


# Environmental Justice in Chicago's Little Village. Asthma Capital of Chicago?





Only when the last tree is  
cut, only when the last river is  
polluted, only when  
the last fish is caught, will they  
realize that you can't eat money

- Cree Proverb



# What is Environmental Justice?

- Environmental justice aims to obtain protection from environmental hazards for all regardless of race and income

(Bullard: 2001)

- Environmental justice is “based on the assumption that if environmental injustice exists then a statistically significant positive relationship should be evident between some measure of race and some measure of an environmental harm when all other explanations are held constant”

(Lester: 2001)

# Beginnings of Environmental Justice Movement

- Colonialism
- United Farm Workers fight Pesticides/DDT
- Love Canal
- Warren County, North Carolina



Dolores Huerta, Co-Founder  
United Farm Workers

(Cole&Foster: 2001)

# Warren County

- PCB Landfill
- 69% non-white
- 20% below federal poverty level
- 1982 Protests\*. 500 arrests



\*Scholars and activists have identified this as the birth of a National Environmental Justice Movement. (Bullard, Robert; Wright, Beverly;; Mohai, Paul; Bryant, Bunyan; Morello-Frosch, Rachel; Pastor, Manuel.)

# Warren County

- Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of Region 4. Findings: Disproportionate impacts on African American Community.
- \$25 million spent to clean up Warren County
- Scholars begin to examine Environmental Injustice Patterns at a National Level

(Mohai and Bryant: 1992)

# The Michigan Conference



- The Need for Dialogue and Discussion
- Dr. Paul Mohai and Dr. Bunyan Bryant (SNRE)
- Conference on Race and Incidence of Environmental Hazards (1990)
- 9 out of 12 scholars of color
- Memo to EPA and DHHS

(Mohai and Bryant: 1992)



# Spearheading Action

- EPA Administrator William Reilly meets with Scholars (December 1990)
- Working Group on EJ created through EPA
- Office of Environmental Equity created (later changed to Office of Environmental Justice) EPA



(Mohai and Bryant: 1992; Cole and Fisher: 2001)



# 1st National People of Color Environmental Leadership Conference

- Scholars and Activists
- Over 650 participants  
(Washington, D.C.)
- 17 Principles of Environmental Justice

# Executive Order 12898

- On February 11, 1994, President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. This executive order requires all federal agencies to:
- Make achieving environmental justice part of their mission.
- Foster non-discrimination in federal programs that impact human health or the environment
- Give minorities and low-income communities greater opportunities for public participation in, and access to public information on, matters relating to human health and environment.

Executive Order 12898

[www.archives.gov/federal-register/executiveorders/pdf/12898.pdf](http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executiveorders/pdf/12898.pdf)





# EJ and in Academia

- Who gets what, why, and how much?
- How can this be remedied?
- How can we establish equity?
- What is equity?

(Bullard: 2001)



# EJ in Academia

- Procedural Equity
- Social Equity
- Geographic Equity

(Bullard 2001)





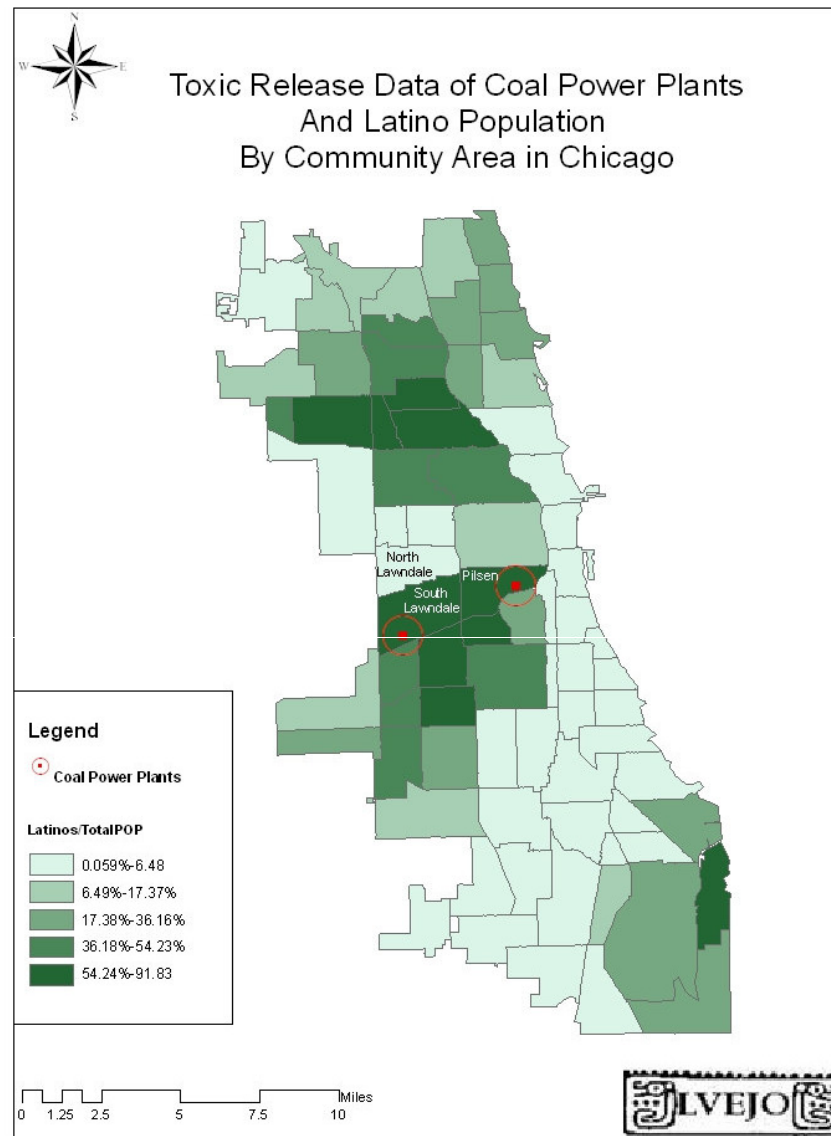


# Little Village

- **Over 90,000 Residents**
- **98% Mexican-American**
- **Over 50% Under age of 21**

(US Census 2000)

# Little Village



(Becerra et. al: 2009)

# Our Health

- 49 premature deaths
- 500 emergency room visits
- 2,500 asthma attacks per year

(Levy: 2002)

- Crawford and Fisk Coal Plants cost public up to \$1 billion since 2002.

(ELPC: 2010)



# Our Health

- 7,300 cases of acute bronchitis
- 97,000 cases of upper and lower respiratory symptoms
- 51,000 cases of aggravated asthma
- 350,000 days when people miss work or school
- 2 million days when people must restrict their activities because of particle pollution related symptoms

(ELPC: 2010).

## What does this have to do with economics?

- Externalities
- Our **living** economies
- We need to move towards **sustainability**
- Keep fossil fuels **in the ground**

# Solutions

- Wind Energy
- Solar Energy
- Chicago Clean Power Ordinance




Exelon Solar Panels  
Chicago Southwest side  
Pullman neighborhood



# Beyond

- EPA regulatory power on Green House Gasses
- Strong Climate Bill
- Strong International Climate Policy
- Rio+20
- Knowledge is power: Educate, Educate, Educate!



We do not need any more “accords” we need concrete policy with a time line and we must follow it.