



## COMMUNITY COALITION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Summer 2005

Volume 11, Issue 1

### FOURTH ANNUAL CONFERENCE CONTINUES CCEJ TRADITION OF SPIRITED MOVEMENT BUILDING

CCEJ STAFF ARTICLE: YALONDA SINDÉ, KATE VILLARREAL, NATE MOXLEY, HOLLY UNGER AND VIRGINIA SURUDA

On May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005, individuals from throughout the Northwest with several guests from across the nation gathered at CCEJ's fourth annual Community Based Solutions for Environmental & Economic Justice Conference held at the University of Washington Magnuson Health Sciences Center.

CCEJ holds the conference each year to provide a space for indigenous people and people of color in the northwest to educate students, researchers, community members, media, health and regulatory agency staff, religious leaders and others about the environmental and economic justice issues they are facing as well as their goals and strategies.

In the words of one conference participant: *"This conference is so necessary in this region, I get to meet so many people from different walks of life, concerned about the same issues. This event connects us all together"*.

Highlights included the speeches given by keynotes Carrie Dann and Owens Wiwa, and the presentations on a host of issues including, redeveloping contaminated land, African Americans and jobs, the struggle to save public housing at Yesler Terrace, indigenous environmental issues, farm workers issues, and global economic justice. The conference closed with a panel of women talking about creative resistance to the current political system. Youth played a major role with CCEJ's Environmental Justice Youth Advocates (EJYA) Seattle Young People's Project and Wilderness Inner City Leadership Develop presenting.

A Western Shoshone grandmother and living legend of Native American advocacy, Carrie Dann drove home a message of strength and determi-



*CCEJ staff from left, Nate Moxley, Holly Unger, Kate Villarreal and Virginia Suruda applaud the speakers at the event attended by more than 200 people.*

nation as she spoke at the conference in the midst of her grief due to the sudden death of her beloved sister Mary Dann, who passed away on Earth Day April 22, 2005. Carrie and Mary Dann were at the forefront of the Western Shoshone Nation's struggle for cultural, spiritual, and land rights. The Dannels have squared off against international gold mining corporations, the nuclear industry and the U.S. government. Mary Dann's life was honored with drumming and song, which provided a respectful opening for the conference. Moved by the outpour of honor, Carrie responded: *"I appreciate all the love that has been shown for my sister, she has gone to the after world...I will continue to fight in her honor"*. She ended her speech by calling on the audience to support the struggle for environmental justice for future generations. For more info about the Western Shoshone Defense Project, go to: <http://www.wsdp.org>.

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Dr. Owens Wiwa's afternoon keynote address gave a call to action, urging conference attendees to tell Shell Oil to get out of Ogoniland, Nigeria. His message: *"We survived the slave trade, we survived colonization, but will we survive globalization?"*

Wiwa, a Nigerian activist, has been working against Shell Oil's environmental destruction and violence in the Ogoni community for many years. Dr. Wiwa opened his keynote address by stating that the story of the Ogoni, his people in Nigeria, is a story applicable to any community in Africa that has a resource wanted by the West. The "ethnic conflicts" in Nigeria and in Africa always occur where transnational corporations operate, he said.

Dr. Wiwa gave some economic and social background on Nigeria, outlining how the World Bank keeps Nigeria in debt. The Niger Delta has abundant oil resources, 60% of it is consumed by the United States which equates only 10% of what the US consumes. So far, Shell Oil has extracted \$30 million worth of oil from the Niger Delta, without care for the environment or Ogoni community. For these reasons, Dr. Wiwa noted, we must see the connection between our personal and national oil consumption in relation to Nigeria.

He spoke about his late brother, slain leader, writer, and poet, Ken Saro-Wiwa who along with members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, mobilized thousands of Ogoni to protest Shell Oil. Dr. Wiwa urged us to write to Shell Oil Corp by going to Shell's website: <http://www.shell.com/home/Framework?siteId=us-en>, and after clicking on the "Tell Shell" page, tell Shell Oil that Owens Wiwa said to stop polluting the Niger Delta and to stop killing people.

For more information, read [The Politics of Bones](#), a book that details what Shell has done to communities and activists in Nigeria.

Behind the Scenes:

This year's conference ran smoothly behind the scenes, thanks in large part to our volunteer coordinator, Holly Unger. CCEJ volunteers and board members did a great job at handling their duties and hung in there until the end. Our hats are off to the participants that stayed for the entire day. It was a long day that was rewarded with a song and blessing from Elmer Makua, a member of the CCEJ NEEJA project .

*Thanks to all of the people that made this years conference a success. **Conference proceedings are available upon request.***

## DIRECT ACTION DELIVERS YESLER TERRACE SUPPORTERS TO SHA DIRECTOR'S FRONT DOOR

BY: CHRIS HARTSON, CCEJ VOLUNTEER

On May 28th CCEJ coalesced with 50 young social justice organizers from across the country through Youth Action and Seattle Young People's Project (SYPP)- to march directly to the source of problems for public housing residents in Seattle: the home of Tom Tierney, director of the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA). As the head of SHA, Tierney leads the organization responsible for displacing hundreds of low-income residents in Seattle. By "redeveloping" public housing, destroying existing units and making the new housing units more expensive, Tierney's SHA effectively kicks people out of their homes who can't afford the higher rent. The purpose of this peaceful and powerful direct action at Tierney's home was a tactic to make him listen to voices from communities that are harmed by his agency, specifically residents of Seattle's oldest

*The peaceful protest was held in front of Tom Tierney's Mt. Baker home.*



public housing project, Yesler Terrace.

Direct action is a community organizing strategy where people go directly to the source of their problems --to the person who has the power to change what needs to be changed. Direct action

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is often taken after other tactics have not worked, such as going through "official" channels, voting, or marching downtown.

The Yesler Terrace Community Council (YTC) voted last winter against an emergency shelter. Tierney and SHA then convened their own meeting ignoring the results of the council's vote, saying "The decision rests with me." This act illustrated that it was time to try new tactics within the Yesler Terrace Campaign.

Once a year the national group, Youth Action (YA), holds a conference attended by young community organizers from around the United States. Each year, YA takes direct action to support a local campaign in the community where they meet.

New Mexico based YA organizer Robert Martinez worked closely with CCEJ organizer Kate Villarreal for three weeks prior to coordinate event logistics. YTC members KL Shannon and Naomi Finkelstein along with SYPP's Cryshawna Mills provided crucial support.

At Tierney's home we said, "this is our voice, the voice of young people all over the country, the voice of poor people, the voice of immigrants, indigenous people, and people of color. If you won't listen to us in your meetings or bureaucracies, you will hear us in your home." We sang and chanted and danced. We handed out information sheets about the Seattle Housing Authority to curious neighbors. Naomi Finklestein, YTC Council president, and Kate Villarreal, CCEJ organizer for the YTC, went to Tierney's door to ask why he had been pressuring Councilmember Tom Rasmussen to stall on the promised community brown bag lunch on the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace.

Though Tierney was not home, the event was a success in that we informed his neighbors of the needs of low-income housing residents and most importantly Rasmussen began to consider the brown bag lunch seriously. Look for the "Speaking Truth to Power" article on page 10.

*Chris Hartson is a dedicated member and volunteer with YTC and has put many miles in participating in door knocking events. Thanks Chris!*

## OVER 200 YESLER TERRACE RESIDENTS DECLARE "NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US!"

BY: KATE VILLARREAL

Loud chants of "No net loss!" resonated across 5 languages on March 29<sup>th</sup> in a packed auditorium at the new Yesler Terrace Community Center. A standing room only crowd of roughly 250 Yesler Terrace residents and community members congregated with CCEJ on a cloudy Tuesday evening to rally in support of public housing. The principal message of the night was "leave us alone" as attendees took a united stand to oppose any redevelopment project at Yesler Terrace by Seattle Housing Authority that would result in the displacement of its tenants.

Residents and community members shared food provided by CCEJ and sat in small groups with interpreters present. Emcee Juan Jose Bocanegra of the Yesler Terrace Coalition and Every Worker's Movement guided the evening's events with precision and humor. The event kicked off with the premiere of Pepperspray Production's documentary film NOTHING ABOUT US, WITHOUT US. The fifteen-minute short chronicles the

Yesler Terrace Coalition campaign starting with a press conference stand-off between Coalition members and SHA director Tom Tierney and concluding with in-depth resident interviews in English and Vietnamese.

Applause thundered through the building as the film concluded and CCEJ director Yalonda Sinde took the stage to outline federal budget cuts and spell out how redevelopment financially benefits SHA while leaving poor folks with fewer housing options and less support systems.

Representatives of the Yesler Terrace Community Council, Jerry Marchea and Naomi Finkelstein followed up with rousing speeches that had the crowd cheering for more. Amid the claps and chants following her talk, resident Ruqiyua Abdi (known in the community as "Mama") was inspired to go onstage and conveyed in Somali and English via an interpreter "Down with rich people! and Viva  
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More than 200 community members and organizers attended the meeting facilitated by CCEJ at the Yesler Terrace Community Center.



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Yesler Terrace!" to a lively audience that echoed her sentiments.

Following Mrs. Abdi was Ms. Hoang Pham of the Yesler Vietnamese community who presented their Yesler Terrace Unity Letter. The majority of residents in attendance signed the letter on the spot and to date have turned in over 100 copies.

CCEJ organizer and Yesler Terrace Coalition coordinator Kate Villarreal gave a detailed report on the past year of organizing activities and victories of the Coalition since SHA made the initial announcement to redevelop this thriving community.

She concluded with a list of goals of the Yesler Terrace Coalition, and asked city Councilmember Tom Rasmussen, who was in attendance, to hold SHA accountable to the people of Yesler Terrace and the community.

Rasmussen then encouraged residents to share their ideas with him and agreed to hold a brown bag lunch on Yesler Terrace.

Toward the night's conclusion, organizing dynamo KL Shannon came onstage and wrapped up the evening with a rallying cry. She referred to SHA's past HOPE VI redevelopment projects at New Holly and Rainier Vista and pointed out how meaningful public dialogue never happened with those because "the train had already left the station". KL made it clear that if SHA tries to redevelop Yesler Terrace without community input, then surely "we will derail that train".

Overall the event came at a crucial moment and served to rally support among community members and recharge the campaign in what could be a decades-long battle to keep low income housing in Seattle.

## REPORT FROM THE NATIONAL BLACK ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK MEETING

BY: YALONDA SINDÉ

From June 30<sup>th</sup> - July 3<sup>rd</sup>, I attended the National Black Environmental Justice Network (NBEJN) meeting in New Orleans, LA. NBEJN was formed in 1999 during an emergency gathering of Black community activists, labor groups, farmers, educators, youth, lawyers, and health professionals from 33 states. The group came together to map out strategies to defeat a pro-environmental racism campaign led by industrial associations and business lobbying groups and to strengthen work for environmental justice.

The purpose of the NBEJN meeting was to provide tools for black communities to better advocate for environmental justice. With leadership coordination from women of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Detroiters for Environmental Justice and others, the meeting featured workshops on such topics as Community Source Water Protection, Asthma, Lead Poisoning, and Health Disparities in Communities of Color. There was a wealth of information about chemical sources and exposures and the correlation between asthma, cancer and lead poisoning.

I gathered new information that will help CCEJ further our environmental health projects. I was inspired by some of the work of groups who presented, such as West Harlem Environmental Action, (WHEACT) an environmental justice group from New York who are doing some impressive work partnering with universities and others to achieve environmental justice.

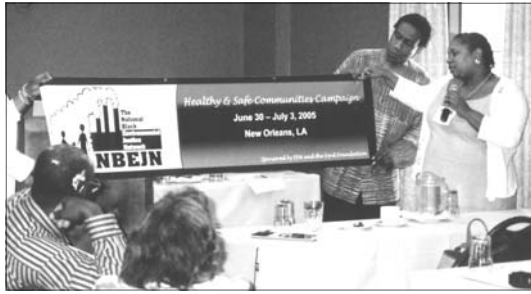
What was very special about the meeting was the NBEJN tribute to our friend and comrade Rev. Damu Smith who has been a key leader of NBEJN until recently and was the keynote for CCEJ's 2004 annual conference.



**ORGANIZE!**

Damu is a dear friend of mine and CCEJ as he has visited CCEJ over the years offering guidance and inspiring words of wisdom. The tribute to Damu was especially moving given his current battle with stage four cancer of the colon, which has spread to his liver. Throughout his life, Damu has given his

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*NBEJN members present their Healthy and Safe Communities Campaign banner at the conference.*

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heart to the movement for human rights and justice throughout the world and his friends from throughout the world have come together to support him during his most recent battle. Damu has been at the forefront of many struggles, and those who know and love him have faith that he will win in his latest battle against cancer. Friends of Damu have been raising money to help Damu cover the mounting medical cost of cancer treatment. More information can be found here: <http://www.damusmith.org>.

## THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL (NEJAC)

### CHARTER EXTENDED

BY: YALONDA SINDÉ

The National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) is a federal advisory committee established to provide independent advice, consultation, and recommendations to the Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on matters related to environmental justice. NEJAC is one of 23 federal advisory committees to the EPA.

The EPA acknowledged the historically vital role of NEJAC by announcing in late May, 2005, that they would renew NEJAC's charter for another year, until Sept. 26, 2006. Said Thomas V. Skinner, acting assistant administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance: *"NEJAC has made significant contributions to our efforts to integrate environmental justice considerations into the agency's decision-making," "Their recommendations are given serious consideration at the highest levels of the organization."*

In the past NEJAC was an effective vehicle for environmental justice groups to access EPA officials and influence environmental justice priorities for the agency. Many NEJAC members represented some of the most influential environmental justice leaders in the nation. It once played a vital role as a place for communities to gather, share information and strategies, carryout direct action as well as gain access to EPA officials.

NEJAC's charter was due to expire on September 30, 2005 and rumors circulated that the EPA would not renew the charter. NEJAC had been inactive for some time as few people remained on the advisory council, meetings were rarely held

this past year, there was no chair or acting chair and there were no longer regular conference calls.

CCEJ touched base with several leaders in the environmental justice community to solicit their response to the expected demise of NEJAC. Many environmental justice leaders had mixed feelings about whether or not NEJAC should remain. Some believe that NEJAC is no longer as effective as it was in the 90's. Some EJ activists felt that NEJAC, however ineffective at the current time, should remain intact. Some put out a call to action for environmental justice leaders to restore its effectiveness.

The EPA had no legal requirement to publish its plans for NEJAC and there was no legal requirement for public comment on their decision, however leaders were urged to contact the EPA Administrator Steve Johnson and voice their concerns.

Some EJ leaders are skeptical of EPA's commitment to NEJAC and environmental justice and point out that renewing NEJAC for just one year is not enough time to rebuild it.

NEJAC's renewal now calls upon the leadership of the environmental justice community and the EPA to work together to revive this once effective vehicle for promoting communication, collaboration, advocacy and action in the national environmental justice arena.

More information on NEJAC is available at: <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/environmentaljustice/nejac>

## ENERGY BILL THROWS MAJOR BLOW TO ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COMMUNITIES AS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE BILL STILL WAITS FOR VOTE

On the eve of Earth Day, a national energy bill (H.R 6), was approved in the House of Representatives that would allow industrial chemicals to continue to contaminate groundwater supplies of more than 1,800 communities in at least 29 states, while allowing the government and industry to avoid financial responsibility.

HR 1648 (Rep. Hastings Alcee L., Fl.) is a Democratic amendment to the energy bill that would require the 1994 Clinton Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice to remain in effect until changed by law, expand the definition of environmental justice, and direct each Federal agency to establish an Environmental Justice Office, and for other purposes. The amendment was co-sponsored by 20 Democrats including 12 from the Congressional Black Caucus. The EPA has come under scrutiny for failing to implement the order effectively.

The Hastings' bill would require all agency rules and guidelines to consider environmental justice implications. The bill would mandate public outreach efforts, require the government to identify low-income and minority communities and codify into law an interagency working group. The bill

would create environmental justice offices at a slew of other federal agencies, and force EPA to consider the impact of its policies on low-income and minority communities.

The Hastings bill was attached to the energy measure to boost its chances of becoming law, as Republicans say passing the comprehensive bill is a top priority this year. But the Hastings plan would still have to survive a House-Senate conference committee, and the fate of the energy bill is not certain, since it has eluded congressional passage over the last several years. The Hastings bill is one of dozens of amendments that lawmakers are planning to offer to the energy bill. An indigenous delegation lobbied congress in an attempt to halt the passage of the energy bill. Environmental groups are also unhappy with the energy bill. The bill allows drilling in the Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, it includes \$8.1 billion in energy tax breaks and several billion in other subsidies, including \$2 billion to increase research into drilling for oil and gas in extremely deep waters of the Gulf of Mexico among other energy tax breaks for corporations.

## MEET CCEJ'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Jonathan Betz-Zall** *volunteer since 1994, board member since 2004*

I earned a master's degree in Environment and Community from Antioch University Seattle, focusing on EJ work. I did a feasibility study on Geographic Information Systems and a program evaluation on the Long Paint Campaign in South Park for CCEJ. I've been a librarian for 30 years, mostly working with children in public libraries, but am now looking for more environmentally-active work. I'm also very active with the Friends Meeting ("Quakers") and intentional communities, and help lead a neighborhood song circle. I'm married to Rosy Betz-Zall, nonviolence trainer and singer, and my grown children work for nonprofit agencies in Seattle and Bellingham.



**Joyce Tseng**, elected in , 2005

I am very excited to be the newest member of the board, and to step up in being more active with CCEJ in order to fight for environmental and economic justice. I've been a union organizer & receptionist for Service Employees International Union for the past 4 years, working in our community with low-income immigrants and people of color. I am also an active member of Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance (APALA) and National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF). This fall, I will have completed a Masters in Public Health in the Environmental and Occupational Health Program at the University of Washington.

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**Alice Park** *volunteer since 1998, board member since 2001*

I've been involved with the Northwest Environmental and Economic Justice Alliance (NEEJA) and met others in the Northwest working on EJ issues. I always come away from our gatherings inspired. I love working with others that hope to achieve a common goal of environmental and economic justice. This year I watched another class of Environmental Justice Youth Advocates graduate from the program. It has been exciting to watch young people in the community engage in the fight for EJ. This is truly making an impact on our future. I'm honored to be a part of CCEJ.

**Dave McGraw** *volunteer since 1998, board member since 2001*

I have been with CCEJ because I believe wholeheartedly in CCEJ's mission, and have seen firsthand CCEJ's positive impacts in South Seattle. As a result of CCEJ's work, and the dedication of residents who got involved, the air is cleaner in my neighborhood. As Dolores Huerta said, "CCEJ has soul", and I am proud to be a part of CCEJ.

**Elijah Akins** *board member since 2004*

I am a student at the University of Washington and the youngest member of the board. I first started volunteering for the Seattle Young People's Project in high school and later became a youth board member. That's how I came across CCEJ. Being on the CCEJ board helps me stay involved with what I believe in- the full liberation of people and the creation of a just and humane society, domestically and internationally.

**Tyrus Smith** *board member since 2003*

Being on the board of CCEJ has provided me an opportunity to participate in something I really believe-- social and environmental justice. I have had opportunities to collaborate with CCEJ staff and members to address a number of local, national and global issues. Beyond the personal satisfaction I've been able to enhance my understanding of how environmental issues are quality of life issues.

**CCEJ is looking for new board members!** We're primarily looking for leaders with experience in accounting, organizational development, fundraising and grant-writing, and the time and energy to commit. Please contact us at 206-720-0285 or [jus-tice@ccej.org](mailto:jus-tice@ccej.org) if you're interested.

## A GARDEN CONNECTION UPDATE

BY NATE MOXLEY



*Garden Connection Crew from left: Virginia Suruda, Charlyse Bailey and India Cater-Campbell.*

The Garden Connection (GC) is officially in full swing! The GC

youth interns are hard at work gardening, outreaching to the community and donating fresh vegetables to low income families in the Central District.

### The Crew

If you happen to be in the Central District and see a group of young women strolling down Cherry Street with large garden tools; don't be alarmed, it's just the GC Crew! The first ever group of interns for the Garden Connection is proving to be a force to be reckoned with, in and outside of the garden.

Our wonderful crew of Garden Connection interns are as follows: Virginia Suruda, India Cater-Campbell and Julia Polk. The GC interns are led by Charlyse Bailey, the on-site coordinator extraordinaire.

### The Works

The GC crew has been hard at work watering, weeding, presenting and planning for a productive summer full of good food and community building activities. Most recently the GC crew gave an environmental justice presentation to a group of 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders at the local non profit *Powerful Voices*. The presentation was coordinated and led by Virginia Suruda. Everyone involved had a great time learning about EJ and playing interactive games.

Throughout the rest of the summer the GC Crew will be presenting to a variety of youth oriented organizations including Seattle Youth Garden Works and Garden Raised Bounty in Olympia. The GC is always looking for new opportunities for outreach; if you know of any please contact us with details.

### Veggie Donations

The GC has donated over 25 pounds of lettuce

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and kale to the CAMP food bank and directly to families at Yesler Terrace. The onions are almost ready to be harvested and should be plentiful because they are growing at both the Hawkins and Judkins sites. (At this point the GC is in charge of garden plots at Hawkins and Judkins P-patches and at NOVA High School.) We're looking into a plot directly behind CCEJ to expand for next season.

**Calling All Volunteers!**

We would love to have you join us by volunteering in the gardens or at an event. Please contact Nate or Charhyse for more information or to volunteer at (206) 720-0285 or stop by!



*A huge thank you to Madison Market for your continued support and donations! Thanks for being a part of our community and helping us work for environmental justice!*



**MEET THE GARDEN CONNECTION CREW**



**Name:** Charhyse Bailey **Age:** 21 **School:** Evergreen State College

**Why are you in the garden connection?** I am a 3<sup>rd</sup> year student at Evergreen State College Tacoma campus and have just recently celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup>

birthday. I became interested in the GC while delving deeper into my studies of environmental justice and community sustainability. I've been a long time supporter of organic gardening and natural health remedies, and hope to further my knowledge of and connection to environmental justice through my heart felt involvement in the GC.



**Name:** Virginia Suruda **Age:** 17 **School:** Franklin High School

**Why are you involved in the Garden Connection?** I believe this project is a unique experience. It's really important to go out into the community and help give back by putting time and effort to

growing organic foods that are good for the environment and for people's health. Getting more people in the community involved with the gardens would help teach people that it's important to take care of the soil. In the long run it could really help save the health of the environment and all the things that depend on it. The GC has opened my eyes to many opportunities that I normally wouldn't have a chance to be part of.



**Name:** India L. Cater-Campbell **Age:** 17 **School:** Franklin High School

**Why are you in the garden connection?** I wanted a job that gave me an opportunity to help low-income families and also the community as well. When I

was elected Captain of a club at school (FAST Team) I told my other elected officers that I was going to find ways for us to be more productive not in the school, but also in the community as well. I feel that working with the GC has given me some ideas to plan out a more structured and productive environment not only for me, but for my club and hopefully the community as well.



**Name:** Julia Polk **Age:** 17 **School:** Roosevelt High

**Why are you involved in the Garden Connection?** The Garden Connection has made a point to specify the empowerment that lies in the hands of everyone. Planting, growing and harvesting fruits

and veggies are things that everyone can do that are economic and health benefits for all.

*CCEJ is proud to have these incredible young woman be a part of our community. Keep up the good work! (Be sure to check out the EJYA accomplishments on page 9).*

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE YOUTH ADVOCATES (EJYA) ACCOMPLISHMENTS

During EJYA this year there were a number of things we did to be proud of.

1- Youth dedicating their time to learn about environmental justice and environmental injustices.

2- EJYA created many different educational flyers and brochures about PCBs and as well put together two PowerPoint's about PCBs in South park and The South park Toxic tour we went on.

3- On March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005 EJYA went door knocking in the South Park neighborhood and gave a survey

asking the residents living there if they knew about the toxics in there neighborhood.

4- We Went on a toxic tour in South Park showing EYJA the Good the Bad and The ugly of south park.

5- On May 7th, 2005 we did a presentation at CCEJ's 4<sup>th</sup> annual year conference to a panel of people.

6- On Sunday May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2005 we gave a toxic tour to a group of youth at the 4<sup>th</sup> annual youth Action Conference held in Seattle this year.

## MEET OUR NEW INTERNS



**VANESSA SHAW**

Vanessa grew up in the suburbs of San Francisco, California and has always been very concerned about the environment. As she grew older her concern for a clean, healthy and safe environment broadened into a concern for a peaceful and understanding global

community.

In 2001 Vanessa spent three months in Thailand and Cambodia volunteering for Cross Cultural Solutions, an organization that works to build international understanding and peace, irrespective of differences in race, culture, or religion. Her experiences there motivated her to return to the U.S. and dedicate her life to being an active member in her community and to empower herself and others against injustices.

Vanessa is earning academic credit for her bachelor degree in Community Studies from the University of California in Santa Cruz through volunteering at CCEJ. She is excited to be here and to work in a new community.



**FARDOWSA MOHAMED**

Fardowsa was born in Somalia, a country located in East Africa. Due to civil war her family left Somalia and went to Kenya. Shortly thereafter they left Kenya, due to poor education and now have settled in Seattle to start a better life.

At a young age she developed an interest for environmental issues, especially the need for clean water and a clean environment. Before coming to CCEJ Fardowsa was involved with a non-profit organization where she spent time teaching young people to take responsibility in keeping their neighborhoods clean by planning a community clean up day.

Fardowsa transferred from Seattle University to the University of Washington to pursue her education in medicine. Since coming to CCEJ as an intern, Fardowsa's desire for social justice grew. She sees social justice as a necessity for environmental justice. Fardowsa is now working on doing educational workshops to educate others about the effect of toxic chemicals.

## EJ GROUPS RESPOND TO EPA'S DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STRATEGY

BY: YALONDA SINDÉ

In late June, the EPA released a request for comment on its Environmental Justice Strategic Plan Framework and Outline. CCEJ and many others did not receive this announcement from the EPA until two weeks before the July 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. The document, although in draft form is to be used to establish "cross cutting national EJ priorities", therefore it was unfair for the EPA to give such a limited time for comment. However, many EJ groups did our best to give the EPA our opinion and submitted letters of comment to Barry Hill, Director of the Office of Environmental Justice.

Here's a summary of some key issues raised in comments from CCEJ and the National Black Environmental Justice Network:

1. CCEJ: The Draft does not incorporate key issues identified in the 2003 EJ Action Plans created by EPA Regions 1-10. We feel that because we work closely with our regional office some of these priorities should be incorporated in the draft.
2. CCEJ: It is unclear how communities were involved in developing the document and what the next steps would be for a final plan.
3. NBEJN: The Draft Strategy/Framework fails to provide a clear and coherent framework for implementation of the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898.

In conclusion, the Draft Strategy/Framework is a weak plan that will not advance the cause of environmental justice. It fails to address such issues as equal protection, equal regulatory enforcement, inclusive decision making, and just compensation for impacted communities. Because environmental racism is still a problem, it is critical that the EPA include issues of race in any plan to achieve environmental justice. Their omission of race in this document has not gone unnoticed and EJ groups will be closely watching the EPA's next steps.

## SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER:

### YESLER TERRACE RESIDENTS MEET WITH SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

BY: HOLLY UNGER



*CCEJ provided brown bag lunches and rides to City Hall for residents of Yesler Terrace.*

On Wednesday, July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2005 Yesler Terrace residents, Yesler Terrace Coalition members and community supporters met with city council members and Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) officials to express their concerns about the future redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, an SHA community. As Naomi Finkelstein, Yesler Terrace Community Council President said, the meeting was an event that doesn't happen enough: poor

people lobbying city council and holding them accountable.

Thanks to intensive multilingual community outreach by Yesler Terrace Coalition over 120 people were in attendance at the brown bag lunch meeting, including about 50 Yesler Terrace residents. CCEJ staff and Yesler Terrace Coalition members organized lunches and rides downtown to the meeting for Yesler residents. The Yesler Terrace Coalition and Yesler Terrace Community Council pushed for the meeting with city council member Tom Rasmussen, who promised at the March community report-back to hold the brown bag to hear residents' concerns and SHA plans (see article starting on page 3).

Councilmember Rasmussen presided at the meeting, which included a panel with council members Jean (Continued on page 11)

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Godden, Richard Conlin, Nick Licata, and Peter Steinbrueck; Naomi Finkelstein, Yesler Terrace Community Council President; Penny Mills, Yesler Terrace Community Council Secretary, Tom Tierney, SHA executive director; and David Bley, SHA Board of Commissioners vice chair. The meeting resulted in Peter Steinbrueck and Nick Licata committing to 1-to-1 on-site replacement in the event of Yesler Terrace redevelopment, thanks to pressure from Juan Jose Bocanegra, local community activist and Yesler Terrace Coalition member.

Several Yesler residents spoke eloquently before the council members and SHA officials, including Ruqiyu Abdi, a Somali resident, who said, "We have to know everything that happens there because we live there."

Naomi Finkelstein introduced herself by saying, "I'm here to talk about [SHA] being real partners with poor people. They're used to patting poor people on the head and saying 'there, there, don't worry, we'll take care of you'." In regards to concerns to federal budget cuts, she pointed out that low-income people understand budgets because they're used to "making southing outta nothing" and that they can bring creativity to the table and help make any redevelopment of Yesler Terrace work for SHA's budget. Public housing is a solution, not a problem, Finkelstein emphasized, because it's an efficient way to deliver social services to people. In response to criticisms that activists are jumping the gun on this issue, she stated that residents need time for training and education so they can be "partners across tables of power."

Ninh, a working mother from the Vietnamese community read their unity letter, which states that they as residents are opposed to any loss of public housing onsite and that they want a real and direct say in all future planning for their neighborhood. David Bley, the SHA Board of Commissioners Vice Chair, stated that "SHA's mission is to conserve and create affordable housing," focusing particularly on the needs of very low income people." He then outlined some concerns of SHA; that affordable housing for very low income people is in short supply, that Yesler Terrace is not built to last and is aging, and that SHA cannot count federal money to sustain it. He stated, "It's doable for us to meet the mutual goals of residents and SHA needs," and that SHA has an obligation to uphold a conversation with "stakeholders".

*Ruqiyu Abdi, a Yesler Terrace resident for 8 years, expressed her frustration and concerns to the board through a translator.*



Tierney then gave a preview of SHA's planning process. Beginning 2005 or 2006 there will be conversations including residents, community advocacy groups and other community stakeholders, which will take place for a year or more. If physical changes are decided upon, then engineers and architects will be brought to the table and it wouldn't be until 2009 or 2010 before any physical changes would happen.

Audience comments included the following:

"Yesler Terrace buildings are structurally sound and well-designed and we like to live there. They were not built as temporary housing, they were built to last." Kristin O'Donnell

"You mentioned community stakeholders a lot—the only stakeholders we should be concerned with are residents." Christina Lopez

"I beg you to consider the people who live there." Christine VanderWerf

"Listen to how articulate the residents are. I hope that professional opinion will not be able to run over their participation in this process." Jonathan Betz-Zall

"Give us our homes, gives us justice." Connie

"We need a commitment from you that supports 1-to-1 on-site replacement for Yesler Terrace." Juan Jose Bocanegra

"I am 100% committed to 1-to-1 replacement and I don't think that's good enough. We need 10,000 new units of public housing in Seattle. No one should be displaced, you have my commitment." Peter Steinbrueck

*CCEJ is now working on the next steps in the process and continuing to strategize with the Yesler Terrace Coalition.*

## STATE SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS THE WILL OF WASHINGTON STATE VOTERS: KEY PROVISIONS OF HANFORD CLEANUP INITIATIVE 297 REMAIN INTACT

The Washington Supreme Court affirmed on July 28<sup>th</sup> that Initiative 297 “was drafted to prevent the addition of new radioactive and hazardous waste to the Hanford nuclear reservation until the cleanup of existing contamination is complete.” The court unanimously ruled that the law is about cleaning up Hanford, and does not regulate purely radioactive materials, such as those used in nuclear medicine.

Voters overwhelmingly passed I-297 last November in response to threats that Hanford is a planned site for a national radioactive waste dump.

In CCEJ’s last newsletter we informed you of the Department of Energy’s (DOE) attempt to dismantle I-297. In 2004, DOE and Hanford contractors filed a lawsuit against I-297, the Cleanup Priority Act, claiming it was an unconstitutional effort by Washington’s voters to regulate medical isotopes and pure radioactive materials.

The Washington Supreme Court also ruled unanimously that DOE’s claims that the Cleanup Priority Act interferes with cleanup are not reasonable. The Initiative, which prohibits dumping more waste from other nuclear weapons plants until Hanford’s wastes are cleaned up, does not prevent moving waste within the Hanford site as cleanup continues on the most-contaminated site in the western hemisphere.

The decision clarifies that the two main arguments raised by the federal Energy Department and Hanford Contractors’ claim that the initiative was uncon-

stitutional on its face will not be an issue when the federal court resumes deliberation on the challenge to the constitutionality of the initiative.

The Court also ruled against the U.S. Department of Energy, which had attempted to claim that the initiative created an untenable burden slowing cleanup by requiring every the sampling of each and every container in Hanford’s un-lined burial grounds.

“The people clearly won,” said Gerald Pollet, the initiative’s chief sponsor. “The federal lawyers and Hanford contractors wanted a ruling where the entire statute could be found unconstitutional. They will no longer be able to argue that the Cleanup Priority Act is unconstitutional on its face.” Pollet is executive director of Heart of America Northwest, the region’s premier Hanford cleanup group and chaired the protect Washington coalition which won the highest vote total ever for a state ballot initiative.

Pollet added, “It is clear that the most popular initiative in Washington history will likely stand up to the challenge in federal court.

The U.S. Department of Energy remains under a federal court injunction against importing more waste to Hanford.

*Information in this update provided by Heart of America Northwest. <http://www.hoanw.org>*

## PARTNERSHIP FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ACTION PROJECT UPDATE

BY: YALONDA SINDÉ

In 2004 CCEJ launched a new project which builds upon our South Seattle Toxics Project called the Partnership for Environmental Justice Action (PEJA). The purpose of our project is to work in collaboration with agencies and parents to identify environmental hazards which trigger asthma episodes in children.

On July 14 we held a community forum on Asthma & Violence: What’s Air Got to do With it? The pur-

pose of the event was to start the process of building a Parent Advisory Group to lead the project and to help educate people about the connection between toxins and children’s health. A small group of residents, CCEJ staff and supporters attended and a presentation was followed by a good discussion. Stay tuned for more events and action on this project.

## EJ CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### AUGUST 2005

**August 7th-9th, College and University Hazardous Waste Management Conference.** In Portland, Oregon. The premiere location for environmental management professionals employed by academic and research institutions to interface, attend technical sessions and access the vendor community. Please visit, <http://www.cuhwc.org>.

### SEPTEMBER 2005

**September Date TBA: CCEJ Garage Sale and Oktoberfest!** CCEJ Members and supporters put aside your quality and lightly used items to contribute to our garage sale fundraiser! Contact Holly for more info at [hollyu@ccej.org](mailto:hollyu@ccej.org)

**September 3rd, 9th International Conference of Environmental Mutagens** in San, Francisco, California. For further details visit, <http://www.icem2005.org>.

### October 2005

October 8th, **5th Annual Border Mobilization** throughout Southwestern United States, sponsored by the Southwest Network for Environmental and Economic Justice [www.sneej.org](http://www.sneej.org) 505-242-0416

### NOVEMBER 2005

**November 2nd-4th, Brownfields National Conference** in Denver, Colorado. For more information, please visit: <http://www.brownfields.org>.

### DECEMBER 2005

**December 8th Northwest Environmental Conference and Tradeshow** in Portland, Oregon. A Forum for Practicable Environmental Management. Located at the DoubleTree Jantzen Beach Hotel. On-line Registration Available in August.

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