (Checker 2002). In still other versions of the movement's history, but not in those of the people I interviewed, the 1978 anti-toxins struggle led by Lois Gibbs at Love Canal is cited as the key event that ushered in the movement (see Thomas 2003). Developments such as those cited here do not merge inevitably as streams coming together to form the environmental justice movement; rather, activists, scholars and groups actively figure the movement by highlighting some aspects and historical events and ignoring others as significant to it.

People of Color Relate Differently to the Environment: Naming the Difference

As will become clear later, individual activists' accounts of their paths to environmental justice tend to include personal issues around themes that are or have been worked out collectively. One of these recurring themes concerns how race is relevant to environmentalism. The expression and interpretation of the distinctive experiences that African Americans and other people of color tend to have with the environment is a subject of some tension and controversy.

The now famous 1987 United Church of Christ commissioned study authored by Charles Lee has become an important cultural resource that highlights a racial dimension to the environmental question. "Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States" was the first national study to correlate waste facility sitings with race. It determined that the main factor in the location of hazardous waste facilities is race. An earlier 1983 study entitled "Siting of Hazardous Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities," authored by the U.S. General Accounting Office, had earlier made the same claim for the southeaster United States. It found that three out of four of the off-site commercial hazardous waste facilities in EPA Region IV are located in African American communities, although African Americans make up just one-fifth of the region's population. Whether or not these and other studies prove racism³⁷, research participant Glenice Baker speaks to the significance of them for aiding individuals in figuring new cultural worlds:

For the first time, people of color began to see the environmental question as their own and a really fantastic redefinition of the meaning of environmentalism took place.

³⁷ Subsequent studies have sought to discredit findings from reports such as these, including a 1994 University of Massachusetts study funded by Waste Management, Inc. which triggered a wave of attacks on environmental justice.

In my interview, Baker recounted an incident at the 1991 First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit that illustrates how environmental justice was forming in dialogue with what she might call “wilderness environmentalism” or “wild blue yonder environmentalism” around the issue of race. She recalled,

I remember a Native American, in particular, getting up at a breakout session in 1991 at the Environmental Justice Conference where a scientist had been talking for hours, and he [the Native American] just got up and said, "You know, your knowledge isn't superior to ours. Because your knowledge only depends on human beings, and ours includes the trees and the animals." And there was dead silence. You almost have to experience [things like this] to see how different it is from previous movements...[Before the environmental justice movement] there were very, very few people of color, with any of the national environmental groups, until this movement started. And now, they're rushing like crazy to hire people of color...Because it's like [the environmental] movement was way out there in the wild blue yonder before this, and now, it's right at the center of the city.

Criticisms like these highlight differences that the African American environmental justice activists in my research noted between the environmentalism of people of color and that of what they see as the mainstream or dominant form of environmentalism. The apprehension of this difference also stimulated environmental justice activists to initiate dialogues between the two environmentalisms. For example, in 1990 activists of color wrote two letters to the “Group of 10”, i.e., the Sierra Club, the Environmental Defense Fund, and other top national environmental organizations, calling for discussions of how environmental issues affect communities of color, an increase in hiring minorities, and their assignment to their governing boards.³⁸ Several of the national environmental organizations responded positively. For example, the Sierra

³⁸ See Richard Moore’s chapter in Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots.

Club's National Environmental Justice Grassroots Organizing Program, formed in 2000, provides organizing assistance, empowerment training, seed grants and paid staff to work in low-income and people of color communities. Though contentious, these conversations and ensuing developments illustrate how the movement has developed in productive tension with more dominant forms of environmentalism.

Emerging Racialized Identities

Race matters not only in how environmental justice activists have come to understand environmental problems, but also in how they understand themselves in relation to those problems. According to geographer Laura Pulido (1996b, 1998), race affects individuals' access to, and participation in the environmental movement, with the environmental justice movement being one site where the 'people of color' racial identity has gained currency. Although Pulido rightly notes that the people of color racial identity is a collective identity around which many environmental justice activists organize, her work does not fully explore the processes important to making this a salient identity for movement proponents. Several incidents from my research illustrate important exclusionary practices directed at whites. While attending the 2002 Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, I observed, for example, an incident that occurred during a session planned by the organizers to build solidarity and multicultural organizing. The idea was to engage candid discussions of perceived barriers and conflicts that, according to them, prevented the movement from being a "more cohesive force". Although it did not appear that session organizers had planned to ask white people to leave, this growing sentiment came from those who wanted only people of color to be present so that according to them, they could speak frankly about

intra-racial tensions in the movement. They were adamant that white people, namely those representing mainstream environmental organizations, should not be privy to such conversations, even as a black man who represented the World Wildlife Federation was allowed to stay. As the situation grew tense, I watched as many of the white people reluctantly exited; presumably those who remained represented environmental justice, not mainstream groups. Incidents such as these, interpreted from my approach, are part of the unifying but exclusionary process of generating racially marked environmental identities and building racial solidarity.

During my interview with Glenice Baker, she recounted a similar process of exclusion that occurred at the first (1991) Summit. It also demonstrates the changing understandings of race that are developing in the environmental arena. Foreshadowing incidents at the 2002 Summit, she recalled how white people, mostly representatives of mainstream environmental groups, were not allowed to participate in the portion of the Summit devoted to drawing up what became the 17 principles of the movement. Baker maintained that “there was no hostility toward white people,” but that for people of color “there was a sense of sort of being chosen almost.” She commented further,

And to me it was very, very different...because these people who were involved in this, people of color thing, were Black, Native American, Asian American and Hispanic; a completely new dynamic developed. You know, the whole issue of Black and White has been fought with such tension -- every word, so to speak, is a very sensitive word. But this group of people of color had never really worked together, and they were coming together under these new circumstances of a new definition. It was just amazing.... A very different dynamic from when you have other people who have had no history of working together. ... And if you think about it in that sense, you really begin to get some idea, first of all how grassroots it was, and how [differently] people began to relate to one another.

During events such as the 1991 and 2002 summits, racial identities such as the “people of color” identity and the practices that accompany their making, become salient.

Since the early 1990s in building the movement, people have come together to establish principles and build solidarity on the basis of being a person of color, in the name of environmentalism. Through these cultural processes and practices, the social identity of ‘environmental justice activist’ has been created and claimed by people of color, at least at this historical juncture.

The environmental justice movement is similar to other social movements in that it is composed of what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as *communities of practice*. Communities of practice as used here to describe environmental justice activism are associations and networks of people who carry out activities and engage in practices that they interpret against the evolving, dynamic, and often contested horizons of meaning or figured worlds that emerge in processes of the types I have just recounted (Holland et al 1998:60). As communities of practice, local environmental groups offer more social immediacy to their members than is available to those individuals whose environmentalism forms primarily in the public arena, where environmental images and narratives are often fragmented, incoherent, and disconnected from specific actions. Communities of practice are sources of cultural production where general public discourses are interwoven with local particularities and developing bodies of practice. In them, inchoate sentiments are linked with specific actions and become marked by race, class, gender and other social divisions. It is noteworthy that many, if not a majority, of the leaders of environmental justice groups are women, see for example Krauss 1992 and Kaplan 2001. In my interviews and related participant observation research, gender issues and differences did not receive spontaneous attention. However, when specifically asked about differences, people linked women’s passion for activism against

environmental health hazards to their frequent roles as guardians of their family's health. Persons involved in communities of environmental practice are often engaged in overt contention locally, and through this collective engagement they develop not only a culturally coherent understanding of a specific environmental problem but also a coherent understanding of themselves as actors in relation to that problem. I illustrate these processes in the following accounts.

Pathways to Environmental Activism

Conrad Ratcliffe, the research participant quoted earlier, provided a sense of how individuals are drawn into the figured world of environmental justice; he shared how he became involved with a group of environmental justice advocates and learned to experience the environment in a new way.

Like many Northampton County residents in eastern North Carolina, in 2002 Ratcliffe had grown accustomed to the noxious smells of sulfuric acid from the nearby Champion International Paper Mill. Although he and others suspected that their health was suffering as a result of living near and working in the paper mill, they had grown “desensitized to the mill’s stench” and indifferent to operations at the mill that according to Ratcliffe’s retrospective account, were “killing them”. Remarkably, through his employment with the North Carolina Student Rural Health Coalition, an organization that works to improve poor people’s access to health care, Ratcliffe’s resignation changed. The Coalition collects and disseminates health statistics on county residents and with them, validates many of their suspicions. As a paid community organizer for the Coalition, Ratcliffe became aware of the “staggering numbers of early deaths in the area” which many residents attributed to the mill. At public meetings and other forums hosted

by the Coalition, residents aired health problems that beforehand were discussed only privately. A lay minister, Ratcliffe likened his environmental justice work to that of a religious zealot: “It’s like carrying the good news, like carrying gospel.”

Through this work with the *community of practice*³⁹ organized by the Coalition, Ratcliffe was introduced by environmental justice activists in the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network to a new explanation for the numbing paper mill stench; he refigured his understanding of the mill to be a case of environmental racism.⁴⁰ At meetings, rallies and workshops held across the state, he described to me his frequent contact with activists who work against hog waste, poor sewage, anti-landfill expansion and cleanup, and lead abatement. He credited the Coalition and the 1999 Summit, organized by the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN), for the opportunity to establish and build relationships with environmental justice activists from across the state.

In his meetings and travels, Ratcliffe had seen evidence that for him proved that communities like his suffer from ‘environmental racism’. The movement, through the work of groups like the Coalition and the NCEJN, validated peoples’ suspicions in ways that according to Ratcliffe made sense: environmental racism is not only the cause of people’s poor health but also the reason why Blacks who have suffered from other forms

³⁹Coined by Lave and Wenger (1991) and expanded by Holland (1998) to include forms of collective environmental action, a *community of practice* (COP) refers to a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. A COP is not just a group or club, but it has three distinguishing features: 1. A COP has a defined identity based on shared interest, in this case, a white ally environmental justice activist; 2. Members of the COP build relationships where they learn from one another, and 3. Members share resources and interact over time (Wenger 1998).

⁴⁰ Kempton and Holland (2003) describe general individual identity processes characteristic of members of all of the environmental groups in the larger study. “Reformulations”, where the individual begins to understand environmental conditions and the social and political sources of these conditions in new ways, are an important aspect of most trajectories of identity formation. In this chapter, I characterize the content of these general processes that are more specific to the environmental justice movement.

of racism have heretofore been resigned and inactive about the mill's stench. His ongoing participation in these communities of practice developed and kept meaningful the figured world of environmental justice, gathering him and others in meetings and summits, helping shape them as 'environmental justice activists' as their lives intersected with this developing figured world.

Dollie Burwell's Path to Environmentalism: Redefining "Environment"⁴¹

Dollie Burwell's case and the others described in this chapter reveal people undergoing personal struggles over, and changing awareness of, themselves as environmentalists. Their efforts were one of the forces leading to the changing collective identity of the environmental movement and to the development of environmental justice activists as a social identity familiar to people within and outside the movement.

Burwell recalled that she did not readily nor initially see herself or her community's struggle as contributing to the environmental movement. Although at the time of the initial Warren County, NC anti-landfill protests Burwell acknowledged an ecological dimension to environmental racism, she refused to be identified as an environmentalist. In our 2001 interview, she told of her refusal to be interviewed by a reporter from the Audubon Society's magazine. She refused because, "I didn't have a clear understanding...I didn't want them to, I thought they saw me as an environmentalist and I didn't see myself as an environmentalist. I saw myself as an activist for justice rather than an activist for the environment."

⁴¹ Burwell's name used with her permission.

Only years after the 1982 protests, at another historical event, the 1991 People of Color Environmental Summit, referred to above, was Burwell able to resolve the long-standing dilemmas she had with being labeled an environmentalist.

After the 1991 People of Color Summit where I met with many people... Native Americans, Hispanics, and Black people all working on different issues. Some was housing, toxic waste issues, and seeing the passion that people brought to whatever their respective issue was and being a person who sat through those meetings and hammered out the term of environment...where we worked, where we played, where we lived. That came out of the People of Color Summit in 1991 and that was the turning point for me understanding. That definition allowed me to consider myself an environmentalist, with that definition where you work, where you play, and where you live⁴². That encompassed those justice issues that were near and dear to me.

After the 1991 Summit, Burwell was more comfortable calling herself an environmentalist. Yet these changes did not happen solely on the intimate terrain of self-authoring. They were the result of her ongoing involvement in communities of practice, first the Warren County Concerned Citizens Against PCB's and then later in work sessions at the 1991 Summit. It was in the Warren County group that she learned alongside fellow members about the dangers of PCB's to human health *and* to ground water, plant and wildlife. It was during her participation in the 1991 Summit that she and others "hammered out" the 17 principles of environmental justice. Instead of wildlife and 'nature', the environment came to mean, "*where we live, work, and play.*" Up until then, environmentalists in her eyes were not people like herself, but, "traditionally white males or some wealthier kind of people who can afford to take two or three months and go overseas and protest." The dominant image of an environmentalist continues to be raced, gendered and classed as white, male and middle-to-upper class.

⁴² Summit participants developed this definition of the environment at the 1991 National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit.

George Garrison's Desire to Remain Distinct from Environmentalists

Local environmental justice groups serve as “spaces of authoring” where people can re-figure themselves and their actions as part of the cultural world of environmentalism, but not without effort. Environmental justice communities of practice are not only spaces in which people develop coherent understandings of environmental problems and solutions but they are also spaces in which individuals can work through their differences with the images of environmentalists they have previously formed. I have just described Burwell's nine-year effort to come to terms with thinking of herself as an “environmentalist”. George Garrison, another research participant, answered the question about whether he considered himself to be an environmentalist in this way:

I guess I would say I never considered myself as being labeled an environmentalist. I have never in the traditional sense of the definition of an environmentalist... I have never enjoyed the killing of animals even as a child and watching full forests being cut down or trees being destroyed needlessly...I think that we all have some environmental tendencies. [But,] I would not have labeled myself an environmentalist and I still don't because I still see environmentalists as tree huggers, go save the whales! And that kind of a definition for an environmentalist. If we look at environment as holistically, then yes, I am an environmentalist because holistically we are talking about people. My basic theory is that if you say people then you say everything else.

KA: Would you say that you are a strong environmentalist?

No, meaning that I would not be going out to save a whale. I wouldn't be protesting the fishing of whales even if they are about to be extinct. So I wouldn't say. No.

KA: Even with your redefinition of what the environment is?

With my redefinition of what the environment is, I would be a strong environmentalist.

According to Garrison, environmental justice pays first attention to people, and the environment is “what is around” them. Garrison is clear again in a later part of the interview that he does not want to be mistaken for the stereotypical environmentalist. He does not want to be labeled an environmentalist, “Because they [other people] think you are hugging trees...[It’s a problem] to be thought of as hugging trees and not people. The people who hug trees don’t usually hug people.” He then told a story about several environmentalists who had tried to stop his community organization from cutting down some trees in order to build a health clinic. When their efforts failed, the environmentalists became distraught. In Garrison’s eyes, they were willing, at least temporarily, to deny health care to local poor people simply because it would mean several trees would have to be cut. Moreover, he found their intense emotional reaction to the tree cutting unfathomable.

Primarily because they focused on people as victims of environmental degradation, most of the environmental justice activists in my study did not identify with, and did not want others to identify them with, the more ecocentric stances of environmentalism. This does not mean, however, that environmental justice advocates are unaware of, or discourage all of the practices of, what they distinguish as the mainstream movement. They support the avoidance of environmentally harmful products in their homes and businesses and recycle. These practices do not demand forfeiting core environmental justice positions and may be recognized as things that black people and poor people have been doing for a long time, as Garrison put it: “Black people and poor people have been recycling a long time because that is the only way we could have made it.” Working in alliance with mainstream environmentalism, environmental justice activists sometimes

try to accommodate the sensitivities of mainstream environmentalists, as in the following account by Garrison:

At the first Hog Round Table some real environmentalists came to the meeting we prepared for them. We had Styrofoam cups to drink out of. We noticed people going outside and coming back in with their mugs. They never said a word but that was enough. From that time on we found paper cups or gave enough mugs.

Still, the differences I found in the meanings assigned to such issues were quite deep.

Which I elaborate in the account below.

S.H.I.T. Versus H.E.L.P: Awareness of Inequality and Injustice

In 1992 a local group started an environmental justice project in Halifax County, North Carolina. They wanted to prevent more hog factories from locating in the area. Uncharacteristically for protest efforts there, the group included good numbers of both black people and white people. According to the humorous account given by Garrison, Help Environmental Loss Prevention (H.E.L.P.) was the name suggested for the group by one of the white members. The black people wanted to call it Swine Habitat is Terrible (S.H.I.T.), a reminder that hogs produce an amazing amount of feces.

The black members saw the group as helping people because large-scale hog operations negatively affect people, but the whites wanted to communicate the purpose as one of saving the environment. Actually, Garrison thought the radio announcements for S.H.I.T. and its activities would be funny. But, regardless of the humor, the point that whites often have different perspectives on environmental problem than black people is a familiar one. Geographer Laura Pulido (1996a) and sociologist Devon Pena (1998)⁴³ make the point that a person's environmentalism is likely to be closely linked to his or her social position. They emphasize the different life conditions that racially and

⁴³See also Pulido and Pena 1998.

ethnically marked people typically face and thus the aspects of the environment likely to concern them. As Ratcliffe, my interviewee, said, “It [the issue of environmental justice] is about life and death for the black person, not just a geographical [environmental] problem”. Or as Garrison said, in speaking about the threat posed by hog factories, “Most of the whites are concerned about the surface waters because *it is recreation for them*. And those of us who live in rural communities [and have old and shallow wells] are more concerned about the ground water because *it is life for us* and the potential contamination of that from the chloroform that comes out of lagoons.” [my emphasis].

Almost all of the environmental justice activists I talked with had originally come to environmental justice from a focus on social and racial justice. Older activists had been involved in the Civil Rights Movement.⁴⁴ As already discussed, for activists with a focus on social and racial justice, environmental injustice is figured as one among *many* injustices. Ratcliffe, who attributed his raised consciousness to his experience serving on the town council and to attending conferences such as the 1999 Summit, had lots to say on the topic:

With regards to environmental issues with Black folks, it parallels and is deeply connected to other injustices.... It is not the first injustice against them. It is deeply connected and rooted with the rest of the injustices....But, more so than anything else, injustices on top of injustices is what Black people are dealing with.

Ratcliffe went on to paint a larger picture. He stated that black peoples’ actions and inaction are rooted in their experiences of not having the political position to affect decisions that profoundly affect their lives, of being treated like objects by doctors and

⁴⁴ Again, I am focusing on environmental justice as conceived by the African American activists I interviewed and the African American communities of practice I studied. White people, albeit in the minority, do participate in environmental justice projects and groups, and as described in the first part of this chapter, do attend Summit meetings and conferences.

other professionals who minister to their needs, and of having to fit into institutions that provide no respect for their cultural traditions or life experiences. He observed “...How the injustice with regards to the environment takes place as a whole [is] because they don’t have a fair representation in saying what is going to take place in their county.” For example, he pointed out that their water quality standards are low because the decisions are left up to people who don’t have to drink the water they do.

These are the social and cultural milieus in which black people and other people of color either do or do not develop identities as environmentalists. As Ratcliffe summed it up, “when we talk about environment from an activist standpoint, then we talk about [social] conditions, not just the trees, river, and streams, but the people and the system that they deal with and they live in, so it is a different ball game.” My interviewees underscored three defining aspects of environmental justice: one is that the meaning of “environment” and “environmentalist” has been defined by, and is associated with whiteness. Second, for black people in the environmental justice movement, environmentalism is embedded within, or combined with the recognition that, people of color live in a world that is pervaded by racism and racist structures. A third distinctive feature of environmental justice concerns the ways that the environment is experienced—as a source of danger. Regarding the second point, a central part of environmental justice activist work is organizing people and raising consciousness about social and material conditions on people’s *home ground*. As mentioned earlier, the environmental justice movement, at least in the southeastern U.S., with its focus on racism and helping people learn to stand up to racism, has so far eschewed an emphasis on national level organizing

and instead has focused on local empowerment and regional organizing; thus its “homegrown” or grassroots flavor.

An Environmentalism of Ever Present Danger

The environmental activism of environmental justice activists addresses real and perceived threats faced in everyday living, working and playing situations. Referring to this type of environmentalism as an “environmentalism of everyday life”, Pulido (1996) characterizes environmental justice struggles as principally about economic issues. This environmentalism, she maintains, is a “material and political struggle” mobilized on the basis of collective identity (Pulido 1996:30). Similar to Pulido, I maintain that social position guides people’s actions in the environmental justice arena and that it is used in the interpretation and mobilization of collective action on issues of health and well being that activists are most concerned about. Yet beyond the point that Pulido makes, social position does not fully determine what, if any, actions or activities individuals will undertake. Rather, the *meanings* that people *collectively make of* structural positions are aspects of their identities, and those meanings are developed in social action. For environmental justice activists, their activism reflects their concern with everyday living and dying in their environments: environmental degradation reacts upon their bodies and the bodies of others and is experienced as a threat to the body and to the self in the social context of struggling with others.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ This perspective explains how I would amend Martinez-Alier’s ideas about poor peoples’ environmentalism. In his discussion of “environmentalism of the poor,” Martinez-Alier presents a powerful materialist structural analysis of the connection between global and local economic inequality with a focus on specific “ecological distribution conflicts,” but he does not explore the complexity of social practice and collective identity development at the local level of communities engaged in environmental justice work. He is critical of the Environmental Justice movement in the U.S. for its failures to address global issues such as biopiracy and climate change, which he sees as limiting the potential for becoming part of a global, majoritarian “Popular Environmental Movement”. The goal of my work is to uncover the

All environmental activists come into contact with the environment; however, their encounters are mediated through cultural activities that tend to vary from one environmental group to the next. For example, for some members of the Sierra Club, bird watching, a principle activity of the group, brings them into contact with a variety of plants and wildlife in the outdoors and models the environment as something to be respectfully observed. In stark contrast, for environmental justice activists, key activities that relate one to the environment are living, working, and playing in dangerous, contaminated places. As illustrated by the contrasting images used in the cultural materials of each type of group—for example, of people engaged in bird watching, recycling, “buying green”, hiking, on the one hand, and of children playing in the shadow of smokestacks on the other, many of the activities and concerns of environmental justice activists and the more typical environmentalists are not shared. In all of these images people are active in the environment, but what the environment is (a fragile ecosystem to be protected versus a place of dangerous threat), and what activities develop one’s sensitivities to it (leisure activities vs. everyday life), differ dramatically.

Several of my ethnographic cases illustrate environmental justice activists’ concern with the social and physical consequences of environmental degradation in everyday life. Dollie Burwell, for example, was saddened and outraged that Warren County residents viewed themselves negatively because they lived in a place made

narratives, images, and practices that have shaped the development of the figured world of environmental justice in the U.S., which would help explain why global concerns have not figured prominently in this cultural world. For example, while the environment is seen as a source of livelihood that must be both accessible and protected for the ‘global poor’ in Martinez-Alier’s account, for those involved in environmental justice work in the U.S. the environment is more often a source of contamination and immediate danger. Although Martinez-Alier calls for cross-pollination between his Ecological Economics and the work of Political Ecologists (to bring together attention to economic valuation and cultural meaning), I would argue that his project should be supplemented by attention to the dynamics of identity development within communities of practice, where the work of transforming existing figured worlds takes place.

infamous for housing a hazardous waste landfill. According to Burwell, many residents have internalized these negative associations. They asked rhetorically, “Do I belong in a dump ground?” “Am I trash too?” Burwell told the crowd at an anti-landfill rally that the landfill has to be detoxified so that her children and other county residents can be proud, not ashamed, to live in Warren County. She feared that they will not be able to shed the internalized image of a dump until the state of North Carolina fulfills its promise to detoxify the contaminated soil and residents are able to transform the site into a recreational center and to consign the episode to history by commemorating Warren County as the birthplace of the environmental justice movement. For many environmental justice activists, landfills symbolize death—the demise of community through death and abandonment and evoke a sense of being disregarded. Symbolically and literally they represent and foreshadow death.

The use of death to symbolize the dangerous of the environment can be seen in another of my ethnographic cases. In a downtown rally sponsored in 2000 by the Westchester St. Anti-Landfill group in Fayetteville, North Carolina, captured the sense of an environmentalism of ever-present danger. Jackie Savin, the group’s spokesperson, dressed herself in itchy tan burlap bags and draped a black lace veil about her head and face. She wore the homemade dress, she told me later, to “show how poor we was down there.” Marchers held up signs that read: “Snakes on Westchester St.--Snakes in City Hall,” “Your Trash is in My Backyard”, and “Living on Westchester St. is living on Death Row.” At the mock funeral, a placard perched against a van windshield listed the names of 28 people who had died in the neighborhood. The funeral march organized by Savin was a time for mourning, mourning the loss of a once vibrant community and

mourning the many people who, according to Savin, have died, who've "dropped like flies".

The Story of Pastor Wilson: Continuing Developments

Pastor Lawrence Wilson was a person who brought key people and institutions together in the events that developed into the Warren County, North Carolina protests of 1982. Pastor White was a civil rights activist in the area late 1960s and 1970s. During the 1982 protests Pastor White was the pastor of a local United Church of Christ and was instrumental in the formation of the UCC's Commission on Racial Justice, which at that time was located in neighboring Edgecombe County. His story shows the latitude that is possible in self-authoring within the environmental justice movement. At the same time his case demonstrates some of the constraints imposed on people of color who would act on any ecocentric, non-environmental justice identities or concerns they might form.

In our 2001 interview Pastor White recounted his trajectory through the period of the Warren County protests. He expressed doubt that he would have become involved if the injustice of the landfill had happened to others: "I went down there because I felt like dumping on those Black folk was an injustice. If they want to dump on those rich White folk in Raleigh I probably would never have become an environmentalist." From those sentiments Pastor Wilson had moved over the years to the point of describing himself as a "lover of nature". He gave this description as an answer to the "Who am I?" question posed at the beginning of our interview. At the end, I returned to the theme of whether he considered himself an environmentalist. Referring back to his original "Who am I? list, he replied, "Yes, when I say I am a lover of nature, that's who I am, I feel for those things".

Pastor Wilson attributed his transformation to reading a passage from the Bible while he was “moving into the reality” of the Warren County struggle:

As I became involved in the struggle marching all the way from Warren County landfill through Warrenton to Raleigh to the state capitol...In Jeremiah 30...all of a sudden this struggle is about the salvation of the earth.

KA: How did that happen?

Just a leap that is called empathy. This struggle is not really about a Black community that is being dumped on. Warren County is a predominantly Black community. Warren County is all [about] being polluted. That scripture that I was reading, it shows us what slavery was about. ...it really was about the economics of it. What ended up being used are people and the earth. The earth was not supposed to be used [it is supposed] to be related to. But you understand that God so loved the world that God gave his son. Paul goes a lot into that. The earth...it really is about justice for the earth because if you don't have justice for the earth, you are not going to have justice for people because everything becomes a thing to be used rather than a part of it.

In addition to preaching in his church about justice for the earth as well as for people, Pastor White approached environmental organizations working to save the earth. These efforts led to revelations about the multiple ways in which environmentalism is entangled with race. During this time he tried to join the well-known Riverkeepers group in New Bern, North Carolina, that monitored and advocated for the river. Yet he gradually concluded that it would be very difficult for him to make the contributions to caring for the river that he wanted to make because the other members persisted in treating him as though his concerns were limited to those of environmental justice. Eventually he lost interest in white-dominated environmental groups and concluded that

the best opportunity for Blacks to contribute is through the environmental justice movement.⁴⁶

Let me tell you why. The environmentalist movement in this nation has no room for Black folk.

KA: What do you mean?

The Sierra Club is dominated by White [people]. It has not really had a Black agenda. The Riverkeepers in New Bern is a White dominated environmentalist movement. I have wanted to be a part of it because I really thought I had a contribution to make. It has the blessings of the state to deal with those issues and White folk don't really need Black folk.

KA: You are saying that environmental racism is an opportunity for Black people to participate in the environment?

In the total environmental issue because...[those issues] have not yet been dominated by the White power structure. Trust me they are not going to get to it. They will touch it, but they are not going to get to it. That is a legitimate role, to become a spokesperson for the environmental racism issue. From where I was, real conversion comes about when you discover the way the earth and the environment have been treated--the issue of injustice. It is a great opportunity.

KA: For a Black person to come to that kind of awareness?

Come to the awareness because if they come to that awareness they have the whole. White people can be environmentalists and racists at the same time. If they see the environment being hurt they may not be able to transpose that to see the injustice in racism.

Here he pointed out a key way in which he considers environmental justice to differ from mainstream environmentalism. In his view, for the latter there is no inconsistency between a person who takes care to be environmentally friendly and fights

⁴⁶ Albeit few, there were some African American participants in the mainstream groups of the larger study. At least one, a middle-class woman in the Delmarva Peninsula area, did not describe her experience as one of being automatically assigned to environmental justice issues.

fiercely to save the earth yet at the same time participates in and even promotes racism. In other words, concerns about damage to the environment have no relationship to concerns about the damage caused by systems of racial privilege, but in Pastor Wilson's revelation, these two kinds of injustice flow from the same source.

Conclusion: Blackness and the Figured World of Environmental Justice

In this chapter I have looked at similarities and differences between environmental justice and other environmental activists through a social practice theory of identity formation, with special attention to the cultural or figured world developed by the environmental justice movement and to the paths that environmental justice activists have taken in identifying themselves within and otherwise becoming part of that world.

The history and trajectory of the environmental justice movement as developed by black people and other people-of-color is distinctive within the broad range of environmentalisms that comprise the environmental movement. The cultural activities that mediate environmental sensibilities include birding, hiking, backpacking, and recycling. These activities provide ways of experiencing the environment that are quite different from those of *environmental justice*. Within the figured world of environmental justice, the environment is associated with the daily smells and sights of blight along with an awareness of ever-present danger and insult to one's body and to the community. Accompanying these threats are the experiences of other forms of injustice and disregard. Not surprisingly, the environmental justice movement sees the empowerment of environmentally stressed communities as equally important to the removal of environmental threats. The work of the movement simultaneously addresses people and their concerns, *and* helps them change oppressive systems under which they live. For

these reasons, activists continue to emphasize local and regional organizing instead of concentrating only on building national-level organizations.

These differences in salient aspects of the environment and in the organizational preferences of the movement are intensified by the distance of environmental justice from popular images of environmentalists and by the marking of both mainstream environmentalism *and* environmental justice by race and class. Environmental justice activists in my study did not constitute the public's prototype environmentalist; they did not occupy the imaginary space of the environmentalist. Instead, their struggles to define themselves as environmentalists involved accepting the label of environmentalist *in spite of* their own sense of distance from the concerns and social positions they attribute to "real" environmentalists. In a sense, white people owned the environmental movement. Or, to put it in the words of a person I interviewed, "White people, and their issues, dominate the environmental movement." This chapter examined the extent to which blackness is being redefined in the environmental justice movement. The movement, I argue, has produced the environmental justice activist identity: African Americans and other people of color occupy the imaginary space of this particular type of environmentalist.

Pastor Wilson's case reveals the extent to which environmental justice activism has become marked as a sphere of black activism. When Pastor Wilson introduced himself at a meeting of the New Bern Riverkeepers he shared that he was active in what is widely considered the birthplace of the environmental justice movement, the 1982 Warren County anti-landfill protests. Although he expressly told the New Bern group that he had attended their meeting because he wanted to help in their efforts to save the

fish of the New Bern River, the white environmentalists continued to suppose that he was there to advance an environmental justice agenda, one that focused on eliminating racism. Pastor Wilson concluded that because he was black the New Bern environmentalists had presupposed that he was there out of concern for racial and social justice for people of color rather than the fish in the New Bern River. Because they were addressing the needs of fish, not people, Pastor Wilson was obviously in the wrong group. Just as the “real” environmentalist is considered ‘white, middle to upper class, and cares about whales’, I argue that the environmental justice activist is identified as black and concerned about the effects of racism on black people. Environmental justice has become marked as a sphere of environmental concern for African Americans and other people of color.

This chapter addressed blackness and environmental justice activism and builds on the work of Checker (2004) who examined competing notions of blackness within the environmental justice movement. In her 2004 article entitled, “We All Have Identity at the Table: Negotiating Difference in a Southern African American Environmental Justice Network (AAEJN)”, Checker examined the conflicts and resolutions among members of the AAEJN at an initial meeting to name, determine membership, set priorities, and otherwise organize the network organization. According to Checker, during the work of building and advancing the AAEJN, activists raised questions about what it means to be a black activist in the post civil rights period and the implications of organizing around race. Checker found that although activists tended to frame differences among the Afrocentric activists and those she characterized as working class church-goers in class terms, the class-based discourses that activists evoked were contingent and reflected a shared concern to protect lower-income and black communities. According to Checker,

although there were tense periods when class-based differences threatened to fracture the coalition, activists nevertheless forged a common agenda around a shared anti-racist commitment. According to Checker, the collective identity of the ‘black activist’ is formed around a commitment to eliminating racism.

Checker’s depiction of how black activists forged a new organization and a common agenda highlights the role of race in environmental justice organizing and demonstrates the significance of black racial identity to it. Different from Checker, in this chapter, I used components of social practice theory to describe the figured world of environmental justice activism. I detailed how people get into this world, how their identity as an environmental activist has a troubled development, and how environmental justice activists end up with a sense of themselves as activists vis-à-vis environmental justice. I demonstrated how their environmental identities are constructed through a process that takes place on at least two levels—in collective action and in the interior world of the self. I focused exclusively on the experiences of African Americans to argue that environmental justice is an emergent form of environmentalism that has produced a new environmental identity, that of the environmental justice activist. The environmental justice activist identity, I contend, is a racialized identity. Different from Checker, I argue that the black identity being produced in the environmental arena is that of the environmental justice activist.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FIGURED WORLD OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE WITHIN THE SIERRA CLUB

The environmental movement is producing new racial identities for white people and providing activities and spaces where some white people form personal identities as “white allies”. In this chapter I show how the response of the Sierra Club to challenges from the environmental justice movement, namely the development of dismantling racism training sessions and a national environmental justice committee, have contributed to the sociohistoric development of the “white ally”. I use case studies of particular ecocentric environmentalists within the Sierra Club to make the point that even though a person may be exposed to particular activities, such as an antiracism workshop, they don’t develop an identity as an environmental justice activist without further participation in a community of practice.

This chapter explores the dialogic relation between the environmental movement and the environmental justice movement and how that relation has produced spaces of environmental justice activism within the environmental movement. It analyzes the development of environmental justice initiatives and related anti-racist programs in environmental organizations as a response to charges of racism by environmental justice proponents. These charges arose in the 1990s and called attention to what critics claimed was the environmental movement’s failure to address racism in its agenda setting and hiring practices. In particular, this chapter focuses on responses of the Sierra Club, as it

has arguably been one of the most responsive of the environmental organizations to the accusation that it has failed to address the environmental concerns of minority and low-income communities⁴⁷. I put forth a version of the story of how environmental justice has become an emergent form of environmentalism within the Sierra Club and include a description of one of the spaces it has created for its members to address racism.

I argue that the responses of the Sierra Club, namely the provision of anti-racism training workshops and the establishment of a national environmental justice committee and program, have contributed to the growing numbers of white people who consider themselves environmental justice activists. I met several of these activists when I joined my local group of the Sierra Club in Richmond, Virginia. At the first meeting that I attended I introduced myself as a graduate student who was conducting research on the environmental justice movement, and stressed that I was also interested in participating in some of the group's outings as a club member. After attending meetings for several months, I met other environmental justice activists after being recruited to serve on the Club's national environmental justice committee. Over the course of a year I interviewed them about their history of involvement with environmental justice. I traveled to Illinois, Virginia, Michigan, West Virginia, Washington, DC and Georgia to interview activists in their homes or on their jobs. I participated in the activities of the Sierra Club's national environmental justice committee and those of my local group as both a researcher and a club member. In this chapter I describe one of these activities, an anti-racism workshop. The Sierra Club developed this workshop because of pressures from the environmental justice community, both inside and outside of the club, to address issues of racism.

⁴⁷ See the introduction to Sandler and Pezzullo (2007) for an analysis of the charges of racism leveled by environmental justice proponents against the environmental movement and the challenges these posed to organizations such as the Sierra Club.

Before I describe my experience in one of these workshops I begin with Karen, one of the Sierra Club's most strident environmental justice activists. Her case is significant in that it describes her pivotal role in the formation of environmental justice spaces within the Sierra Club. Karen, a 15-year veteran Sierra Club volunteer, spearheaded the formation of the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Committee and Program. At the time of our interview she lived in a small college town where she lives with her husband and dog and conducts research on plants at a university. I took the train to Karen's suburban home from industrial Detroit where I'd left a day earlier after conducting interviews with two other Sierra Club members. During our interview we swung on Karen's porch and sipped lemonade as neighbors strolled by and soft breezes rustled leaves along her tree-lined street. Amid chirping birds and the occasional bark of her friendly burly dog, Karen recounted the story of how she became an environmentalist and how that has led to her interest in environmental justice.

In the 1990s Karen played a crucial role in advancing the work of the Sierra Club's environmental justice task force. Prior to her involvement in the task force various club members had made sporadic and stalled attempts to get the club to systematically address environmental racism. Under Karen's leadership and with the support of several influential higher ups in the Club's leadership, the task force grew in prominence as it was later established as the Environmental Justice Committee, one of 29 national issue-oriented committees, programs or campaigns within the Sierra Club. The Club's Environmental Justice Committee is volunteer-led committee that develops policy and makes recommendations related to environmental justice for consideration to the Sierra Club's national board of directors and various other conservation programs and

initiatives of the Club. The Committee was also responsible for the formation of the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Program. The Committee and its programmatic arm hires and serves arguably the largest number of racial minorities who are who are Sierra Club volunteers, community partners or staff. Karen has played a critical role in the creation of forums like those I describe below in the Dismantling Racism Workshop. In these there is "frank and honest talk" about race among white people and people-of-color within the Sierra Club, and the environmental movement more broadly. In these ways Karen has played a principal role in advancing an environmental agenda within the Sierra Club that expressly addresses the needs and concerns of low-income communities of color. Her story is also instructive as it sets up the discussion in chapter five that addresses the formation of the white ally racial identity in the environmental justice movement.

An Anti-Racism Workshop for Environmentalists⁴⁸

It was far chillier inside the hotel basement room than along the hot, humid waterfront of the nation's capital. In the summer of 2005 participants in the anti-racism training workshop arrived from Virginia, Tennessee, West Virginia, Maryland, and the surrounding Washington, DC area. I drove in with several people from my local Sierra Club group in Richmond, a two-hour drive south of Washington. Our workshop facilitators—two middle-aged community organizers—greeted us at the double doors of the large windowless hotel conference room. They seemed at ease with one another—passing papers between themselves, directing one another to retrieve this notebook or to

⁴⁸ I was allowed to participate and observe activities in one of these workshops under the condition that I not reveal any identifying information on workshop participants or anything of a sensitive, prejudicial or confidential matter that occurred during the workshop.

move that easel—as if they were an old married couple. I immediately dismissed the thought that they were married. Diana was a black woman and Tom, a white man. Both were employees of the Sierra Club’s environmental justice program⁴⁹. I later learned that the two had together gone through “Train the Trainer” instruction in racial sensitivity and awareness and now were conducting these trainings for Sierra Club volunteers, staff and affiliates. Diana and Tom used the “Train the Trainer” instruction and their knowledge of the Club’s “culture” to tailor anti-racism workshops that aimed to help meet the club’s diversity goals and aspirations. By the time I met them, they had facilitated these workshops several times over.

I joined others who were milling around a refreshment table that was fully stocked with coffee and bottled water. It was situated in a corner to the left as we entered the large dimly lit room. We piled our suitcases and carryalls onto chairs that lined the walls until we would later secure them in our guest rooms. Those of us from out of town were assigned hotel rooms on the floors above, but we would all share meals, attend workshop sessions, and otherwise stay cloistered in the basement room over the next two days. Diane and Tom encouraged us to wear comfortable warm clothing, relax, keep an open mind, and maintain a willingness to share our experiences during the all-expense Sierra Club paid “diversity boot camp”, as one participant referred to it. Shortly after it appeared that most of us had arrived, the 25 or so of us settled into rows of straight back chairs that faced Tom and Diana in front.

I didn’t know what to expect. I had never been to an anti-racism workshop before and I was apprehensive about any success organizers would have in changing people’s

⁴⁹ As open-minded as I like to think I am, I too make racist assumptions. Such as it is for me, black and white romantic love remains taboo.

hearts and minds, especially after I learned that they had a difficult time enrolling people-of-color. Apparently a roughly equal number of white people and people-of-color are needed for the *Dismantling Racism Workshop* to work effectively as a “safe space” where people can confront one another about racial stereotypes, learn about racism’s impact on people’s lives, learn how to fight racism in their everyday lives, and transform an organization into a more racially inclusive one (or so the stated aims of the workshop read). This sounded to me like a tall order. The Sierra Club just didn’t have a large enough cadre of people-of-color *volunteers* from which to recruit the requisite number of workshop participants. Instead, it relied on staff and community partners to secure the right proportion. The club joins with new and old allies to advance its mission of defending and protecting land, water and wildlife. In addition to partnering with labor unions, churches and other communities of faith, hunters and fishermen to advance its aims, the Sierra Club seeks partners and builds alliances with residents of lower income communities and/or communities of color who request organizing assistance from the club’s environmental justice program. According to Sierra Club staff and volunteers with whom I spoke, the goal of increasing the number of people-of-color volunteers and paid staff is an ongoing challenge. As it turned out we met our quota. Most of the people-of-color participants were community partners, while most of the Whites were club volunteers. The purpose of the workshops, I learned, was to increase racial awareness and sensitivity among club volunteers and staff. It was an internally directed effort to change the culture of the club to be more sensitive to the concerns of racial minorities with whom the club partnered. For the organizers then, having community

partners and not club volunteers who were people-of-color was not antithetical to the aims of the workshop.

Over the course of the two-day workshop, Tom and Diana alternated between lecturing and encouraging group sharing and discussion. In one session we read and discussed anthropologist Peggy McIntosh's provocative article entitled, "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack" in which she likens the benefit of having white skin in the United States to an invisible packet of unearned assets. Our purpose in reviewing the article, it seemed, was to ease into a discussion of racism. The aim for white participants, it appeared, was for them to acknowledge that they have these unearned benefits and to commit to work to end racial oppression in their everyday lives. In contrast, it appeared that our [that is, the people-of-color] aims were to have our experiences of racial discrimination heard and validated, to persuade the white participants to recognize their white skin privilege, and to urge them to work to end racial oppression in their everyday lives. I felt vindicated having my experiences validated: the white folks seemed genuinely apologetic for the hurt from racism experienced and expressed by people-of-color in the room. However, I remained skeptical about whether they accepted the view espoused by our workshop facilitators that they were racists because they benefited from unearned white skin privilege. Few of them participated in the club's environmental justice national committee or in local campaigns of the club's environmental justice program where they could explicitly address racism both within and outside the club. Perhaps their participation in the workshop would inspire them to develop and strengthen partnerships in their local groups with low-income residents or communities of color.

As intended, workshop sessions raised our awareness of racial differences. In one session we were instructed to separate ourselves into two “caucuses”. People-of-color were instructed to leave the room for one across the hall, while Whites were instructed to remain. We gathered our handbags and backpacks amid snide comments like, “Why are *we* always the ones who have to leave?” Though said in jest, these comments belied growing tension between the forming racial camps. Ostensibly, this separation would give us a chance to “work within your own identity group”: to share our experiences, assumptions, denials and testimonials of racism in the comfort and “safety” of our own racial group. Tom facilitated the white caucus and Diana facilitated the people-of-color caucus. My caucus consisted of all women, including two self-identified Latinas and the rest African Americans like myself. Minutes after we settled into our new room across the hall, Christina (a pseudonym) eased into the room.

It did not take us long to start “venting”. We shared stories of being followed by store clerks while shopping for no apparent reason other than that we were black, and of being singled out in discussion groups of mostly white people and asked for the “black perspective”. Shouts of “amen” and affirmative head nods signaled increased trust, which invited more sharing and disclosure. That was when Christina spoke up. First she apologized for being delayed. Then timidly, she added, “I couldn’t decide: was I white or was I a person-of-color”. We looked puzzled. It was obvious to me that Christina was a woman-of-color—bone straight jet-black hair, yellow skin undertones, slight build, and eyes shaped like those associated with Asians. I did not understand why she could not or did not see what appeared obvious to me—she was a person-of-color. Sensing our bafflement, Christina added that when she was confronted with having to declare her

racial affiliation she sat glued to her seat. She wasn't sure of which caucus to join. She had never been forced to choose or decide what race she was. "You see", Christina, continued, "My father was white and my mother is Chinese". Christina told us that she grew up in relative affluence in suburban Baltimore and was a university professor. She seemed to question more than assert, "We [my family] were all white." Christina's case speaks to how an individual's racial identity is not predetermined. Instead, racial identities are constructed and determined in specific contexts (Jackson 2001). In the space of the Sierra Club Dismantling Racism Workshop, Christina considered herself a person-of-color, outside of the workshop, in her family, for example, she considered herself a white woman.

Towards the end of our exhaustive sharing, and amid embittered words and sighs of resignation that "whites ain't go' never change", Christina concluded that she had made the right decision to join *our* group. Although she shared no personal stories of discrimination, she proclaimed at the end of our workshop session that, "I am a woman-of-color!"

Most of the people in the workshop believed that racists are people who commit overtly racist acts. The definition of a racist that was put forth by the workshop leaders that simply being born into a racist society that privileges white skin makes a person a racist was a new one for most of the workshop participants. It was one that met with some resistance, particularly among white participants. Despite what the workshop leaders proclaimed, it did not seem to me that most whites accepted the view that by simply having white skin they were racist. Though they may have rejected this view, and perhaps voiced apprehension in their whites-only caucus, us people-of-color were not

privity to their objections. I never did ask Christina what moved her to get out of her seat, leave a room in which we had all grown comfortable, and join the people-of-color caucus that had been summoned to move across the hall. Perhaps she was attempting to dissociate from white people, who, we were learning were racists. (Recall that Christina had earlier identified herself and members of her family as white.) Or perhaps, as she sat in a roomful of phenotypically Caucasian people, she realized that her Asian-like features did not match with how she might have felt inside, white. I wish I had asked her to explain.

In the Dismantling Racism Workshop, people learned to distinguish between personal and institutional racism. The reader might be surprised to learn that the above scenes took place during one of the recurring anti-racism workshops organized by the Sierra Club, “America’s oldest, largest and most influential grassroots *environmental* organization (www.sierraclub.com, emphasis mine).” The mixed race crowd that was sequestered in the Washington, DC hotel basement and was confronting one another on matters of race could have been mistaken for a neighborhood racial reconciliation forum. Why, one may wonder, did the Sierra Club, an organization known for its lobbying on energy, global warming, wild lands, and clean water issues, and popularly thought of as a magnet for outdoor enthusiasts, pay premium dollars for a weekend hotel stay in the nation’s capital for the sake of 25 people, many of whom weren’t even Sierra Club members? More to the point, why were a group of environmentalists talking about racism? And why was there the dogged effort to enroll people-of-color in the workshop?

In the workshop white people needed the participation of people of color in order that they see themselves as white and to create a space where they could alter their racial

beliefs, actions and self-identifications. In her review article on the discourses of whiteness, anthropologist Karen Brodtkin (2001, p. 147) notes that, “whiteness is less a freestanding category than the powerful pole of a social relationship created by contrast”. Consequently, she adds, “the meaning of whiteness, its variability and its fluidity all derive from its position of power and privilege vis-à-vis particular nonwhite others”. According to Brodtkin, for white people to be white requires the ongoing presence of the non-white other: whiteness is considered positive in contrast to negatively associated non-whites. Its meanings and the relationship it has with non-whiteness vary over time as well as in relation to what she refers to as the “panoply of whiteness”.

I would amend Brodtkin’s critique however. Not only are there multiple ways to be white, but also these ways as well as the meanings of whiteness are produced in particular social contexts. In the space of the anti-racism training workshops, the privileged way of being white was to be an anti-racist, a person who fights against racism as white skin privilege. In the contemporary era, the racial identity that has come to be associated with white people who engage in anti-racism work is that of a white ally. Anti-racism work and the white ally identity that accompanies it, I argue, likewise requires the presence of non-white others who fight against racism. The distinction made in the anti-racism workshops between personal and institutional racism is an important one for understanding the formation of the white ally identity in the context of the environmental justice movement.

The Development of White Racial Identities in the Environmental Movement

When I began my research on race in the environmental movement, I was certain that one primary focus would involve black people’s means of organizing against what

they would identify as ‘racist’ zoning ordinances and landfill sitings and racist county commissioners and other people in power. As I proceeded, I noticed that many black-organized activities included white people. Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I had not been active in any protest movements. These were my first experiences organizing against racial discrimination alongside people-of-color *and* white people. Though people-of-color dominate the environmental justice movement, whites have a growing presence within the movement, particularly as a result of such efforts as those just described during the Sierra Club’s Dismantling Racism Training Workshop. To my initial surprise, white people joined Blacks on the frontlines of protests and supported their efforts to stop a landfill from expanding or to secure a moratorium on hog factory construction. Along with Blacks, white activists organized meetings and summits of community residents and activists, and grumbled too that white folks in groups like the Sierra Club do not address the environmental concerns of low-income and people-of-color communities. Like many black activists, white environmental justice activists complained, “Environmentalists are concerned with trees and owls, not people.” These criticisms sounded to me as if “white” were a euphemism for environmentalist and that environmentalists’ lack of regard for the particular concerns of people-of-color communities amounted to racism.

During my fieldwork I saw that not all environmentalists disregarded the environmental concerns of communities of color. Some white people even considered themselves environmental justice activists and would speak out against environmental racism. For example, around the conference table at meetings of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network white people nodded in agreement with black peoples’

assertions of the “racist” intentions and practices of North Carolina’s hog industry. I spotted white people marching with black people in protest of alleged discrimination against black residents who lived on the periphery of Fayetteville’s largest landfill. These were residents whose backyards overlooked fires that would erupt spontaneously from the dangerous mixture of methane gas and other flammables and toxins that were legally *and* illegally dumped in their neighborhoods. I also noted that black people did not treat all white people with distrust or hostility, as if they were among the perpetrators of racism. Neither did these white people identify with the alleged racists. They considered themselves different and black people regarded them different too. White people who participated in the environmental justice movement behaved differently than the white people that were targets of black activists’ accusations of racism. They believed and spoke differently about race than those I observed who either knowingly or unwittingly exercised white skin privilege. To the contrary, these whites occupied what I deem to be an honorary status among activists-of-color; they were considered what black and white activists themselves referred to as ‘white allies’. This white identity, I learned, is designated for those white people who unite in solidarity with communities of color against racism. Had I not read Peggy McIntosh’s “Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” article in an anthropology course, I would not have been familiar with the term “white ally”. But through my study and activism in the environmental justice movement, I had come to know many whites that consider themselves white allies. How white people, particularly those in the Sierra Club had arrived at this self-identification and its relation to their environmental justice practice is the focus of this chapter.

Figuring the World of Environmental Justice in the Sierra Club

In our interview Karen detailed her trajectory into what she and other were creating and I am referring to as the figured world of environmental justice activism. Distinct from the trajectories of black environmental justice activists, Karen's pathway brought her into this world through her involvement in the well established, internationally known environmental group, the Sierra Club. Her case is valuable on multiple counts. It provides a version of the story of the introduction of environmental justice into the Sierra Club and sheds light on the distinctiveness of the environmental justice perspective and approach within the Sierra Club.

Karen, then in her late 30's, considered herself "through and through" an environmentalist. Being an environmentalist, she said, "is part of my core being". During our interview she recollected times as a child when her parents would take her camping; together they would look for bugs underneath rocks. As a young girl she watched nature shows on public television and was offended when she saw people litter. Karen lamented, "It violated every part of me when people would throw things on the ground [because] the ground is nice, pretty, you have to protect it." She recalled how she would cry with the Native American man in the 1970s government-sponsored 'Keep America Beautiful' anti-litter 'public service announcements'. He stood teary-eyed amid trees alongside the highway while he silently witnessed people throw litter from their cars. Even as a young girl Karen thought of herself as a "nature lover".

Karen drew a distinction between being a nature lover and her environmental activism. She reported that her parents were not involved in any environmental or civic groups when she was a child; nor were they "political" or involved with party politics. Her predilection for politics, she claimed, was inherited from her grandfather who was

involved in the leadership of the local Democratic Party in rural Minnesota and who campaigned with President Harry Truman during his 1948 presidential campaign. For Karen, her sense of herself as an environmentalist and her environmental activism resulted from these two tendencies—what she called her appreciation and respect for nature which she attributed to her parents, and her political activism which she and members of her family credited to her grandfather.

Karen's entrée into the world of environmental activism came in 1992 when she was a young adult recently out of college. In our interview, she recalled then feeling like she "wanted more from life and was looking for a cause to contribute to". While "searching" for this cause, Karen attended local meetings of an AIDs coalition group, and then later a Sierra Club meeting where she instantly "felt like I [had] found a family". The Sierra Club offered Karen various opportunities to protect the environment and she "dove in". In no time, Karen assumed leadership responsibility as her local group's delegate to her state's chapter of the Sierra Club⁵⁰. She also served as membership chair of her local group, and soon after as its chairperson. In addition to distributing Sierra Club literature to her friends and family and hiking and camping with fellow club volunteers, within three years Karen was attending rallies and public hearings,

⁵⁰ There are 63 Sierra Club chapters and 390 groups and hundreds of issue committees and activity sections. There is at least one chapter in every state, and all chapters have groups, which are organized geographically around local issues. For example, the Virginia chapter that I participated in comprises 12 groups—the Blue Ridge Group, Chesapeake Bay Group, Falls of the James Group, Great Falls Group, Mount Vernon Group, New River Group, Piedmont Group, Rappahannock Group, Roanoke Group, Shenandoah Group, Thunder Ridge Group and the York River Group. An executive committee elected by the members guides each chapter and group. Approximately 5,000 volunteers nationwide are elected or appointed to leadership positions, such as chapter chair, chapter treasurer, committee chair, and outings leader. The Club structure allows the club to work on multiple levels to solve problems. Nationwide membership gives the Sierra Club clout with Congress and the White House, while local groups and chapters influence city council members, county commissioners, and state officials. The local groups also put pressure on their members of Congress (Taken from the Sierra Club's website at <http://www.sierraclub.org/101/5.asp>)

spearheading letter writing campaigns, speaking out in public, and marching in protests. She confessed that she had not done these latter activities before, and discovered that they energized her; she “loved them”. She recounted her early participation in one protest event:

So there's this march, everybody's moving, marching and making fun of the Republicans (laughter). That's really energizing and being in this packed hall and standing there with my sign. It was—I felt like I was part of something big, and ultimately we were successful which is always nice.

She asserted, “I find that there's an energy in doing things with people that's remarkable.”

Karen’s anti-littering concerns and camping pastime preceded her involvement in the Sierra Club, yet prior to her joining the Sierra Club she had not considered herself an environmentalist. *After* joining, she acted on her anti-littering concerns and camping interests as an active member of the Sierra Club. These preexisting concerns and interests joined with new actions—protesting, marching, letter writing—and characterize how Karen came to understand herself as an environmentalist. “Contributing to change”, for example became a significant part of her environmental identity. She explained,

Before joining the Sierra Club I didn't have an avenue to contribute...I didn't realize the opportunities to contribute. I would say, ‘Gee somebody needed to do something about that [problems like littering].’

Over time, Karen took on more commitments and became more involved in working for change as a Sierra Club volunteer, as well as enjoying its recreational offerings. Her case is an example of someone who explicitly took on responsibility for alleviating the problem of environmental degradation. The range of issues she contributed to changing grew from anti-littering to include ending clear-cutting. The latter happened when she took advantage of a fortuitous opportunity to go with Sierra Club members on a fact-finding mission to the Pacific Northwest during which time, to

her astonishment, she witnessed people fishing in pesticide polluted waters! Though Karen was “energized” and enjoyed contributing to social change, she lamented, “It can be overwhelming until people can find a way to channel their energies”. While the range of issues demanding her attention did not stifle Karen, she had not yet focused her attention on any one of them for the two years she had now been a club volunteer. “I hopped around from issue to issue until,” she proudly exclaimed, “EJ found me!”

Karen’s Path to Environmental Justice

During my interview, Karen stated:

For a long time, even as a young girl, I have felt an affinity toward Native American culture...One night at the Sierra Club’s annual Winter Solstice party, Bob Schmick with the White Earth Recovery Project (WERP) asked for Sierra Club support to help with the group’s efforts to preserve [Native American] ownership of reservation land. The Tamarack Wildlife Refuge was situated on reservation land [in Minnesota where she was living] and the WERP were attempting to get a portion of the Refuge returned to tribal trust for “co-management” with the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Management (DFW). I called our [Minnesota state] chapter chair and encouraged them to do it.

After two years of "contributing to change" as a club volunteer, Karen was now a volunteer leader. For example, she found herself trying to convince others to support a Native American-led campaign. The White Earth Recovery Project (WERP), which the famed Native American activist leader and environmental justice spokesperson, Winona LaDuke, spearheaded, was attempting to share in the management of the Tamarack Wildlife Refuge with the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Management. Karen had gone to the refuge on a fact-finding mission and spoke with representatives from both WERP and the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Management. She learned that the refuge was designated ‘multiple-use’. When she saw what that meant, “[It] really opened my eyes." She ended up receiving two different tours of the refuge, one from WERP that

included seeing vast tracts of land devastated by logging, and the other from the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Management (DFW) that did not include any vistas of trees ripped from the ground. When she returned from the refuge she gave presentations to her local Sierra Club group and state chapter about what she had seen and learned. Her presentations highlighted the fact that her DFW tour guides had failed to show her any of the logging damage. Again and again she showed pictures of the devastation caused by logging to club members. She made repeated telephone pleas to and met with fellow club members to convince them to support WERP members' centuries' long commitment to environmental stewardship.

Until the Tamarack Wildlife Refuge campaign, Karen had not assumed the lead on any club issue or campaign. She reported that she became increasingly frustrated at the club's failure to support WERP. During one of her presentations she recalled one of what would become many instances of "racism" within the club:

There was one person in particular who said, 'sure we treated them bad a couple of hundred years ago, but that's not happening anymore and if we give them control of the Refuge we won't have any say in it anymore, and they're probably just gonna put a casino on it anyway'.

Baffled and angered by his response, Karen retorted,

'I'm like, it's a lake! It's wild rice beds.' I mean, you can't put a big casino boat on a lake. I didn't understand where all of that [hostile opposition] was coming from. I recognized it as racism, but it's like 'wait a minute; we're supposed to be the good guys here'. So what I thought was gonna be something relatively trivial turned out not to be and it killed me to have to call Winona LaDuke and say, 'no the Sierra Club is not going to support you.' And for ten years after that whenever I'd hear her speak she would talk about how the Sierra Club wouldn't support [their campaign] and you know I'd keep thinking, 'That's my fault'. [KA: Your fault?] Yeah, my fault. I felt like I failed because I couldn't get the Club to do what I thought was a really good idea, what seemed like a no-brainer to me.

In spite of the then lack of attention by the Sierra Club as an organization to environmental issues and concerns as they explicitly affected people-of-color communities such as the case above, the language of environmental justice, with its explicit focus on the autonomy, health and well-being of communities-of-color, was spreading. During this time the Sierra Club was coming under increased scrutiny from the country's growing environmental justice community. As mentioned in chapter three, in 1990, for example, nine environmental justice activists authored a letter to the "Big Ten"⁵¹ mainstream environmental groups. In it, environmental justice proponents challenged the Sierra Club's historic lack of attention to the particular needs and interests of people-of-color and low-income populations. Specifically, the Big Ten Letter stressed the need for environmental groups to reflect the diversity of these populations by hiring more people-of-color. Later that same year, a second letter penned by 103 activists-of-color representing grassroots, labor, church, youth, civil rights, and social justice coalitions in the Southwest was sent to the Big Ten environmental groups. This second letter reiterated points made in the first and further scrutinized their lack of attention to the issue of environmental racism and how it affected what the authors referred to as "Third World Communities" in the Southwest United States. Also, in 1990 noted environmental justice scholar Robert Bullard published the seminal Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality, which presented case studies in the U.S. South of black communities fighting against toxic dumping.

Frustrated and wanting to contribute to expanding the priorities of the club, Karen

⁵¹ The Big Ten included mainstream environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club, National Wildlife Federation Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund. These organizations have had a great deal of influence in shaping the nation's environmental policy (Gale 1983), but had not had much success in attracting or in working-class people (Taylor 1989, Morrison and Dunlap, 1986).

assumed a leadership position in the effort to establish environmental justice priorities within the Sierra Club. A few years later in 1995, a year after President Clinton issued Executive Order 12898 that made achieving environmental justice part of federal agencies' mission by requiring them to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse human health-or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations in the United States, Karen concluded that now was the time when the club should raise members' awareness of environmental justice. She made some inquiries and learned that in 1994 the Sierra Club had listed environmental justice among its priority issues along with environmental issues such as air quality. Yet it was nearly a decade *after* her foray with the White Earth Recovery Project (WERP) surrounding the Tamarack Wildlife Refuge, that the club developed avenues and opportunities for its members to actively advance environmental justice within the club. Due in large part to Karen's leadership and concerted efforts, in 2000 the Sierra Club adopted its own set of environmental justice principles⁵², which mirror to some extent the *17 Principles of Environmental Justice* developed at the 1991 People of Color Summit in Washington, DC.

Karen's work to advance an environmental justice perspective within the club eventually led to the creation of an organizational structure to achieve it. In 1997 the Sierra Club established the Sierra Club's Grassroots Environmental Justice Program. The program provides organizing assistance and training resources for communities with whom it partners. To accomplish this, Karen continued to meet with others in the club,

⁵² Adopted by the Board of Directors in February 2001 the Sierra Club's Principles of Environmental Justice outlines its vision of how it proposes that no community should bear disproportionate environmental risks regardless of its demographic or economic condition. See Appendix 4 for a list of these principles.

who like herself, were attracted to the principles of environmental justice. This growing cadre of members included those who were sensitive to the environmental plight of low-income communities and those working on what she referred to in our interview as “social justice causes”. By the early 1990s, Sierra Club members had organized a task force composed of volunteers and staff from across the country. Within just six months of joining the task force, Karen became its chair by “default”: the original leader who convened the task force stepped down for reasons unrelated to the club.

Under Karen’s nurturing oversight and guidance, interest in the task force grew. Members worked diligently to designate it as the Environmental Justice *Committee*, which would endow it with additional resources from the Club’s national office and otherwise increase the Committee’s visibility and profile within the Club. Karen and other committee members quickly developed a programmatic component of the Committee that in the winter of 1997 was designated the Sierra Club’s Grassroots Environmental Justice Program. This meant that paid staff could be hired to work with community groups that invited the Sierra Club to help organize *local*, as opposed to *nationally* focused, environmental justice campaigns⁵³. With no prior experience leading a nationwide club effort, but with endorsements from Sierra Club members from across the country and “significant contributions” from members in the Southeastern region, Karen tenaciously guided the nascent Environmental Justice Committee and Program. Understatedly, she admitted,

I wasn’t sure I was ready, but I moved forward anyway... [And] While there have been misunderstandings about how the EJ program works, there's been a willingness [among club members] to understand the difference in EJ organizing

⁵³ Like other groups in the environmental justice movement, the Sierra Club’s environmental justice program assists in organizing communities at the local level, unlike the national focus of civil rights groups like the NAACP.

styles.

These differences, Karen contended, challenged the Sierra Club's established organizing approach, which was to assume the lead on local and national campaigns. The new approach, brought about from criticisms from the environmental justice community against the environmental movement, "allows room for other [read: non-white] leadership to exist."

In this chapter I outlined some key developments within the Sierra Club that were a response to charges of racism by environmental justice proponents. In the chapter that follows I demonstrate how these responses, namely the provision of antiracism training workshops and the establishment of an environmental justice committee and program, have contributed to the formation of what I call the 'environmental justice white ally' identity. I make the case that the environmental justice movement is an arena in which new white racial identities are forming.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIGURING WHITENESS AND PATHWAYS TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

This chapter furthers my examination of the “white ally” in the U.S. environmental justice movement begun in chapter 4. My central thesis is that the environmental justice movement is one site in which the white ally racial identity is being produced. This identity, alongside the environmental justice activist identity is developing in relation to blackness and in relation to mainstream environmentalism. In this chapter I argue that the responses of the Sierra Club to challenges from the environmental justice movement outlined in chapter 4, namely the provision of dismantling racism training workshops and the establishment of an environmental justice committee and program, have contributed to the formation of the white ally identity in the context of the environmental justice movement. This chapter draws from transcripts of ethnographic interviews and observation in which white activists reflect on their growing consciousness of race and changes in their racial identity. These changes, I argue, developed in the course of activists’ ongoing participation in an environmental justice community of practice. I argue that white activists’ *awareness* of the interconnectedness of environmental and racial justice issues and *self-identification* as environmental justice activists, of which being a ‘white ally’ plays a part, *develop together* in the context of their environmental justice *practice*. This chapter spotlights the little researched topic of racial identity formation of white people in the context of the environmental justice movement. In doing so, it underscores the value and the

difficulties of building solidarities across lines of race, culture, and class within the U.S. environmental movement.

In this chapter, I draw on fieldwork data to examine the extent to which multi-racial environmental organizing shapes white activists' racial identities. I introduce the personal narratives of a range of activists to examine similarities and differences in how they came to self-identify as environmental justice activists, which for them includes being a white ally. I use the term white ally as my research participants introduced and used it to refer to those white people who acknowledge and work against racism as a hierarchically structured set of social relations, which those who are considered white benefit most, regardless of whether they hold racist sentiments. Like many of the white environmentalists who participate in the Sierra Club's Dismantling Racism Training Workshops, white allies acknowledge and fight against racism in solidarity with people of color. The term refers to those white people who actively take on the challenge of opposing racism in their everyday lives.

In this chapter I review the life experiences and pathways of four activists to and through their environmental activism. Though there are other cases I could have presented, I chose these because of what they most clearly exemplify about the process of becoming an environmental justice ally for some white activists. Each case illustrates how engagement over extended periods of time with other environmental justice activists affects the formation of a person's ideas about the environment, the nature of their environmental activism, and their racial and environmental identities. First, I chose Karen's case, first introduced in chapter 4 because of the important role she has played in the development of an environmental justice perspective within the Sierra Club. Second, I chose David's because he presents an alternate pathway to the figured world of environmental justice activism. Unlike Karen, a declared nature-loving

environmentalist, David, a middle-aged self-professed anti-racist organizer, entered the world of environmentalism through his volunteer work as a labor union organizer. David was not a member of the Sierra Club, but instead was a member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. In our interview David spoke passionately of a distinction between being an *ally with* versus an *advocate for* people of color. Third, I introduce Kathy. Like David's narrative, Kathy's story draws attention to the distinction between working on behalf of people of color as an advocate and working in solidarity with them as an ally. Karen is a twenty-something year old vegetarian and "lifelong environmentalist". During our interview, her demeanor evoked stereotypical comparisons between 'idealistic young upstarts' and 'cynical veteran activists'. Karen worked for a number of environmental organizations, including two that focused on environmental justice issues before landing a job with the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Program. Last, I introduce readers to Tema. Tema is a retired French high school teacher and a "full-time volunteer" in the Sierra Club. Like Karen, David and Kathy, Tema answered yes to my research question, "Do you consider yourself an environmentalist?" But she was unlike them in three important ways. First, Tema had no experience working with or in communities of color. Second, although Tema participated in the same kind of anti-racism training workshops as Karen, David and Kathy, she did not consider herself white ally. Third, although Tema was familiar with environmental justice, did not consider herself an environmental justice activist. Instead, Tema could be characterized as a 'traditional' environmentalist. She maintained a nature-centered environmental perspective, one that privileges the healthy functioning of eco-systems. At the time of our interview, Tema was chairperson of the Political Issues Committee in her state's Sierra Club chapter. Her environmental activism focused on animal habitats. She counted bird watching and camping

among her environmental activities and considered herself a “pretty strong environmentalist”. Unlike the others she reported that race had nothing to do with her environmentalism. Tema’s case reveals differences between traditional environmentalists’ and environmental justice activists’ conceptions of the environment and how these relate to environmental identity and practice.

The presentation of identity trajectories in this chapter reveals the individual voices and collective contributions of white people to a movement dominated by people of color. I use them to illustrate a rarely considered point. New concepts of whiteness and white racial identities are being constructed in the environmental justice movement. The processes involved in making various racialized environmental meanings and identities are both individual and collective, and occur in what anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as ‘situated learning’. Situated learning characterizes learning as a fundamentally *social process* that occurs not just in the “learner’s head” but also in collective action. Newcomers learn from old timers about the activities, identities, knowledge and practices of the group. The cases presented in this chapter illustrate how for some white activists, this process moves them toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of environmental justice communities of practice⁵⁴.

Labor Organizing: Another Path to the Figured World of Environmental Justice Activism

“The link through workers is how I came to environmentalism.”

(David Caldwell, member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network)

In 1985 David and his wife, who is African American, moved from New York City to rural North Carolina to live closer to her mother. In New York David had been a shop steward

⁵⁴ Notice that I am also emphasizing the productive capabilities of social movements. Communities of practice associated with the environmental justice movement are dynamic and in flux. Newcomers are not only engaged in learning from the old timers, but also become part of the community that is itself in the process of further developing the identities and environmentalism of the environmental justice movement.

and when he moved to North Carolina was already a “rank and file union member”. Although North Carolina is a ‘right-to-work’ state, a fact that David acknowledged as making union organizing particularly difficult, he continued to volunteer his time organizing workers and helping them resolve labor disputes. David’s case is significant for at least two reasons. First, his path to environmental justice activism reveals another area of concern for environmental justice activists: safe conditions for workers. Second, David’s case points to the interconnected relationship of racial identity to environmental justice for white activists. In our interview he recalled that he first heard the phrase environmental justice while he was volunteering as a labor union organizer. He credited his move to North Carolina to changing his understanding of environmental issues.

Living in the big city [New York City], the environmental issues you hear most often are air pollution, traffic...it isn’t necessarily something I would choose to either demonstrate about, I probably didn’t write a letter to a congressman unless it impacted my life directly. If they were trying to change the traffic patterns, reduce the amount of green space or recreation facilities or run some kind of superhighway that would have displaced a lot of people, I didn’t think that was some kind of environmental issue, back in the day, that was probably in the 1960s, I just thought it was wrong and it was disrupting people’s lives and it basically bulldozed and steamrolled people out of their communities and destroyed neighborhoods and probably in the meantime did a lot of environmental damage, but I didn’t necessarily see it as an environmental issue. I just didn’t. And I come here and seeing how pervasive the drive for profits are at the expense of the environment, whether it be pesticides and fertilizers on the land or factories polluting rivers and streams. But I became much more aware and passionate about it when I came to North Carolina.

David’s introduction to North Carolina’s environmental justice community and to the discourse of environmental racism came through his labor organizing activism with Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ)⁵⁵. In 1999, members of BWFJ introduced David to the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN). David credited NCEJN for changing his

⁵⁵ Black Workers for Justice is “an organization of Black workers formed in 1981 out of a struggle led by Black women workers at a K-mart store in Rocky Mount, North Carolina against race discrimination.” Group’s Website.] In addition, the group was a founding member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network.

perspective on the environment⁵⁶. According to David, he shared with them a commitment to social and racial justice.

David's involvement in the environmental justice movement deepened when in 2000 he was invited to join the planning committee for the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network's 3rd Annual Community-Initiated Summit⁵⁷. The summit brought together hundreds of residents, organizers, academics and professionals from across the state for a weekend of workshops, good food, and fellowship. David recalled that time.

I had a lot of conversations with people who were involved in EJ, in particular George and James (pseudonyms). James was going to these meetings [and I was] invited to meetings about planning the Summit. I actually attended the meetings as a representative of the Coalition Against Racism and because I was on the periphery of Black Workers For Justice. I went and was part of the planning of a Environmental Justice Summit before [actually] going to a Summit, and it was because my political work drew me there to other people who were serious about fighting for change so it was much more general than environmental in impetus. [It was not environmental] in the more restrictive sense—clean air, water that kind of stuff.

David's planning and participation in the summit changed how he understood the environment. He met community residents and activists who were fighting against 'environmental racism', which was then a new term to David. Their campaigns involved trying to stop landfill expansions in overburdened black neighborhoods, increasing lack of access to clean potable water in Vance County, cleaning up the putrid air being spewed from a paper factory in predominantly black Northampton County, and in Duplin and Halifax Counties stopping toxic air releases from hog lagoons. In what for David was a new arena of activism—the environment—he organized summits and attended meetings with veteran environmental justice activists. He learned about different struggles for safe clean environments, including

⁵⁶ As noted in earlier chapters, the NCEJN, based in rural eastern North Carolina, provided information, referral and support to community and environmental activists, groups and professionals across central and eastern North Carolina.

⁵⁷ I helped organize and participated in most of the annual summits, which as of this writing is in its 10th year.

worker campaigns for safe work places. He participated in rallies and protests against county commissioners who made environmental decisions without community involvement. He circulated petitions, sent letters of protests, and participated in vigils on the steps of the state legislature.

As a result of learning more about North Carolina's environmental justice movement, David's ideas about the environment changed. He was being drawn into the figured world of environmental justice.

[Now] I define the environment much more broadly than a lot of other people; I've learned that from EJ people like George and other people in the [North Carolina] EJ⁵⁸ Network. I certainly was committed and organizing around issues that I later found out was underneath EJ, issues of safety and health in the workplace, which very often puts workers at risk. Not only does the worker bring the toxins home with them, but that effluence that comes out of the plant goes right through [the] land, water, air that workers breathe and drink.

Under the tutelage of veteran environmental justice activists like George, David altered his ideas of the environment to include issues of worker health and safety. As a member of the summit planning committee, and later as the lead organizer in the Coalition Against Racism which later became a member of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, David created connections between the environment, broadly conceived by environmental justice activists as *where we live, work and play*, and his labor organizing work. North Carolina's environmental justice community provided David with a language to reconfigure and rename issues about which he was already concerned and passionate. He stated,

[Now I know that] The environment is just about everything in our lives. You can't work if you don't have clean air and water. When I thought about the environment, especially when I wasn't aware of the term EJ, like everybody else you have a sense of something but didn't know what to call it when you haven't heard it called anything, until I came to North Carolina.

⁵⁸ David, like many other environmental justice proponents, uses EJ as shorthand reference to the term environmental justice.

He continued,

I realized how I was passionate about issues that I didn't consider necessarily environmental. Issues of worker safety and health and the consequences of what workers do, and they often have no choice but to do it in the factory or plant and even on the farm and what that means for them as residents and neighbors and family and community residents, [I realized] how total environmental issues are to people's lives.

Like many environmental justice activists, David learned to reframe issues of safety and health in the workplace as environmental justice issues. Prior to working with activists in Black Workers for Justice and being introduced to activists in the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, David had not considered himself an environmentalist. That changed. He credited the time he spent helping plan the summit and his ongoing activism in the environmental justice movement with deepening his understanding about the relationship between racism and the environment. He concluded, "That's [worker health and safety issues] the primary link that makes me an environmentalist." At the same time that David's ideas about the environment changed and his identification with environmental issues were altered, his ideas about race and racism sharpened.

Being White and an Environmental Justice Activist

"White is not a color, white is what you do." (David Caldwell)

The "white ally" identity is becoming a social identity, that is to say, a widely circulating and popular identity among whites that are engaged in environmental justice activism. In our interview, David introduced the term and referred to himself as a "white ally" because, he stated, he is aware of the impact of racism on the lives of all people, including his own, and because he works against racism in his labor and environmental justice organizing work. Although he knew that racism was a part of people's life and work experiences from his work as a union organizer in New York City, it wasn't until he moved to North Carolina that he became aware of what he

referred to as the pervasiveness of race in people's everyday lives. This growing race consciousness appears to have resulted from two factors. The first was conversations with his family members about their experiences of being black in eastern North Carolina in an area historically known as 'The Black Belt'⁵⁹. The second resulted from his environmental justice activism. During our interview he recounted these changes in his racial consciousness,

[When I moved to North Carolina] my whole thinking [about race] was redirected. I spent a lot of time when I came down here opening my mind and ears and listening and not speaking. I was very humble that I knew barely a thing about [race].

David compared his experiences and awareness of race in North Carolina to his prior life in the Bronx. A transplant from the Bronx, New York, David talked more about how his ideas of race changed when he moved to North Carolina.

I learned a lot about race from my wife's family. I would go to my wife's sister's home [and] the family would come visit us. I was like a sponge; I was a storehouse of facts about the concept of white [ness] among my family and some of the people I work with.

That's probably where I first really learned about race, despite how racial things were in my life in the Bronx. I've never experienced anything like it [living in rural eastern North Carolina] except possibly in jail. [Here, in North Carolina] most everything in people's lives is defined by race. When people of different races are involved in something [here in rural eastern North Carolina] it's always about race.

⁵⁹ The region in the Southeast United States referred to as the Black Belt was noted by Arthur Raper in his 1936 study Preface to Peasantry, as historically home to "the richest soil and the poorest people" in the United States. In his autobiographical work Up from Slavery, Dr. Booker T. Washington observed that he had "often been asked to define the term 'Black Belt.' So far as I can learn," he wrote:

The term was first used to designate a part of the country, which was distinguished by the colour of the soil. The part of the country possessing this thick, dark, and naturally rich soil was, of course, the part of the South where the slaves were most profitable, and consequently they were taken there in the largest numbers. Later and especially since the war, the term seems to be used wholly in a political sense—that is, to designate the counties where the black people outnumber the white. (Washington 1965:68)

I was astounded, in the presence of both races, how pervasive race is...I expected [something] other than that kind of thinking. I have not encountered that kind of impact of race and how it affected my life choices. I'd never heard it before...I learned a lot more than what I knew before about racialism and racial thinking and racism than I knew in New York.

I do not believe that David meant to suggest that no racism existed in New York City; instead his comments suggest that he realized that he had never noticed it there to the extent that he was noticing it in eastern North Carolina. In North Carolina, he listened intently to his relatives' stories of being insulted by whites and being discriminated by them at the grocery store, in municipal and county offices as they paid their bills, and in school classrooms. At meetings of the NCEJN I observed David silently bear witness to repeated stories of racial discrimination from residents of East Arcadia who were fighting with county commissioners over an encroaching landfill. In our interview he told me that he listened and learned from his "comrades" in Duplin and Halifax Counties who opposed the hog industry's infringement on black people's farmland, health and safety.

David's growing awareness of racism in North Carolina workplaces and neighborhoods and his anti-racist activism altered how others' viewed him. He was taking actions that reflected a deepened commitment to combat racism. In our interview he proclaimed,

Because I challenge that [racism], I actually organize people black and white to get people's job back if they're [unfairly] discharged or not considered for promotion. Then I am seen as a troublemaker, even by some blacks, but especially by the whites.

His changing awareness and anti-racist actions accompanied changes in how David's racial identity was viewed by himself and others.

Some people would say, "You're not white". I'd say, "Well, I'm Italian". [But] I know what I am: I'm white.

In our interview David asserted that his black relatives and black "comrades" began to insist that he was not white. To them, his work to combat racism belied his white skin. His anti-racist stance and practice positioned him in alliance with, not in opposition to or domination over them.

David claimed that whenever he could he would bypass an opportunity to exercise his white skin privilege, such as when he acknowledged in our interview that because he was white he had likely been hired over a more qualified black woman applicant for his current mental health counselor job. He felt that he was hired over her despite the fact that he had no prior experience as a counselor because of racism and white privilege.

Becoming an Anti-Racist White Ally

White allies are white people who rather than remain silent, confront racism. We shared our experience of how people of color and white people are treated when they bring up the need to address racism in predominantly white organizations. When a person of color brings up racism, Whites see it as self-serving. To be a white ally for people of color is to risk having other white people not like you.
(David Caldwell)

According to David, a white ally acknowledges and confronts racism, thereby breaking its silence. He explained,

It [my change in consciousness] came from positioning myself as an ally to the black community and [seeing] how white people think of you as a traitor and how black people no longer think of you as a white person.

A growing body of literature on whiteness is comprised of studies that theorize whiteness as a historical, cultural and political construction whose variable meanings and fluidity derive from its position of power and privilege vis-à-vis particular nonwhites (see Allen 1994; Brodtkin 1998; Crenshaw and Morrison 1992; Frankenberg 1993; Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1998; Morrison 1990 and Roediger 1991). Anthropologist Karen Brodtkin (2001), on the other hand, calls for more empirical studies that describe how whiteness is lived. She calls for a treatment of whiteness that highlights its performative aspects. According to Brodtkin, “the relationship of white folks to their whiteness, defined by the putative nonwhiteness of particular others, is often a relationship of ambivalence about the costs and benefits of what they embrace and what they devalue in order to be white” (2001:1). In other words, white people like David acknowledge that they pay a

price to be white. This price, he surmises, is measured in terms of the initial distrust of him by activists-of-color and the time and effort expended to establish himself as a trustworthy ally with people of color. In our interview David acknowledged added benefits and costs of giving up white skin privilege—no longer was he considered white by black people, instead to them he was black like one of them. He was also called a (race) traitor and a troublemaker by whites. According to David, they considered him a traitor because he exposed the privileged position that white people have over Blacks in his city's schools, grocery stores and workplaces. Like many other white people who participate in the environmental justice movement David deepened his awareness of his own white skin privilege and of racism in the environmental arena, not by himself in his own head, but through his regular and ongoing participation in the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN). His growing racial consciousness facilitated by his environmental justice activism, altered his racial identity, especially as it pertained to his activism. It also altered his activist identity? Throughout our interview, he proudly proclaimed, "I'm a white ally!"

The Literature on White Ally Identity Formation

Although my search of the literature revealed no writings on white ally identity formation in the context of environmentalism, a nascent body of work on the racial justice ally identity is helpful for understanding its defining characteristics. For example, in her study of white civil rights activists, Stokes Brown (2002) presented life history narratives of four white racial justice allies. She noted several common personal characteristics among them including: a high degree of moral courage; high levels of energy; good health; and an unusual sense of optimism for change. Her findings also highlight the importance of social support from a like-minded community to sustain their identity as racial justice allies, a finding mirrored in my own work.

Bishop (2002) likewise stresses the role of social support for white ally identity development. O'Brien (2001) defines an anti-racist white ally as "someone who 'daily vigilantly resists becoming reinvested in White supremacy'" (p. 6). Among the 30 allies she interviewed, they all rejected a colorblind worldview and instead recognized the role of race in society that includes a sense of "whiteness" that incorporates an understanding of power and privilege. What these authors seem to stress is the significance of ongoing participation in a community of practice where one learns to recognize race and racism in their own lives and the lives of others. They also receive support and encouragement to combat racism.

A racial justice ally identity develops and is maintained when individuals incorporate a "privilege-cognizant" (Bailey 1998:27) sense of whiteness into their sense of self. I use the term 'whiteness' to refer to the dynamic, socially constructed (non-essentialist) understanding of what it means for an individual to be white in America (O'Brien 2001; Giroux 1997; Thompson 1999). These and the authors in the preceding paragraph stress the significance of reflection and redefinition of what it means to be white. These processes were apparent during my interview with David. He described what's involved in being a white ally,

A white ally works for social change, anything less would be unacceptable. Now that's a pretty high standard, but I think any white person that is not working for social change so that we have justice, especially around race, is part of the problem, because you reap the reward of racism as a white person in this country whether you work at it or not and I don't care how poor you are you still have the privilege of not to be black.

David continued,

So by my choosing to be an ally, and by the way many many white folks in Greenville, think I am very racial in the way I carry myself meaning I attribute aspects of race to things that they think that's not... [They say] 'We didn't do this because he's black, we didn't do this because he's Latino, he didn't get fired because he's black, he just didn't do his job, he was disrespectful to his supervisor, he was insubordinate'. That she didn't pay me proper homage [because I am white]—this [I believe] is what's underneath those reasons for their firing.

For David and others, being a white ally involved going beyond advocating on behalf of blacks for racial justice. In his words, “[It] means following black leadership, not blindly following white leadership.” Below he clarified what for him is the distinction between being an advocate and ally.

It’s good to be an advocate, but it’s not enough. I’m more than an advocate; I am an ally. So for example, during the summer of the urban rioting in New York City, around various things whether it be Dr. King’s murder or just simple poverty and the lack of services provided by the city where garbage cans were rolled out into the streets in the main thoroughfares and on Lexington and 3rd Ave., and garbage was burned in the middle of the streets and commuter buses of folks who had to get back to the suburbs had to detour and when the police came in to brutalize the people who were basically crying out after years and years of oppression, some of us engaged in diversionary tactics, in the mostly white community, to make the police respond to us and they had to spread their forces much thinner and they couldn’t concentrate solely in the black community.

David acknowledged that he is critical of political “progressives” who have what he referred to as a “white blind spot”. According to David, those who have a white blind spot “don’t see that the struggle for justice must be led by people of color.” He claimed to be especially unforgiving of whites that consciously use what anthropologist Peggy McIntosh (1988) termed an ‘invisible knapsack’, a phrase that refers to any one of the 25 unearned privileges she listed that are gained simply by virtue of one being born with white skin. Instead, David maintained, “The job of an ally is to educate other whites to also become allies... [Because] If you’re not part of the solution you’re part of the problem.”

He went on to explain what being an ally means to him.

For me it means championing the decisions and the attempts at self-determination by people who have a history of being oppressed. I didn’t learn this up north; I learned it down here. When I was a [New York] city employee it was the workers in the most difficult jobs that had hazards in the workplace who often were better paid than I was, but they worked harder, at least in more physical labor. They worked in subways, as bus drivers—people in transportation and people in hospitals, and these two groups of workers were the most militant...and they led job actions that stopped the city in its tracks...and after they got their contracts they helped others [renegotiate theirs]...and that showed me, this is leadership I’m gonna follow.

Following the leadership of people of color because he believes their analyses and proposed solutions to the problem of environmental degradation and racism are “right” figures centrally in David’s environmental activism. Below he explained,

Instead of starting my own organization or identifying with the Sierra Club...I chose to ‘follow the leadership’ of Gary, Doris, Lenice and other people [already] involved in the [North Carolina] environmental justice movement because they’re mostly right and they’ve proven themselves to be right and successful. They’re not only right about what’s wrong with the environment and how it most dramatically and disproportionately affects people of color; they’re not only right about the analysis, but they’re right about what to do about it. And the parts I identify with them most is whatever direct action we choose to take... [Like] direct actions in East Arcadia around a landfill. They not only had it right about what’s going on, and how best to go about it, and they succeeded. Why do we follow anybody? It’s because they provide good leadership. And I think people of color are more likely to provide good leadership when it comes to these issues because they’re most oppressed and they feel it personally and as a race.

David points out three features common in the experience of white environmental justice activists. First, they learn that they exercise something called ‘white skin privilege’. Second, they find it incumbent on themselves to educate other white people about white skin privilege. Third, they come to value and follow the leadership of people of color. These latter two aspects feature prominently in the environmental justice organizing work of Kathy, a former director of the Sierra Club’s environmental justice program.

With Privileges Come Responsibilities

During my interviews I asked white environmental justice activists a follow up question that had to do with the kinds of support they felt people-of-color wanted from them. Their responses tended to focus on personal qualities and interpersonal relations. Paul Kivel (2002), in Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice, outlines some general guidelines and tactics white allies can use to demonstrate support for people-of-color. The table that he developed, which appears below, is similar to materials used in the Dismantling Racism

Workshops offered to Sierra Club members. An undeclared aim of these workshops was to generate interest and support for the Club’s environmental justice program and initiatives.

Table 4: What People of Color Want From White Allies

Respect us	Listen to us
Find out about us	Don't make assumptions
Don't take over	Stand by my side
Provide information	Don't assume you know what's best for me
Resources	Money
Take risks	Make mistakes
Don't take it personally	Honesty
Understanding	Talk to other white people
Teach your children about racism.	Interrupt racist jokes and comments
Speak up	Support
Don't be scared of my anger	Your body on the line

As Table 4 details, these tactics require whites to do what educational researcher Nancy Schniedewind refers to as “exemplifying race consciousness in practice” (2005:11). (I will return to this idea of consciousness in practice later in this chapter.) In her 2005 study of diversity education programs and ongoing professional development of secondary school teachers, she details how teachers exemplify race consciousness in practice. Their efforts involve supporting students of color, educating about stereotyping, addressing the topic of white privilege, and challenging institutional racism. Her work points to the need to foster trust and collaboration among whites and people of color on an ongoing basis. Although Kathy did not use the above chart, in my interview she described encounters she’s had with Blacks and other People-of-Color in which she engaged in any number of the trust engendering tactics listed.

Learning to Lead From Behind

Since she was 13 years old, Kathy, a bright-eyed, 20-something old, reported that she'd been an environmentalist. At 13 years of age she said she first "became aware of all the problems of the world." This awareness first manifested in her concern for the well being of animals. Although her family kept pets, she reported that no one in the family was a vegetarian or active in animal rights causes. That is, until one day while eating a burger she was not able to bring herself to finish it. Although she could not recall any triggers, in that instant she decided to become a vegetarian.

Kathy's awareness and activism to address "the problems of the world" continued through high school. As a freshman she began reading tracts and browsing Internet sites to learn more about being a vegetarian. In high school she started SCAT (Students Concerned About Tomorrow) because she was eager to "be active and do something about what I felt was wrong." Under the sponsorship of the school's librarian, SCAT initiated a recycling program and held bike rides as fundraisers to generate money to purchase bicycle air pumps for Nicaraguan children. Kathy's activism extended to writing letters to her congressman, though still she "felt that not very many people cared about the plight of animals." With a bit of dismay she admitted to "still feel[ing] somewhat hopeless about the scope of the problems in the world."

Not to be deterred, her awareness of "the problems of the world" continued to grow in high school and beyond. In high school she read Black Elk Speaks and first became aware of what she called the "betrayal by the U.S. government against Native Americans," "and the lies perpetuated against people who lived here before." To learn more about the plight of racial minorities she read books by Black Panther Party member Stokely Carmichael. But despite her growing awareness and excitement to "do something", she grew frustrated because "no one believed me...people didn't want to talk about it [injustice]. I was like you need to know and

you need to do something.” In her own family, she wryly recalled, “conversation [about social injustice] wasn’t even going on at the dinner table.” But then the tide of her frustration turned when her high school librarian took her to a student conference where she met others who, like herself, felt that something should be done. She felt like “maybe there are other people out there who [do] care.”

Kathy’s frustration, hope and activism continued through college. “I went to a college specifically known for its activism,” she offered. But at Oberlin College she found that the college’s “talk didn’t live up to their actions.” Again she grew frustrated, but just, as she had done in high school, she started a student group. One group she co-founded was “Free Burma”. Under her leadership the group initiated actions that led to the college divesting its holdings in corporations that did business with the Myanmar government. Inspired by the success of the group, Kathy questioned, “How can I be the most effective change agent possible?” She responded by starting an environmental group and resurrecting the campus’ animal rights organization.

Although Kathy considers herself an animal rights activist, she continues to spend most of her activist time in the environmental movement. Furthermore, while some analysts subsume the animal rights movement into the environmental movement, Kathy makes a distinction in her work. By the time she left Oberlin College, Kathy had worked on yet another issue, an anti-tobacco campaign, and after college applied for and obtained a coveted paid internship with Green Corp⁶⁰, a prestigious field school for environmental organizers. Before joining Green Corp, Kathy worked as a paralegal with an immigration lawyer but began to feel that the needs of illegal immigrants could best be met through activism rather than her “pushing papers”. “It

⁶⁰ Green Corps' one-year, full time, paid program touts that it provides the best training available to launch an environmental/social organizing and advocacy career.

[pushing papers] was very frustrating for me,” she added. After one year she left for Green Corp’s paid training program to learn advocacy organizing.

But alas, Kathy became disenchanted with what she characterized as Green Corp’s “advocacy work” and focus. She explained that organizers were entering communities with predetermined agendas rather than tackling issues identified by the community as priorities⁶¹. Although Kathy “had built up relationships with people and knew that I was going to spend my life working for change, I had to move on. I didn’t want to keep doing it [advocacy work]”.

Kathy’s activism began to shift from what she and other white environmental justice activists in this study characterized as *advocacy for* vs. *alliance with*. They also characterized the latter as community organizing. After one year Kathy completed her training at Green Corp and took a job with the Toxics Action Network in Boston where she worked as a community organizer. “I knew a lot [about environmental issues], she explained, “but wanted to learn *community organizing*” [emphasis mine]. Kathy’s distinction between community organizing and the kind of environmental advocacy work she performed in her paid training program is worth noting. The critical distinction she maintained, had to do with “leading from behind”, a strategy that I will elaborate on later.

Growing into the Figured World of Environmental Justice

Before Kathy graduated from college she began her entrée into the figured world of environmental justice. For a class she read sociologist Robert Bullard’s landmark Dumping in Dixie (1990) and chose the topic of environmental justice for her research project because, she stated, “I’ve always been concerned about people being treated fairly.” Just as she had done in

⁶¹ During the early campaigns against Shintech, a Louisiana petrochemical company located in the region referred to as Cancer Alley, the Sierra Club drew similar criticism. Local residents and activists who were already organizing in the area against the company’s illegal and dangerous emissions of vinyl chloride (VCM) and other toxins charged the Sierra Club with ‘coming in and trying take over’.

high school, Kathy “concluded that those in power will do what’s in their interest...[and so] I wanted to explore how it [inequality] showed up in different areas, and EJ was one.” She explained how she learned what she called “lead-from-behind” organizing as she grew into the figured world of environmental justice.

I knew about EJ before working in Boston. I did a college project that was like the [1987] Toxics Waste [and Race] Study.... [My research project was] my attempt to look at those issues. Doing it myself had a big impact on me. [And] my time in Boston was a time when I could work on them. With ACE⁶² I did an EJ in the Hood’ workshop [where I] learned a lot about how to approach leading a campaign and campaign organizing. [From the program director] I learned another way to [work for social change].

This alternative method of organizing mirrors the distinction David made between being an advocate and an ally. According to David and Kathy, the difference in strategies depends on where one stands in relation to the community—in the lead, introducing the community to a pre-fashioned agenda and set of tactics and assuming an ‘out front’ position in these efforts, or working side-by-side, addressing priorities through tactics determined by the community and advancing their lead in accomplishing them.

Kathy worked with ACE in Boston for a year, and then returned to her Connecticut home to work for another two years in what she described as a “racially diverse effective community-networking group, led by a doctor in Hartford.” She described them as “A great group of people, very smart and dedicated and active who will not let people get away with things. They got a lot accomplished.” Trusting in the know-how and passion of the Hartford Environmental Justice Network (HEJN), Kathy assisted with *community-initiated* campaigns. In one she witnessed kids playing and jumping on trash bags containing known cancer-causing agents that were dumped illegally in a landfill located in their neighborhood. For Kathy, these images of children playing

⁶² ACE stands for Alternatives for Communities & Environment. It was launched by a group of community activists and lawyers in 1993 to support community leadership on environmental justice issues and provide legal resources for community partners.

among toxic garbage bags were a “powerful” motivator for her to press for change. In the Hartford Environmental Justice Network she developed friendships with residents of communities that had been negatively affected by environmental threats. These images and deepened personal relationships altered her life. Below she explained,

That work was on an emotional level for me. Knowing the people and kids who had asthma attacks, who were personally affected, I heard a story about a mom who had her kids cover their heads in the afternoons when they got off the school bus because of the toxics being spewed [in the air].

Unlike her previous organizing work in high school, college, at the immigration law firm and at Green Corp, Kathy was now personally connected with the people affected by the environmental issues on which she worked. The emotion Kathy reported experiencing echoed sentiments and experiences expressed by other environmental justice activists—they too felt assaulted by environmental dangers in their everyday lives. Kathy explained,

It [my environmentalism] became an issue about how air quality issues affected particular people that I knew. People are dying and those in power don’t give a damn... [I was] meeting in people’s houses and [we were] plotting power scheme plans. For me, you [just] have to do something about it.

At the time Kathy had a boyfriend who happened to be Nigerian. He had asthma and lived in what she characterized as the polluted city of Hartford. “Without a doubt”, she conceded, this helped to further alter her awareness of the impact of environmental threats on people’s everyday lives. In describing pollution she explained, “It is environmental, but it is [also] people’s lives. It’s more than the environment, its personal, whether we’re breathing it [polluted air] or not.” She then repeated her common refrain, “We have to do something about it.”

‘Doing Something’: Leading from Behind and White Skin Privilege

In her work as a community organizer in Boston and Hartford, Kathy acknowledged white skin privilege and accepted what she had come to feel was her responsibility to help end

racism. This acknowledgment and self-assigned responsibility, she maintained, developed through her personal relationships with people-of-color. For example, while dating her Nigerian boyfriend she experienced first-hand the pervasiveness of racism in everyday life and felt a keen need to end it. One incident was particularly poignant. The two of them were driving through a predominantly white suburban Hartford neighborhood, well under the posted speed limit, she added for clarification. In the rearview mirror they saw a whirl of police sirens. A police officer pulled them over, walked up to the driver's side of the car, and "as soon as he spots me in the passenger seat, waved us on without a word". Kathy was convinced that Odeh (a pseudonym) was pulled over because he was black. She lamented, "It's made me want to work towards changing that. I feel like you need to know what's going on and *do something* about it [emphasis mine]." Kathy concluded,

Being with someone who's black...having been and caring about someone, I think also has played into who I am today. I think probably just personally caring so much about racism and how it affects people. And people who are white like me who are doing so much harm, working to combat that in the white community and encountering racist jokes. It's made me realize how deep racism is within people and how resistant people are to changing that. People looking at us and I'm more similar to him [than to them]. [It's] an experience that you come to understand some things about race in a very personal way.

As a result, Kathy assumed that racism is "everywhere" and "operates everyday". In her daily life she noted how racism is denied, minimized, and justified by white people. Through her activism and readings of books like Black Elk Speaks and those penned by Black Panther Party members she gained important insight into how racism works. She developed a sophisticated understanding of racism. To paraphrase, she saw it as a system of unequal social relations that changes over time with new forms developing in attempts to subvert and resist challenges. With this critical understanding of connections between racism and economic issues and other forms of injustice, Kathy chose to "do something" to end racial oppression. This commitment to do

something to end racism developed in the context of her involvement in the environmental justice movement.

Supporting the leadership of people-of-color and being an ally of people-of-color are central to how Kathy and other white people understand themselves as environmental justice activists. She explained, “If you’re a white person and you’re there [organizing with people-of-color] you’re seen as an ally and you agree that the power structure is racist.” Kathy left her work with ACE in icy Boston for warmer weather in Atlanta to take a job with more responsibility and a nationwide scope with the Sierra Club. Her commitment to being a white ally was evident in our interview as she reflected on work in the Sierra Club’s Environmental Justice Program.

When I came on board [there] was John who was black and I was hired as his co-director, and he’d been a lead organizer and he left about a year or so later because he was really burnt out...Now I’m the only co director of the program and I’m white and I definitely feel that I can do a good job but I feel that the Sierra Club is remiss in not having that co director position filled [by a person of color]...[I feel that it] gives more legitimacy to the program if there’s a person of color in the leadership, they’ve experienced something [racism] that I haven’t.

The absence of people-of-color in leadership positions within the Sierra Club, she maintained, has implications for her environmental work with communities-of-color and affected how other, i.e. black, environmental justice activists view her. She explained,

I feel that people are looking at me a little bit more suspiciously. I’ve experienced racial issues on the different side of the coin. If I go to national ej things [like the 2002 People of Color Environmental Summit in Washington, David] people are looking at me a little bit more suspiciously [because I’m white and I represent the Sierra Club’s environmental justice program]. [Being white,] that’s a visible part of who I am and that plays out.

In each organization in which she worked, Kathy learned something new about the relationship between environmentalism and race. Together the experiences seemed to have deepened her understanding of the complexities and challenges of multi-racial organizing in the

environmental movement. For example, she distinguished her leadership of the Sierra Club's environmental justice program from her former community organizing work with residents in black communities in Hartford and Boston.

The difference there [in Hartford and Boston] was that I was in the background. [I was] not the face of the program and I was doing more community-based things, and I was working more one-on-one and people could trust me. As opposed to when I go to the national meetings they don't know who I am or where my commitments are. I think for the [Sierra Club's Environmental Justice] Program's sake that a person of color should be a co-director, and there's just so much work to do.

Being an Environmental Justice White Ally

Kathy, Karen and David identify themselves as white allies. This self-assigned identity developed in the context of their environmental justice activism. According to them, being a white ally involved the recognition that one can be racist [accepting of white privilege] without being prejudiced. As an ally, working in solidarity with people-of-color in community-initiated campaigns to end environmental injustice, they each increased their awareness of racism in black people's lives. Their participation in anti-racism workshops, where they read articles like Peggy McIntosh's "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," deepened their belief in and awareness of white skin privilege. For example, David's listening to the racist experiences of his African-American relatives and his perceived rejection by white people because he's a "race traitor" led him to conclude, "I'm not like other [white] people who disrespect them [Blacks], who 'put them in their place' and who won't look them in the face."

David, Kathy and Karen's environmentalism reflected educational researcher Nancy Schniedewind's finding that white allies "exemplify consciousness in practice" (2005:11). In taking those actions outlined in Table 1 above they demonstrated their support of people-of-

color. David's comments mirror these actions: respect people of color; listen to them; do not take over; and do not assume to know what's best for them.

Environmental Justice Spaces within the Sierra Club

In each of the cases examined above, we see spaces and activities that helped activists deepen their awareness of white skin privilege and racism in the environmental arena. In the Sierra Club where Karen and Kathy were active, these spaces and activities were explicitly aimed at encouraging volunteers and staff to adopt an environmental justice perspective and to acknowledge racism in the club's environmental decision making. Sierra Club volunteers, personnel and community partners associated with its environmental justice committee and program supported one another in adopting and advancing a racial analysis to explain environmental degradation. According to them, communities of color disproportionately suffered from 'environmental racism'. One of these spaces was the volunteer-led Environmental Justice Committee, which is the Sierra Club's governing body that formulates its environmental justice policies. Another is the Environmental Justice Program, which is staffed by paid employees who assist community residents with organizing local environmental justice campaigns⁶³. Activities included Dismantling Racism Training Sessions. Within the Sierra Club,

⁶³ In 1999 the Sierra Club developed guidelines for its National Environmental Justice Grassroots Organizing Program that defines an ethical code of conduct for its program sites. Two of these read:

These are: We will enter a community to provide grassroots organizing assistance only when invited to do so by the community, and

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.

these were the spaces and activities wherein the figured world of environmental justice was produced.

In the volunteer-led Environmental Justice Committee, committee members expended considerable effort to recruit people-of-color to serve. As a former committee member, I observed members expend great effort to secure a person-of-color to co-chair the committee. I also witnessed considerable effort spent on recruiting Sierra Club volunteers who were considered to be supportive of an environmental justice perspective to serve on various national and state-level committees and initiatives within the club. The Sierra Club has a relatively small number of volunteers who are people-of-color from which to recruit committee members, out of which a small number are supportive of an environmental justice perspective within the Club.⁶⁴

Within one of the most powerful white-dominated environmental organizations, the Sierra Club, environmentalists have created spaces of environmental justice activism. In them white people can learn about white skin privilege and be supported in becoming what I call an *environmental justice white ally*. Yet the cases presented here suggest that only within these proscribed spaces, namely environmental justice programs and initiatives, are the kinds of shifts in consciousness and action that accompany becoming a white ally most likely to happen. These activities, initiatives and spaces include the environmental justice summits that David helped plan, the Sierra Club's environmental justice committee that Karen spearheaded, and the Sierra Club's environmental justice program that Kathy directed. There are spaces within the Sierra Club and in the environmental movement more broadly, where white people are neither encouraged to become environmental justice activists nor are they supported to be allies of communities-of-color. Tema's case below is a case in point.

⁶⁴ Paid staff of the Sierra Club cannot serve on volunteer committees; only Sierra Club volunteers can serve on any of its volunteer-led committees.

Karen, Kathy and David deepened their understanding of white privilege in the course of their environmental justice activism. At the same time, they grew in awareness of the negative impacts of racial discrimination on people of color *and* themselves. This growth in awareness occurred over time in sustained involvement with “like-minded” people, whether it was the Sierra Club’s environmental justice committee or program or the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network. (I refer to these as an *environmental justice community of practice*.) From them, Karen, Kathy and David received support and encouragement to act as *environmental justice white allies*. To these communities they brought their personal histories and experiences with environmental and racial justice issues. These histories and experiences were evoked as individuals developed this identity through their ongoing participation in an environmental justice community of practice. For example, David and Kathy used knowledge of racism’s effects on black people’s lives that they’d gained in their personal relationships with family and friends who are black to further their understanding of environmental racism and its impact on communities-of-color.

The Significance of an Environmental Justice Community of Practice for Being an Environmental Justice White Ally

Awareness of racism and its impact on oneself and others does not in itself lead white environmentalists to adopt an environmental justice perspective or a white ally identity. Environmental justice, a view that I favor, advances an environmental perspective that recognizes racism in environmental decision-making and fosters a notion of the environment that directs attention to harms to people. Environmental justice activists, like David above, are concerned principally with the health and well being of people. For them, the environment surrounds them. It is where they *live, work, and play*: children swing and run around in playgrounds situated in the shadows of smokestacks or amid towering drums that dot the

landscapes of oil refineries. In contrast, Tema, the nature-minded environmentalist briefly introduced in the opening pages of this chapter, maintains a view of the environment that is without people and is unpolluted by the foulness of environmental racism.

Like a growing number of Sierra Club staff and volunteers, Tema participated in one of the club's Dismantling Racism Workshops. According to those I spoke with in the club, the workshops were developed in response to criticisms from environmental justice activists who pressured the club to increase the sensitivity of its staff and volunteers to how communities of color are affected by environmental issues. At this point, chapter 4's description of the Dismantling Racism Workshop I attended needs to be augmented. In the pages that follow, I further illustrate some of the dynamics of these workshops. It will be recalled that Dismantling Racism Workshops are regularly offered at no cost to Sierra Club volunteers, staff and community partners who wish to become more "comfortable" working with racially diverse communities in their conservation campaigns. I argue that although workshop participants are likely to increase their awareness of racism, if they do not participate in an environmental justice community of practice, they are unlikely to maintain any increase in their awareness or become a proponent of environmental justice or a white ally identity. In my interview with Tema, I learned that she had participated in one of the Sierra Club's Dismantling Racism Workshops. She credited the workshop with helping her become more aware of the experiences of racial minorities. Below is Tema's response to my question about why she thought the club made anti-racism workshops available to Club members.

It's important. We need to know how other people are feeling. If we want to protect our Earth, we need to work together, and again, the Sierra Club has just so few African Americans that, um, that we need to find out why and see if we can make a difference. [KA: Do you mean increase their numbers in the Club?] Right, increase their numbers, or if they don't want to join, that's fine but at least try to understand why or work or find a

way because environmental work can happen outside of the Club as well and find a way to work with [them].

During its 2005 annual meeting, the Sierra Club's board of directors set new five-to-ten year priorities for the club that included reaching out beyond its "traditional" base of support to reach its three conservation initiatives—creating smart energy solutions, protecting America's wild legacy, and promoting healthy and safe communities. Tema's comments about the workshops were similar to those I heard from club volunteers and staff. A goal of the Sierra Club was to increase racial diversity among its staff, members and volunteer leaders. Its attempt to increase diversity can in part be read as a response to demands by environmental justice activists for the club to hire more people-of-color and to be more responsive to the environmental concerns of people-of-color and low-income communities⁶⁵. The Sierra Club's reasons for adopting these goals were revealed in a 2007 article entitled, "The Importance of a Diverse Sierra Club" published in the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Newsletter. In it, Kirsten Repolge, former chair of the Environmental Justice Committee reiterated reasons I first heard when I attended the Sierra Club's 2005 annual Summit in San Francisco, California, the organization's national headquarters. Kirsten wrote, "A more diverse membership, staff and volunteer leadership is critical to the Sierra Club's conservation mission and long-term health of the organization" (EJ Activist 2007:3). Alluding to projected growths in the country's Hispanic population, Kirsten referred to changing demographics and "politics" as reasons for why "the Sierra Club and the rest of the environmental movement must broaden its base to become relevant to all Americans" (EJ Activist 2007:3).

According to volunteers and staff, the Sierra Club offered Dismantling Racism Workshops as part of its efforts to work more effectively with racially diverse communities.

⁶⁵ See open letters to the Big Ten, later called the Group of Ten or G-10 referred to in chapter 4.

During our interview, Tema shared more about the value she saw in the club offering what some participants pejoratively called “diversity boot camps”. She acknowledged that not all white people in the club are interested in becoming sensitive to racial issues. Some, she maintained, are simply interested in enjoying the Club’s outdoor offerings. But for those volunteers and staff who may feel “a little bit alone” in their “dealings with people outside of their [racial] group”, the Dismantling Racism Workshop is a “good first stop” Tema argued. Tema urged, “More people should be encouraged to take it” so “that more [racial] issues can get on the table.”

My interview confirmed that her increased racial sensitivity, gained mostly through her participation in anti-racism workshops, had not lead to her self-identification as an environmental justice white ally. Her case, I believe, reveals why someone who holds an ecocentric view is not likely to adopt an environmental justice one simply by engaging in racial sensitivity training. In these ways, Tema’s case is different from Karen, Kathy and David’s.

Tema: A Particular Kind of Environmentalist

When I sat with Tema in her airy living room for our interview, sunlight filtered through the trees. Lush green trees, birdbaths and bird feeders dotted her backyard, which was visible through the uncovered floor-length windows in her living room. Her backyard was home to a number of bird species. Their chirping was so loud that they can be heard in the audiotape of our recorded interview. Tema called to mind the kind of environmentalist typically associated with older established environmental organizations like the Sierra Club. Like most of Tema’s fellow Sierra Club volunteers, she holds an ecocentric view of the environment. Ecocentric environmentalists recognize the importance of the environment in what they refer to as the “web-of-life”. They believe that no single organism is more important than another, and in their view there is little distinction between animate life and inanimate matter. Although for them, the entire

‘sphere’ of life is important, they are concerned principally with the ecology of rivers, forests and other animal habitats. Tema describes her view of the environment.

When I just think of plain environment, just one word, I think of a beautiful scene in nature, where nature is able to support natural life, where the area’s clean, where the water is clean, where the turtles can do their thing, where the little frogs can, uh, live, because they’re really going fast right now. First, like the canary in the mine...

In Tema’s view, the environment is pristine nature supportive of a variety of animal life.

Tema’s fondness for camping and bird watching and her appreciation for open uncultivated spaces were evident when I visited her home the summer morning of our interview. Nestled in an older wooded subdivision on the outskirts of Richmond, Tema’s picturesque one story home has the air of a quaint country cottage. We sat amidst chirping birds and pictures of breathtaking vistas that dotted her sparsely decorated white walls. Nature books crowded shelves and sat stacked on her bare wooden floor. In her world, ‘nature’, not people, is endangered. Tema told me why she joined the Sierra Club.

I joined because I thought I would find like-minded people, and I’d heard that the Sierra Club was a great place to meet people. So I went to my first meeting and thought I would go on some of their hikes and outings and get to meet some people that way.

Since she retired from teaching high school French five years ago, Tema has been a full-time Sierra Club volunteer. At her first Sierra Club meeting, members asked Tema what brought her there. “What”, they asked, “was my issue?” “[That question] drew me in”, she continued, “I talked about the beauty of Grand View Beach because it’s really pretty and that’s where I liked to take walks”. She found the Club to be a great place to meet friends, to socialize with “like-minded” nature enthusiasts.

Aside from enjoying outdoor activities with friends, Tema worked with others who share her commitment to conserve and restore the *natural* environment. As a member of the Club she has opportunities to work with others to fight “environmental degradation”, which is how she

characterized the effects of proposed dam construction on the Mattaponi River in central Virginia. Tema's environmental activism included work to stop construction of a large drinking-water reservoir that threatens to drain the Mattaponi River, which is considered one of the most pristine rivers in the Eastern United States. She worked to stop construction of the dam because, according to the Army Corps of Engineers, it poses a threat to the river's various animal habitats.⁶⁶ Tema's ecocentric view of the environment influences the sort of activities she associates with activism. As will become clearer, her environmental activism links to her views of race.

Raising Racial Awareness

Tema recounted some of what she learned about racial issues from her participation in the workshops.

And so some of the black staff would tell stories that were horrific...we would listen very carefully to some of the barriers and some of the harder things that have happened to these people and how they live their lives. So, when a woman told me how she had to go through the back door of a house when she was a child. And she didn't understand it and her mother had to explain it to her. I mean it really made a big impression on me and, uh, I'm sure it did on everybody there. You know, her honesty and her forthrightness and telling us these stories about her childhood as a young black girl not knowing anything about anything and having these things happen to her and how she's lived with it. So it's, you know, it was, uh, definitely something that I came away with, with a lot of new information that I've integrated into my thoughts.

Tema reasoned that her thinking about racial issues changed as a result of hearing "horrific" stories from black participant. For this she appreciated the "honesty and forthrightness" of the people-of-color participants. I followed up by asking how she integrated this new information into her thinking about racism. Now, she said, "[I] understand that there are [racial] problems

⁶⁶ The Mattaponi River is home to a large population of bald eagles and is considered the best shad-spawning habitat in the Chesapeake Bay region. In addition, the proposed reservoir would divert as much as 75 million gallons of water per day from the river, destroying more than 400 acres of forested wetlands, inundating archaeological sites and jeopardizing the Mattaponi tribe's shad fishery (<http://www.sierraclub.org/greatoutdoors/virginia/>).

still.” As a result of her participation in the Dismantling Racism Workshop, Tema’s racial awareness and understanding changed and resulted in an acknowledgement that racism still exists.

Tema’s account of the content of the Dismantling Racism Training Workshop reminded me of the one I had attended. She reported that she’d viewed the film “True Colors”. The film was a 1991 Primetime Live investigation report moderated by then ABC News anchor Diane Sawyer. It featured video footage of how two men, differing only in their skin color, were treated differently over two and a half weeks in St. Louis, Missouri. The investigation team employed two people trained to conduct fair housing testing by the Leadership Council for Open Metropolitan Communities in Chicago. These men (who were actually friends) had the same educational and socio-economic backgrounds—the only apparent difference was that one was black and the other was white. The video documented racism picked up by hidden cameras as the two approached the same businesses while looking for jobs, apartments, and cars. The film raised Tema’s awareness of present day racism. Tema recounted her response to the film.

I was somewhat aghast. Yeah, in other words, I went, well I’m sure that there are racist people out there, gonna be people out there that are gonna say, well, this apartment has already been rented, you know, even though it hadn’t been and then, and then, a white guy would come by later and then it would be opened? I mean, I don’t think I’m racist, but then, it let’s me know that I should be more aware that there are racial things happening still, and that, you know, I should [that] take into my understanding.

Tema’s participation in the Dismantling Racism Workshop provided her and others with knowledge about issues of race and racism in the present period. Like Tema, participants were motivated and called to act against racism. They saw the possibility of themselves acting against racism.

Yet participants in the Dismantling Racism Workshops are offered no opportunity to engage in anti-racist actions or even discuss what such an action might be. The workshop

provides information, but doesn't fulfill on its promise to alter participants' actions or identifications. Organizers did not issue a call for participants to be what the workshop creates as a possibility. It offered no actions for people to live into the possibilities they created in the workshop. Participants were issued no demands, requests, or incentives to be or act as anti-racist white allies. It likewise offered no follow up activities for participants to practice what they learned in the workshop. From my fieldwork observations, I argue that in the absence of these, participants will do one of three things. First, they will go back to believing and thinking what is familiar; they will revert to the actions, knowledge and opinions they held before their participation in the workshop. Second, some will leave the workshop simply with new knowledge, but not do anything that will alter their opinions or actions; these participants simply gained additional information. Different from these information gatherers is a third category. Some participants were motivated to seek out or return to opportunities to practice what they learned about racism and being a white ally in the workshops.

The Dismantling Racism Workshops fulfilled their potential to alter a percentage of participants' actions and identifications. Unlike Tema, they were those that left the workshop and went on to take actions in the name of a white ally identity. Like them, Tema could see the possibility of relating to minorities differently out of what she got in the workshop. She changed her opinions about racism, which is why she called herself an "evolved white person".

Well, I am white. I mean, I think that I'm white and I think that I'm not prejudiced for example, and then, I go to a workshop that would show me that maybe I am [laughter] or maybe someone who thinks that they're white really is still prejudiced, so I've learned a few things about my belief, my personal belief, that I am, that, you now, what's the word, evolved, um, I'll just say an evolved white person I know...I might as well admit it. I'm white. I don't know...I've never felt superior being white, so I feel like I'm a pretty cool white, you know [laughter]. But I feel like, okay, but there's a lot of white people that think that they are evolved whites, but they're not really not evolved whites.

Although Tema acknowledged that Blacks still face racial discrimination, she does not consider herself an anti-racist white ally. To her, being a racist was not a matter of simply having white skin privilege as it was for Karen, Kathy and David. Instead, it had to do with making sure she herself would not carry out discriminatory action. After viewing the film she concluded that she should be more aware that “racial things are still happening.” Although she did not consider herself an anti-racist white ally, her increase in awareness that racial discrimination still existed did affect how she might act in an imagined future. Below she explained.

[Now I] understand that it's there [racism] and try not to fall into a trap, where you think, 'ah, *I'm an evolved white person*', but don't really pay attention to what's really going on around me, and then, people make a little comment, you know, then, if someone makes a little comment, a little racist comment...Somebody would look around the room and make a little racist comment or a joke. You know, I could just laugh, I wouldn't just laugh, I could just let it happen or I could say, I'm not really happy with that and make them feel uncomfortable. So that would be my choice, so I could have a choice in a matter like that. [Italics mine.]

As a result of participating in the Dismantling Racism Workshops, Tema grew in awareness that racism continued to exist. However, she did not change her understanding of racism as a matter of personal prejudice and discrimination. For Tema, a person was not a racist simply by virtue of being born white. However, as a consequence of participating in the workshops, Tema felt empowered to act against racism. As “an evolved white person” she would no longer pretend to not hear racist comments and jokes. Instead, she “pay[s] attention to what's really going on” and expresses her discomfort. Now, when someone is telling a racist joke or makes a racist comment, rather than laugh or ignore the comment, she says to the offender, “I'm not really happy with that.” Tema attributes the workshops to raising her racial awareness and sensitivity. As a final commentary, she added that although the club has offered more of these workshops, she did not think they were a “big thrust” of the Sierra Club's activities.

Tema grew in her awareness of racism. But this awareness had not extended to her understanding of environmental problems. Hearing and seeing stories of racial discrimination did not appear to have altered her ecocentric view of the environment or resulted in her identification as an environmental justice white ally. In the view advanced in the Dismantling Racism Workshop, a white person is a racist because they benefit from their social position as white skinned people within a hierarchical system of relations. In contrast, an anti-racist white ally acknowledges and disavows these benefits as they call attention to the varied ways that racism works in their everyday lives, and fights against it as *allies* with people of color. Despite her participation in several Dismantling Racism Workshops, Tema does not accept this belief, but does acknowledge that her awareness of race and racism has deepened as a result of her participation in them. She explained,

So you go back to your life. It's not like you forget about it. You just have a deeper awareness of race. And that things are still racial that we thought were not racial.

Tema did not accept the view espoused in the Sierra Club sponsored Dismantling Racism Workshops that all whites are racists because they benefit from white skin privilege. Toward the end of our interview, I asked if she considered herself an anti-racist white ally—one who acknowledges white skin privilege and works against it and other forms of racial oppression *in solidarity* with people of color—she answered “no”. For Tema to have answered yes, I argue that she would have had to have been involved *over time* in a community of practice that would have encouraged and supported actions and beliefs advanced in the Dismantling Racism Workshop. Though she insisted that she is not going to lose the awareness or racism she gained in the workshops, at the time of our interview she was not involved in a community of practice that would mediate against that happening.

Racial Awareness in the Absence of a Community of Practice

Karen, Kathy and other volunteers and staff who are supportive of the Sierra Club's environmental justice initiatives reported being committed to making the Sierra Club more racially and culturally diverse. They participated in training sessions such as the Dismantling Racism Workshop to increase their own awareness and knowledge of how racism operates and affects people's everyday lives. They encouraged other volunteers, staff and community partners to do the same. I observed this commitment during the club's 2005 Sierra Summit, the club's annual national meeting. I worked alongside them as a member of the club's environmental justice committee. I saw in their stated commitments and actions recognition that the people-of-color communities they worked with have different environmental perspectives and priorities than the majority in the club. Their hope for the Dismantling Racism Workshop trainings was that Whites within the club would strengthen their support of the environmental needs and concerns of minority communities that partner with the Club's Environmental Justice Program.

Racial awareness and sensitivity does not only have the potential to develop in the environmental movement's ostensibly "safe spaces" like Dismantling Racism Workshop trainings. In them people are assured the support they may need to navigate the inevitable misunderstandings, lapses in judgment, and naiveté such as the Buckwheat incident that involved Karen, which I recount in the pages to follow. But even without these assured safe spaces, environmentalists can increase their racial consciousness. People who have developed the white ally identity can affect other spaces of the Club by bringing their environmental justice practice and related concerns into them, for example in routine meetings, in public comment periods at town hall meetings, and during camping and hiking outings. Anti-racism work requires effort and commitment. Tema, like the others hadn't been trained to notice or understand white privilege. Often, as I had witnessed in the Dismantling Racism Training that I'd participated in,

feelings of guilt and shame surface. Unlearning racism, the challenge posed by workshop organizers, requires ongoing recognition of how racism shows up in people's everyday lives. It requires ongoing support and encouragement to combat it. In the absence of such, the failure to recognize and combat white privilege is likely to remain (see Gillespie, Ashbaugh, and DeFiore 2002, Iyer, Leach, Crosby 2003, Kivel 2002, Bishop 2002, and Segrest 1994 for suggestions on how to combat racism in everyday life).

Challenges of Multiracial Organizing

The environmental trajectories of Karen, Kathy and David revealed some of the shifts in awareness and action that accompanied the formation of an environmental justice white ally identity. As these shifts occurred, differences in life experiences and perspectives surfaced that sometimes made for awkward, embarrassing and/or offensive moments. Karen's case provided an example of one of these 'teachable moments' from early in her environmental justice work in the Sierra Club.

In our interview on her front porch, Karen talked of growing up in an all-white mid-western town in which only one minority family lived. They were the town's only African-American family and newcomers. They had lived there for just one year and a half. Karen concluded that growing up with this kind of lack of racial diversity explains why, prior to her involvement with environmental justice, she was unaware of the generational impact on Blacks who live in what she referred to in our interview as "a white dominated political structure". Conversely, in the last 10 years Karen has worked with the Sierra Club's environmental justice organizers in low income and people of color communities across the country. She attributed this work to how she'd become "really aware" of the negative impact of Jim Crow laws, racist-zoning ordinances, and "the conscious decisions by people who *look like me* on communities and

populations all across the country” [emphasis mine]. Karen did not gain this awareness without first making what she called “some big ass blunders along the way.” She drew a breath and her voice seemed to lower as she recounted one of these blunders. Before beginning, she was careful to remind me *again* that she grew up in a “very white community” where everyone “jokes” around a lot.

The scene that Karen recounted unfolded in 1997 at the first presentation of the Environmental Justice Committee to the Sierra Club’s board of directors. Karen, then committee chair, was having a difficult time refocusing and quieting participants after a session break. In particular, Jack, a black man (Jack is a pseudonym) wouldn’t stop talking. Exasperated and “without thinking”, Karen, shouted to Jack, “Hey Buckwheat!”

The room suddenly grew quiet. Just then Robert⁶⁷, another black man, turned to Jack and bellowed, “She just called you Buckwheat!” “It wasn’t until it was out of my mouth that I was like, ‘Oh my God!’” Karen ceded. She’d realized that something she said was “wrong”. She paused in our interview, covered her mouth with her hand and said, “I was “horrificed.”

Karen claimed to have not have known about the 1930’s Buckwheat character on the television comedy “Little Rascals”. She said she’d never seen the comedian Eddie Murphy’s impersonation of the little black boy character with unkempt bushy hair and frozen wide-eyed expression. At the time she did not know that in popular culture “Buckwheat” refers to this easily frightened black character. Demeaning to African Americans, the name has been used to characterize frightened black men.

Karen insisted that she was not aware that the word “Buckwheat” is a derogatory term that mostly applied to Blacks. Instead, “Buckwheat” was the name she’d given to her beloved first pony. As a girl, she’d shout “Hey Buckwheat!” to her pony to do something that he’d

⁶⁷ A pseudonym.

stubbornly been refusing to do. Her intention was to get Jack to stop talking; in her mind, he was stubbornly refusing. Not aware of the cultural significance of the name Buckwheat, Karen had nevertheless called Jack a scared black man in front of room full of people! “To me”, she said “it was always this very innocent word and I didn’t realize the baggage that it had.” She painfully acknowledged, “It was [a racial slur] for a lot of people in that room”.

Karen did not know of the cultural significance of ‘Buckwheat’ in her life, and this lack made her reluctant to divulge the story to me. She feared that doing so might re-ignite past wounds and jeopardize the club’s progress thus far in creating a climate of increased racial awareness and sensitivity. Despite her apprehension, Karen hesitantly continued the story. “[I screwed up”, she said, but “learned an awful lot from that experience.” Now, she perked up, “I’m not ashamed to say that I had a lot to learn, and I still have a lot to learn when it comes to communicating cross culturally.” She concluded, “You know I made a mistake, and I’ve moved on and Jack moved on and [most] everyone in the room moved on.”

Karen’s story revealed some of the perils and gains of multiracial organizing. Although she admitted to causing offense, she also professed to be a better person for having been “outed” as a racist. She said that she was fortunate to have been “confronted” and reproached “in a loving way”. Her environmental justice community of practice “didn’t beat me over the head, [and say] do you know how inappropriate that was?” Though she acknowledges that the incident was “painful” for her, others in the room, and mostly for Jack, “it opened my eyes to a whole new way of thinking”. As a result, she reported being a better listener in all aspects of her life and more sensitive to differences in people’s life experiences. Although she didn’t want to “censor” herself, the Buckwheat blunder caused her to become “careful about what I say.” So for example, she reported that when she is in multiracial settings she doesn’t “talk so much off

the cuff”; she’s not as “flip” as she reported once being. And although she no longer serves as the chairperson of the Sierra Club’s Environmental Justice Committee, she remained a committee advisor and continued to push for greater cultural and racial diversity in the Club’s priorities, staffing and volunteer ranks.

Conclusions

The environmental movement is producing new racial identities for white people and providing activities and spaces where some of them form personal identities as white allies. In this chapter I have argued that the environmental justice movement is one site in which the white ally identity is forming. I introduced Karen, Kathy and David who considered themselves environmental justice activists and self-identified as white allies. In our interviews they shared how being an anti-racist white ally developed alongside their environmental justice activism. For them, being an environmental justice activist also meant being a racial ally to communities of color.

There is, I maintain, a spectrum of whiteness. According to David, some African American members of his family and those in his church and union and environmental justice organizing communities insist that he’s not white at all, but that because of how he has demonstrated his anti-racist commitments, he is black. But, David insisted, being a white ally is one way to be white, it does not make him black: “I know what I am: I’m white”. Environmental justice communities of practice can be viewed as sites of situated learning in which white people not only learn about environmental racism, but where over time they learn about and receive support to become environmental justice activists of a particular kind. For David, Karen and Kathy, being a white ally is a part of their identity and work as an environmental justice activist.

Additional research on the various ways that environmental identities are racialized is sure to yield valuable insight into how environmental identities are also classed. For example, future research may explore the extent which the experiences, concerns, beliefs, and identifications of the white middle class environmental justice activists presented in this chapter differ from those white environmental justice activists who live in low-income communities and work to combat what they term environmental injustice, not environmental racism. Further research may explore how the environmental identities of these differently classed environmental justice activists are different from those of white ecocentric environmentalists like Tema? How might communities of practice be constructed to bridge the figured worlds of the two?

In this chapter I have demonstrated how ongoing participation in an environmental justice community of practice is essential to the development of an environmental justice identity. Just because a Sierra Club member attends one of its anti-racism training workshops does not change their views on the environment or turn them into a supporter of environmental justice. To demonstrate this point, I introduced readers to Tema, a Sierra Club volunteer who maintained an ecocentric-centered environmental perspective. Although Tema had taken the same Dismantling Racism Workshop as Karen and Kathy, and had become acquainted with the view espoused in the workshops that white people are racist from birth, unlike them, Tema had not come to consider herself an anti-racist white ally nor an environmental justice activist.

In her years of work to establish the Sierra Club's Environmental Justice Committee and Program, Karen had gained much experience working with people of color and had learned from what she herself called mistakes. Kathy brought to the Club years of multi-racial organizing experience, and like Karen, continued to work with communities of color on environmental justice campaigns. Tema, on the contrary, had no experience working in coalition with

communities of color. At the time of our interview, she did not declare herself to be a white ally, but instead came up with a novel racial identity, that of an “evolved white” person. As an evolved white person Tema intends to openly objects when she witnesses acts of racial prejudice. Unlike before taking the anti-racism training, Tema stated that she no longer ignores racist jokes or comments, instead she openly objects and expresses her disapproval. In the absence of working on an environmental justice campaign, alongside people of color who are likely to challenge her view that racism is simply a matter of personal prejudice, Tema, and the many other white volunteers in the Sierra Club, are unlikely to self-identify as either an environmental justice activist or a white ally. Efforts to expand the figured world of environmental justice activism within the Club will be stunted and perhaps even thwarted as those who simply attend the Dismantling Racism Workshop will be relieved of their personal racial prejudice, and like Tema consider themselves ‘evolved white people’.

Tema’s case reveals that it takes more than a one-time participation in an anti-racist training workshop for an individual to take on the concerns, actions and identities associated with being an anti-racist white ally. Like Tema, not all white Sierra Club volunteers and program staff who participate in Dismantling Racism Workshops were involved in environmental justice communities of practice prior to attending the workshop, although the majority of the African American Sierra Club volunteers and program staff did. At the conclusion of the workshop, organizers may consider providing participants with structured opportunities where they will further the distinctions they learned between personal and institutional racism. These opportunities could include local environmental justice campaigns that the Club helps to organize. The Club could consider developing follow-up, ongoing anti-

racism training sessions where participants in the initial Dismantling Racism Training Workshop will have opportunities to gain experience combating racism and ‘practice’ being a white ally.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: MAKING MEANINGFUL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN RACE AND ENVIRONMENT

This dissertation contributes to discussions of how race forms in particular sites, in this case, the environmental justice movement. Its goal is to demonstrate how racial identities, ideas of race, and notions of the environment develop together in the environmental justice movement. In it I explain how environmental justice activists come to think about and act on environmental issues and how race shapes their thinking and actions. I further demonstrate how these ideas, beliefs, actions and identities that are related to both race and the environment are shaped by activists' participation in what I call environmental justice communities of practice.

In this dissertation I argue against deterministic theories that imply that social position, namely race, is why Black Americans and other people of color tend to adopt an environmental justice perspective. Instead, I favor a social practice approach to explain, for example why some White Americans advance the people-centered environmental justice perspective while others favor the more dominant ecocentric view of the environment. The approach and findings presented in this dissertation direct attention to the processes, both collective and individual, that make racial and environmental meanings. I conclude that the ongoing, changing environmental justice movement is the medium in which personal affect, racial meaning and understanding, and especially action toward the environment, develop for growing numbers of Americans. Race affects

people's understandings of themselves and the problems they come to identify as 'environmental': racial identities and ideas of race are forming in the environmental arena. To clarify and elaborate on these conclusions, I revisit a question raised in the opening pages of this dissertation: *what does race have to do with the environment?* I answer by summarizing findings from the chapters and conclude with possibilities for future research.

Environmental Justice Activism Adds to the Heterogeneity of the Black Public Sphere

Although considered a civil rights issue, environmental racism has developed in dialogue with mainstream environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club. Traditional black civil rights organizations such as the NAACP have played a minimal role in the development of the movement. In chapter two I suggest that class differences among African Americans help explain why environmental justice networks, groups and organizations have developed as a distinct arena of black political organizing within the black public sphere to address environmental racism. I described how the organizational style and focus of activities of the NAACP tend to favor the concerns of the more elite segments of the black public. Environmental justice organizations, on the other hand, provided much needed organizing assistance to communities that were economically and politically vulnerable, those mostly affected by environmental racism. The fact that environmental justice has not developed in dialogue with traditional black civil rights organizations became evident again in 2008 during the final stages of writing this dissertation. I elaborate below.

My Speaking Engagement with the NAACP

In mid-2008 I received a request to speak to a group of college students about environmental racism from a colleague at the Sierra Club, Glen Besa. At the time of the request Glen was the director of the Sierra Club's Virginia state chapter. I first met Glen in 2005 at a monthly meeting of the Richmond, Virginia group of the Sierra Club. I had subsequent periodic contact with him mainly through my involvement on the Sierra Club's National Environmental Justice Committee. Glen himself had over 10 years of experience working on environmental justice issues within the Sierra Club: during the period of my research he was director of the Sierra Club's Southern Appalachian Region, which included oversight of several of the Club's environmental justice programs. I had taken a hiatus from my environmental justice activist work to focus my attention on completing my dissertation, I would however, see Glen from time to time at public events such as Richmond's annual Easter Parade where the Sierra Club maintains an information booth staffed by club volunteers.

Glen telephoned to ask if I would be willing to give a public talk at an event sponsored by an area college's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Before he could finish giving me the details, including the fact that I was the second person he'd asked, I enthusiastically agreed. Both Glen and the club volunteer he had contacted before calling me had prior engagements and were unavailable for the Monday evening talk.

I was excited about the speaking engagement. I saw it as an opportunity for my activism and research on environmental justice to come together in the service of both. Not only was it an opportunity to raise the public's awareness of environmental racism, it was my opportunity to speak to the NAACP about what I considered its limited role in

the development of environmental justice. The speaking engagement would be my opportunity to share findings from my research with an organization that had been part of my study. I was also hoping to receive their feedback on conclusions I had drawn. Although I was excited, I was troubled by how the opportunity came about.

The NAACP had turned to the Sierra Club to educate its membership on a major civil rights issue of our day—environmental racism. Before I conducted research for this dissertation this development would have astonished me. After all, the Sierra Club is a white-dominated organization known for its leadership in environmental stewardship and advocacy of wild lands and endangered species protection, not its commitment to racial justice. The NAACP's request for the Sierra Club's assistance had actually confirmed a conclusion I'd drawn from my dissertation research: mainstream environmental organizations, not traditional black civil rights organizations, have been significant contributors to the development of environmental justice, both as a concept and a social movement.

The talk went well. Attendees reported being better informed and many even felt called to action in the fight against environmental racism. About 25 college-age students filled an auditorium in the student commons. Eight of them were male, and six of the 25 were white. Although I had urged Ja'Nel, the NAACP student representative who had contacted me, to invite members of the Richmond branch of the NAACP to the public talk, none showed up. I later learned from Ja'Nel that the college chapter maintains little to no contact with local branches or the Virginia state chapter of the NAACP. In fact, college chapters, along with high school chapters, youth councils⁶⁸, and junior youth

⁶⁸ Chapters for those under 25 years old not enrolled in college.

councils⁶⁹ of the NAACP are housed separate from local branches and state chapters within the NAACP's organizational structure. Like other college chapters, Ja'Nel's chapter receives guidance from the NAACP's Youth & College Division located in the National Headquarters of the NAACP in Baltimore, Maryland, not the local Richmond branch or the Virginia chapter. The Youth and College Division's three-person staff created its national agenda and supports the NAACP youth units, via training and field events. At the time of my talk, no relationship, formal or otherwise, existed among the Virginia chapter, the local Richmond branch of which I was a member, and the college chapter at whose event I spoke.

Ja'Nel told me more about how she chose a Sierra Club representative rather than an NAACP representative to speak to her about environmental racism. She first learned of environmental justice after she read the fall 2007 cover story on environmental racism in *The Crisis*, the NAACP's quarterly member magazine. She elaborated,

That was my first real introduction to the issue and led me to [want to organize] the environmental racism event. I just knew that I wanted to do something with the environment because many students and people do not recognize the NAACP as an environmentally conscious group, and I wanted to show that we are broad and versatile with our issues.

In Ja'Nel's quest to educate her fellow students on the issue of environmental racism, she came upon the Sierra Club through an Internet search of agencies and groups that she thought would have the most information on environmental racism. She was directed to a number of national groups and individuals before finally reaching me locally through Glen at the Virginia chapter of the Sierra Club. Ja'Nel told had not contacted the NAACP's Richmond branch or state chapter, she said, partly because she did not know

⁶⁹ Chapters for those under 13 years old.

who there could speak to the issue of environmental racism. Besides, she continued, she wanted to reach out to organizations other than the NAACP “to find new contacts and connections”. The NAACP’s historic role of spotlighting important civil rights issues, as it did in its magazine cover story on environmental racism, marks the extent of the organization’s most recent contribution to the development of environmental justice.

Raising Awareness of Environmental Justice

My talk with the student chapter of the NAACP highlighted aspects of the process of how people become aware of and active in the figured world of environmental justice, the subject of chapter three of this dissertation. I found that people who live in communities where landfills, oil refineries and other polluting facilities are located are more likely than the general public to have heard about environmental justice. My research suggests that awareness of environmental racism spreads principally by word of mouth: those who know about environmental racism are likely to have learned about it as a result of being involved in a neighborhood-based campaign against a local environmental threat.

During my talk to the student NAACP group introduced earlier, I showed a short video clip that demonstrates this. The video entitled, *Contamination and a Crusade* tells the story of black residents of Dickson, Tennessee. The video features Sheila Holt-Orsted, one of the town’s few black residents. She believes that the toxins in her family’s drinking water led to a series of family illnesses, including her own cancer. She maintains that her family was not informed by company or municipal officials of the dangers involved in drinking water from the family’s well—a well that had been contaminated with toxins from a nearby factory.

The video echoed comments made by activists who participated in my study. Like other environmental justice activists I studied, Ms. Holt-Orsted did not begin her campaign believing that what happened to her family was something called environmental racism. Instead, she came to this particular understanding in the course of her community's struggle. After Holt-Orsted returned to her hometown of Dickson, Tennessee, having lived for years in Virginia, she discovered that members of her family as well as herself had contracted various types of cancer. Her father eventually died from cancer. In an effort to explain why, she and others came up with environmental racism as the cause. In the video clip Ms. Holt-Orsted tells why she thinks her community is experiencing environmental racism:

The reason I believe that this is environmental racism is because every single Caucasian family in this county that was found to have trichloroethylene, TC, in their water, according to state records, took them off the water and informed them of what they had been drinking and they provided them with a alternate water source. [However] with the whole family they wrote us letters telling us it was okay to drink it and that it wouldn't cause any adverse health affects. I believe that if my father had know that his well water was contaminated with the 15th most toxic chemical known to man that he would've gotten hooked up to municipal water. But the County of Dixon and the city of Dixon and the state of Tennessee and the EPA failed to warn him that his family was drinking trichloroethylene.

Holt-Orsted, like other environmental justice activists, attributes racism to why black communities like hers are not adequately informed and protected by government officials. She came to understand the differential treatment her family received as a case of environmental racism. Environmental justice activists like Holt-Orsted are introduced to the phrase environmental racism in the course of their fight; they learn its meaning from others who claim to have also experienced it and from those who fight against it. The environmental justice movement spreads principally through word of mouth: one

community educates another; one person tells members of another community or group. The spread of environmental justice is akin to the proverbial grapevine.

Before my NAACP talk I surveyed the 25 or so students who were present to see how many of them had prior awareness of environmental racism or environmental justice. I wanted to determine the extent of their knowledge of the issues. My informal poll revealed that only three were familiar with the terms—Ja’Nel who had invited me and two white students. As noted earlier, Ja’Nel first learned of environmental racism from the NAACP’s fall 2007 edition of *The Crisis* magazine. One of the two white students became aware of the issues through her participation in a campus-based environmental group. The other student was introduced to the concepts in a college course. For those who were first introduced to them during my talk, they were eager to know whether race or economic status explains why landfills, oil refineries, chemical factories and other polluting facilities and environmental threats are located in racially and economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. I pointed out to them that in Ms. Holt-Orsted’s case the family was not poor; they were self-sufficient farmers who made a living off the land. They are however, African American. Furthermore, I explained, it was Holt-Orsted herself who had determined that racism, not class explained why a toxic dump had been situated 57 feet from her family’s farm and why government and corporate officials failed to inform them of the dangers of drinking water from their wells that had been contaminated with cancer-causing agents.

At the end of my talk I left my student audience with a call to action. Many were dismayed that my talk had been their first introduction to environmental justice, having learned that the movement has been around for over 25 years. They were shocked and

troubled to learn that situations like those facing communities like those in Dickson, Tennessee were happening all across the country. They were eager to get involved in the environmental justice movement.

Their lack of awareness of environmental justice points to a need for greater public education and sensitivity to issues of environmental justice. Segments within the Sierra Club have taken on this challenge. Members raise awareness of environmental justice within and outside of the Sierra Club. They introduce environmental justice to non-academic audiences, recruit members to join the movement, help connect communities facing environmental injustices to one another, and encourage people to advocate for environmental justice and to become allies of affected communities.

Possibilities

The environmental justice movement is now nearly three decades old. Many of those interviewed in my study participated in the original Warren County, North Carolina, protest--a protest that figures in movement and academic narratives as the birthplace of environmental justice (e.g., Kaplan 1992). Interviews with them and others who entered the movement later, together with additional ethnographic research conducted by me shed light on the ways in which the environmental justice movement has and continues to develop and transform through the understandings and campaigns of activists and through the events, institutions and networks that are being established. In this dissertation I have looked at similarities and differences between environmental justice and other environmental activists through a social practice theory of identity formation, with special attention to the cultural or figured world developed by the

movement and to the paths that environmental justice activists have taken in identifying themselves within and otherwise becoming part of that world.

The history and trajectory of the environmental justice movement as developed by black people and other people-of-color is distinctive within the broad range of environmentalisms that comprise the environmental movement. The cultural activities that mediate environmental sensibilities include birding, hiking, backpacking, and recycling. These activities provide ways of experiencing the environment that are quite different from those of environmental justice. Within the figured world of environmental justice, the environment is associated with the daily smells and sights of blight along with an awareness of ever-present danger and insult to one's body and to the community. Accompanying these threats are the experiences of other forms of injustice and disregard. Not surprisingly, the environmental justice movement sees the empowerment of environmentally stressed communities as equally important to the removal of environmental threats. The work of the movement simultaneously addresses people and their concerns, *and* helps them change oppressive systems under which they live. For these reasons, activists continue to emphasize local and regional organizing instead of concentrating only on building national-level organizations.

These differences in salient aspects of the environment and in the organizational preferences of the movement are intensified by the distance of environmental justice from popular images of environmentalists and by the marking of both mainstream environmentalism and environmental justice by race and class. Environmental justice activists in my study did not constitute the public's prototype environmentalist; they did not occupy the imaginary space of the environmentalist. Instead, their struggles to

define themselves as environmentalists involved accepting the label of environmentalist *in spite of* their own sense of distance from the concerns and social positions they attribute to “real” environmentalists. In a sense, white people owned the environmental movement. Or, to put it in the words of one person I interviewed, “White people, and their issues, dominate the environmental movement.”

In thinking about possibilities for rapprochement between environmental justice and the other strands of the environmental movement; my theoretical approach advocates for consideration of opportunities for merging figured worlds. So far, from the vantage point of my research with environmental justice activists, efforts toward transcending the differences are difficult and sometimes asymmetrical. Dialogues, imagined and actual, with “real” environmentalists have driven many of the conceptual developments of the environmental justice movement. Environmental justice activists have reworked taken for granted notions that differ from those of white environmentalisms, including the central concept of “environment”: the environment has been redefined as “where we live, work and play” or as Ratcliffe stated, “When we talk about our social conditions we talk about what is around us and that is our environment.” As a conceptual touchstone for activists, these modified definitions of environment give a broad scope for projects that address social injustices.

At the time of my research, particularly from 1996 to 2001, environmental justice was not well known within the broader environmental movement in the sense that its ideas had not been widely circulated either in the mainstream movement or in the public sphere. I did, however, note the formation of alliances among some environmental justice activists and other environmentalists. Such that by 2002, environmental justice

was starting to become institutionalized inside of some mainstream environmental groups like the Sierra Club. As I've outlined in this dissertation, I observed some of these cross-racial alliances despite complaints by environmental justice activists that the mainstream environmental movement marginalizes the environmental concerns of low-income communities and communities of color. At the local level, white people who were being threatened by large-scale hog factories and leaking landfills were willing to team up across color lines, despite histories of racial tension. Two of the initial participants in the Warren County anti-landfill struggle are white. And in a number of the environmental justice groups I studied there were both black and white participants. This development has, in fact, been significantly shaped by activists' participation in a North Carolina statewide environmental justice summit and network organized by outspoken anti-racist critic George Garrison, among others.

These alliances are potential places where more encompassing figured worlds could develop. Pastor Wilson, for example, directed attention to the similarities of people and nature and the injustice that arises when either is treated not as beings that deserve respect in their own right but as objects to be exploited. Another of my interviewees came to the conclusion that justice is owed to both people *and* nature from a position critical of capitalism. "Capitalists are hell bent on raising capital with no regard to life or limb." This possibility of championing justice and respect for people *and* nature and thereby building a bridge between environmental justice and the environmental movement would still have much to do in developing discourses about the common sources of racism and environmental degradation and at the same time grapple with the legacy of racialized ownership of strands of the movement. Nonetheless, it is a start.

And, then, there is the styrofoam cup. George Garrison described a change in practice that came about when the members of his group recognized the aversion of “real” environmentalists to the cups. This small, but tangible marker of different sensibilities played a role in a number of other interviews in the study. Seemingly a small thing, recognition of aversion to Styrofoam on the parts of others can sometimes function as a wedge, a disruption of taken for granted indifference. As people take part in the figured world of any environmentalism, they can learn about new ways to care about the consequences of their actions, and to care about evaluations of themselves by others in this figured world. Identification as any sort of environmentalist involves investing one’s self, taking responsibility, being answerable for one’s actions while gaining practical knowledge, and becoming familiar with the social relations and activities of environmental work as it’s defined in the communities of practice of which one becomes a part. Alliances provide at least a temporary community of practice where different environmentalisms can be learned and where new forms can be created. This is the most likely positive path for the future. The question is how long the process will take.

The ethnographic research summarized here was primarily carried out from 1996 to 2005. During that period national environmental organizations especially the Sierra Club had only recently begun to publicize environmental justice movement issues. Academic interest in the environmental justice movement has accelerated as well, producing books (e.g., Cole and Foster 2001, Bullard, Johnson and Torres 2004, Stein 2004, Gottlieb 2001, Faber 1998, Camacho 1998, Adams, Evans and Stein 2002) to augment the early work of Bullard and others. Films and videos, including those made by environmental justice groups, have become more available and churches such as the

Episcopal Church in Raleigh, North Carolina, have taken on environmental justice projects. These resources make it possible for students and others to become familiar with environmental justice issues and concepts. New research would tell us whether this broader circulation of the perspective of environmental justice is being incorporated into local environmental groups that have heretofore focused primarily on mainstream activities and concerns. What I saw in my research on the individual and local level of environmentalism was primarily a one-way conversation. At that time, local environmental justice activists were the ones struggling to understand and modify the relationship between environmental justice and other forms of environmentalism. There were few local environmental groups of other sorts that seemed aware of environmental justice issues and none that were engaged with expanding their vision to accommodate environmental justice issues. Should I continue to study local environmental groups, I might see more of a two-way conversation.

Future Research

Questions related to gender formations in the environmental justice movement offer one productive area of inquiry. Much of the sociological literature on environmental justice is anecdotal in that it spotlights the heroic struggles of individual women to protect their communities against what come to be considered environmental threats. However, little of this literature examines the extent to which gender shapes activists' understandings of themselves and how this process occurs in relation to their environmental justice activism. Future research may document the unique contributions black women have made toward the advancement of an environmental justice perspective. For example, what factors contribute to the appearance of a greater

willingness among black women to join and exercise leadership in the environmental justice movement?

The field of *black environmentalism* is a productive site to further explore questions related to the intersection of race and nature. There is, for example, little research available to help us understand the full range of beliefs, actions and concerns about the ‘environment’ that are held by African Americans today. Little in the literature on race and nature helps to explain how notions of ‘nature’ and race work to silence, erase or lift up black people’s historical struggles against racism. Meanings of race and nature and their intersection are written onto landscapes. According to Moore, Pandian, and Kosek 2003, “Nature is not merely the material environment, or is race merely a problem of social relations. Race and nature are both material and symbolic” (p: 2). The James River, located in one of my research sites, Richmond, Virginia is one such landscape. How has the James River, a major waterway that connects the Atlantic Ocean to the interior of Virginia, home of the nation’s first permanent English settlement in 1607, been used to construct the history and presence of African Americans in Richmond, Virginia since 1619? My preliminary research suggests that the efforts of black Richmonders since the late 1990s to document the history and experiences of enslaved Africans’ who were transported on slave ships and ushered onto the banks of the James River in Richmond is one such struggle or local contentious practice in which ideas of race and nature have been inextricably linked. Future research may well shed light on the multiplicity of ways that African Americans engage with environmental issues.

Appendix 1: 17 Principles of Environmental Justice

Adopted at the People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, Washington, DC, October 27, 1991

1. Environmental justice affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.²
2. Environmental justice demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
3. Environmental justice mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.
4. Environmental justice calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.
5. Environmental justice affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural and environmental self-determination of all peoples.
6. Environmental justice demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and the containment at the point of production.
7. Environmental justice demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision-making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.
8. Environmental justice affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.
9. Environmental justice protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.
10. Environmental justice considers governmental acts of environmental injustice a violation of international law, the Universal Declaration On Human Rights, and the United Nations Convention on Genocide.
11. Environmental justice must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.¹

12. Environmental justice affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. Environmental justice calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. Environmental justice opposes the destructive operations of multi-national corporations.

15. Environmental justice opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. Environmental justice calls for the education of present and future generations, which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. Environmental justice requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and reprioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

Appendix 2: Summary of the 2008 Environmental Justice Renewal Act

Introduced to the United States Senate in 2008 by presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, the Environmental Justice Renewal Act proposes to address the rollbacks that have taken place during the Bush Administration, and again focus federal attention and resources on environmental justice. It is intended to increase the federal government's efforts in addressing the disproportionate impact of environmental pollution upon racial and ethnic minority and low-income populations.

According to Clinton, the bill will focus on four areas. First, it will revitalize the Interagency Working Group (IWG) on Environmental Justice, codifying the IWG and requiring biennial assessments of their efforts by the Government Accountability Office, to ensure that all agencies are completing goals and following timelines identified in each agency's environmental justice strategy.

Second, it will establish new and expand current grant programs. With this additional funding, community groups can address the complicated health, environmental, and economic components of the pollution problems in their neighborhoods. The legislation will help states, tribes and territories develop and implement environmental justice strategies and policies. And it will strengthen the technical assistance available to communities, by developing web-based Environmental Justice Clearinghouse.

Third, the bill will increase the number of federal employees who have received environmental justice training, and who are able to incorporate environmental justice into their daily activities, such as permit review. In addition, it would establish a training program for community members modeled after the existing

Superfund training programs to help affected individuals gain the skills needed to identify and monitor environmental concerns in their local areas.

And fourth, the bill will increase public awareness of and participation in environmental justice activities, requiring the EPA to routinely hold community-based outreach meetings and ensuring increased interaction with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Committee, which represents stakeholders and impacted communities. It will also establish the position of Environmental Justice Ombudsman at the EPA, in order to receive, review, and process comments about the environmental justice work of the agency.

Appendix 3: Sierra Club Conservation Policies: Environmental Justice

The Board of Directors of the Sierra Club recognizes that to achieve our mission of environmental protection and a sustainable future for the planet, we must attain social justice and human rights at home and around the globe. The Board calls on all parts of the Club to discuss and explore the linkages between environmental quality and social justice, and to promote dialogue, increased understanding and appropriate action.

Adopted Board of Directors - September 18-19, 1993

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, 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.

Appendix 4: Sierra Club 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, 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.

References

- Adams, Joni, Mei Evans, and Rachel Stein, eds.
2002. *The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and Pedagogy*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Allen, Kimberly R.
2001. "The Black Freedom Struggle: Environmental Justice Activism in North Carolina." Fourth Semester Paper, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill.
- Allen, Kimberly R., Daro, Vinci and Holland, Dorothy.
2007. "Becoming an Environmental Justice Activist." In *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement*, Eds. Sandler and Pezzullo. Pp. 105-134. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Alvarez, Sonia E.
1997. "Reweaving the Fabric of Collective Action." In *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest*. R. Fox and O. Starn, eds. Pp.83-117. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press.
- Alvarez, Sonia E.
1998. "Latin American Feminisms "Go Global": Trends of the 1990s and Challenges for the New Millennium." In *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures Re-Visioning Latin American Social Movements*. S. Alvarez, E. Dagnino and A. Escobar, eds. Pp. 1-29. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Alvarez, Sonia E. and Arturo Escobar.
1992. "The Making of Social Movements." In *Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press
- Alvarez, Sonia E., with Evelina Dagnino and Arturo Escobar.
1998. "Introduction: the Cultural and the Political in Latin American Social Movements." In *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. S. Alvarez, E. Dagnino and A. Escobar, eds. Pp. 293-324. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Arp III, William and Christopher Kenny.
1993. "Black Environmentalism in the Local Community Context." *Environment and Behavior* 28(3): 267-282.
- Bailey, A.
1997. "Locating Traitorous Identities: Toward a View of Privilege-Cognizant White Character." *Hyfatia* 13(3): 27-43.
- Bates, Daniel G., and Susan Lees

1996. "Introduction." In *Case Studies in Human Ecology*. Daniel G. Bates and Susan Lees, eds., Pp. 1-12. New York and London: Plenum Press.

Baugh, Joyce A.

1989. "African-Americans and the Environment: A Review Essay." *Policy Studies Journal* 19(2): 182-191.

Berglund, Eva

2001. "Self-defeating Environmentalism? Models and Questions from an Ethnography of Toxic Waste Protest." *Critique of Anthropology* 21(3): 317-336.

Bhadha, Homi K.

1994. *The Location of Culture*. London; New York: Routledge.

Biersack, Aletta.

1999. "Introduction: From the "New Ecology" to the New Ecologies." *American Anthropologist* 101(1): 5-18.

Bishop, A.

2002. *Becoming an Ally: Breaking the Cycle of Oppression in People*. New York: Zed Books.

Black Public Sphere Collective, ed.

1995. *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo

2001. *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Boulder: Lynn Rienner.

2003. *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Braun, Bruce and Noel Castree, eds.

1998. *Remaking Reality*. London: Routledge.

Broad, Robin

1994. "The Poor and the Environment: Friends or Foes?" *World Development* 22:811-822.

Brosius, Peter.

1993. "Analyses and Interventions: Anthropological Engagements with Environmentalism." *Current Anthropology* 40(3): 277-290.

1997. "Prior transcripts, divergent paths: resistance and acquiescence to logging in Sarawak, East Malaysia." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (39) 3: 468-510.

1997. "Endangered Forest, Endangered People: Environmentalist Representations of Indigenous Knowledge." *Human Ecology* (25)1:47-69.
1999. "Locations and Representations: Writing in the Political Present in Sarawak, East Malaysia." *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* (6) 2-3:345-386.
1999. "Green Dots, Pink Hearts: Displacing Politics from the Malaysian Rain Forest." *American Anthropologist* (101) 1: 36-57.
- Brulle, Robert J.
1995. "Environmental Discourse and Social Movement Organizations: A Historical and Rhetorical Prospective on the Development of U.S. Environmental Organizations." *Sociological Inquiry* 66 (1): 58-63.
- Bryant, Bunyan and Paul Mohai.
1992. "Introduction." In *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards*. Bryant Bunyan and Paul Mohai, eds. Pp. 1-9. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Bullard, Robert D.
1990. *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*. Boulder: Westview Press.
1992. "Dismantling Environmental Racism in the USA." *Local Environment* 4 (1): 5-19.
1993. *Confronting Environmental Racism: Voices from the Grassroots*. Boston: South End Press.
1994. *Unequal Protection: Environmental Justice and Communities of Color*. San Francisco: Sierra Club.
- Bullard, Robert D. and Beverly Hendrix Wright
1987. "Environmentalism and the Politics of Equity: Emergent trends in the Black Community." *Mid-American Review of Sociology* 7 (2): 21-38.
- Bullard, Robert D. and Glenn S. Johnson, Angel O. Torres, eds.
2003. *Highway Robbery: Transportation, Racism and New Routes to Equity*. Cambridge: South End Press.
- Buttel, Frederick H.
1992. "Environmentalization: Origins, Processes, and Implications for Rural Social Change." *Rural Sociology* 57(1): 1-27.
- Calhoun, Craig
1992. " "New Social Movements" of the Early Nineteenth Century." *Social Science History* 17 (3):385-427.

- Camacho, David, ed.
1998. *Environmental Injustices, Political Struggles: Race, Class, and the Environment*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Checker, Melissa.
2001. "“Like Nixon Coming to China”: Finding Common Ground in a Multi-Ethnic Coalition for Environmental Justice.” *Anthropological Quarterly* 74(3): 135-146.
2001. "“It’s in the Air”: Redefining the Environment as a New Metaphor for Old Social Justice Struggles.” *Human Organization* 61 (1): 94-105.
2005. *Polluted Promises: Environmental Racism and the Search for Justice in a Small Southern Town*. New York: New York University Press.
- Cohen, J.
1985. “Strategy or Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements.” *Social Research* 52:663-716.
- Cole, Luke and Sheila Foster.
2001. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. New York: New York University Press.
- Conklin, Beth A. and Laura R. Graham
1993. “The Shifting Middle Ground: Amazonian Indians and Eco-Politics.” *American Anthropologist* 97(4): 695-710.
- Connell, R.W.
1993. “Disruptions: Improper Masculinities and Schooling.” In *Beyond Silences Voices: Class, Race, and Gender in United States Schools*. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine, eds. Pp. 191-207. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Cousins, Linwood.
1999. ““Playing Between Classes”: America’s Troubles with Class, Race, and Gender in a Black High School and Community.” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 30(3): 294-316.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle.
1992. Intersectionality and Identity Politics: Learning from Violence against Women of Color.” In *Reconstructing political Theory: Feminist Perspectives*. M. Shanley and U. Narayan, eds. Pp. 178-193. University Park: Penn State Press.
- Crumley, Carol L.
1994. “Introduction.” In *Historical Ecology: Cultural Knowledge and Changing Landscapes*. Crumley, Carol, ed. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

2001. *New Directions in Anthropology and Environment*. Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.
- Cunningham, Hilary.
1995. "The Ethnography of Transnational Social Activism: Understanding the Global as Local Practice." *American Ethnologist* 26(3): 583-604.
- Dagnino, Evelina.
1993. "Culture, Citizenship, and Democracy: Changing Discourses and Practices of the Latin American Left." In *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. S. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar, eds. Pp. 33-61. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Darier, Eric.
1996. "Environmental Governmentality: The case of Canada's Green Plan." *Environmental Politics* 5:585-606.
- Darnovsky, Marcy, with Barbara Epstein and Richard Flack, eds.
1992. *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Daro, Vinci.
2000. "The Terrain of Radical Environmentalism in the United States." Fourth Semester Paper, Department of Anthropology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Davies, Charlotte A.
1999. *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others*. Routledge: New York.
- Dawson, Michael C.
1994. "A Black Counterpublic: Economic Earthquakes, Racial Agendas, and Black Politics." In *The Black Public Sphere: A Public Culture Book*. Black Public Sphere Collective, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- De Cereau, Michel.
1998. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Translated by Timothy J. Tomasik. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press.
- Descola, Philippe and Gisli Palsson.
1996. "Introduction." In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*. Philippe Descola and Gisli Palsson, eds. Pp. 1-18. London and New York: Routledge.
- Du Bois, W.E.B.
1969. *The Souls of Black Folk*. New York: The New American Library.
- Edelman, Marc.
1999. "Social Movement: Changing Paradigms and Forms of Politics." *Annual Review*

Anthropology 30: 285-317.

Eder, Klaus.

1996. *The Social Construction of Nature: A Sociology of Ecological Enlightenment*. London: Sage Publications.

Edwards, Bob.

1992. "With Liberty and Environmental Justice for All: The Emergence and Challenge of Grassroots Environmentalism in the United States." In *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism*. B. Taylor, ed. Pp. 135-155. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Ellen, Roy, Peter Parkes, Alan Bicker.

2001. "Introduction." In *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*. Roy Ellen, Peter Parkes, Alan Bicker, eds. The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Emerson, Robert, Rachel Fretz, and Linda Shaw.

1995. *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ernst, Tom.

1993. "Land, Stories and Resources." *American Anthropologist* 101(1):27-53.

Escobar, Arturo.

1992. "Culture, Economics, and Politics in Latin American Social Movements Theory and Research." In *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America*. Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds. Pp. 62-85. Boulder: Westview Press.

1996. "Constructing Nature: Elements for a Poststructuralist Political Ecology." In *Liberation Ecologies*. R. Peet and M. Watts, eds., pp. 46-68. London and New York: Routledge.

1997. "Cultural Politics and Biological Diversity: State, Capital, and Social Movements in the Pacific Coast of Colombia." In *Between Resistance and Revolution: Culture and Social Protest*. Orin Starn and Richard Fox, eds. Pp. 40-64. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

1998a. "Whose Knowledge, Whose Nature? Biodiversity Conservation and Social Movements." *Journal of Political Ecology* 5 (1):56-82.

Escobar, Arturo and Sonia E. Alvarez, eds.

1992. *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Faber, Daniel.

1998. "The Struggle for Ecological Democracy." In *The struggle for Ecological Democracy: Environmental movements in the United States*. Daniel Faber, ed. pp. 5-26. New York: Guilford Press.
- Fanon, Frantz.
1995. "The Fact of Blackness." In *The Post Colonial Studies Reader*. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, eds. Pp. 323-326. London: Routledge.
- Fisher, William H.
1997. "Megadevelopment, Environmentalism, and Resistance: The Institutional Context of Kayapo' Indigenous Politics in Central Brazil." *Human Organization* 53(3): 220-231.
- Flacks, Richard.
1988. *Making History: The American Left and the American Mind*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Fletcher, Thomas
2003. *From Love Canal to Environmental Justice: The Politics of Hazardous Waste on the Canada-U.S. Border*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Fordham, Signithia.
1993. " "Those Loud Black Girls": (Black) Women, Silence, and Gender "Passing" in the Academy." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 24(1): 3-32.
- Fox, Richard and Orin Starn, eds.
1997. *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.
- Frazier, Franklin E.
1957. *The Negro in the United States*. New York: Macmillan.
- Gilroy, Paul.
1987. *There ain't no Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*. London: Hutchinson.
2000. *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line*. Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Giri, Ananta.
1992. "Understanding Contemporary Social Movements." *Dialectical Anthropology* 17: 34-49.
- Giroux, H.
1997. "Rewriting the Discourse of Racial Identity: Toward a Pedagogy and Politics of Whiteness." *Harvard Educational Review* Vol. 67: 285-320.

Goldman, B. and L. Fitton.

1994. *Toxic Wastes and Race Revisited*. Washington, DC: Center for Policy Alternatives.

Gottlieb, Robert.

1992. "“First Feed the Face”: Environmental Justice and Community Food Security.” *Antipode* 28(2):179-193.

Gottlieb, Robert.

2001. *Environmentalism Unbound: Exploring New Pathways for Change*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Gramsci, Antonio.

1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*. Hoare, Quintin and Geoffrey Smith, eds. New York: International Publishers.

Greenberg, James B., and Thomas K. Park.

1994. “Political Ecology.” *Political Ecology* 1:1-12.

Gregory, Steven.

1992. “The Changing Significance of Race and Class in an African-American Community.” *American Ethnologist* 19(2): 255-274.

1992. *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

1993. “Race, Rubbish, and Resistance: Empowering Difference in Community Politics.” *Cultural Anthropology* 8(1): 24-48.

2001. “Placing the Politics of Black Class Formation.” In *History in Person: Enduring Struggles, Contentious Practice, Intimate Identities*. Pp. 137-170. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Grim, John.

1992. *Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: Interbeing of Cosmology and Community*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Guha, Ramachandra.

1989. *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Guldbrandsen, Thad and Dorothy C. Holland.

2001. “Encounters with the Supercitizen: Neoliberalism, Environmental Activism, and the American Heritage Rivers Initiative.” *The Anthropological Quarterly*. Krista Harper, ed. 74(3): 124-134.

Hall, Bob.

1985. *Environmental Politics; Lessons From the Grassroots*. Durham: Southern Studies.

Hall, Stuart.

1986. "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall." Grossberg, L. ed. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10(2): 45-60.

Hall, Stuart.

1986. "Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity." *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 10(2) 5-27.

Harper, Krista.

1992. "Chernobyl Stories and Anthropological Shock in Hungary." *Anthropological Quarterly* 74(3): 114-123.

2001. "Introduction: The Environment as Master Narrative: Discourse and Identity in Environmental Problems." *Anthropological Quarterly* 74(3): 101-103.

Harrison, Faye V.

1992. "The Persistent power of "Race" in the Cultural and Political Economy of Racism." *Annual Review Anthropology* 24: 47-74.

Harvey, David.

1992. "The Environment of Justice." In *Justice, Nature, & the Geography of Difference*. David Harvey, ed. Pp. 366-371. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Higginbotham, Elizabeth.

1992. "Race and Class Barriers to Black Women's College Attendance." *The Journal of Ethnic Studies* 13(1): 89-107.

Holland, Dorothy.

2003. "Multiple Identities in Practice: On the Dilemmas of Being a Hunter and an Environmentalist in the USA: Multiple Identifications and the Self." *Focaal: European Journal of Anthropology*, Toon van Meijl and Henk Driesson, eds. No. 42:23-41.

Holland, Dorothy and William Lachicotte, Jr.

Fc. "Vygotsky, Mead and the New Sociocultural Studies of Identity." In *Vygotsky Modern Masters Series*. Harry Daniels, Michael Cole, and James Wertsch eds., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Holland, Dorothy and Jean Lave, eds.

2001. *History in Person: Enduring Struggles, Contentious Practice, Intimate Identities*. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

Holland, Dorothy, William Lachicotte Jr., Debra Skinner, Carole Cain.

1998. *Identity and Agency in Cultural Worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Holland, Dorothy, William Lachicotte Jr., and Willett Kempton.
N.D. "Environmental Identity as a Mediator of Environmental Action: The Importance of Investing One's Self." Ms in preparation.
- Hooks, Bell.
1984. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. Boston: South End Press.
- Hopkins, Nicholas S. and Sohair R. Mchanna.
1992. "Social Action Against Everyday Pollution in Egypt." *Human Organization* 59(2): 245-253.
- Hornborg, Alf.
1993. "Environmentalism, Ethnicity and Sacred Places: Reflections on Modernity Discourse and Power." *Review of Canadian Sociology & Anthropology* 31(3): 245-265.
- Ingold, Tim.
1992. "Culture and the perception of the environment." In *Bush base: Forest farm*. Elisabeth Croll and David Parkin, eds. Pp. 39-56. London and New York: Routledge.
- Jackson, John L., Jr.
2001. *Harlemworld: Doing Race and Class in Contemporary Black America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Johnston, Barbara R.
1998. *Who Pays the Price? The Sociocultural Context of Environmental Crisis*. Washington, DC: Island Press.
- Jones, Robert Emmet and Lewis F. Carter.
1992. "Concern for the Environment Among Black Americans: An Assessment of Common Assumptions." *Social Science Quarterly* 75(3): 560-579.
- Kalland, Arne.
2001. "Indigenous knowledge: Prospects and limitations." In *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*. Roy Ellen, Peter Parkes, Alan Bicker, eds., pp. 319-336. The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Kaplan, Temma.
1992. "'When It Rains, I Get Mad and Scared': Women and Environmental Racism." In *Crazy for Democracy: Women in Grassroots Movements*. Temma Kaplan, ed. Pp. 47-72. New York: Routledge.
- Kauffman, L.
1990. "The Anti-Politics of Identity." *Socialist Review* 20:69-80.

Kitchell, Anne, Willet Kempton, Dorothy Holland and Danielle Tesch.
2000. "Identities and Actions within Environmental Groups." *Human Ecology Review* (7) 2: 1-20.

Kitchell, Anne with Erin Hannan and Willett Kempton.
1992. "Identity Through Stories: Story Structure and Function in Two Environmental Groups." *Human Organization* 59(1): 96-105.

Kivel, P.
1992. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*. Kansas: Content Communications.

Knight, John.
1996. "When Timber Grows Wild: The Desocialisation of Japanese Forest Mountains." In *Nature and Society: Anthropological Perspectives*. Philippe Descola and Gisli Palsson, eds. Pp. 221-239. London and New York: Routledge.

Krauss, Celene.
1992. "Women and Toxic Waste Protests: Race, Class and Gender as Resources of Resistance." *Qualitative Sociology* 16(3): 247-261.

Lansing, J. Stephen.
1991. *Priests and programmers: Technologies of power in the engineered landscape of Bali*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Latour, Bruno.
1998. "To Modernise or Ecologise? That is the question." In *Remaking reality*. Braun, Bruce and Noel Castree, eds., pp. 221-243. London: Routledge.

Lave, Jean and Etienne Wenger.
1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Leslie, P.W. and B.P. Winterhalder.
2002. "Demographic Consequences of Unpredictability in Fertility Outcomes." *American Journal of Human Biology* 14: 168-183.

Lipschutz, Ronnie D. and Ken Conca, eds.
1993. *The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics*. New York : Columbia University Press.

Little, M.A. and P.W. Leslie, eds.
1999. *Turkana Herders of the Dry Savanna: Ecology and Biobehavioral Response of Nomads to an Uncertain Environment*. London: Oxford University Press.

Luke, Timothy.

1995. "On Environmentality: Geo-Power and Eco-Knowledge in the Discourses of Contemporary Environmentalism." *Cultural Critique* (31) 1995: 57-81.

Lusane, Clarence.

1993. "Rap, Race and Politics." *Race & Class* (35)1: 41-56.

Marable, Manning.

1992. "The Divided Mind of Black America: Race, Ideology and Politics in the Post Civil Rights Era." *Race & Class* 36(1): 61-69

Marcus, George E.

1998. *Ethnography Through Thick and Thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Martinez-Alier, Joan.

1992. *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar.

1994. *The Environmentalism of the Poor*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.

Marx, Karl.

1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. London and New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Melucci, Alberto.

1980. "The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach." *Social Science Information* (19) 2: 199-226.

1985. "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements." *Social Research* (52) 4: 789-816.

1987. "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements."

International Social Movement Research 1: 329-348.

1990. "New Perspectives on Social Movements: An Interview with Alberto Melucci."

In *Nomads of the Present*. John Keane and Paul Mier, eds. Pp. 180-232. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

1995. "The Global Planet and the Internal Planet: New Frontiers for Collective Action and Individual Transformation." In *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. Darnovsky, Marcy, Epstein, Barbara, & Flacks, Richard eds. Philadelphia: Temple U Press. pp 287-298.

2000. "Complexity, Cultural Pluralism and Democracy: Collective Action in the Public Space." *Social Science Information* (39) 4:507-527

Milton, Kay.

1996. *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse*. London and New York: Routledge.

Moberg, Mark.

1985. "Co-opting Justice: Transformation of a Multiracial Environmental Coalition in Southern Alabama." *Human Organization* 60(2): 166-177.

Mohai, Paul and Bunyan Bryant.

1985. "Environmental Racism: Reviewing the Evidence." In *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse*. Pp. 163-176. Boulder: Westview Press.

Mohai, Paul and Bunyan Bryant, eds.

1993. *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards: A Time for Discourse*. Boulder: Westview Press.

Morrison, R.

1996. "Ecological Democracy and Civil Society." In *Ecological Democracy*. Roy Morrison, ed. Pp. 137-170. Boston: South End Press.

Morrison, Toni.

1992. *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the literary imagination*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

O'Brien, E.

2001. *Whites Confront Racism: Antiracists and Their Path to Action*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Ogbu, John.

1978. *Minority Education and Caste: The American System in Cross-Cultural Perspective*. New York: Academic Press.

Omi, Michael and Howard Winant.

1993. "On the Theoretical Status of the Concept of Race." In *Race Identity and Representation in Education*. Cameron McCarthy and Warren Crichlow, eds. Pp. 3-10. New York: Routledge.

Parker, Julia Dawn and Maureen H. McDonough.

1985. "Environmentalism of African Americans: An Analysis of the Subculture and Barriers Theories." *Environment and Behavior* 31(2): 155-177.

Parkes, Peter.

2001. "Indigenous Knowledge: Prospects and Limitations." In *Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and its Transformations: Critical Anthropological Perspectives*. Roy Ellen, Peter Parkes, Alan Bicker, eds., pp. 253-292. The Netherlands: Harwood Academic Publishers.

Peet, Richard and Michael Watts.

1993. *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*. London and New York: Routledge.

Pena, Devon.

1998. *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics: Subversive Kin*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

1994. "Introduction." In *Chicano Culture, Ecology, Politics: Subversive Kin*. David Pena, ed. pp. 3-21. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Pezzullo, Phaedra C.

2001. "Performing Critical Interruptions: Rhetorical Invention and Narratives of the Environmental Justice Movement." *Western Journal of Communication*, 64:1, Winter. Pp. 1-25.

Pichardo, Nelson A.

1985. "New Social Movements: A Critical Review." *Annual Rev. Social* 23: 411-430.

Pulido, Laura.

1985. "Restructuring and the Contraction and Expansion of Environmental Rights in the United States." *Environment and Planning A* 26: 915-936.

1985. "Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest." In *Society, Environment, and Place*. Andrew Kirby and Janice Monk, eds. Pp. 3-124. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press.

1996a. "Development of the 'People of Color' Identity in the Environmental Justice Movement of the Southwestern United States." *Socialist Review* (26) 3&4: 145-180.

1996b. *Environmentalism and Economic Justice: Two Chicano Struggles in the Southwest*. Tucson: The Univ. of Arizona Press.

1998. "Development of the 'People of Color' Identity in the Environmental Justice Movement of the Southwestern United States." In *Socialist Review*. Vol. 26, Nos. 3&4, Pp. 145-180. Durham: Duke University Press.

Pulido, Laura and Devon Pena.

1998. "Environmentalism and Positionality: The Early Pesticide Campaign of the United Farm Workers' Organizing Committee, 1965-71." *Race, Gender & Class* (6) 1: 33-50.

Rahier, Jean Muteba.

1999. "Representations of Blackness and the Performance of Identities." *American Ethnologist* 441-443.

- Rappaport, Roy A.
1967. *Pigs for the Ancestor: Ritual in the Ecology of a New Guinea People*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Regis, Helena.
2000. "Blackness and the Politics of Memory in the New Orleans Second Line." *American Ethnologist* 28(4): 752-777.
- Reinarman, Craig.
1985. "The Twelve-Step Movement and Advanced Capitalist Culture: The Politics of Self-Control in Postmodernity." In *Cultural Politics and Social Movements*. M. Darnovsky, B. Epstein and R Flacks, eds. Pp. 90-109. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Roediger, David.
1991. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class*. London: Verso.
- Sacks, Karen Brodtkin.
1989. "Toward a Unified Theory of Class, Race, and Gender." *American Ethnologist* 16(3): 534 -550.
- Sanjek, Roger.
1990. "Introduction." In *Fieldnotes: the makings of anthropology*. Roger Sanjek, ed. Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1990.
- Schild, Veronica.
1985. "New Subjects of Rights? Women's Movements and the Construction of Citizenship in the "New Democracies."" In *Cultures of Politics/Politics of Cultures: Re-visioning Latin American Social Movements*. S. Alvarez, E. Dagnino, and A. Escobar, eds. Pp. 93-117. Boulders: Westview Press.
- Shaw, Susan.
2001. *Dependency Transformed [microform]: The Making of Neoliberal Subjects in a Massachusetts Community Health Program*. Thesis (Ph. D.) University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- Shiva, Vandana.
1985. "The greening of the global reach." In *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*. Wolfgang ed. pp. 149-156. London: Zed Books.
- Sinha, Subir with Shubhra Gururani and Brian Greenberg.
1985. "The 'New Traditional' Discourse of Indian Environmentalism." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 24(3): 65-99.

Skocpol, Theda.

1979. *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Robert

1996. *Racism in the Post Civil Rights Era: Now You See It, Now You Don't*. Suny Series in Afro-American Studies) State University of New York Press, Pp. 203.

Smith, Robert and Richard Seltzer.

2000. *Contemporary Controversies and the American Racial Divide*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Stein, Rachel, ed.

2004. *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality and Activism*. Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

Stern, P. C., Dietz, T., Abel, T., Guagnano, G. A., & Kalof, L.

1999. "A Value-Belief-Norm Theory of Support for Social Movements: The Case of Environmentalism." *Human Ecology Review*, 6(2), 81-97.

Stokes-Brown, C.

2002. *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights (The Teaching for Social Justice Series)*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

Streicker, Joel.

1995. "Policing Boundaries: Race, Class, and Gender in Cartagena, Colombia." *American Ethnologist* 22(1): 54-74.

Szasz, Andrew.

1994. "The Iconography of Hazardous Waste." In *EcoPopulism: Toxic Waste and the Movement For Environmental Justice*. Pp. 197-222. Minneapolis: Rutgers of the University of Minneapolis.

Taylor, Bron Raymond.

1985. *Ecological Resistance Movements: The Global Emergence of Radical and Popular Environmentalism*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Taylor, Dorcetta E.

1987. "Blacks and the Environment Toward an Explanation of the Concern and Action Gap Between Blacks and Whites." *Environment and Behavior* 21(9): 175-205.

1992. "Can the Environmental Movement Attract and Maintain the Support of Minorities?" In *Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards*. Bryant Bunyan And Paul Mohai, eds., Boulder: Westview Press.

2002. *Race, class, gender, and American environmentalism*. United States Department of Agriculture, Forest Service. PNW GTR-534.

Thompson, B.

1999. "Subverting Racism from Within: Linking White Identity to Activism." In *Becoming and Unbecoming White: Owning and Disowning a Racial Identity*, C. Clark & J. O'Donnell, eds., Pp. 64-77, Westport: Greenwood.

Touraine, A.

1971. *The May Movement: Revolt and Reform*. New York: Random House.

1973. "Las Clases Sociales." In *Las Clases Sociales en America Latina*, ed. R. Benitez Zenteno. Pp. 3-17. Mexico City: Siglo XXI.

1981. *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Turner, Terrence.

1991. "Representing, resisting, rethinking: Historical transformations of Kayapo culture and anthropological consciousness." In *Colonial Situations: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge*. George Stocking, ed. pp. 285-313. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

United States General Accounting Office

1983. *Siting of Hazardous Waste Landfills and Their Correlation with Racial and Economic Status of Surrounding Communities*. GAO/RCED-83-168, B-211461.

Walker, Richard and Linda McDowell.

1985. "Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference: A Review Symposium." *Antipode* 30(1): 1-55.

Warren, Kay.

1985. *Indigenous Movements and Their Critics: Pan-Maya Activism in Guatemala*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Weber, Max.

1958. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner.

Williams, Brackette F.

1959. "A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain." *Annual Review Anthropology*. 18: 401-444.

Wilson, William Julius.

1978. *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

1996. *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*. New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, Inc.

Winant, Howard.

1994. *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

1997. "Racial Dualism at Century's End". In *The House That Race Built*. Waheema Lubiano, ed. Pp. 87-113. New York : Pantheon Books.

Winant, Howard and Michael Omi.

1994. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York: Routledge.

Zavella, Patricia.

1995. "Mujeres in Factories: Race and Class Perspectives on Women, Work, and Family." In *Gender at the Crossroads: Feminist Anthropology in the Past Modern Era*. Pp. 312-336. Berkley: University of California Press.

Zimmerman, R.

1993. "Social Equity and Environmental Risk." *Risk Analysis* 13(6): 649-666.
