SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

ANACOSTIA MUSEUM

CONFERENCE

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS
EAST OF THE ANACOSTIA RIVER:
JUSTICE OR JUST US?

Saturday, June 18, 1994

The conference was held at the Allen Chapel
A.M.E. Church, 2498 Alabama Avenue, S.E., Washington,
D.C., at 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

THERESA ALEXANDER
KISHI ANIMASHAUN
DOROTHY ASHLEY
JAMES BANKS
JOANNA BANKS
FERIAL S. BISHOP
GOD BUIDIN
ROBERT BOONE
VENITA BOYD

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PRESENT (Continued):

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RACHELLE BROWNE
JAMES BUTLER
ROSS CAMPBELL
RONA CARTER
HERBERT CHAMBERS
ADDIE COOK
ZORA MARTIN FELTON
DOROTHEA FERRELL
DEEOHN FERRIS
MAURICE K. FOUSHEE
LIZ GILCRIST
ROBERT E. GULDIN
MARLUIN HALL
JIM HANNAHAN
HANNAH. M. HAWKINS
LOUVENIA HOLMES
GUSTAV JACKSON
DEBRA JONES
THERESA JONES
ABSOLON JORDAN
JULIA S. KERR
ROBERT J. KNOX
ALLISON M. KOLWAITE

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PRESENT (Continued):

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KWELISMIT
ADAORA LATHAN
ARNE LEONARD
LEON G. LIPSOMB
DELLA LOWERY
LOUISE MADISON
JODEANE MARKS
TOM MARTIN
VERONICA MIDDLETON
LINDA MOODY
KEMI MORTEN
ELAINE C. MOSBY
ANTHONY MOTLEY
FRIEDA MURRAY
STEVEN NEWSOME
RETHO P. NOBLE
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PHIL PANNELL
ROSA PINDERHUGHES
CHUCK D. RAMSEY
ROBERT RICHARDSON
JOE RODGERS
PAUL RUFFINS

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PRESENT (Continued):

RICK RYBECH
JEWELL SAUNDERS
ROGER SMALL
JEROME SMITH
SYDNEY SMITH
GERALDINE TWITTY
GROVER L. TYLER
EVAN VALLIANATOS
JULIA WASHBURN
PAULA WELCH
ADRIAN WHITE
DARRYL O. WHITE
JERALD L. WHITE
WILLIAM WINER
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MR. RUFFINS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. RUFFINS: I recognize some friends here, people who I've seen at other places. I taught a course in environmental racism at the Institute for Policy Studies about five years ago, and what I'm speaking on today is a very much continuation of the work that I've done over the past five years, writing about environmental justice and the political issues involving the Afro-American community in environmental justice.

If we start from a basic question, which is to say in a society that is an unjust society, the people who are at the bottom -- in many cases we can say at the bottom of the ecological food chain -- happen to be also the people who are exposed to the highest concentrations of environmental hazards. People have begun to notice now. This was an idea that was beginning to be thought of in 1988 and '89, but it's been articulated now. There's a variety of good materials.

In terms of Washington, D.C., the specifics, I'm not very much going to go into the
specific technical things of pollution in Washington, D.C. I know there are other people in this room who are going to speak who know that better than I, but I'd like to refer you to this document, "Our Unfair Share, a Survey of Pollution Sources in our Nation's Capitol." It was recently published by the African American Environmentalists Association, which is associated with the group I'm with, which is the Center for Energy, Ecology and Community, the National Association of Neighborhoods, and the National Wildlife Federation.

And to read for you, if you really want to know what are considered the most serious environmental issues in Washington in 1994, one is motor vehicle air pollution. The city is out of compliance with the federal Clean Air Act, and it does not seem that it will be able to be brought into compliance with that without some very serious changes made, much more intense car, automobile emissions control in not just the District, but also in Virginia and Maryland.

Urban water runoff. Every time it rains, when you ask yourself, "Where does the rain go? Where does the rain on the roofs, where does the rain on the streets, where does the rain that cannot soak into the
ground go?" it runs off, and unfortunately a lot of it runs of literally downhill into the Anacostia River; okay, some into the Potomac, but the Anacostia River is one of the most polluted urban rivers in the United States. It's supposedly one of the fourth worst polluted rivers.

Everything you throw out, batteries, oil from your car, antifreeze, these things that go into the streets get washed by the rain into the rivers.

Then the question of combined sewer overflows. When you get big rains, can the sewers handle the rain, and where does that water go? It ultimately goes into the rivers.

Drinking water contamination. I'm sure you remember it was in December there was an alert for people to, you know, boil their water because there had been a mistake made in the reservoir uptown.

Lead exposure. I'm sure many of you are aware now that the really serious problem of lead exposure, particular urban children, particularly black children, Hispanic children who live in old buildings, who live near highways. It's estimated that the rate of lead poisoning, not just lead paint -- we used to think the lead was just in the paint. Now we realize the lead is also in the air, in the

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soil, in the waters.

A lot of people have -- my house, for example, is an old house, and if you look in your basement next to where your water meter is, a lot of the service into buildings is lead. So one of the things I have done, I've had to buy bottled water. I'm a middle class person, but one of the things I have to spend my money on is buying water for my children because my house is one of the 25 percent of the ones in Washington where the lead levels are unacceptably high, and that's just a cost.

When we talk about, you know, can the average person afford cleaning up the environment, when you figure in things like having to buy water, and in fact, probably most of the black people who live in Southeast, in this part of the thing, should have their water tested. Okay? This is a case where a disproportion is disproportionately borne by the poorest people.

I can afford bottled water, but I'm sure many people cannot, and we're concerned about why do so many young black people make choices that seem crazy. Part of it is some of them are not thinking straight because their brains have been poisoned.

Another thing is illegal dumping. As it
gets more expensive to legitimately dispose of things, people have been subject to midnight dumping. A friend of mine who has a photo studio over by the Rhode Island Metro Station literally came to his job one morning and couldn’t get in because someone had dumped, without exaggeration, 500 tires, you know, a pile of tires as wide as this room and ten feet high, in the alley leading to his place of business, and I don’t know how much it’s going to cost him to get rid of them.

So those are some of the environmental issues right here in D.C. right now. These all have political implications. You know, the mayor is supporting -- the current mayor and also the former mayor -- are supporting the creation of the Barney Circle Freeway Project, which is right over the Pennsylvania Avenue Bridge, all right, which will help bring a lot of people from Maryland and possibly Virginia into downtown in a more efficient manner.

But when we have to ask ourselves what does that mean to the people who live here, okay, what does it mean for people who have to breathe the air, I would suggest that we need to ask ourselves are a few construction jobs, okay, worth it.

It used to be that people say, "Well, you
know, the federal government is paying for half of it," or two-thirds of it or three-quarters of it, but is that money that you get from the federal government for six or eight months or two years worth the construction jobs? What is the impact that's going to have on the people who have to live here?

Anyway, I recommend this to you. It's very detailed. It's new. It's got a lot of good, very detailed information on what are the sources of pollution in Washington, D.C. I think they did a very good job.

What I'm going to specifically speak on are four ideas. I'm going to tell you two stories. I'm going to discuss the black patron saint of recycling, and then I'm going to talk about some ideas that we don't really usually consider environmental. The last thing that I'd like to talk to you about is crime as an environmental issue because part of what we want to speak on is, you know, there are no buffalos in Washington, D.C. There are no spotted owls, but when we begin to look at an environmental consciousness and ask ourselves how can thinking of things environmentally help us deal with some of these other problems, like I'm sure if we had this meeting at night, all of us would be paranoid about walking out.
of here, walking into the parking lot, because we see these kinds of questions.

People have said not that long ago -- it was not too long, 1966, 1985, 1987 -- "Well, black people aren't concerned about the environment. We have more pressing things to worry about, like crime or like feeding ourselves every day."

My contention to you is that these are environmental issues, and the things that we will learn in the environmental movement can be applied to try to deal with some of these very serious social justice questions.

The first thing I'm going to speak on -- these are just chapters of my book -- is the history. One of the critical incidents in the environmental movement, what I would say is the birth of the modern African American involvement in the environmental movement, and I would say in many cases if people think of the Montgomery bus boycott as a critical incident in the civil rights movement -- this is when Martin Luther King comes to prominence. This is when they win. Okay? This is when Rosa Parks -- we know these stories.

Well, the equivalent of the Montgomery bus boycott is the Warren County, North Carolina, major
demonstration in 1982, in 1982, and partly how that comes to happen is a good way to get a picture of how dumping -- we've been hearing that black communities have been cited for dump sites, and Warren County is the example of how that happens.

What happens, it starts with a crime. What happens is on June 24th, 1978, in the middle of the night a man named Burns, a man named Burns, takes a truck out of a company called Ward Transformer in Raleigh, North Carolina, to dispose of PCB oils. Okay. PCB oils are widely used in electrical transformers, okay, which are one of the most basic parts of all industrial societies. How do you distribute electricity?

If you look out on electrical poles and you see those big, gray canisters, okay, they look like, you know, they're this big and they're round. They are transformers. They step the current down from five or six, maybe 2,000 volts, and the things that come into your house at 110, which is much saver and what appliances run on.

Inside those transformers, at least most of the old ones, is a thing called PCBs. Okay? And they're useful. They're very good in transformers. They don't break down. They don't explode. They
don't burn at normal temperatures.

However, the fact that they don't burn, they don't break down means they stay in the environment forever. Well, let's just say a couple of hundred years before they break down. They're very stable. So the same chemical properties that make them useful to electricity make them toxic in the environment.

And what had happened was that in 1976, the Toxic Substance Control Act basically said that these were cancer causing. We know they're dangerous, and we're going to stop manufacturing them in the United States. This is a decision that's made after Earth Day, after the society begins to say things like, "We have to be more careful if we're going to get rid of this stuff, okay? We just can't make these things indiscriminately. We're going to put a stop to that."

Okay. In '76 they say we're not going to make anymore. Later on -- that's the Toxic Substances Control Act. Okay. It'll illegal to manufacture this stuff, but there's still thousands, possibly millions of transformers hanging around all over the United States containing billions of dollars, of gallons worth of this oil.

Now, what happens is that this guy named

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Ward decided he thought there was a business opportunity in recycling, recycling these materials, right, and this other gentleman -- no, excuse me -- Burns thought he would go into business recycling. What happens was this guy name Ward had a large company making transformers and repairing transformers, and he had about 12,000 gallons of this stuff on his property.

In 1978, they also passed a law that says that you now have to dispose of them in EPA approved or approved toxic waste sites. Okay. Now, this is a good example because, on one hand, the society is doing something that was probably a good thing to do. It was a good thing to stop making this stuff. It was a good thing to decide to be more careful in where it was disposed, but they didn’t think it all the way through and begin to say, "Well, where are we going to dispose of it? What are we going to do with it?"

So what you have now is this man Ward has a problem. He’s got 12,000 gallons of this stuff that’s very expensive to get rid of. He doesn’t know what to do with it. This man Burns says, "Ah, I know what to do with it. I’m going to warehouse the stuff. I’m going to recycle it. Okay. I’m going to start a business collecting these things, collecting this
stuff, and then when other people want to repair transformers, you simply recycle it by repairing transformers. I'll have it, and I'll sell it, and that's what's going to happen."

And what he does is he rents a warehouse in Pennsylvania, and he's going to move this stuff from Raleigh, North Carolina, to Pennsylvania where he's going to recycle it and become a millionaire.

It doesn't work that way. He moves about 2,000 gallons of it, and he says, "This is not profitable. I'll never make a dime trying to do this," and then they decide to dump it.

So what happens is in the middle of the night, they go out and they head for -- they have basically just a regular kind of panel truck. They put a 750 gallon tank in the back. They fill it up, and they take it to the Fort Bragg, North Carolina, testing range, which is where they test artillery shells. It's in the middle of nowhere. It's isolated, and they just take this tank; they open the tank up; they drain the stuff out; and they get rid of 750 gallons of it.

He goes back to Raleigh to get another load. When he goes back to Fort Bragg, what he thought would happen was if you just, you know, let it
out, it would just drain into the ground and disappear. That's not what happens. He gets there and he realizes there's this huge -- well, he's got an oil slick. He's got an oil slick. Rather than being a little, small thing, they can tell clearly that something has been dumped here illegally.

He dumps the second load, and he almost gets caught right there because what happens is the truck gets stuck in the sand. In fact, the police later helped him pull his truck out. They don't know a crime has taken place.

He goes back to this guy and says, "This isn't going to work," and then what they do is they get another truck, and they install basically a hose so that you can drive down the road. You don't have to dump it out, you just open up -- you screw open a valve, and the stuff drains out, out of the truck, and Burns and his son -- I don't know exactly how many trips they made, but in the next two weeks they get rid of the other 9,000 gallons by literally just driving along the roads outside of Raleigh, North Carolina, and they just drain it. They literally just drain it right out onto the road.

They're pretty quickly caught. The stuff instantly kills the grass. I think the grass turns
like blue. You know, the state troopers look at it and say, "What in the hell is this?" They do a chemical analysis on it. It's very clear that it's PCB transformer oil. They relatively quickly track this guy down.

Burns is arrested, and originally he says that Ward has nothing to do with it. He makes a deal with the guy to say, "I'll take the weight for it." The guy who owns the transformer company had nothing to do with it. Later Ward reneges on his promise to pay the guy's legal fees, and then he is also arrested.

Okay. Both of these guys go to jail. The question now is: what are we going to do with this stuff? These guys have polluted. It's not really clear. I think it's like 110 miles of road in North Carolina with very highly toxic stuff that causes birth defects. It causes skin rashes. It's bad; it's bad stuff.

The State of North Carolina says, "We have four options." What they're going to do is they're going to dig up the dirt. If you wonder how do you clean up a toxic site like that, what they decide to do was basically dig up about four feet wide and two feet down of 110 miles. Okay. It's a huge amount of
stuff, and they decide what are they going to do with it.

There are four choices. One is they can try to detoxify it at the site. They were going to try some chemical process to see if they can neutralize this stuff. That was one option.

The second option was they could have taken it to a preexisting, EPA-approved landfill. I think there was one in Texas, and I think there was one in Alabama.

The third option was they could basically burn the stuff in high temperature in these huge kilns. They thought that was too expensive. They had to move that -- I think they had one in New Jersey. I don't remember all of the exact details, but there was a facility in New Jersey, but they concluded that it was prohibitively expensive. That would have cost $3 million -- no, $7 million. It would have cost $7 million, and they thought that that was prohibitively expensive.

So what they decided to do was bury it in the state, and then they had to decide where they were going to put it, and where they decided to put it was a town of Afton in Warren County, North Carolina, and it just turned out to be extremely poor. It just
happened to be the county with the highest percentage of black people in the entire state. It was 84 percent black. It had no city council. It was an unincorporated county. Obviously there were no black members of Congress from that area because at that time in North Carolina there were no black members of Congress from North Carolina. There were no black state senators to go into the state legislature and say, "No, we don't want this."

And they decided to build the dump in the town. Now, the people in the town did not know this waste dump was going to be put in their town until they put up fliers saying there's going to be a public hearing about this, after the decision had already been made.

The people in the town, they tried to organize. One of the things they did was they hired a soil scientist, a guy name Mulchi, who said the site is just inappropriate. All right. There are two things. It does not meet two of the EPA -- the federal EPA has laid down ten or so conditions to have a good dump, and this one cannot meet two very important conditions.

One is it's supposed to be impermeable. So it's supposed to be in clay because you don't want
this stuff to leak out into the aquifers, into the water supply. There was very little clay in this particular town.

The second one was the EPA said that any waste site had to be at least 50 feet -- had to be in an area where the water table was at least 50 feet below the surface of the soil. In this case, the water table was only ten feet below the surface, and it was also a town where probably 95 percent of all the people in the town, okay, got their water from wells.

It was just an environmentally inappropriate site. This did not stop the State of North Carolina. It did not stop the EPA. The community put in several lawsuits, several lawsuits, to try to get the thing stopped, and they never were able to get it stopped. They sued. They showed down the process. They finally got the -- there were a lot of permits needed. They argued a lot of technical things, that the design had not been designed well, and finally they lost.

This story has no happy ending. All right? They did manage to get certain kinds of things done, which is they did get the judge to require a liner. When they had originally designed this dump, they were
going to put the cheapest dump they could design into it. After several lawsuits, they did get a liner in the bottom installed, which they had not originally planned to install. All they planned to install was a liner at the top and cover it with soil on the idea that if no rain could get into the top of it, nothing would leach out underneath.

They went to court. They did get the judge to require a liner on the bottom, and they did get the judge to require what they call a leachate system, which is, I guess, you use large crushed rocks underneath, and you can pump it out if anything does leave it, but everything was going to be okay. This was no problem. There was nothing to worry about. They had the problem solved.

The people did not buy it. Okay? They were not happy about it. They were not going to stand up with it, and several people, a man named Ken Fielding from the local university and a woman named Dollie Burwell were organizing community opposition to this, and Dollie Burwell plays a critical part for several reasons.

One is she had been in the civil rights movement, and people were angry. They were considering violence. There was a very real threat
that the people in the town were not going to put up
with this, and people were saying they were going to
get guns, and they were going to start literally
shooting at these trucks.

If you want to know, there was 8,000 dump
trucks full of material that was going to be put into
this landfill, 8,000 dump trucks. Okay. If you think
of the size of a dump truck, that’s what it takes to
dig up 110 miles of roads, 110 miles six feet wide by
two feet down.

On the day that this happens, that they’re
going to begin to ship the stuff, it was the first --
we don’t really know what the first demonstration of
black people it was against the environment. We may
find out that it happened in 1920. Okay. As we look
into our history, it’s very hard to know what really
is the first one or what people have protested before,
but as far as we know, this was the first major
demonstration against a toxic waste dump in the United
States by anyone, black or white, and these were the
ordinary black people. These were the church ladies.
These were the farmers. These were not what we would
consider environmentalists. Okay? These were people
fighting to protect their community.

And starting in September 15th, it took
them about two or three weeks to truck this stuff in, 8,000 truck fulls. Five hundred twenty-five people were arrested, but they finally did the dump.

Now, one of the reasons why this incident remains so important when we look at our history of the environmental movement is two important things happen. Two people were arrested there, and one was our own Reverend Walter Fauntroy, who was with SCLC. Bob Lowery from SCLC came down. He was arrested. I believe his wife was also arrested, okay, on the front lines, and Walter Fauntroy came down.

And there was a funny story about Walter Fauntroy because part of what happened was they said, "Well, can you come down? Can you help us out?"

Walter said, "I’m really busy, but I’ll flow down. I’ve got a small plane," and he told the guy, "I’ll be right back. Keep the engine running."

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: You know, and he went down, and he said -- the Dollie Burwell said to him, "Well, you’re a Congressman. They can’t arrest you. You have congressional immunity," and the story is Walter said, "That’s right. I’m a Congressman. They can’t arrest me."

Well, they had never seen a black

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Congressman in Warren County in 1982.

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: And Walter sat down in the street and was promptly arrested and taken to jail.

Also Ben Chavis came down, the Reverend Ben Chavis who was at that point the Deputy Director of the United Church of Christ Institute for Racial Justice. He was also arrested.

In the end, the demonstration did not work. Okay? The dump was there. The dump was completed, and the dump was built, and it’s tragic because as soon as it was finished, something that was going to hold this stuff forever, literally before they could put the cap on, they had a tremendous several weeks of rain, heavy rain, and they figure half a million gallons of water went into this perfectly dry landfill, all right, eroded huge gullies that were supposed to be -- this was a mound that was supposed to be, you know, smooth, and they would landscape it, and before they were finished, there were huge gullies, and the top material was mostly washed away.

And then they found that the liner of the thing, this impermeable liner they had put in began to balloon literally in places. They could see the top of this thing coming off.
What had happened is there were, I guess, natural gas deposits under the site. So the thing begins to balloon. So they way they solved that was they went to the top and drove pipes down through the liner to let the gas out.

So this Cadillac of a landfill was defective from the day that it was built, and that was in 1982, and to this day it is not fixed. It's still there. There's an interview with Dollie Burwell where she says, "Well, every time it rains, every time it rains I wonder what's getting down there and when will the water be poisoned."

And they say it's not just a question of "if." It's just a question of when will it be poisoned.

The good thing that came out of it, there are a few good things that came out of it, which was that was the first time -- and again, I use the first time trying to be historically correct -- that the white people and the black people in the town actually got together on any significant political organizing.

This part I will read to you. This is the first chapter of my book. The mobilization against the dump completely changed the politics of Warren County. In 1982, Afro-Americans were 65 percent of
this population, but held only one of five seats on the Board of Commissioners and one of five seats on the School Board. The next year after the demonstration, they went back and did a major voter registration drive, okay, and got people to go to the polls, right.

Afro-Americans captured three of the commission seats, and there are not two blacks or a Native American serving on the School Board. The county elected its first black representative to the North Carolina house and senate, and Dollie Burwell, the woman who helped organize it, is the Registrar of Deeds.

State-wide voter turnout in general elections was only 25 percent, but in Warren County they consistently get 60 percent of the people to turn out to vote. So it was a mobilizing thing. People came out. They lost, but they got organized, and even ten, 12 years later, that has led to a much greater level of community and political activity going on in that town.

So that’s the story of the first major African American mobilization for environmental justice.

Now I’m going to talk to a story that is
extremely painful to me because it took place in Washington, D.C. You can see Warren County as an example of where poor and powerless black people were victimized by the state and possibly by the society, where they said, "Look. It's good to clean up this stuff, but you're going to get it."

Okay. Had the Congress never decided to ban the manufacture of PCBs, they would not have come to a town. None of the people in that town got any jobs making that stuff. None of them worked in electrical power plants. None of them got the benefit of that chemical. Maybe our society has benefitted from the creation of PCBs. We have lights. Okay? We have electricity. That is probably good, all right, but none of those people got any of that good, and that's when we talk about the injustice of it.

Everybody has lights, but they have the pollution, and that is essentially what we see happening again and again and again and again. There may be good things produced, but some people get a disproportionate share of the bad stuff.

Now, I'm going to talk about D.C. How many of you were in Washington in 1987 for the bottle bill campaign? Do you remember that? Do you remember that?
Well, I’m going to talk about the bottle bill which is, in my mind, a terrible disgrace. This is also a story with no happy ending, okay, but it is not a story primarily about poor black people being victimized, okay, by people on the outside. In my mind, this is a story of how poor black people were victimized by our own people, black ministers, okay, black politicians, black public relations executives, some of whom were good friends of mine.

I used to be in the PR business. So I know some of these people personally. Okay? Where basically people’s feelings of black solidarity and nationalism were exploited, and racism was exploited to fight an idea that would have been a good thing for our community, and then I’ll start to tell the story now.

It should have been easy to pass a bottle bill in 1987. Okay. Seventy-two percent of the people in Washington thought it would be a very good idea to put a deposit on bottles and cans. Most of the older people, most of the people in this room, I’m sure, who are over 50 or even — excuse me — who are my age remember —

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: I’m sorry.
-- remember when we were children that people took bottles back. Okay. There was a deposit on bottles. This is before probably most things came in cans, but there was a deposit on every bottle. It did not seem like an oppressive idea. It did not seem like a conspiracy against the poor. It did not seem like white people trying to fill your house with roaches. Okay? It seemed like a good idea.

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: People experienced it. It did not seem oppressive that you had to take the bottles and cans back to the stores. It was an idea that had worked for years and years. All right, and that's an important thing to remember. This is not a new idea.

Okay. It should have been easy. It should have been easy to pass a bottle bill in '67. The District has some very unique -- well, the District is small. Okay. It's only 44 miles. All right? It's not like most states that have upstate. There is no upstate in D.C. Okay? There's no rural areas where you can build dumps. Okay. It's landlocked. All right.

There's only two facilities to get rid of things. One is the Benning Road. Twenty-seven
percent of the trash went to the aging Benning Road incinerator, okay, and the other 70 percent went to Lorton.

Well, the Lorton landfill is almost full, okay, for a couple of reasons. One, it’s been operating for years and years and years. Two, Virginia has its own solid waste disposal problems. Maryland has its own solid waste disposal problems. In the '80s, the Greater Washington Area was the fastest growing area of any place in the country. Rockville was the fastest growing city in the '80s. All right? This was a construction boom. The population in this area has doubled.

My wife grew up here, and she said, you know, Gaithersburg used to be a horse farm. So a Metro in Gaithersburg is kind of unbelievable now.

It should have been a perfect place for a bottle bill. The District of Columbia has always been a politically progressive place. Okay? We have supported rights for gay people. We have supported health care coverage for everybody. We have supported gun control. Okay? We have traditionally been the kind of political or community that recognizes these political issues, okay, and what was good. It should have been just our kind of issue to say, "Let’s clean
up the streets."

If you have an honest kid, let him make
money cleaning up the street. It seems like a good
idea. It should have passed.

Again, the first poll said 72 percent of
the people including, which by definition means more
than 50 percent of all the black people, thought that
a bottle bill was a fine idea. Okay. What happens?

Not to mention the bottle bill had been
Most people don't realize that a bottle bill has been
introduced into D.C. at least four times, at least
four times. In 1974, a bottle bill passed. It was
introduced by the late Julius Hobson, was the person
who introduced it. A stone progressive black
politician introduced the bottle bill into the city
council in 1974, and it passed the city council by a
vote of six to three. It was vetoed by Mayor
Washington, who was concerned that they would lose
business, that the stores in D.C. would lose business
to Virginia and Maryland.

It just turns out that Loudoun and Fairfax
County in Virginia also passed bottle bills around the
same time, in the early '70s. Those were thrown out
of court because basically under a technical thing.
That was a bit of state legislation that a locality could not do on its own.

Montgomery County has a bottle bill on the books, by the way. This is a very well kept secret during the campaign. There is a law in Montgomery County that was passed at approximately the same time, that if they passed a bottle bill in either the District of Columbia or Prince George’s County, it would go into effect.

So, in fact, had they passed a bottle bill in D.C., it would have instantly kicked in the one in Montgomery County, dramatically reducing the chances that businesses would have lost any business across the county line.

This was never brought up. Okay. Then in the mid-'80s the bottle bill was reintroduced. Hilda Mason in 1984, Hilda Mason introduced a bottle bill into the city council, putting I think it was a -- she and Polly Shackelton introduced a bottle bill into the city council, and it was bottled up by Nadine Winter. Okay? Nadine Winter would not let this out of committee. Nadine Winter was against; she was just against it.

She was working with an organization. I forget what it's called -- the Keep America Beautiful
Foundation, which is funded by Coke, Pepsi, Budweiser, Reynolds Aluminum.

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: Okay? People who make -- and she bottled it up.

PARTICIPANT: Pardon the pun, right?

MR. RUFFINS: No, but it's true. She never let the legislation out of committee in the city council. It stayed there dead for three years.

In '87, Hilda Mason came back again and she and Wilhemina Rolark from across the river, Ward 8, okay, two black women -- first a black woman and a white woman, okay, Hilda Mason and Polly Shackelton, long-time respected Washington, D.C., organizers introduce a bottle bill, and then in '87, two black women introduce a bottle bill, okay, Hilda Mason and Wilhemina Rolark. Wilhemina, who represented -- are we in Ward 7 or Ward 8?

PARTICIPANT: Eight.

MR. RUFFINS: Who represented this ward introduced a bottle bill into the city council.

Okay. Nadine Winter would not let it get out of committee. Once again it was not allowed out of committee. Okay. They were talking about voluntary recycling. The industry did not want them
to put a deposit on the bottles. Okay? The industry said, "Well, we can have a clean-up. Well, we can do this. Well, it should be voluntary. Okay. No, it's too much trouble."

She never let it out of the committee, and it was only after that in 1987 that basically three or four white environmentalists tried to put it on a bill. If you want, one was Jim McCarthy, who's chairman of the Washington Deposit Coalition; Gene Karpinsky, head of the U.S. Office of PIRG, U.S. PIRG, which is right down on Pennsylvania Avenue.

An interesting thing that Calvin Rolark has told me, that PIRG was one of the first things he funded through the United Black Fund. Yes, yes, Calvin Rolark said in the early '80s, when they started PIRG, which was part of Ralph Nader's research group and came out of Ralph Nader's organization, that the United Black Fund funded them because they thought they were such a good, responsible community organization and that the community needed a kind of government watchdog organization.

And then there was a guy named Jonathan Puth from Environmental Action. These are three -- they're all white -- three guys who introduced, basically made the move to introduce the bottle bill.
as a referendum. No, it was an initiative. It was an initiative. Let me see if I’ve got it right. I don’t know if it was actually technically an initiative or a referendum. It may have been a referendum because they were responding to something that was already in the city council. It’s not really important, but you take it basically to the citizens.

All right, and they decided to do that. They started collecting signatures after the ’86 primary, and they easily got the 50 or whatever, 20,000 signatures they needed, and immediately the industry began to fight them.

Okay. The metropolitan area liquor distributors, you know, coalition fought it. They went to court to keep it off the ballot, and then they began to — as they got their signatures, more and more people got upset about it. The people who decided to fight it the most was from Mid-Atlantic Coca-Cola. Okay? I’ll tell you who. I don’t need to personally name any bad guys, but the guy who was chairman of Mid-Atlantic Coca-Cola was the main bad guy in this. Okay?

And that’s when they formed the Clean Capitol City Committee, okay, which was the group, okay, that fought the bottle bit. It was chartered in
Maryland. It wasn't even in D.C., okay, and when they had their first meeting, okay, when they called their first public meeting, the people from Coke weren't there. The people from Budweiser weren't there. Sterling Tucker was there. Okay? They paid Sterling Tucker $10,000, okay, to represent them, and he later denied that.

Okay. They tapped into -- Sterling Tucker tapped into an organization he had founded when he had been chairman of the city council, the organization of 100 black ministers. All right? Sterling Tucker went directly to -- he sent the letter to the ministers' organizations. Okay?

And time after time throughout this whole story, okay, they went to well respected black community leaders to fight the recycling. So when they had their first rally, which was held in a big hotel in downtown, you didn't see the faces of the industry. Okay? You didn't see the chairman of Coke. You didn't see the chairman of Pepsi. You didn't see the guy who was president of the Glass Packaging Institute. You saw Sterling Tucker. You saw Reverend Ernest Gibson from Mount Rising Baptist Church, okay, who had been head of the Washington Council of Churches, coming out against recycling.
It was terrible. It was a terrible thing
to see, okay, and what happened was ultimately they
used black community leaders, black community people.
They brought media in, in every black newspaper, and
I had a black newspaper just about then. So I went
and spoke to -- they went on the Cathy Hughes Show.
Ultimately a very cynical group of white corporations
got the black civil rights leadership of Washington,
D.C., to fight a bottle bill.

And every time you go out think about that.
Okay? So when you see the bottles in the parks and
the bottles and the cans in the streets and you
remember that we were exploited, okay, people did not
understand. Black people at that point -- and I know.
I've spoken to some of these people. They said,
"Well, we didn't really know."

Okay. They hadn't begun to understand
where our environmental issues were. They thought
that the million dollars that the industry gave to
public relations consultants and Cathy Hughes and the
Afro to buy all of this radio and television time was
a good investment.

But every year since we have not had a
bottle bill, it has cost the city about a million and
a half dollars a year to pick up those bottles, okay,
at a time when we're talking about laying off city workers. It was a terrible decision. It was a terrible decision, and the community has to be very careful.

I mean if there's anything that comes out of it it is that we must be very careful who speaks for us. We must be very careful and seriously sit down and define what our interests really are, okay, so that a few dollars to black newspapers, a few dollars to political consultants, and a few dollars to black television time does not constitute doing good things for the community.

That was a terrible story of that. Now for the good new.

(Laughter.)

MR. RUFFINS: The good news is that there are tremendous, tremendous, tremendous possibilities for solving the problems that we see. You know, you talk about, well, what about crime? What about the fact that people cannot find jobs? Okay. What does this have that, you know, particularly there seem to be real serious problems with young men? They cannot find jobs. Okay. They cannot feel like men. So they decide to feel like men by proving they can shoot people.
Okay. They don't have constructive work to do. They see no future, and I said to myself when I began to write this, I said: where in black history can we look; where can we look for our ancestors? Where can we be guided by the people who went before?

And I looked around, and in the first chapter, first page of my book, I started out by saying that people need to remember why Martin Luther King was actually in Memphis when he was killed. Martin Luther King wasn't supposed to be in Memphis. Jesse Jackson and Andy Young urged him to come on. They were doing the Poor People's Campaign, okay, to come to Washington.

Martin Luther King was in Memphis to support the sanitation workers on their strike. All right. In other words, these people who are cleaning up the urban area, you could say the bottom line troops of recycling; that's why he was in Memphis. That's why he was in Memphis when he was killed.

But then I looked back and I said, well, you know, Elijah Mohammed was another person. Okay. Elijah Mohammed talked about "don't go into those stores. Make your own clothes. Have your own businesses. Get out of this consumption. This consumer consumption is killing us. The cars are
killing us. The bottles are killing us. We're being buried."

And when we consume, we are now burying our brothers and sisters because all of the new dumps, trust me, if they're not burying them in black areas, they're going to be in Hispanics. I look for an ancestor, and I found one. I found an ancestor, and I almost cried when I read this.

George Washington Carver, Scientist and Symbol. It's a scholarly biography published by Oxford University Press, and I began to say: where are we compared to the black people in Tuskeegee, Alabama, in 1900, 1895, when people were starving, when people were desperate, when people were uneducated, okay, superstitious, okay, and George Washington Carver had this idea that God had given you everything you needed to make a better life for yourself.

And we talk about the things he did with peanuts. It wasn't just this. He said to these people, "Look. If you've worn out four farms" — and one cotton farmer said, "Don't tell me that." An old black man said, "Don't tell me how to farm cotton. I know how to farm cotton. I've worn out four farms."

(Laughter.)
MR. RUFFINS: Right? And he said, "You know, if you blow under the leaves, if you take the horse manure, okay, you can replenish the earth around you."

And he said, "Don't just grow cotton. If you grow cotton, you'll stay in debt. You'll stay in debt. You'll stay in debt, and your children will be starving because in the wintertime you'll have to go down to that sharecropper's store and spend that little money on fatback and molasses, okay, which are not nutritional. Instead of trying to grow more cotton and spend that money, if you grow half an acre of vegetables, your children can eat."

Okay, and one of the things is he was very interested -- he did not have a lot of traditional gender roles. He was very good at sewing. He was an extraordinarily good cook. He said to the women, "You know, you can take those corn husks, and you can have rugs on the floor. You can have curtains on the walls of your shack."

He said to the men, "If you wash that red clay, you can wash the red out of the clay and have color in your life. You can have a better life for yourself and your children" through what we would now say recycling, at a time when people were desperate,
and they had nothing.

We have so much here, and I want to end by reading you about two people in this area, okay, who are really doing that. One is a guy named D.K. Wesley Copeland, who is a chemist, right, who is with the National Academy of Science, and one of the things he did about 20 years ago was he went into the ghettos of Caracas, Venezuela. Okay. I mean terrible conditions, terrible.

He said, "What resources do we have?" They said they took and they looked, and he was an engineer. He looked around and, you know, all we see are magazines and newspapers and tin cans and stuff. They started a business. They took a garbage disposal, a regular garbage disposal like you have in your sink, okay. What can you do with a garbage disposal, old magazines and newspapers and a screen door?

Well, with enough water and enough magazines and a regular, old garbage disposal, you could run the magazines through the garbage disposal, you could screen them out on a screen door, and you can make beautiful writing paper. You can make very fancy stationery. It's extremely expensive, and they set up a small factor in this community making
stationery and note paper literally out of the funny papers with a very small thing.

They said, "People don't have enough to eat," and they said, "All we see in the streets are tin cans." They did hydroponic gardens. There was no room for regular gardens, but they did tiered literally in boxes, in wood boxes, hydroponic gardens out of tin cans. Right? They started them end to end, and they made everything they needed to do that.

He has an office in downtown. There's another guy who's literally called, okay, the George Washington Carver of the Prisons. The guy's name is James Ingram. He's an industrial engineer. He has a company called Design Recycle, right, and they make all kinds of things. They make stuff from tires. They make stuff from glass. You can make marble, you know, kind of artificial marble from unsorted glass. You can make park benches from plastic milk jugs, these things.

But what he recycles is people. Okay. He has a furniture. He teaches furniture refinishing and upholstery in the Prince George's County Jail. Okay? He takes guys who have never done anything constructive in their lives, all right, and teaches them you can do something. You can do something with
your hands. You don't have to just kill people. You can be a productive person.

He has -- generally about 50 percent of all the guys who go to jail go back to jail. He has achieved a recycling rate of about 93 percent. Only three percent of the guys, and they're mostly all men. I don't mean to be sexist about this. Only three percent of the inmates who go through his program come out and go back to jail today.

And what he said to me, "This guy doesn't understand." He says, "This guy thinks what he's doing is refinishing a chair." He says, "He's not refinishing a chair. He's rebuilding his own life."

(Appause.)

(Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

MS. BROWNE: We have a luncheon planned. Lunch is only half an hour. So we'll have the panel, hopefully generate some questions at the end of the panel, continue questions through lunch, and then come back for the afternoon program.

As Steve indicated, the fact that the Anacostia Museum is convening this morning in Allen Chapel A.M.E. Church, it reflects a coming together of various segments of our community to address environmental issues.
This panel also reflects a variety of the differing disciplines and training and experience that have come together to address environmental justice issues. We have legal issues. We have scientific issues, and in terms of our scientists in the environmental justice movement, they really have replaced the sociologists that were so crucial in the civil rights movement in the ’50s and ’60s. Our scientists today are the Kevin Clarks that testified in the 1954 Board of Education decision.

So what I would like to do is to have the two scientists address the health effects on us, on our communities, on our children; also the effects of pollution and failure to take care of our environment on the land, the air we breathe, and the water we drink.

And we’re going to start first with Jim O’Connor. His bio is introduce in the materials to this program, but basically he’s associate professor of geoscience at UDC. He’s also taught at the University of Maryland, at Boston College, and he’s the national coordinator for minority participation in the earth science program.

Each panelist will have essentially 15 minutes to present their topic.
Jim.

MR. O’CONNOR: Well, good morning, and I want to thank Laura and Joanna for inviting me to be one of the scientific experts.

I have spent 22 years studying the real underground of Washington, D.C., and my job today is to make you aware of the rich cultural and natural history of this side of the Anacostia River, as well as to help you be better stewards by understanding the whole role of history on this side of the river.

And what I would like to start out with to get you in the frame is to go back to 1926 and to bring black spirituality and the environmental movement together through the renowned African-American poet Langston Hughes, through his poem The Negro Speaks of Rivers.

I have known rivers. I have known rivers ancient as the world and older than the flow of human blood in human veins. My soul has grown deep like the rivers. I have bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young. I have built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep. I looked upon the Nile and raised the
pyramids about it. I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I’ve seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

I have known rivers, ancient, dusty rivers. My soul has grown deep like the rivers.

That poem has not ended. We are now in the Anacostia area, and the Anacostia is your spirituality, and that’s what I want to talk about today, is this side related to the wonder river.

And the first thing I would like to do is tell a myth. Contrary to the American rivers David Letterman Top Ten, our river has never been cleaner in the last 20 years. The last two years have seen major changes in the quality of the water. It is the best quality judged by chemistry, judged by the fish over the last two years, and judged by the sea birds coming in to eat those fish.

The geology on the bottom, however, is another whole story, and probably in my lifetime it will never be cleaned up unless somebody invents a new technology to eat it and clean it in place.

And the east bank is much cleaner than the...
industrial and urbanized west bank in Ward 6.

Now, where am I going to start? One of the things that was just mentioned was that science is now the social studies of today. Without science you’re dead in the water. Every citizen must know the appropriate science. Let me repeat that. Every citizen must know the appropriate science, and you’ve already seen that a little bit this morning because I’m focusing on the end of today’s title, and that is "Just Us," and it’s you that need the knowledge to protect your environment.

The survival of the fittest depends on those that understand the habitat that they’re in, and only you have a neighborhood. Every neighborhood needs to be preserved. Every of the 53 neighborhoods in the District is polluted, but nobody is going to worry about your neighborhood except you because they’re worried about theirs.

There’s where the activism comes in, and what I want to share with you today is to protect all of the good things that are already over here on this side of the river. The eastern shore of the District of Columbia is wonderful. The best open spaces and natural spaces are in part of the green necklace over here. They need to be preserved for the next century,
and they are under stress, believe me.

And with that what I’d like to do is take you through a little, quick history of seeing all of the peoples and the natural resources that are over here, similar to what we did two weeks ago when we looked at 46 sights over here on the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Would you show the first slide?

I’m going to run through these just to give you, again -- you need an equal foundation before this afternoon. The first thing is to look at the census data as a map. In this case, everybody is blue. So we’re all blue.

And within that, keep in mind now that Washington, D.C., is just nothing but an urban oasis within the larger Chesapeake Bay context, but it is a very important context.

(Simultaneous conversation.)

MR. O’CONNOR: But keep in mind now this is what we’re talking about, is one little blue oasis from outer space, and it does show up from outer space.

What we really need to understand is the foundation, physical geography. Why is your neighborhood unique? We are part of the Anacostia
Valley, and the whole Eastern Shore is nothing but a big, giant cliff, and all weather basically comes from this side of the world and slams against your neighborhoods. That's all I'm going to say about air pollution. You need to understand the meteorology, but these cliffs are beautiful.

The other aspect is looking at what's under your feet, and that is the basic geology, the same geology that fostered George Washington Carver to play games and goes back to the lathyritic soils of the tropical belts of the equator, is the wonderful red clay on either side of the Anacostia River.

That red clay, you see, goes all the way along the mid-blocks from Eastern Avenue all the way down to almost the tip at Southern Avenue. It is a major importance for the history of the area.

This is what it looks like. Four hundred feet thick. It is why we have all of the bricks, not only here, but in the rest of the city. This is our natural resource for brick, but this is one of our creatures. It got wiped out and burned. This is the D.C. dinosaur that lives in those swamps that piled out that red clay delta higher and deeper on this side of the city.

There is a rich history, but keep in mind
now if kids could find this stuff, and that of all ages, you could make a fortune, especially if you found the eggs.

(Laughter.)

MR. O’CONNOR: We are just now rediscovering some of this ancient climatic past. As the green line tunnels through both towards the University of Maryland area, the middle of the city, and certainly out in this area, we are finding more and more bones. This is what a dinosaur bone looks like as it comes out of the subway.

So there are rich histories to play with, but we really need to look at the people history. This whole belt of red clay goes from Gay Head, Massachusetts, all the way down to the Richmond City Jail in Richmond.

Why be concerned? It is physical hazard, not chemical hazard. The biggest problem on this side of the city is physics, not chemistry. How many of you recognize this spot? One person. This is O Street and Branch Avenue. It took $3 million to put a wall up here. Most of you have probably seen the wall off Pennsylvania Avenue. This is why one has to worry about the red clay. Your house is going to go. Your habitat can be moved if you wet this red clay.
So we have all kinds of wonderments, from the super landslide that wiped out 95 roughly 20 years ago, to the O Street slide, to the Hillcrest slide, to the Benning Road slide. I can go on and on. Most of them have been fixed, but somebody had to pay money.

In the '70s, the city put in a law so this wouldn't happen, and you must now have geotechnical studies before you can build houses. So we put in laws to protect you against Mother Nature, and yet we see people don't understand science. If you recycle the bottom of the slide to the top of the slide, then you haven't taken a course in physics to see that if you pile everything on the top, it's going to slide down the hill.

(Laughter.)

MR. O'CONNOR: So George obviously didn't go to UDC and take a basic science course or he wouldn't have spent all of that money doing that.

Now, part of understanding this is what piece of time do you want to talk to me about. In this neat map here, which you may or may not be able to see from the back of the room, it has a bunch of colors. So when I go back, this blue line along here is where the Native Americans live. That is the shoreline of the Anacostia on the Eastern Shore here.
back in 1792, when Washington, Banneker and Ellicott
were planning out this neat-o chunk called the
District of Columbia.

There's a red line in here to show just
before the Civil War, and the black lines you probably
can see are today's shorelines of the Anacostia and
the Potomac. You've lost two-thirds of both rivers
downtown because of reclamation to create land for
Anacostia Park, for East Potomac Park, et cetera.

Oh, yeah, that has a lot of fun. What is
all of that stuff? Where did it come from to go in
the water?

Well, these people knew a lot about
geology. They had to live off the land. The 150
people that lived here every summer, they loved it
here because the land was good to them. They had the
first outdoor education school of preparing the
gеology to make the goodies that they needed to
survive.

This is what their villages looked like.
This is the real Anacostia. What happened to those
people? What kind of environmental goodies took care
of them? And when did they go down the drain?

We now have their record. So as the subway
system dug up Suitland Parkway to put in Anacostia
Station, this is some of the stuff they found. So we now know how good -- all that's left is the geology, but we know a whole bunch about those people from the tools, and this was not for crime. This was for survival of a different sort.

And then, of course, we have big changes. Because we are a seaport, then people could come by tall ship to visit us, and starting in the 17th Century, people came to visit and take care of the good resources, like the beavers and other good things that were around here. They also took the trees to fix their boats and the tar along with that to patch up the boats.

And with that came another plan. Totally wrapped up in our local history is the role of tobacco, not the nasty environmental goodies that you could argue about out of tobacco and air pollution of today, but the money of yesteryear, and not only the money of yesteryear, but the whole role of bringing in people to make sure that you could harvest the crop, and not only do we have two-legged beasts of burden. We also had four-legged beasts of burden and hence the name "Oxen" of Oxen Run and why these kind of creatures had to walk all the way up Good Hope Hill, and you had a cabin at the top.
But notice now the plantation area is very wrapped up not only with cultural and social history, but also with the beginnings then of the filling in of the Anacostia with sedimentation, and people lived off that wonderful clay. The same clay that gave the bricks and gave nourishment to the tobacco gave nourishment to all that lived, as well as economy to a few.

That has not changed, and then, of course, the next era as we jump from plantation days, we become planned cities, and we have Andrew Elliott taking care of some of the downtown things, and we have the mathematician, astronomer, surveyor Benjamin Banneker doing all of the work early in the morning as he used the rising sun and the setting moon to plot out all those wonderful boundary stones that some of you saw last week.

So along Eastern Avenue and Southern Avenue every mile is a Banneker boundary stone, and remember now that was done 204 years ago with the sky and a piece of chain, and they are accurate, not by kilometers, but by miles, and here they are.

There is the original District of Columbia, ten by ten by ten by ten. So what district are you dealing with? And, again, this isolated core of the
Eastern Shore is an important piece of that whole box.

And with that we get to see there are cities within the box, and dealing with that, you want to look at all of these rivers. So one of the neat things about looking at that is the two most important goodies in the emerald necklace over here, and that is because of the Civil War the green space is protected over here in a beautiful line, and besides the green space, you have the rivers.

But the key I want to leave you with in understanding this is this city is built on seven steps, seven bottoms of the Potomac River, and that is an important key because the developers understand that if you stand at the edge of one of these steps, you will see forever, and we can go to our Lady of Perpetual Health panorama view and see from the top step that you’re sitting on right now. We can drop down to Saint E’s and go to Artis Point at Saint E’s and see that wonderful view of L’Enfant City.

We can go down to Douglass’ house and see the hill and sit on his front porch and see that beautiful view. We can drop down to Minnesota Ave. and wonder why Minnesota Ave. is so flat across the whole length that it drives.

These are river terraces similar to where
we plunk the neighborhood called River Terrace, but all of these are important because your problems are related to this diagram. Each of these diagrams has springs that have been lost. There’s a river cutting down through, all through the bluffs from Alabama Ave. down to the Anacostia. There are streams cutting down through all of these stairs.

And people have said that valley for the river is ugly. Let’s fill it in. So one of them is God’s dump because nobody protected the valley. Nobody has put up signs saying, "This is the name for my stream," and there are more than 12 streams over here. So you can go through and look at the meanders of the Potomac. You can look at all of the rivers of downtown that are lost, but these are your rivers all along here that the federal city and regional governments do not fully recognize because you have not said, "I want a sign. I want to know the name of my river. I’m going to protect my river."

These lost rivers of the Anacostia are an important key. They’re all alive and well, but they need someone to look at them. They need someone to keep them. They need stewards, and the dirtiest river in this city is note the Eastern Branch. It is this river here that you call Suitland Parkway.
Go out and see it. Find it. So when you see all of that ooze and leachate coming out of Saint E's, it following a river that is a tributary. When you go to George Washington Carver trail and see the tires in Zora Felton Branch, it's all part of Stickfoot Branch.

See your rivers at Dupont, Watts Branch, Piney Run. See these are the things that are here. You're not protecting the good stuff. This is what everybody is after, and you have the Anacostia Watershed Society. Maryland takes care of their stuff. We need to deal with all of these goodies down here, and if you don't say, "I want a sign, and I want to protect my rivers," who else is going to do it? They haven't done it yet.

So get off your fanny and look at your river. Walk and find. If you see a road that goes downhill, there has to be a river at the bottom of that hill. Simple science. Then follow it until it hits the Anacostia, and this is what we're talking about now.

There's all kinds of wondrous things. This is how they filled in the rivers. This is my geology of today. How do you do this? It ain't there. This is the sedimentation of the Eastern Shore of the
District of Columbia. This is how they did God’s
dump. It’s not by nature. It’s by 10-wheelers or 12-
wheelers. That’s not in my geology book.

And also don’t forget about this. What’s
under your street? By organization, everybody has to
have their own little goodie, and when they come
around with the spray cans for environmental graffiti,
you get to see orange is for telephone and TV cable;
red is for electricity; blue is for water; green is
for sewage; yellow is for natural gas when you call
Miss Utility. All of those things are under your
streets and under your properties.

One needs to be aware of that because it
changes the ecology underground, and this is the kind
of thing that’s important. Here is our city dump from
the ’50s and the ’60s. This is the Kenilworth
sanitary landfill now known as a national park. This
is where it was before Lorton, but keep in mind now if
this started in the ’50s what happened with all the
trash before the ’50s? It’s someplace in the city.
I guarantee every ward has at least two dumps, and it
ain’t on nobody’s list up here.

Well, one of the things that was important,
and Paul talked about that stuff earlier, this is a
safe place because it’s totally lined with that
wonderful red clay, unlike Saint E's which was not lined. So it is oozing out, and that's where it is. Here it is right here. It's right next to Kenilworth Gardens.

And we just spent $2 million planting trees, planting plants in here, $2 million tax money. How many kids from Woodson Senior, Anacostia Senior, et cetera, were involved with this project? All of those things were planted by hand by students. Zero from D.C. That's going on now.

This is your Bible. The first urban soil survey by the federal government in the United States, done by two black, African American agronomists of soil sciences. This is where the information is about your neighborhood.

If you don't know how to read it, then you're environmentally illiterate, and you need to see Jim Butler over there and make sure his office and Ferial's office runs a course so that you are literate about the soils for gardening or for safety in your back yard.

Now, this looks like just a map, but colors mean environment. I don't care what kind of earth science map you get. If it's colored, every color is an environment that needs to be understood, and we
have less with old maps. This is where I make all my
goodies, is from studying old maps, and I even
discovered since my trip the other day, there was two
railroads here on Nanny Burroughs Avenue area, not
one. I always thought there was one, but it's now
houses.

But the reason I put this up, and the next
slide will blow it up a little bit more, is to show
you now here is 1950. Here is the Potomac Electric
Power plant, not like it is today, and here is the
Kenilworth marshes. There is no dump. There is a
race track where the Mayfair Apartment complex is, was
the old city race track. We've drastically changed in
44 years. We've totally filled all of this in.

So you need to get a sense of history of
your land. You need to understand what's under your
feet and the water-land relationship. You need to be
aware of not only Mother Nature, but all of the things
that people have done to land. You need to be able to
go back and look at history and look at today.

Here is the Anacostia River, and here is
the vegetation. The law today would prevent this from
happening because the Pennsylvania farmers can't let
their cows into the river. Well, we don't have cows,
but, see, that's illegal. There we encouraged it to
eat the hydrilla. We might have to bring cows back when you clean up the Anacostia.

(Laughter.)

MR. O’CONNOR: So remember now one of the neat things we have lost that is not only rich black history, but rich D.C. history is this is a marine seaport. This is founded by the founding fathers as a seaport. Don’t lose that heritage. Use that heritage. Bring back the tall ships. Bring back the fish, and don’t ignore the subway.

There is wonderful ecology, not only the rat ecology, but keep in mind now the whole role of having a subway go through is important economically. It is important developmentally, and you need to be up front with this and not wait until everything happens.

The developers know what’s over here. They see the natural resources as an amenity to putting up wonderful highrises on slopes that will easily erode away. So when you start looking at the year 2000, pay attention to transportation, and the old railroads are probably the dirtiest spots in the city because they were the industrial corridors, but don’t ignore the Metro as an ecology system in its broad sense.

And, again, one of the things I wanted to leave you with: this is our background in the city.
Unlike the report that came out this week which is, I would say, a poor high school edition, this is the one that has the GIS, and there's a whole host of these kinds of city reports that people are ignoring that have been put out by your university for your neighborhood.

So when you start looking at this now, this is what we're talking about. Listen to your elders. Pay attention to the kids coming along. This city has some of the best environmental education programs in the country for urban education, and they're going to get better.

But at the same time, don't ignore all of the history that we have. Pay attention to the land. Listen to the land. Read the land, and as Frederick Douglass would say, "Agitate," but agitate from a strong knowledge base, not from emotionalism.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Our next presenter is Dr. Geraldine Twitty. Dr. Twitty has a doctorate degree in biochemical genetics from Howard University. Recently she took a sabbatical to work with the Environmental Protection Agency and Office of Environmental Justice when she co-authored a paper on

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protecting endangered communities.

She also organized a lecture series entitled "Environmental Justice, Environmental Injustice."

Dr. Twitty.

DR. TWITTY: Good morning.

PARTICIPANTS: Good morning.

DR. TWITTY: I'd like to thank the committee for inviting us, and I want to thank them for inviting you because I think we need each other to get where we have to go, and where we have to go is along a route that will change our environment from what it is now to where we can survive.

There is an old Mexican proverb that says that it's unwise to dirty the water around you because you might have to drink it. I would like to paraphrase. It's unwise to dirty our environment because we have to live in it.

So it becomes our agenda; it must become our agenda to do something about it.

I just want to show you a couple of transparencies because I've been asked to talk about what's poisoning or what potentially can poison us.

Our drinking water; air; occupational exposure; our food; many of our so-called medicinal
drugs that are intended to help us; and then we have incidental and accidental exposures. That's all of what we are about, so that there's no one particular facet of our environment that can be considered to be free of hazardous materials that jeopardize our people.

We've all heard and we know very well that disproportionately African Americans are affected by these various hazardous materials. To what extent? Let's look at some statistics.

According to our Environmental Protection Agency, industries in the United States generate about 265 million tons of officially classified hazardous waste per year. That translates to about one ton per person.

In addition to that, there is another 40 million tons of unregulated waste that is hazardous that is produced. By far the greatest volume of hazardous waste is produced by the chemical and petroleum industries. Together they account for something like 71 percent of our hazardous materials. Another 22 percent or so can be attributed to metal refineries, and all of the other industry contribute about seven percent.

Imagine some 60 million tons, 60 million
tons of hazardous waste that enter our air and our waterways and our niches that our friends, our plants and animals, normally habitat, and that happens each year.

The General Accounting Agency has identified some 425,000 abandoned hazardous sites. Yet as late as 1990, only 1,226 of these had been recommended for Super Fund clean-up. Some 444 different toxic chemicals are associated with these abandoned sites, and if we tried to list maybe the ten top, we would look at lead. We would look at trichloroethylene, toluene, benzene, PCBs, chloroform, cadmium, chromium.

You've all heard these names. They're not new to you. We accept them. We shouldn't accept them.

If we look at what environmentalists commonly refer to as the five worst polluting chemicals, we can look at what we call total suspended particulates, sulfur oxides, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic chemicals, and what I've done is to try to show a relationship between particular kinds of pollutants and particular facilities that are most associated with producing that kind of entity.

Total suspended particulates, things that
come into our air and settle back down on our soils and in our waterways primarily as a result of industrial processes and burning of fuels, coal, wood, oil, natural gas.

Look at carbon monoxide: transportation. Some very large proportion of the pollution which the Washington metropolitan area experiences is associated with transportation. Do you have any vague idea of how many registered vehicles there are in the metropolitan Washington area? The document which has been referred to a number of times today, Unfair Share, documents some 2.8 million registered vehicles.

These are people that live in this area, and what about all of the buses, all of the school kids who come into our area on a regular basis and bring their transportation woes to us?

Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless, very, very highly toxic gas. What does it do to us? The best known involvement has to do with the fact that carbon monoxide preferentially and irreversibly binds with hemoglobin. That's the red stuff in our red blood cells that normally transports most of our oxygen. Well, if carbon monoxide is preferred to oxygen as a binding substance, as a transport substance to hemoglobin, how is it going to help us?

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This means that the very parts of our bodies that produce energy and help to regulate energy are going to be compromised, and so we can have then a whole syndrome of ill health effects that are related to the incidence of carbon monoxide in our environment.

Sulfur oxides, again, fuel consumption. These fuels inappropriately burned and contributing extra sulfur to our environment. Sure, we have natural sulfur. Anybody who has done any wetland moving about knows very well that we have sulfur in the environment naturally, but we are talking about a great increase in the amount of sulfur.

Sulfur oxides combine with water in the environment, and what do you get? That nasty stuff called sulfuric acid. It'll eat a hole in anything, and it eats a hole in most things. In the atmosphere the sulfuric acid is a part of this business of the acid rain that we have.

Look at nitrogen oxide. Again, almost equal contributions transportation-wise, stationary fuel combustion. Much like the sulfur, the nitrogen comes from burning these fuels at very, very high rates and very, very high temperatures, and again, much like the sulfur, the oxides combine with water.
You get nitric acid, which is as detrimental to living things, whether it be plant or animal, as anything else. This likewise contributes to the acidity in our rainfall, and so we plant our vegetables, and we expect them to grow, and the rains come, and what happens? The plants die.

What good are plants to us? It’s where our oxygen comes from. So if we don’t maintain our green, living things, the plants in our environment, how are we going to get our oxygen? What’s going to be our source of oxygen?

I just want to address another particular issue, and that’s one that I think many of us overlook. Indoor air pollution. How healthy is our indoor air? Not very healthy at all. Look at what we have to do. Smoking and environmental tobacco smoke, which is second-hand smoke; lead from a variety of sources. Fortunately we don’t eat, I don’t think, much canned foods anymore, particularly the canned foods with margins soldered together with lead. Radon; asbestos; formaldehyde; the insulation in our homes; the foam carpeting under our carpets; household cleaners: ammonia, chlorine, insecticides, pesticides. Sure, you spray for roaches. You use chemicals to keep down the moths so your clothes don’t
have holes in them.

You're killing yourselves. You are creating an internal environment which is far worse because we spent about 90 percent of our time indoors. We can't afford to let this continue.

Where do we need to go? We need to go to school and learn what we need to do to make our own individual environments healthy. Begin at home. We always say that. Education begins at home. Make your home a safe environment, and then step outside. Make your external environmental as healthy as you make your internal environment.

How? We've got to work together. We have a lot of work to do. We have a very short time to do it because our young people are being hurt. Your sixth graders exposed to large concentrations of lead are learning impaired. Their growth is stunted. Their nervous systems are damaged. We can't allow it to continue, and I think we're all here today to do something about it.

Thank you for having me and good luck.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Thank you, Dr. Twitty.

The comment about the role of education in the environment is a wonderful way to lead into our
next presenter. Ferial Bishop is the Administrator for the District Environmental Regulation Administration, and in that capacity she's the coordinator of environmental education and other outreach programs on behalf of the District of Columbia.

She also, like Dr. Twitty, has spent her time in the Environmental Protection Agency, working at that agency as a biologist and gaining extensive expertise in the area of toxic substances, water pollution, and research, and she has another connection with Dr. Twitty. She graduated from Howard University, as well.

Ms. Bishop.

MS. BISHOP: Thank you.

I'm just going to stand here and talk to you a little bit about what we do in my role. You heard from Dr. O'Connor, who gave us a wonderful history and explanation of what's happening in our area.

My role is one of the regulators. I am the Administrator for the Environmental Regulation Administration here in the District of Columbia. I am the one who is responsible for enforcing the environmental laws on the books.
When Congress passed over the past years — I think they are up to about 12 or 14 laws passed by Congress -- those laws went to the Environmental Protection Agency to administer, and what EPA does is then to develop national programs for the United States and outside on how they’re going to administer and implement those laws passed by Congress.

In addition to that, those same national environmental programs are passed out to the regional offices, of which there are ten in EPA, who then in turn feed it down to the states.

District of Columbia is considered a state along with the other 50 states, and therefore, we are obligated, we are mandated, and we are required to implement those laws passed by Congress. If we don’t implement those laws, we suffer the same results as any state in the union, either through sanctions, either through having their money taken away from them, or a whole host of environmental sanctions and penalties.

So when you think about the Environmental Regulation Administration, which, by the way, is housed in the Department of the Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, an odd couple, but that’s where we are, then you will note that we have the same
responsibilities for insuring that life in the District of Columbia is to the extent that we can make it a quality of life for all of us through the enforcement of all our regulations.

I'd like to say just a few words about the Environmental Regulation Administration so you will know who we are and where we are. I did say that we are part of the Department of Consumer and regulatory affairs. Years ago, long before I came, it is a fact that the District of Columbia government perhaps did not, in their infinite wisdom, see the necessity of having a department on the environment for many reasons.

Certainly back in the '70s and the '60s, the whole notion of environmental protection was not like it is today. It is my understanding that back then a lot of what we might do today used to be part of what was called Environmental Services, and then there was a reorganization in the early '80s, and a lot of that responsibility went to the Department of Public Works, and some went to the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs.

When I came in right behind the mayor, Mayor Kelly, the first thing that I noticed was that environment and housing were hooked together. It was
called at that time Housing and Environmental Regulation Administration, and I knew from my background that that was not to be.

And so the first thing that I set out to do with the permission of the director and the mayor was to separate those two. Housing is just as important as environment, and there was no way that they could have, in my opinion, had a very informative program by being together.

So the first thing we did was reorganize and realign, and in doing so we elevated the whole notion of environmental protection up a notch. So today you have the Housing Regulation Administration, and then you have the Environmental Regulation Administration.

I am hoping and praying that one day this ERA will be its own cabinet level. I think it needs to have a representation at the cabinet. It needs to be visible, and it needs to play a more important role than it perhaps is doing now.

Nevertheless, there are about 100 scientists, engineers, chemists, biologists who make up the Environmental Regulation Administration. We have three focuses that we are looking at right now.

Number one, of course, is that we are a
regulatory body who enforces the regulations within the District of Columbia.

Secondly, we are involved with environmental education and outreach.

And, third, which is a new idea coming on, is looking at environmental economic development initiatives in environmentally related jobs on the job market.

The first division that we have is the Air Resources Division. You've heard a lot talking about our air pollution. You need to be aware that we, along with Northern Virginia, Maryland, and most of the states up the Northeast, are in nonattainment status. What that means is that our air exceeds the threshold of any kind of standards that we should have, and we are working very vigorously with our northeast states to try to reduce our air pollution by a variety of ways, either through mobile sources, which is the car, impact of cars on the city; stationary sources, which would be impact of places of Pepco or our printing operations or the Capitol Hill heating plant and the like.

We have a second division which deals with water resources, and that one regulates our surface water, our groundwater, and monitors the water and the
rivers and the groundwater to make sure that they are not exceeding our standards.

Remember that when we are in the regulation business, we have to adhere to a certain standard, and therefore, the staff then goes about monitoring these various sources of pollution to insure that they are not going to exceed whatever threshold or standard that we're talking about.

A third division deals with soil resources, and I think Dr. O'Connor did a lot to explain to you about the concerns that we have vis-a-vis our land and the quality of land over here on this side of the river, which is more unstable than on the other side of the Anacostia River.

Finally, we have our fourth division that deals with pesticides, hazardous waste, underground storage tanks, and in that division, again, we are registering underground storage tanks to make sure we are on top of what does or does not leak. We are looking at generators of hazardous waste, and we are monitoring them from the cradle to the grave, if you will.

We are still in the business of allowing pesticides on the market, and that does seem like a contradictory statement, but we are in the business of

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issuing licenses to insure that companies like Terminex are, in fact — and monitoring them to make sure that they are staying within their guidelines and the requirements when they use those pesticides.

We are pushing a program called IPM or integrated pest management, which talks about alternative approaches to using chemicals as a pesticide. I would like to suggest to you to go to the drug store and buy a bottle of boric acid, just boric acid. It's on the shelf, and if you have roach problems, use boric acid. Just sprinkle it along the sides of your border of your walls and see whether it works because when you buy some of those chemicals off the market at the Hechinger's, read the label and you will discover that in some of them they do have boric acid, but you can just go and buy the boric acid yourself in a bottle and sprinkle it around, and let's see what happens. It does the same thing as an insecticide.

I need to rush on. I have not very many minutes, but I just wanted to bring to your attention the fact that we have -- there isn't a group in the District of Columbia that is vigorously enforcing the environmental laws. I like to think that we need to partner. We need to work with you. You need to work
As Dr. O'Connor says, there are lots of things that you can do on your own to protect yourselves and your neighborhoods, but there are also times when there's a need to bring in the guns, and the guns are the regulatory agencies to come in to help us and help you make certain that your neighborhoods are free from pollution.

We don't have much resources. In fact, my program is run primarily on federal grants. Right now we have about 21 grants that are sustaining this program, and the money that we get from the District of Columbia government is very small.

So with that little bit of resources, I'd like to think that the staff does a magnificent job in trying to protect you and me from our polluters and from those midnight folks that come across the border to do all of the dumping that we have.

The Anacostia River is getting cleaner. The fish are coming back. We have a fisheries management program that does research to monitor and insure that we are doing all that we can to bring the fish back in the river.

It probably still looks brown in places, and that's because of all the runoff that's running...
off into the river, but there are a lot of people; it takes a whole lot of folk to work together to try to clean up that river. That is the mayor's priority focus in the environment. It is certainly a focus of Maryland. We've got the Corps of Engineers, those folks who, on the one hand, dredged and created this problem now working with us to plant grasses along the river to bring the river back to its natural shape.

We've got the White House who's now gotten involved looking at the Anacostia River. We've got folks up on the Hill. We've got Representative Norton's bill that she introduced to try to set some of that money aside for the Anacostia watershed.

So from our vantage point, there are a lot of people who are trying to bring back the Anacostia River. I like to think that we all are working together. There are some things like combined sewer overflows that will require a lot of money, and there are some other things that will require paradigm changes, changes with us, how we treat the water and how we treat the banks along the bay, and what we do with the trash and the tires, and where do we dump the batteries.

That's a paradigm changes that we have to make and that with your help, you will go back to your
neighborhoods and talk about the other folk and how they should change their mindset on treating the environment, the neighborhood, the rivers, the streams.

I'd like to talk an awful lot more with you. Somebody tells me when you get me started, I can go on and on and on, but I am very appreciative that you asked me to come here today, and if we can talk afterwards or if you have some questions, and in the interest of time, I will stop at this moment, and just say thank you for your time because my time has lapsed.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Thank you, Ms. Bishop.

Back in December 1993, Joanna Banks, whom you may have met as you registered to come in this morning, and I attended a meeting of the National Council of Churches, and at this meeting, one of the speakers was Vice President Gore, and we had many different religious denominations represented at that meeting, and we had church.

At that same time, Vice President Gore made a commitment that the Clinton administration would pass an executive order or adopt an executive order addressing environmental justice issues.
We have with us today Robert Knox, who's the Deputy Director of the Office of Environmental Justice at the Environmental Protection Agency. He also has a Howard connection. He was a visiting professor there, and he has been with EPA for several years, previously serving as Director of the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

He holds his Master's and Bachelor's degree in environment engineering and management, combining the science with the policy making.

Mr. Knox, please.

MR. KNOX: Thank you very much.

I can see that lunch is being prepared here. So I'm going to try to be brief.

(Laughter.)

MS. BROWNE: Fifteen minutes.

MR. KNOX: Geri gave me five minutes.

(Laughter.)

MS. BISHOP: She gave me give.

(Laughter.)

MR. KNOX: Okay. Let me talk to you a little bit about our executive order. Rachelle mentioned that the executive order was signed by President Clinton on February 11th of this year, and the executive order really looks at environmental
injustice.

It says that the federal government at all levels, all agencies are starting to deal with environmental injustice, past present, and future. Now, that’s easy to say and very difficult to do, but let’s talk about it. Let’s talk about environmental injustice just very briefly.

Environmental injustice. Well, you can define environmental justice, as some people call environmental racism. Some people refer to it as equity, and sometimes it’s just called environmental justice. Essentially there’s a difference in the two, and hopefully we’re moving toward environmental justice all the time with things like the executive order.

We at one time in EPA used the term "environmental equity" and you’ll see some of the literature that we’ve given out here even has environmental equity, reducing risk in all communities. However, we changed the name. We stopped using that term because some of the people, such as Deeohn Ferris, who’s going to follow me, looked at that issue and said that environmental equity actually meant spreading pollution around equally.
MR. KNOX: That’s not exactly what we had in mind, and what we were talking about is equal environmental protection in all communities, you see.

So when the Browner administration came in, one of the first things they wanted to do was change that term and move to environmental justice because that was clear. The definition was clear, and more people understood what we were talking about.

Earlier this morning Paul talked to you about some issues, such as LULUs. I’m going to briefly tell you about LULUs and then about BANANAs. LULUs and BANANAs, that’s what this whole issue comes down to.

First of all, LULU is an acronym that standards for locally unwanted land use, and what we’re talking about there is what do you do with land when you can’t use it for anything else and when it’s in a flood plain or if it’s an industrialized area or something like that. Usually you put public housing there because you’re trying to find a place to place public housing, and you need to keep land, and invariably you’ll put it in industrialized areas.

Look at our public housing. Most of the public housing in our country is in an industrialized...
area. In fact, there's an area called the Toxic Doughnut, which had all kinds of terrible polluting industry, and it had a dump right in the middle of it, a garbage dump, and they cleaned the dump off and put public housing in, a large public housing project, and it's surrounded by -- and the people who live there, the children who live there, don't stand a chance. They stay sick most of the time, and it's just a very, very difficult situation. That's LULU.

Another LULU, you heard about lead this morning, and lead is a serious issue. Lead, in Dallas, for example, in west Dallas, they were going to build public housing, and so they were looking around, and they found a LULU, and the LULU was on the down wind side of the lead smelter, and they built this public housing project there, and so the kids who lived there are just inundated with serious problems, learning disabilities, neurological problems, brain damage, and things like that, serious problems.

The kids who live there, very few of them graduate from school. They have very low IQs, and we know that children who drop out of school invariably drop out of school because they have learning disabilities, not because they don't have the right clothes to wear and all this sort of thing.
So we know that lead — and we've known about lead, incidentally, since the days of the Romans, you see. You see, the Roman Empire came down because of lead poisoning. See, the Romans used to drink wine out of lead steins, and the acidity in the wine was breaking lead down inside, and the Romans were actually dying of lead poisoning.

So we've known about lead for a long time, and yet lead is pervasive in our environment, and we have not taken adequate steps to try to get it out, and that's one of the things that we're going to try to do, and it's very difficult to get lead out of the environment.

It's in air. It's in the soil. It's in our pipes, in our water lines, and that sort of thing, and we've used lead for years, you see, and now we're talking about it, but we've got to get lead out of our environment.

Anyway, that's another LULU. Okay. I'm going to talk to you about one final LULU here in Washington. See, what happens with LULUs is that it doesn't only occur in the environment. It occurs where you have poor people, where you have people who just economically don't have power, or — and I think the most important one is they don't have political

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power, and any time you don't have political power in our country, you get dumped on. That's where they place all of the facilities because you don't have anybody to speak for you.

So there was another LULU that was occurring here in Washington, D.C., and LULUs occur when we build highways because where does the highway construction always go? It goes then for communities, but the land is cheap, you see, and so when the Highway Administration is going to buy up land, they look for cheap land, and invariably they send communities of color over in poor communities, and so they buy up this land.

And this happens all over the country. In fact, when I was a kid, I was raised in the City of Philadelphia and during the time that highway construction was going on, and we moved three times. My father finally said, "I'm going to move next to the highway so we don't have to move again."

(Laughter.)

MR. KNOX: The only way you could get stability was by being near a highway, but, see, again, we had leaded gas. So people living near a highway, you've got the lead thrown out on you, and you've got a lead in the air and that sort of thing.
Okay. So in Washington, D.C., now you've got highway construction, and you've got 395. Where are they going to put 395? Right, of course, in Washington, D.C. They were going to connect Virginia with Maryland, and connect 95 up by a split right across Washington, D.C., and do you know what stopped it, stopped the LULU? A LULU ran into a BANANA.

(Laughter.)


This LULU that was being planned, 395, stops dead in its track where, New York and New Jersey Avenue because one person, Reverend Smallwood Williams, and Reverend Smallwood Williams said that highway is not going to go through my church. He stopped it dead in its tracks.

And that shows you that with people, when local people can get power and communities come together, they can change a LULU into a BANANA.

(Laughter.)

MR. KNOX: And that was Reverend Smallwood Williams. He changed a LULU into a BANANA, and that's what we're talking about when people organize and take charge of their communities.
And, you know, in the United States if you don’t organize and take charge of yourself -- you know, we fought the war from the British. The United States had to get strong and organize itself. Civil rights, civil rights, if we had never marched in civil rights, we would have never integrated a thing. Washington would still be a segregated society, and you wouldn’t be able to go into restaurants right now had we not organized and said, "We’re not going to tolerate it anymore. We’re going to stand. We’re going to stand still and take our civil rights," and that’s the way to do it.

The homeless people, until they get organized, they’re going to stay homeless because do you know what happens? You don’t see it, and they become invisible. Homeless people are invisible. You drive down the highway and you don’t even see them. They stand at the corner.

One time during the winter it was like four below zero in Washington, D.C. I was coming into work in the morning, and I came down South Capitol and there was a homeless guy standing at South Capitol and M Street at seven o’clock in the morning at four below zero. I’d been passing homeless people by just like most of you, but anyway, I saw this guy out there at

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that time in the morning. I went in my pocket and
gave this guy a $5 bill because I said, "You are on
your job. You’re out here in the freezing cold at
zero degrees in the morning like that." That man was
doing more work than most people were doing by staying
on his job.

But, see, homeless people are going to have
to stand up for their rights. Do you know what
happened to homeless people? They got put out on the
street. They used to be at Saint E’s. They don’t
have a place to go anymore. See, a previous
administration said -- give minutes?

(Laughter.)

MR. KNOX: Anyway, homeless people, that’s
the way you’ve got to take charge of your own life.
You’ve got to take charge of your own communities, and
when we do that, then we stand up and say, "We’re not
going to take it anymore," and people organized.

And that’s what’s happened in our country.
People have organized. They’ve got environmental
justice people. They’ve got people like Deeohn Ferris
who is going to come up and talk to you, who are
working with communities, organizing communities and
bringing communities together and saying, "Hold it.
You don’t have to have these facilities site in your

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communities."

You have to know what your laws are, and that’s what the executive order does. It makes all of the federal agencies look at what the laws are. It says that you’re going to comply with Title VI. You can’t discriminate in the use of federal funds, and you’ve got to follow certain requirements and that sort of thing.

And this administration is serious about this issue. It was brought to them by environmental activists, and they’re serious about community people. They’re listening to community people for the first time.

Who ever heard of the federal government listening to anybody? Now they’re starting to listen to community people. They’re having meetings, inviting community people to come and sit down at the table and start making decisions with the federal government. Normally decisions in the past have already been made by the time you see anything, but now they’re bringing people in at the very beginning and sitting down and saying, "Let’s start to make decisions so people can plan their lives."

If a facility is going in your community, you should make the decision about whether you want
it. Is it going to be beneficial to you? And sometimes they will be; sometimes they won't be. You've got to know what the facts are so that your own community can make decisions like that.

Let me stop here before I get kicked off.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: I spoke earlier about our scientists, our physical scientist and our health scientist being the new Kenneth Clark of the environmental justice movement, but there's one consistency in Deeohn Ferris. She has said it all.

MS. FERRIS: Just one?

MS. BROWNE: She has followed in the footsteps of many of those attorneys in the '50s and the '60s and through the '70s. She is an attorney. She started, again, with the Environmental Protection Agency.

MS. FERRIS: The graduate school.

(Laughter.)

MS. BROWNE: She spent almost eight years there serving as Director of the Special Litigation Division in the agency's Office of Enforcement. She later joined the American Insurance Association, working on liability and tort issues, such as Super Fund.
In 1992, she moved over to the National
Wildlife Federation to serve as National Director of
Environmental Quality, and then later went to the
Lawyer’s Committee for Civil Rights and launched its
environmental justice project, which culminated in a
very definitive March 1993 quorum on civil rights and
the environment, bridging the discipline.

She has now made another move since she
visited the Anacostia Museum in January when we were
first planning this forum, and she is now working with
the Washington Office on Environmental Justice or to
establish such an office where she will continue to
coordinate and facilitate grassroot access to the
public policy development process.

We could think of no better person to give
perspective on the current state of environmental
justice.

MS. FERRIS: Hi.

(Applause.)

MS. FERRIS: I’m a little restless. So I’m
going to take it to the end of the room here.

I want to commend Jim on the slide show.
It was really educational, and I’m glad to know -- and
Dr. Twitty with the health issues and Ferial. They’re
all colleagues of mine.
As you know now, my name is Deeohn Ferris. I've been practicing environmental law for a long, long time, back in the days when people told us that people of color were not interested in environmental issues. Well, they need to wake up now, don't they?

There are a lot of people of color in this room who are very interested in environmental issues, and I'm glad to see there are people of non-color here also interested in those issues.

I'm real glad to be here today. I've been living in D.C. since 1975. I came here to go to Georgetown Law School, and I knew at the time that I wanted to do something in Washington, D.C., that had to do with legislation and power broking and all those fancy things, but I didn't know quite clearly what I wanted to do in terms of career after I went through this gauntlet called law school.

I ended up selecting environmental law almost by happenstance. The only thing I knew for sure was I didn't want to be involved in a field of law wherein all the solutions were found in dusty, old law books. You see, I like to be innovative, and I like to be creative, and way back then environmental law was still a very new field, yet to be discovered that the environment pervades everything that we do,
everything that we do.

    When I say "we," I mean we ordinary people
and I mean we industry and we government and we all of
those sectors. The environment pervades it all.

    Now, as was said a few moments ago, there's
this mythology that people of color don't care about
the environment, but back 40 or 50 years ago when
people were organizing around all kinds of issues,
most particularly labor, most particularly civil
rights, there were people of color who were also
working on environmental issues, but they worked in
groups that didn't have the word "environment" in
their name.

    So as issues matured and the civil rights
movement matured and social justice movements matured
and the peace movement matured and nuclear free zones
and the labor movement matured, people of color in
these organizations started looking around and decided
that all of these issues that we've been working on,
each of them constitutes a facet of the environment.

    You see, for people of color, the
environment doesn't stop at the door of the work
place. It doesn't stop at the door of the home.
Their housing is an environmental issue. Access to
transportation is an environmental issue. Education,
economic development, fair employment, equal wages, clean air, clean water, safe homes are environmental issues for people of color.

I often like to say that bullets ought to be declared a hazardous air pollutant because for people of color, bullets are an environmental issue.

Now, this redefinition of what constitutes the word "environment" is part and parcel of what we call the environmental justice movement. The title of your conference, "Environmental Justice," I'm going to talk to you a little bit about an historical perspective, how we got where we are today.

Fundamental to this discussion is your understanding that the environment cannot solely be bees and trees. If we don’t protect the people, there also will be no bees and trees.

The environmental justice movement emerges out of a growing recognition that especially people of color and the poor are more exposed, more often, in more concentrated fashion to pollutants, environmental hazards, contaminants than other segments of the population.

Now, that doesn’t mean we’re not talking about white people and that white people are not part of this movement because, as one of my good friends,
Dr. Bob Willard, who's a noted scholar in this movement, says, if they can't find a person of color's back yard to put it in, then they go find someone poor and white.

So, the movement emerges out of this recognition that we need to protect those most jeopardized because by protecting those most jeopardized, we protect everyone.

So to what is it that we are most exposed? Triple threat, triple threat, and when I say "people of color," I mean the spectrum of people of color: Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Latinos, Native Americans, African Americans. Obviously when we're talking about Asian people and Native American people and Latino people, we're talking about a panorama of folk. There are lots of tribes of Native Americans in this country, lots of different Latino people in this country, Mexicanos, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans. Asian people, it's a nomenclature that we use, but we're talking about Korean people, Vietnamese people, Chinese people, Filipinos and on down the list. African American people I think we're pretty familiar with in this part of the world, but we're also talking about Caribbean immigrants.

So we're talking about a panorama of people
of color who are more exposed than others to the widest possible range of risks.

What kind of risks? I talked about the triple threat. The environment for us doesn't stop at the door of the work place, nor does it stop at the door of the home because people of color are most affected by occupational hazards, indoor air pollutants, and ambient contamination.

Now, what's ambient? That's the outdoor stuff. Let's start there. A recent literature review of studies dating back to 1967 shows that air, land and water, people of color are more exposed to environmental pollutants than any other segment. Regional studies, nationwide studies; we're talking about high and low level radiation. We're talking about landfills and incinerators. We're talking about pesticides, industrial operations, manufacturing facilities, water pollution, consumption of contaminated fish and wildlife because you know there are lot of people of color who fish in order to put protein on the table, put protein on the table. They don't go to Safeway. They can't afford Safeway.

So about 66, 67 -- what did I say? Probably 63, 64 -- I bounce back and forth between those numbers -- show without equivocation that anyone
driving vehicles with — it might be my car. I borrowed a car to get here. I don’t know. Is it a grey —

PARTICIPANT: It looks like a Bronco.

MS. FERRIS: AABA2P, as in Paul, B and C 118 are the tags? Okay. Nobody has that car that’s blocking people.

Okay. What did I say, 63 to 67 studies, depending on which day I’m counting, shows that without equivocation people of color are more exposed to this enormous range of hazards, but you’re in the minority.

"Minority" is a word I don’t use. I don’t apply it to myself. I am not a minority.

But you’re in the minority supposedly in the nation. Nevertheless you’re more exposed. That’s the ambient stuff.

Another curious thing about those studies, more important than income, race correlates as the most significant predictor in Los Estados Unidos as to who is going to be exposed and when and how often, which is more often than anybody else.

Let’s turn for a moment to occupational hazards. You know, we were talking about the triple threat. Occupational hazards, the National Institute
of Occupational Safety and Health tells you that people of color are more often located in the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration tells you that 100,000 people of color die every year as a result of occupational related exposures.

Let's take a little micro view of occupational hazards, and let's look at farm workers. Farm workers in this country are 95 percent Latino and African Americans, 95 percent. How many years did it take EPA to come out with worker protection rules, Bob?

MR. KNOX: Twelve years.

MS. FERRIS: Twelve?

PARTICIPANT: It took a hell of a long time.


Up to 1,000 of those, and these are estimates, die every year as a result of those illnesses. The farm workers tell us, by the way, that that rule that EPA took 12 years to promulgate isn't
very protective. Farm workers have been defined as a
disposable segment of our population, sort of just
like some of you in this room.

So let's go to indoor. I don't want to
spend a lot of time on indoor because Dr. Twitty did
such a wonderful job with it. Let's just say that for
the sake of having something to say about it --

(Laughter.)

MS. FERRIS: -- that lead poisoning is
irreversible. So we have more African American
children in this country lead poisoned, and we're
wondering what's going on with our kids today.

And, by the way, I talk about race
correlating more significantly than income. It does
so, too, with lead. Black middle class people will be
just as lead poisoned as poor. So let's not think of
this solely as a class issue. Just because you might
get a job does not mean you ain't going to be
poisoned.

People like to make this a class issue, and
in some cases it is very much a matter of poverty, but
it is also very much a matter of discrimination and
racism, and if we don't deal with the root, and
difficult as it is to deal with our word, we're not
going to solve any of these problems.
So this environmental justice movement revolves around these things I'm talking about. There was an event that occurred back in the early '80s that people like to point to as the galvanizing event in the environmental justice movement, the event that really spurred the growth and the burgeoning movement of the movement.

The event occurred in the early 1980s in a place called Warren County, North Carolina, and there was a woman there who overheard or found out as women often do, because, you know, women are the bedrock of this movement, that the government was trying to do something in her community that she didn't think was a very comfortable thought.

Now, learned that the government and this private company were trying to site this thing called a polychlorinated biphenyl landfill in her community, literally almost in her backyard, and she didn't know what polychlorinated biphenyl meant, but she figured it's got to be bad. So she started to do some investigation.

As a result of her investigation, she encouraged activism, marches, protests, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and at the time some pretty interesting people joined her because

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they, too, decided that it was time to start dealing with some of these environmental issues under the traditional nomenclature of environment, and she was joined by then D.C. Delegate Walter Fauntroy and Dr. Reverend, Reverend Dr. Ben Chavis, who is now Executive Director of the NAACP, and other notables who came down and marched with her and were summarily arrested.

As a result of his arrest, Walter Fauntroy commissioned the General Accounting Office study of the placement of landfills in the South, and this 1983 GAO report found without question, even based on status of majority-minority, that is, more white people than black people in the South, that it was definitely a fact that if you were black, you had a whole lot better chance of living next to a landfill in the South than if you were white.

That was the first sort of public study that was done on disproportionate impact, environmental injustice, environmental racism, whatever you prefer to call it.

As a result of that study and his activism around these issues, Ben, who was then Executive Director of the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice, commissioned a national study to
corroborate those results. The United Church of Christ, working with activists around the country who were doing this environmental stuff, pulled together in October of 1991 a four-day, five-day conference, and in your packet are the results, some of the results, of that conference.

The first national people of color environmental leadership summit convened, magnetized activists from all over the United States, principally people of color because the environmental justice movement is very much a people of color led movement. I will state once again for the record that doesn’t mean white people aren’t in the movement, but people of color are taking control of their own agenda and devising their own solutions to the problem that government and industry don’t apparently seem to be able to solve and in many cases are creating or exacerbating.

Six, 700 people convened in Washington, D.C., October 24th through the 27th in 1991, and forged the principles of environmental justice, this blue document in your packet. The charge at the summit to each delegate who attended was to return home and build the movement from the bottom up, not top down, from the bottom up. It is a grassroots,
community based, people of color led movement.

What makes it so strong is that it builds on movements that have succeeded in the past. It has learned the best, this movement, from movements that haven’t succeeded so well. It’s multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-regional, and multi-issue. It’s also international because we understand that what goes on in this country is not confined within our national borders. It moves beyond. We have global relationships, and people of color around the world are also victimized by majoritarian, as it were, conduct.

I’m getting the high sign in the back. So I’ll wind up by saying this. It is the urgency of the movement that has caused government to respond. Before environmental justice activists decided that there was going to be an executive order, it wasn’t on the agenda. Before environmental justice activists demanded their human rights to safe, clean, and healthy environment, nobody paid attention.

It is my cause to be here today -- obviously you’re interested in what you’re doing -- to connect with people in this movement. United we stand. There are similar strategies to be employed here as have been employed around the nation,
strengths to be drawn from the strong around the nation. Reach out, keep up the good work, follow the advice of all the speakers before me.

Thank you for allowing me to be here, and next year I want to see 500 people, and I want --

(Laughter and applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Before we break up for lunch, I would like to acknowledge the elected representatives to the Board of Education of Ward 8 and also the President of the Board, Linda Moody.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Would you like to say a word to the group before we break for lunch?

MS. MOODY: Well, I just want to say good morning to you. I’m going to tell you I’m not the usual politician or elected official because I don’t like intruding on someone else’s program. So I’m glad to have been able to sit here with you for a while to learn something also from this session.

And since you have allowed me to speak, I just want to say that the school system also is concerned about the environmental issues. Our students participate in clean-up. We have environmental programs in our schools, and I conduct a ward-wide tour, six per year, to let our children
see the good things that are going on in our ward to, in essence, help them understand that we have to keep clean ourselves as well.

So I want to thank you for this opportunity just to speak and say good morning to you because I think we as elected officials have to respect other people’s events, and so I just want to thank you and say good morning and hope you have a very pleasant conference.

(Applause.)

MS. BROWNE: Okay. We want to get you out promptly at the time we promised this afternoon. So if you would get your lunch, take a little break, and come back, and we’ll convene in about 15 or 20 minutes.

(Whereupon, at 12:20 p.m., the conference was recessed for lunch, to reconvene at 12:40 p.m., the same day.)
MR. BANKS: Thank you very much, Mr. Butler.

You know, a lot of strange things happen to me, including a few months ago I came up to this church and saw the lady who was the secretary to the minister, and she and I were in kindergarten together, and she's standing right here.

(Laughter and simultaneous conversation.)

MR. BANKS: But that was a long, long time ago because I was born in 1920.

(Laughter.)

MR. BANKS: But when I was invited to speak to you today I said to my wife, "That's strange." I said, "I don't know anything about environmental factors."

And she said, "Well, maybe you ought to ask."

And I said, "Well, I'll try to find out," but the more I listened this morning, the more I understand the breadth of the definition of environment and the relationships between the various environmental factors, some of which are physical, some social, and some economic.
And what I decided to try to do this afternoon is to give you a profile of what life was like during my childhood and early adulthood in this area, with specific emphasis on description of the environmental forces at play, and then to continue with a description of those forces today under perspective of the work that I am trying to do with the Anacostia-Congress Heights partnership.

Seventy-four years ago this area was predominantly rural. Most of the housing was single family, free standing. Most folks had lots, some of them small, but some of them large enough to raise cows and chickens and pigs and a few horses, and almost everybody had a garden.

It was a strictly segregated community. The area where we now sit was principally black all the way down to the river, and on the north and on the south there were white communities, and there was very little in the way of intermingling.

Well, the community was principally poor. It had some people who had opportunities for education. So we had a few professionals. We had a pharmacist who ran the drug store down on Martin Luther King Avenue. It was called Nichols Avenue then. We had a few school teachers. We had two
lawyers. My father had finished law school in 1911, and my mother actually went to Teachers Normal School. I guess she graduated about 1915 or something like that.

So we had a special arrangement in our family. I lived in a block between Morris Road and Stanton Road west of Pomeroy Road, where there were three houses that my family lived in. My father's father owned a house next to us, and around the corner his brother lived, and his sister lived with his mother, and we all went to the same John (inaudible) Church, which was basically across the street, and this is where everything happened that was important, whether it was a social affair, a religious affair, or a family affair.

But we were not atypical. Most of the people in the community were related in some way or other or knew each other well. So it wasn't a place where you could really misbehave without everybody knowing it, and the crime rate for this 11th precinct, which is what it was, was the lowest in the city for many, many years.

Now, the employment for most folks was unskilled. Most of the men were laborers. Most of the women who worked were domestics. A lot of women
didn’t work, but as I said, there were a sprinkling of
people who did professional or semi-professional work.

There was a structure. The institutions
were of the community. I’ll just give you this as an
example. The principal of the school when I went
there was a man named John Syphax. He didn’t live
here. On Sunday afternoon at St. John’s Church, we
had what was called (inaudible), which was a young
people’s gathering to talk about issues that concerned
us. This was back in the ’20s and ’30s, and John
Syphax came to that church Sunday evening at six
o’clock to attend the meeting of these young people.
It was extraordinary really. Sometimes he had to come
on a streetcar. We didn’t have buses at that time.
He did have a car, but he’d come on a streetcar, and
the streetcar ended down on Martin Luther King Avenue,
on Nichols Avenue, where the old Anacostia Museum used
to be, where the theater is, and so anybody who came
on the streetcar had to walk wherever it was, whether
it was up here on Alabama Avenue or anywhere in
between.

But he used to come regularly, and I
remember it so well because I was giving a report one
evening. I guess I was about ten or 11 years old, and
after the meeting he came up to me and he said,
"Thanks for that good report." He said, "But never, never say 'more better.'"

(Laughter.)

MR. BANKS: And I have never forgotten it.

(Laughter.)

MR. BANKS: Over the years, in addition to that, this was a community which because of its hilly terrain had a number of trees, a lot of brush, and a lot of wild berries growing, blueberries and blackberries and some raspberries, and one of the things that we used to do as kids was pick those berries and sell them for ten cents a quart, which was pretty good money for us because at that time you could get in the movies for ten cents or 15 cents at the most.

In addition to that, there were so many trees growing, we used to cut our Christmas trees around in the neighborhood, and that didn’t seem to cause any problems because everybody did it, and it was property which people owned who lived there, and they agreed.

But when World War II came a number of changes came, and I’m going to describe those to you in just a minute to show you how different our community became.
We all know about the river. When I was growing up the river was an important place to go. There was a park down along the river at the time which was well attended by everybody in the neighborhood. Fishing was done frequently by many of the residents, and at that time probably the fish were more important than they are today in terms of helping with the family’s budget.

Swimming was not publicly discouraged because the water was clean. It was discouraged by many parents, including mine, because every year somebody drowned. Every year somebody drowned in that Anacostia River trying to swim.

And the bridge, we only had one bridge at that time, was the 11th Street bridge, and it was a wooden bridge in the early days, a wooden bridge which supported the streetcar crossing, if you can believe that, but so you could feel the vibration rattling as the cars came across.

But socially, it was a safe and secure community, impoverished, but not anguished, if you know what I mean, and then comes World War II. We have a lot of vacant land out here. World War II brought a lot of people to Washington who worked in the war effort. There was a serious housing shortage,
and Anacostia was a prime target for people to build housing, this new housing that the government was going to support.

But something else had happened. During the '30s, some of the families that owned land here lost it because they weren't able to keep up with the real estate taxes, and some of the people who bought it got the District government to zone the land R-5A, which meant that you could only build garden type apartments. You could build no single family houses, not even a row house. It wasn't permitted.

That's why we have a community which is primarily rental, 80 percent. But in addition to that, because, as the gentleman said earlier, because the land was cheap, it was land that was sought after or sold for public housing. So we have eight public housing developments out there.

But that's not the whole story because around those eight public housing developments, there are a number of privately owned, subsidized developments. Now, when the subsidy first started, it went pretty much like the requirement was that there not be more than 20 percent subsidized, and the rest of the tenants had to be market rent.

But something else happened. Because of so
many low income families living together and so many problems which were intense and so many people from all over the city representing government and private organizations giving services, so to speak, there was always -- and I have to emphasize "always giving services" -- not helping people to help themselves, but giving services, some with no promise or no promise in the minds of the giver that the receiver had any chance to do anything but to receive.

Now, that's an environmental factor that I think we ought to spend some time talking about because we had what I would call an environment of dependence as a consequence of both the clustering and isolation of so many low income families together, and then the domination of those communities by so-called service givers.

And what had happened was the community that I knew when I was a youngster disappeared because when your life is dominated by people who give you the very basics that you require to survive, your food and your housing and your clothing, you pretty much do what they say or else. You have to tow the line, so to speak. We never talk about that much when we talk about people getting welfare, but you have to tow the line.
I mean you tow the line, and you are not your own man or woman, and there are a number of people in this community today who have been the victims of that environment, and I'm proud to tell you one thing. We've been working here. I've been working here with an organization with Ms. Murray and Ms. Hawkins, and a lot of other people have been working, too, for the last four years, and when we first started working here in 1990, Ward 8 had the highest crime rate in the city. Ward 8 had the highest crime rate in the city, crime associated with the isolation and posturing of large numbers of impoverished people together, and the same kind of data applies to other sections of this city that has that kind of arrangements of families.

But I want to tell you something. All is not lost, and I don't think we ought to ever give up, and I'm glad to see all of these people here today interested in changing the environment because I found out something Thursday, Ms. Murray, at our partnership meeting. What would you guess the standing is of Ward 8 in terms of crime in this city compared with the other wards in the city? Anybody got a guess?

PARTICIPANTS: Third.

MR. BANKS: Ward 8 is the second from the
lowest ward in this city.

(Applause.)

MR. BANKS: That comes directly from the police chief and Inspector Robinson. Now, that means that folks here have begun to know that in spite of the denied opportunities, in spite of the environmental forces which have been theirs for years and years and years, that when they put their hands together and their brains together and people like Reverend Chambers get active and start doing things, changes do come about, and they come about broadly.

There's a synergy to it because when folks see somebody doing something that's good, they begin to think they can do something good, too, and I'm glad to say that I have been a witness to change.

And I think that we can change our social and economic environment just like we can change our physical environment, and physically, I'm glad to say that a part of this whole arrangement has been something called the Earth Conservation Corps, which was started down on the Anacostia River a few years ago.

They went down to Beaver Dam to clean it up because some people had been taking advantage of the fact that the officialdom wasn't looking and had
dumped thousands and thousands of discarded tires down there, and Earth Conservation Corps went down and cleaned it up, and it's now a clean part of that river.

A lot more has to be done, but that part of it was done.

Now, because this is an isolated area and we have dependency, we still have some problems. One of the environmental problems that we have of significance is there is a good deal of illegal dumping, illegal dumping in this neighborhood, and many of those dumping are coming from outside of the city.

Now, I think we can bond together. We can form our orange hats or whatever we want to call them and communicate with each other and catch these folks and get our city council to put the kind of penalties on them that will stop them once they’re caught and they’ll never do it again because the penalties will be too high.

So I’m glad you invited me here today because I think that my perspective is a perspective of social justice in environmental forces, and I hope that we will keep our hands together and our heads together, both to pray and to work, because both are
necessary.

Thank you.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

MS. JONES: Good afternoon.

I have some housekeeping tasks. I know housekeeping tasks come from a book, but I picked up and had to take back -- and there's some more of them that are out, and they would like for you to bring them back. They don't belong to us. They have to go back. They have a blue stamp on them. Please give them to Julia. Julia is in the grey sweater, if you will, please. Thank you.

Good afternoon, and as she said, my name is Theresa Howard Jones, and I'm the moderator for this afternoon.

One of the things that caused me to think about it, a young lady asked me how did I get involved in this, and I remember going back in and it was really 1959 when the city had planned to put an incinerator in our back yard over at 20th and Stanton Terrace, and I belonged to the civic association for this area, which was the Garfield Heights Civic Association, and Sterling Carroll said, "We have to fight that thing out of here."
Now, that was when the city was basically quiet, and I am a Washingtonian, and I don't think I'm a rare breed. There's a whole lot of us around here, and you can find us if you look.

Well, we protested that and went over to what is now the Fort Totten incinerator and dump, and I felt sorry for those people over there, but the city put it there. I don't think they raised their forces against it, and even if they had, the city would have planned and nobody listened. People listen somewhat more now, but of course, it's always a fight.

And then I jumped over some years as I had done some things, but I remember when the Wilburn Mews housing first came about, and we said to the zoning board, "They can't build without treating the land," and I went over to agriculture with Absolon Jordan and we got all this information and all these books, and we gave testimony to say, no, you can't put those townhouses up there without treating the land.

And Walter Lewis, who is now dead, great mentor of mine, always plucking my memory and provoking my thinking, he said, "Are you a soil expert?" He was the chair of the board of zoning.

And I said, "No, but the government is," because I had this book, and this book is put out by

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the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

He didn't buy any of that. So what I did was I took myself down to the treatment plant into a class for ten days that taught me about the soil. Well, the next time I went before the board of zoning and Walter said, "Are you a soil expert?" and I said, "Half way, but, yes, I am."

(Laughter.)

MS. JONES: And I told him that I had been to this class, but that was incident to the official records, and we did make some headway.

So I looked at those two things, and then I've been in and out of environmental issues, and of course, in the town meetings I'm always talking about how the government allows the pollution of land with all kinds of things, noise, trash, pollution, air pollution, water pollution, and I always bring these things up, and sometimes I sound like a broken record, I said, but I'm right. So, therefore, the record is broken in the right place.

(Laughter.)

MS. JONES: And I think that we have to keep these issues in front of us. We have to keep our actions in front of us, and we have to go get the government's documents, as well as the private
sector’s documents, and use and quote and say these are the things that pertain to us, and this is what will make this kind of activity stop.

And I’m happy today to see so many people here, and I’m happy today that we can do this in Ward 8, and I’m just happy that environmentalists came together to say something to the powers that are, to say, "Save us, save our children, save a tree, save a lawn, save anything that’s going to be beneficial to our environment, and leave the earth here for generations to come."

We’re going to have a little change in our lineup of the panel, and we’re going to call on Evan Vallianatos -- am I saying that right?

MR. VALLIANATOS: Vallianatos.

MS. JONES: Vallianatos, who is a professor/lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the American University and a program analyst at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and he is going to give us a spiel today that will be beneficial to all of us that we can take back to our communities, neighborhoods, friends and foes alike.

Evan Vallianatos.

MR. VALLIANATOS: Thank you very much.

The discussion this morning was obviously...
focusing on domestic environment, and this is particularly affecting this community, and I'm afraid I have to report to you that what's happening on the global level is not any better. In fact, I would say it is pretty much identical.

Whether you talk about water or whether you talk about the air or you talk about the economic and colonial dependence that Mr. Banks alluded to and Paul Ruffins alluded to, this is on a global scale, so to speak.

This disaster started in 1492 when the Europeans through Columbus discovered, so-called discovered, America, and from 1492 to now, a little bit over 400 years, more or less, we have had this continued kind of colonialism of peoples by the Europeans. They colonized them by force, of course, and then by religion, and in the 20th Century the colonialism continues, of course, in a different level, a far more sophisticated level.

So that you are creating unfortunately a mono-culture that is one kind of idea, one philosophy that says we know how to go about resolving economic problems. We know how to go about resolving all sorts of other problems, tough problems, education and so on, and that kind of model of development has been so
distracting unfortunately so that you have right now
Africa, 30 years after so-called independence, that is
actually worse today than it was in the '60s.

You have problems in Brazil, for instance,
where the rain forest -- we have the largest section
of trees in America in one spot, so to speak, and that
development model of the Europeans is pretty much a
white community, a model of development. You have
massive deforestation, the destruction of the people,
the indigenous people, the American Indians, there,
and you have the spread of disease and the spread of
all sorts of horrendous problems.

In early '92, I managed to go to Brazil for
a national conference, and I visited that space that
is the Amazon. I don't pretend to know very much
about it, but the fact that I was there, it made a
difference to my life.

You not only have the canopy of trees, but
you have this fantastic system of rivers and the
fantastic system of plants and animals, all coexisting
together. What I did not see unfortunately is that
you don't see very many Indians. You don't see very
many indigenous people left in the Amazon. Most of
them like the American Indians in North America have
been pretty much taken off where they were, and they
have been put in a place of concentration, or to put it in a little bit more gentler way, they are in reservations, and they have become completely dependent.

This is the sort of development model that is actually causing the environmental problems. For instance, if you look at Africa, Asia, and Latin America and put them together, and you look at the kind of technical assistance that they’re supposed to be receiving, the amount of money they’re receiving, the amount of money they are receiving is less, the amount of money that actually leaves these continents. So you have the impoverishment of Africa. Africa today sends more money out than it receives in technical assistance.

And you have international organizations like the World Bank and IMF and other major banks that continue to demand that they get paid for the loans that some of the nasty, corrupt governments of those places did before like the '60s and continue to do, so that the impoverished Africas have to pay the interest, much less the original money that they borrowed.

And it is this kind of colonial understanding, I think, that explains the

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environmental problems because it's that model that pretty much continues to be transferred everywhere, from universities to every place we go.

The problems that we are trying to resolve today in this neighborhood, for instance, have a global repercussion. The good part about all of this, of course, is that you have people like you all over, in Brazil, in Nigeria, in everywhere. Everywhere you go there are no large organizations. They are small groups that actually are fighting to resolve some of these problems.

And an example of what these nonprofit organizations or these people without power can do, it was the 1992 Rio Conference in Brazil when the agrarian nations put up this conference on environment development, and you had a fantastic group of people from all over the world that got together. In fact, they signed their own agreements and conventions in contrast to the official agreements and conventions that were signed by the governments.

And in those NGO conferences or conventions, you see ideas like sustainability, sustainable development. You hear the ideas of, for instance, agrarian reform, land reform. You talk about sustainable communities, how people can actually
end the pollution of their lives and the pollution of the environment.

In contrast, if you compare those agreements with the official conventions and agreements, you have, you know, both kinds of perspectives that by the year 2000 we’re going to slow down the export of hazardous waste, for instance, from the United States to places in Africa. By the year 2000 we’re going to diminish the amount of chemicals that we allow into the environment to destroy the ozone layer, and you have promises like this. They’re absolutely formal promises, and perhaps they are social, but I think in the long term in terms of finding solutions for problems, it’s people like you that really will make a difference.

It’s the nongovernmental organizations in Africa and Asia and Latin America that can get together, and they understand the impact of the environment on their lives because, like some people said today, the environment is not just a kind of physical environment. It is the biological species. The environment is the whole social and biological involvement that we actually are trying to make a living, and unless we protect the biological environment, we can’t protect the social environment.
and vice versa. There is a complete dependence between the two.

For instance, right now, another example of this kind of horror story is going on in Eastern Europe and Russia. Remember the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991, and as a result of that, they decided to go capitalist. So it was after that that you have typical companies that run into Russia or what is Russia that used to be the Soviet Union, like jackals on a victim that’s actually died.

For instance, in Siberia and the far eastern part of Russia, you have an area that is the size of the entire United States, and that is about one billion hectares of forest still intact, some of which has been destroyed, but for the most part is intact. So you have American companies, like Warehouser, and you have companies from South Korea, companies even from North Korea, companies from Japan, of course, that have been going there and they make all sorts of corrupt deals with the local former communist officials, and they begin to export the trees just like they exported from Northern California.

I taught a year in Northern California, and my students and I saw some of this clearly. By clear
cut I mean you have this vicinity that complete wipes out everything that lives in that territory, and if you should look at it from an airplane, it looks like somebody actually bombed the place.

This is the official way of actually saying that they manage the forest. When you talk about forest management, that’s exactly what they mean. They’re going to clear-cut, and all of these problems are going on in Russia at this moment as we speak.

Russia, because of its system of government before the change, they have irradiated practically the whole country. That is, in the development of nuclear bombs and the development of nuclear weapons, they had to test those weapons so that the country has been irradiated. You have places like Kazakhstan, which is a huge country. It’s an Asian country, and they’re trying to do something about it right now. They are in charge a little bit of the Caspian Sea. They have the Aral Sea, and both seas, which are huge bodies of clean water, they are practically dead, not dead, but pretty much because they were used for the dumping of all sorts of waste, and they put all of the petrochemical industries around the seas so that all of the effluents ended up into the water.

Now, for instance, we are trying to
understand the magnitude of those problems and help them, but at the same time, I don't think there is a real honest appraisal of all these past errors or past misjudgments or past bad developments to say: if that model of development didn't work, what is the alternative?

They are not really looking at, for instance, the wisdom and the knowledge of people like indigenous peoples in the Amazon or in North America, for that matter, or anywhere else and say: if we do agriculture this way and we have contaminated the soil and the land and now our food and our water, what is the alternative to that?

In the United States, we have a few problems that deal with the reduction of the poisons that are used to grow food, but I don't think they go far enough really to replace the toxic system that we have in place because that's the toxic system that has been in place around the globe, and it's contaminating everything on the environment.

And it seems to me if you cannot have clean water and clean food, then I don't know what is there.

But in contrast to that, as I said before, the local people, in particular, the local organizations, actually are moving slowly, gradually,
without much resources, just like the NGOs in this community I presume don’t have much money. They get together on occasions like this, and they talk about it, and they promote ideas like sustainable agriculture or organic farming and a system of growing food without a dependence on chemicals, and that way also the farming is not dependent on outsiders, so that you have a self-reliant community.

The environment begins to heal itself if you give it a chance, and then slowly you have the reemergence again of democratic institutions. Because remember we have to have diversity in nature, as well as diversity in societies, and if one diversity gets smashed because of the prevalence of one idea, one culture, then you have an imbalance in the biological environment.

So that you have to have biological diversity and human diversity. They both are interdependent. They both create the whole idea of sustainability, and sustainability is the only hope that we have really to recreate some kind of a system of both social and political institutions that will help the earth to heal itself, and perhaps that way we can understand and get results for some of the other major problems that arise out of racism, out of class
inequality, and so on.

And the idea of environmental justice that was stressed so much this morning, it’s really very valid, and it has, again, also global kinds of dimensions because you have Africans who are black, you have Asians who are not white. They themselves face the same problems that you face in this community.

You have the export of hazardous waste, the export of the dangerous industries that go to these places, and then you have the export from those communities of the best things that they have, like bananas and agricultural crops, coffee and everything else. They come to the people that have the money to purchase them.

So you have the same kind of arrangements that are going on in this community. You have more money going out than more money coming in, and the kind of dependence that I think is nothing but another form of colonialism, and this is the understanding that we have to have really to resolve the problem.

It’s not just accidental that things are as they are. Mr. Banks, I think, gave a very interesting and illuminating lecture on the history of this area, and he demonstrated how these colonial forces began to
dominate this area from the time of racism down to
today, the official racism of today, and it is this
kind of perspective of historical events that we have
to have in order to really resolve any of the global
problems.

So I hope this is what I have to say, and
I thank you for inviting me to be here.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: Thank you, and we're glad that
we invited you and glad that you could come.

I'd like to introduce the Reverend Anthony
Motley, who is my neighbor and a good friend of mine.
Anthony J. Motley is the co-organizer of the
Redemption Ministry and Evangelistic Outreach Ministry
located in the Congress Heights section of Southeast
Washington. Reverend Anthony Motley's many community
and civic activities range from his ministry to
persons living with AIDS to his work on behalf of the
Coalition of the Homeless has won him national and
local recognition.

Reverend Motley came to me a while back and
asked about this environmental conference here today,
and I told him, yes, I was interested, and, yes, I
would agree, and of course, the museum would not let
me renege on that.
I'd like to introduce the Reverend Anthony Motley that we call Tony.

REV. MOTLEY: I want to first give honor to God for I know that if it wasn't for God in my life I wouldn't be sitting here looking at you and you looking at me. Thank my friend and mentor and sister, Theresa Jones, for that introduction, and thank the museum for inviting me to be a part of this discussion, Mr. Newsome, who is a dear friend -- we go back years -- as well as Ms. Banks.

To my panelists that I'm sitting here with, it truly is good to sit in such company and to also hear the international implications of the environmental problem as it has been shared by the professor.

In 1983, I started a program in Congress Heights called the Summer Academic Program, which reached out to young people ages ten to 16, and the theme that we had from June 27th through August 19th of 1983 was "Speculations of Nature and the Environmental Motions and Conditions of Man."

Some people thought that that was a little bit too progressive, and some folks even laughed at us for even attempting to take young kids and share with them the problems associated with the environment, and

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especially the environment that they lived in, the conditions of community life.

And during that course of time -- it was about an eight-week period -- these young children did environmental air testing, quality testing. They would take stockings from their mothers and other guardians, and they would like build a little screen and put it in the yard, and then they would go back and check for the air quality, and then we would analyze it not in terms of some type of elaborate scientific process, but just on site looking at it and looking at what this stocking gathered in just from sitting there in the yard.

They also went around and took pictures of the environment that they lived in, and they compiled a document that they, in turn, sent to the city council person at that time and stressed the importance of the need to fix the infrastructure, the streets, the curbs. These things were in environmental conditions that impacted negatively on their growth and development, and they saw that, and they shared with the powers that be.

They also did some writing on the environmental issues in our community, and they looked at the impact of the airport being right across the
river from where we live and its impact on the noise
environment of our community, and they even visited
the airport, and for many of them it was the first
time.

And so I'm very pleased to be a part of
this discussion. I think it's long, long overdue, and
I come now as a minister who, when we set out to do
this project back in '83, we identified churches that
we sent this proposal to to say to them, "Help us to
make this a reality in the lives of these children,"
and we got no response from the religious community
because environment was not an issue at that time, and
they had not the foresight to see that it was
necessary to enhance the quality of live
environmentally, as well as socially and politically,
economically and educationally, as well as, you know,
dealing with what these children were faced with on a
day-to-day basis.

As we begin to dialogue on the issues
pertaining to and related to the environment, i.e.,
the water and air quality, trash, toxic dumps, I would
also think that we would look at the housing
conditions, crime, drugs, violence in the community,
and especially in the context of God's creation and
our responsibility to it as God's creation.

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We've been created by the Creator, and we must also, as we embark upon this historical dialogue, take into account that it was on the backs of African Americans that this country was, in fact, built, and that we, in turn, tilled and planted harvest on the farms and plantations of this country, in the fields, and our blood has been shed for the ideals of freedom, for this democratic society, as well as now our blood is running down the streets of America's cities and into the gutters which are filled with despair, the lack of economic opportunities, inadequate and affordable housing, and the tears of our mothers who have lost daughters and sons are running in the streets now, and the infrastructure is deteriorating before our eyes, and the educational program that our young people are exposed to lacks some basic understanding and teachings concerning the world in which we live and our role and our responsibility to this world and to one another.

Now, when we think about theology, one of the things that we must put into perspective is that it's not something that is beyond our reach. The thought of theology is not something that's beyond our ability to articulate it. It's simply a talk about God and where does God, in fact, fit in our lives.
According to a young man that wrote a book called *Churches in Struggle*, Norman Fong, he said in the chapter on theology emerging out of community that theology is first and foremost a theology for and with a community. It must be rooted in a people’s story, giving direction for and with that community.

James Cohn, who is an African American theologian from Union Theological Seminary in New York, in his book *A Black Theology of Liberation*, says that theology ceases to be a theology of the Gospel when it fails to arise out of the community of the oppressed.

Now, these two thoughts have led me to conclude that there cannot be a succinct, effective, and comprehensive strategy or approach arising out of this forum or any other forum to address the environmental issues confronting our communities without first having a body politic that creates in us a predisposition, a predetermined attitude, a well thought out and critically analyzed approach agreed to and accepted by those of us who, first, realize that a common denominator or common ground which is based on the theology must first of all be accountable to God.

And so it cannot be accountable to one
another, each other. It has to be first accountable to God, and therefore, once we establish that as the common threat, the common denominator, then we can function in the term of or in the sense of community and do what is in the best interests of the earth and what God has created.

For in Genesis 1:28, it says God delegated responsibility to humankind for taking care of the earth, and it says, and I quote, "Then God blessed them and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth,'" unquote.

God did not tell us to destroy the earth or to abuse all living things on the earth. No, what God wanted us to do was to be responsible stewards of his blessings, take care of what He has given us.

Now, we have not done such a good job. Now, while we are discussing the way things look, that is, the aesthetics of our communities and the potential hazards of toxic dumps, lead paint, trash dumps, and the like, I would like for us to take into consideration a school of thought that doesn't receive the kind of attention I believe it ought to and the type of responses that it should in order for our
children, because they are our future, to survive in a time when they are confronted with a dichotomy that begs some close, very close observation and analysis.

The fact that our children are faced with so many social, economic, educational, psychological, and spiritual problems, and that they are constantly being deprived of some basic cultural, environmental, physical, and emotional stimuli necessary to help mold them into productive human beings is an area that needs our attention.

We can talk all we want to about the toxic waste, and we can talk about the acid rain, and we can talk about the ozone layer being destroyed. We can talk about the water pollution, but it is necessary for us to look at the correlation between IQ, job acquisition and performance, genetic development, cognitive skills, SAT scores, and environmental conditions.

Now, we must look at these things in order to help our children to compete in and make a wholesome and significant contribution to society. Finally, given that the District of Columbia has become, quote, unquote, the worst in terms of environmental quality among U.S. cities according to the Environmental Almanac, and compared with 50
states, the District of Columbia ranked dead last in each of ten categories considered indicators of the environment in which children lived, i.e., violent deaths, idle teens, high school graduates, violent crime, poverty, teenage parenthood, et cetera; and moreover, that the District's most heavily African American neighborhoods also are its most polluted by cars, illegal dumping, leaking oil, sewer overflows, and other contamination, according to a report on race and the city's environment, the church must -- and it is emphatic that the church -- that institution that has been historically the place where the oppressed people of the world have come to receive enlightenment and come to be relieved of their burdens and come to seek liberation and freedom; the church, that religious institution that sits on just about every corner in our community, the one that sometimes the doors are open and sometimes the doors are not.

The church, the place where our people seek to find answers to some of the most perplexing problems that they are faced with today; the church must become once again the institution in the center of a community or neighborhood wherein we can begin to address the issues such as environmental concerns and justice.

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If we are to begin the process of determining the direction to address these issues, then the church must be willing to respond and help to lay out the agenda for the communities’ redress of those matters that have overly compromised the quality of life and endangered yet another generation.

And so I thank you and thank you for your patience and understanding. God bless you.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: Thank you, Reverend Motley, and I’m happy that you talked about the young people because the next person on our panel to speak, I went over and introduced myself to her, and I hugged her because I was saying to myself, "Where are the young people in here?"

And I also saw someone brought some very young people who can benefit from a gathering like this, but I spoke to Ms. Rona Carter who is a senior student at the University of the District of Columbia, and she has organized extensively through the United States as a volunteer within the grassroots communities, mostly on youth leadership training and environmental justice issues.

I give you Ms. Rona Carter.

(Applause.)
MS. CARTER: Thank you for letting me be a part of this panel.

I come to you as a board member of the Student Environmental Action Coalition and also as an active member of the People of Color Caucus, and let me just go on to kind of explain what SEAC is, which is the acronym for the Student Environmental Action Coalition.

It's a grassroots coalition of youth and student groups in the country who are concerned about social and environmental justice issues and have mobilized together to create SEAC, and through this united concern, we have over 2,000 student and high school groups in our coalition, representing over 50,000 students in this country.

Young people are becoming increasingly aware and concerned about our environmental issues because I think we realize that we will inherit the legacies of today's political and economic choices that are being made, and I think that as we sit here today, there are over 2,000 high school students at a high school strategy session in Champaign, Illinois, strategizing on an environmental agenda for this next school year.

But I think as in all movements that we
have today, there are a lack of students in the movement, but also a lack of people of color, which again, I'm involved in the People of Color Caucus.

Now, within SEAC in 1990, young activists came together, people of color, to create the caucus to address the marginalization of people of color in the environmental student movement, and we have come very far in that we have a lot of environmental programs designed for students of color. We have a lot of environmental youth leadership training. We currently have a Sustainable California Youth Project in California.

And, again, SEAC is led and organized by students. We have no -- nothing against adults --

(Laughter.)

MS. CARTER: -- we have no adults or older people, should I say, in leading roles in SEAC. It's student organized and student led, and you know, this new environmental justice initiative which includes the Sustainable California Youth Project is a national effort of people of color, youth and students, people of color across the country to begin to educate and train a lot of young people whose doors have basically been closed on environmental issues and understanding what it is and how and why it's so important to get
involved at this point.

And I think that, again, in D.C. we'll be having the environmental justice initiative in the fall. We'll be getting students from the D.C. high schools to get involved in the initiative. It's a mentoring and leader trainership process, but I would like to reiterate what the Reverend has said, that we must begin at first before we can begin to learn or really expect to understand what the environmental justice movement is; we have to begin at the root causes of why they're lack in that.

We have to begin with their lack of understanding what racism is and how that plays a role in their everyday lives and why, you know, within the environmental justice movement racism plays a major role in that, and that process will begin in the fall so that we can begin to build leaders and applicants of people of color to become leaders in this movement as has been lacking since it's kind of come out.

Again, we are not the only ones; SEAC is not the only one involved in this student environmental justice movement. We have students groups across the country. We have the Latinos and African Americans who call themselves Toxic Avengers, and they go in their communities, and they're fighting
against hazardous waste issues.

We have indigenous youth in the Indigenous Environmental Network who are battling indigenous issues and religious freedom rights, and we have also international students within our network. It’s ASEED, an acronym meaning Action for Solidarity, Environmental Equity, and Development, which includes 62 countries of international students who have mobilized and come together to deal with race, population, policy, and development, and sustainable economy.

And we actually were very successful at the Earth Summit in 1992 in bringing over 2,000 students there and having them represented on the U.N. board, representing ASEED.

So this is again to say that students are involved in this movement. We’re forcing our way in there, but we’re getting involved, and we’re trying to open the door for those who aren’t, who aren’t getting involved or those who are kind of closed-minded or not really attuned to the issue.

My statement is brief. Basically that’s what I wanted to say here. Again, thank you for letting me come and speak with you.

(Appause.)
MS. JONES: I'd like to say, Ms. Carter, that we're glad to have you here and we're glad that you came.

The next person on our panel I went over and introduced myself to him and indicated that I read his Anacostia Watershed newsletter, which is very informative. I do take it to work, had it with me today, but I left it on the seat of the car, but this past issue had a lot of information in it, and people who would like to read that paper ought to tell him that and get it and read it because there's a lot of information in that and things that you can use in your own neighborhood.

His name is Robert E. Boone. He is the Executive Director of the Anacostia Watershed Society and co-founder and president and CEO of a unique, citizen-based conservation society whose primary focus is to, quote, clean the water, recover the shores, and honor the heritage of the Anacostia Watershed.

I give you Mr. Boone.

(Appause.)

MR. BOONE: Well, first of all, I'd like everyone to stand up a minute and break the spell of taking a nap after lunch. Take a deep breath. Thank you.
Second of all, I’d like to express my appreciation for this event happening and for the sponsor Smithsonian putting this on, and there’s got to be more of these. We just can’t wait until next year at this time to have one of these. We’ve got to have one in Ward 6, one in Ward 5, one in Ward 7. It’s critical that these sorts of meetings happen because there’s not enough people in these communities taking care of their communities. They just don’t have the information. They are not aware of what’s going on. They’re not aware of the plans that are being made behind their backs about their community.

And I’m here to bring a message, and I’m not concerned about how you think about me or what the color of my skin is. I’ve got a critical message here I want to deliver, and it’s a message that we should take to heart and we should take to our friends and neighbors who live in this part of town because there’s some bad business happening.

But before I get to all of that, I just want to give you a little prologue of what we’ve been up to in the last five years. I’m sorry I didn’t bring slides, but I get carried away when I get into slides. So I just brought these.

This is what’s happening on the banks of
the river of the Anacostia. Imagine this in your front yard. Well, this is the front yard of the Anacostia community, that river, and this is what you see there after a good rain storm.

And what are our good governments doing about it?

PARTICIPANT: Nothing.

MR. BOONE: Nothing.

Well, now the D.C. government did get a good grant from the EPA, and it put up some trash booms, and that did work for a while, but they ran out of funds, and so that was the end of that.

But the irony is that much of this trash doesn't even come from D.C. More than half of it is coming out of Maryland, and what are the Maryland governments doing about it?

PARTICIPANTS: Nothing.

MR. BOONE: Nothing.

We've been hounding on them for a good while to do something about that, and we are making some slow progress, but it's really slow.

This group, the Anacostia Watershed Society, has removed about 80 tons of trash off of the river, 80 tons, and we hope to be out of that business soon. There are low cost solutions to the problem,
and one of them that the D.C. Public Works Department
developed was putting the trash booms up to collect
the trash, but they've got to be put up way up in the
tributaries.

Now, there are some stuff coming down from
Watts Branch and Hickey Run and other tributaries in
the District, but all of the tributaries need to be
done.

We were talking. Mr. Banks, he's left, but
he mentioned this psychological environment of
dependence. Well, I feel like this trashed river is
exerting this oozy psychological pall over the whole
community. You go to a school and you look out the
window and you see the trashed river. What kind of
message does that deliver to the kids? We can't play
here because the community doesn't care enough to
clean this area up. This is the dump.

And they see other kids going to beautiful
rivers and enjoying it. What kind of subtle message
are we sending to the young people? We don't care.
We don't care about this community. We don't care
about this river. We just don't give a damn. That's
really the strong message that's being sent.

I read a Chesapeake Bay report. They were
doing a survey of the fish out in the Potomac here in
Washington. The water was clear. You look down six feet. A school of fish were swimming by. You could see them there, and they were digging up the sediments to look and see what kind of micro invertebrates were there in the sediment.

Then they moved over to the Anacostia. They dug up some sediment from the Anacostia that had a oozy, foily smell to it. The fish they caught had tumors on them. So this is just an excellent example of what's really going on between the two communities here in Washington.

But as Jim pointed out, the river is getting somewhat better. The sediments on the bottom aren't, but some of the water quality is improving, but at the same time that there's millions of dollars being spent on government programs or other programs to clean up the river, there's other parts of the government that are pushing as hard as they can to destroy the parkland along the river and to put in this super highway right in the middle of town, this Barney Circle Freeway.

This community is down wind from that. This community is going to suffer more than any other from the impacts of Barney Circle. This community is not responding to this issue.

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I just got word from a Senate subcommittee
the mayor is sending her people over there to Congress
saying there’s very little opposition to the Barney
Circle Freeway, very little. That’s the word that
Congress is getting about the project.

Well, we’re going to bring a different
message, but we need more people who live here in this
community saying, "We don’t want it. We don’t need
it. It’s just a negative. It’s a very big deficit to
the health of everyone here and the children of the
next generation."

That’s what got me into this river clean¬
up, my son. I wanted to have a place so that I didn’t
have to drive 500 miles to and fro to have a clean
place to show him how I fit and how we all fit within
a bigger context that’s not manmade. It’s natural.
It’s made from the spirit, from God, and you don’t
find that in the city. Everything you experience in
the city is manmade or most of it, and so we get the
idea, well, we can make it; we can break it; we can do
anything we want to, but it’s all right. But that’s
not the case when you get out into the natural
environment. You learn you’re a part of an
interdependent net.

So that’s the frame of reference we have,

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and this river is really a delightful experience. We’ve just acquired eight canoes, and we start our canoe trips from Bladensburg right here. I’m sorry if you can’t see this. The District line is running right along here. So you see most of the Anacostia River is in the District, but there’s two miles that’s in Maryland, and we take kids and put them in canoes, not only kids; big kids, too; put them in canoes here and we go down the river, and you can go all the way down to Benning Road and not see a single manmade structure. It’s an incredibly beautiful trip.

There’s more bird wildlife in this area than any other part of Washington, and this is the Aquatic Gardens here where the Corps just spent what was it, $2 million restoring weapons here? And they’re going to do some more work in Kingman Lake. It’s a super area here for doing what I said, bringing young people to teach them there’s something bigger to life than a Chevrolet.

(Laughter.)

MR. BOONE: There’s something more to life than a parking lot or housing, you know, and this is going to be an excellent place to do that.

If you have a group and you want to do this, take them down the river, get in contact with me
and we’ll set it up.

And there’s the National Arboretum. It’s our nation’s garden spot. There are some incredibly -- you know, there are some plants in there that cost more than my car did. They’ve imported them from China. There’s an Asia valley that comes right down at the Anacostia River. It’s incredibly beautiful there.

And then you go down to Children’s Island. Children’s Island has been a sore point. That’s the reason we have it in red here. Fifty acres of prime property right in the middle of Washington, D.C., and what does the present administration want to do with it? They want to give it to a developer, charge $12 a head to go and look at these phoney crystal palace, look at fish in aquarium, and other just really low class events on Children’s Island.

We would like to have Children’s Island as a nature center, a free park, preserve it like C&O Canal is, like Rock Creek Park. That was the original intent of the designers of this city. Rock Creek Park was an upland park, and Anacostia was going to be an aquatic park. We want to see that vision become a reality, and that’s what we’re about.

We are fighting real hard now. The mayor
wants to put the Barney Circle Freeway that’s going to
go right through here, both sides of the river, and
hook up this Kenilworth with Southeast-Southwest. She
wants to develop Children’s Island. This is her jobs
program. She wants to break up the furniture and burn
it to stay warm.

(Laughter.)

MR. BOONE: We’re selling the next
generation’s inheritance for a few lousy, low class
jobs in a construction that, you know, maybe last two
years. Nobody’s going to buy a house with that kind
of job, but if you preserve this land we and the next
generations will have a beautiful place to enjoy,
equally as fine as anything else in this city.

And, in fact, this region right here is
going to be one of the most attractive nature areas in
the whole entire Eastern Seaboard. You’ve got a
beautiful urban area with the national Mall here, this
area here, and Fort Meade up here. That’s a 20 mile
bike ride from the Mall to Fort Meade, and it’s just
going to be a really delightful place to live and to
see nature not far from home.

So I highly encourage this group to offer
this experience to more people who live in this area
because this is the place we learn what’s going on in

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our neighborhood. We're not learning from the government. We're not learning from TV.

We had these clean-ups, as you saw. The media doesn't come out for that. Although it's dumping in the community, it's not very exciting. We've had more than 80 of these clean-ups involving thousands of volunteers, but you don't hear about it in the paper.

But we're not doing it to get in the paper, but it's important that it gets in the paper because it gets into people's minds, and you know, coming over here today, Alabama Avenue, the litter strewn on the sides of the streets. It just gave me a creepy feeling. It's an indicator of community pride, and it's time. You know, it's time to organize and say, "We can no longer tolerate this."

You know, the Kingman Park community, we work in the Kingman Park community real closely, and do you know what? We work together, and Jack Kent Cook ain't there anymore. The new stadium isn't happening there, and the reason that's not happening, the Kingman Park community and environmental groups got together. We put our color aside. We put all of this other stuff aside, and we got down to this, and we educated the people in the community, even some of
them who had season's tickets. They came on our side because we took the time to describe it to them and tell them about the impacts of the new stadium, which they already knew from the old stadium, and we got together, and we blocked that stadium.

But it took everybody being informed, and that's the reason I'm asking that these kinds of meetings happen more often, because it's through these kinds of information meetings that people learn the truth about what's going on.

So that's what I've got to say and I thank you for this opportunity.

(Applause.)

MS. JONES: Thank you. We thank you for coming.

Our next speak is also a neighbor of mine, a friend of mine, a long time friend of mine. I'm a friend of her father's, okay, is Kemi Morten, Esquire; is a Southeast Washington, D.C., resident who graduated from the D.C. public schools before earning a Bachelor's degree from the University of San Francisco, and a law degree from the University of California at Berkeley.

And I'd like to say this because I like to give a lot of encouragement to women lawyers who
understand what the issues are, and not that the men
don't understand the issues, but they understand them
from another point of view.

(Laughter.)

MS. JONES: What I'm saying is -- what I'm
saying is, having been an advocate for the poor and in
the low income community and also part of that and a
former public housing tenant, we didn't make any
progress until we had some women lawyers who said,
"Well, I know about raising children."

The men were saying the same thing, but
they were saying something else about raising
children, and we were talking about nurturing children
in the environment, in a clean environment, and we
were saying things like that. So finally the men did
come to our side.

I must give some credit to Reverend
Lipscomb because no matter what we asked him to do --
he's the pastor of this church -- what we asked him to
do when this was a little, bitty historical church
sitting on this site, he came to help us. Even if he
didn't agree with us, he came to help us, and
sometimes he put us on the right track, and we put him
on the right track.

(Laughter.)
MS. JONES: So I am saying that I give a lot of encouragement, lots and lots of encouragement to anybody, but I do put some emphasis on young black women lawyers and Kemi Morten is one of those, and she’s one of our own from here in Anacostia, and I give you Kemi Morten.

(Applause.)

MS. MORTEN: Thank you. Good afternoon, family.

I’ll tell you I’m very, very pleased to have been invited to speak today, and I really wish that we could go around before this is over and just find out who’s here because I know everyone in this room has a lot to say about this issue, and I think we should meet next month, same time and same place.

(Laughter.)

MS. MORTEN: Or you can meet in our place. We can rotate it.

I’m with the Ward 8 Citizens for Environmental Justice, and I just wanted to ask: how many of you know about the plans by the FAA to build a 90 foot, 95 foot tall radar tower at the corner of South Capitol and Martin Luther King? Please raise your hands.

Okay. Ninety-five feet tall where it’s...
going to have a facilities building. It’s going to have a huge underground fuel tank, and it’s going to be located on parkland that has been used for years in this community by the neighbors. We would play softball. Theresa, I know you know we’d have picnics over there. I think it’s I’d say about eight or nine acres of parkland, beautiful parkland in the middle of a residential community.

I found out about it because Unfoldment, which is the organization that I work with, is situated right next door to the site. We have three acres of land, and our neighbors, the U.S. Park Service, have nine, and they’re reluctant conspirators in this, I must say, co-conspirators. I think they’re kind of being forced along by the politics, but they really don’t want the tower to be there.

When I saw the scaffolding going up two months ago to actually construct it, I mean I just freaked out, and I called our ANC commissioner, Calvin Lockridge and Mary Cochran and some others, and they sprang right into action, and we called the meeting of Unfoldment. I showed them the scaffolding. We formed the Ward 8 Citizens for Environmental Justice, and our membership is open. You can call us at (202) 561-2992, (202) 561-2992. We’ve only had one meeting, but
that was a powerful meeting because we called Congresswoman Norton’s office, and she came to our meeting. Well, she didn’t come, but she sent Alma Henderson, and we named our group. We created our letterhead. We came up with a phone number and a fax number, and that’s all we’ve done. We don’t even have a mission statement, and one week later the scaffolding came down. Isn’t that great?

(Applause.)

MS. MORTEN: But that’s not the end of it because what they’re going to do -- I’ve gotten a letter dated May 20th to Ms. Norton, a copy of a letter -- the Federal Aviation Administration proposes to locate an airport surveillance Radar 9 tower in the vicinity of South Capitol Street and Martin Luther King, and they’re going to have another hearing within the next 60 days.

Now, the problem is they had a hearing on October 10th, 1992, and February 5th, 1994, but nobody knew about it. We only received less than a week’s notice of the February 5th, ’94, meeting, and I don’t think any of us received notice of the October 10th, and at the hearing we weren’t given any information about the structure. We were just told that it was coming.
And there are other sites that are more appropriate for this tower. It's presently at Crystal City, and they're saying that the buildings are too tall at Crystal City, and Crystal City has overgrown this tower, and so it's going to have to be moved, but it could be put at Bolling Air Force Base. It could be put at National Airport. There are a whole lot of places it could be put rather than the heart of our residential community, taking away parkland from our children.

So I am here on behalf of the Ward 8 Citizens for Environmental Justice to urge all of you to join our organization and to help us defeat this permanently.

Now, the Washington Post people came out last week, and sometimes, you know, when you get a call from the Washington Post -- and I know you know it, Theresa -- sometimes you don't even want to return the call because you don't know what the story is going to wind up saying.

(Laughter.)

MS. MORTEN: And when I took them over to the site, we had to hike through the woods to show the reporter the site, and he said, "Well, could you hike through the woods again and show the photographer and
take a picture, maybe preferably of little children
who would be deprived of this area?"

Well, the woods have grown up now and you
can’t even use the area for a park anymore unless it’s
cleared, but we hiked through the second time, and we
took pictures, and there’s going to be an article they
said coming out, but none of that really means
anything, except as a lawyer I have volunteered, as I
told the Washington Post reporter, to file a lawsuit
and to get a team of lawyers together to help us file
a lawsuit if necessary to prevent the construction of
this radar tower in our community.

But we’re going to need your help, and I
think we don’t even have to go as far as a lawsuit if
we get all of your help in this room to make calls and
come to the meeting and get involved with us. I think
we as a people can defeat this outside of the courts.
So I’m here to ask for your help and to ask you to
join our organization and give us your genius and your
ideas and let’s get this tower out of our community.

Thank you very much.

(Appause.)

MS. JONES: Thank you, Kemi.

And as far as the tower is concerned, I
wrote a letter, and I told them that we’d walk in
front of bulldozers, and I don’t know whether you’d
like to do that.

MS. MORTEN: That’s right. That’s right.

MS. JONES: I’ve done that before.

MS. MORTEN: We will walk in front of
bulldozers.

MS. JONES: Because the tower is not what
we want. We want that to be an environment where
children are nurtured, as I said before. That’s the
way I think children ought to be.

I’d like to thank our panel. I thought you
were great. I think everybody in this room is great,
and this is the end of this section of the program.

(Whereupon, a short recess was taken.)

REV. CHAMBERS: I’m going to be very short.

I’m serving for Brenda Richardson’s
absence, but the concerns I have this afternoon are as
a result of going into a meeting focus group at the
museum that dealt with environment. As a clergy
person in Ward 8, I find myself to be one of those
persons who are speaking up who really had no
awareness of the toxic dumps, the waste, the quality
of air that was in Ward 8. After sitting, listening
to the meeting, I became very concerned because I
think all clergy persons are concerned about the

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welfare of the parishioners, residents.

One of the things that I'm going to offer this afternoon at the table is that this should be a consortium of groups in Ward 8 primarily that deal with environment issues. It appears that a lot of people are doing a lot of things, but we're all out on various wings, and I think that one of the answers to that is to bring a consortium together that not only would bring about an umbrella group, but also bring about an advocacy group.

There would be no need for the citizens of Ward 8 -- and there is a need, but had there existed a consortium which would have been on target, then the emergency need for this citizens group -- the group would have been in place, and what I'm suggesting in Ward 8 is that we come together and bring all of the pieces together because what I understand as the clergy here is that not only are we talking about environment issues, but we're also talking about a great development that's getting ready to hit Anacostia.

And I think that many of us are asleep. Many of us don't understand that the Metro is there for great development, that the Highland Washington Heights Apartments are there, and there's a group

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meeting constantly for the purposes of developing that whole piece and doing away with the public housing and everything else in that environment.

So I think we really need a group that will be involved in ongoing, day-by-day activity in terms of dealing with the issues that are hitting us in Ward 8, and that group must be a group that's totally staffed, funded, executive director, because I personally feel that if that does not happen, we're revisiting Southwest; we're revisiting Georgetown.

The other that I offer, after listening to the discussion, is that in public housing that is set up having focus groups and museums, that maybe we want to go into public housing and meet with the people right where they are and make them aware. Begin the education piece with them right in their setting.

PARTICIPANT: Amen.

(Applause.)

REV. CHAMBERS: We sit in this room today, and I'm sure all of you are experts, most of you, most of you.

(Laughter.)

REV. CHAMBERS: But I'm sure that the folk who are in the public housing environment, many of them aren't aware. They know nothing about the
quality of air, the toxic waste. I did not know until three weeks ago when I went to CVS -- is that right?

PARTICIPANTS: Yes.

REV. CHAMBERS: Drug Store. I did not know that God's toxic dump was behind the drug store. People are shopping there every day. I did not know that. I wasn't aware of that.

So I think what we need to do in order to help the people is to go into the environment and then to impact it. I would like to see us in Ward 8, maybe out of this consortium, begin a clean-up process, begin to move automobiles, clean the environment, and even in public schools. You know, kids go into dirty schools, then they go to dirty homes, then they go to dirty streets. So if we're going to really impact this situation, I would hope that we would start in our neighborhoods beginning to clean up the streets, bringing to bear on the Honorable, most distinguished former mayor, Mr. Barry, that we need to do something in Ward 8 and clean this total environment.

And then the other idea is relevant to churches and pastors. I don't know, Reverend Motley. You've done an excellent job, and I'm sure pastors were invited today. Possibly ten, 15 pastors were invited today. I'm not sure that they see this piece

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as critical, and it's due primarily to, again, the lack of education.

But I think that a means, a method, some mobilization can come about to bring about pastoral involvement. There's hope. There's got to be hope, and I think that once they understand this through an education piece that they would participate.

The reason I'm here today is because I understood in the focus group the danger, the need, and so I came. I'm sure that other pastors really have a real feeling for this, especially in Ward 8, those I speak of, that they will join us at the table. So don't give up. I just think we need to find a model, find a means, find an organization to bring them to the table and give to them the same education and we received today.

I know that that can happen. The final piece that I bring to the table, Mr. Banks spoke of the dumping, the illegal dumping in Anacostia. That needs to be addressed in an immediate way, and I think that that can happen possibly through some mobilization, some monitoring of your organizations, your groups that will set up a reporting system, and we can identify these people who are coming in, have a system by which we can report them, and make them be
held accountable for their actions.

Those are the items that I deduce from this meeting today, and I trust that it will be helpful, and maybe we can put them in place.

(Applause.)

(Whereupon, at 2:50 p.m., the meeting was concluded.)
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript in the matter of: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND CONCERNS EAST OF THE ANACOSTIA RIVER: JUSTICE OR JUST US?

Before: SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Date: JUNE 18, 1994

Place: WASHINGTON, D.C.

represents the full and complete proceedings of the aforementioned matter, as reported and reduced to typewriting.

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