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Kelsey Ripper

Fordham University, envstudies14@fordham.edu

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The New Social Movement:
Environmental Justice in the Bronx

By Kelsey Ripper

Professor Van Buren

Environmental Studies Independent Project

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It can be argued that the birth of the Environmental Justice movement was 1982 in Warren County, North Carolina during a battle over the implementation of a PCB waste site. Unfortunately though, environmental injustices have been occurring throughout most of human history. The exploitation of minorities manifests itself in many ways, and one of those ways is through unhealthy and unsafe environmental conditions. These conditions are often the result of unfair policies which unjustly skew the burden of pollution and waste onto minority or low-income groups. These groups in particular often lack the financial resources or political power necessary to fight back. In the case of Warren County the community was comprised of primarily African-Americans when the state of North Carolina proposed the dumping of toxic waste in their town. Residents of Warren County decided that it was time for minorities to stand up against unfair environmental practices.¹ Regrettably, the residents of Warren County lost their battle, but it ignited a movement that has since grown drastically.

This essay will explore the Environmental Justice Movement from a few different viewpoints. Firstly, the ethical arguments and principles associated with the Environmental Justice Movement will be investigated. Secondly, case studies of organizations involved in Environmental Justice in the United States will be examined. By looking closely at a couple sample organizations one can get an in-depth look at the way environmental justice issues are identified, approached, and resolved. Lastly, this essay will evaluate the validity and practicality of the Environmental Justice Movement and its future as an American social movement.

¹ Shrader-Frechette, Kristin. Environmental Justice : Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy. Oxford University Press: London, 2006. p. 8.

An Ethical Issue

The Environmental Justice Movement is based on a set of principles which have been regarded as universal human rights. And the movement is just that, a movement for human rights and the right of each person to be treated fairly. For this reason, much of the Environmental Justice Movement is human-centered or anthropocentric. The mission of those involved is to achieve human equality and fairness when it comes to the environment in which we all live and work. Environmental Justice has risen out of other social movements including the civil rights and for this reason they share many of the same core principles and values. The Environmental Justice Movement may also be considered a mere extension of the civil rights movement since it is people of color who are most often the victims of environmental injustices. The Environmental Justice movement, however, does not necessarily need be considered extensionist because it does not aim to extend rights to the environment, but rather to further clarify the meaning of human rights. Additionally, the Environmental Justice Movement does not claim moral standing for non-humans. This means that the movement does not subscribe to the belief that nature has rights in itself. In the United States we consider equality to be the right of every person. The Environmental Justice movement is based on the idea that equality means that every person should have equal access to a safe and healthy environment. Operating under this principle the movement is comprised of organizations, companies,

and individuals who are trying to rectify the unfair and unequal distribution of harmful waste and other pollution.

A range of organizations exist which view Environmental Justice as their goal. Large non-profits such as the Environmental Defense Fund and Indigenous Environmental Network along with much smaller local organizations such as the Bronx River Alliance, espouse the goals of environmental justice. The role of non-profit organizations is imperative in furthering the goals of environmental justice. Although there are successful examples of businesses operating ethically and attempting to protect the environment, a business can easily be captured by its drive for profit.² Too many cases exist in which employers knowingly put their employees and the general public safety at risk for one to dismiss corporate greed. Non-profits attempt to rectify this situation by providing a medium which is not profit driven and has the collective power to influence businesses and government. In the case of environmental justice, these organizations provide a united force that is able to represent people who otherwise might not be heard.

Non-profits and community based groups must also undergo their share of scrutiny. As in other industries, the environmental justice groups lack proportional representation of minorities. This is cause for concern given that it is minorities who are most often affected by environmental injustices. In an essay by Karl Grossman he writes of the need for minority presence in these organizations, because it is minority groups who disproportionately bear the burden of environmental degradation and its effects.³

² Shrader-Frechette. p.187.

³ Grossman, Karl. "Environmental Racism" *The Crisis*, Vol. 98 April 1991. *As it appears in* VanDeVeer, Donald and Christine Pierce. *The Environmental Policy Ethics and Policy Book*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, 2003. p. 554.

Unfortunately, as Grossman points out, there is a lack of minority participation in environmental organizations.⁴ He goes on to cite a quote by Fredrick D. Krupp, the now-president of the Environmental Defense Fund, when he said, “the truth is environmental groups have done a miserable job of reaching out to minorities.”⁵ In New York City, there have promising signs of a reversal of this trend. Many grassroots organizations have been established in low-income and high-concentration minority areas that are committed to environmental justice. While they are only small and medium-size non-profits, they are quickly growing and establishing themselves in their respective neighborhoods and regions. Well established organizations with considerable funding are necessary in combating the large corporations and governments who are often in opposition to these communities and themselves have considerable financial resources.⁶

Not only must businesses be counter-balanced by non-profits or watch-dog groups, but the government, too, must be watched over with scrutiny. While the government is not considered a for-profit business, they may have considerable vested interests in opposing many environmental justice causes. Government bureaucracies also have a tendency to be captured by business interests who are then able to push through legislation in their favor or capture regulatory systems. United States history has shown that governments have lied and covered up major environmental disasters in order to avoid substantial lawsuits and other fallouts. The extensive damage to human health caused by nuclear testing during the mid-twentieth century was widely ignored and even

⁴ Grossman, Karl. “Environmental Racism” *The Crisis*. Vol. 98 April 1991. *As it appears in* VanDeVeer, Donald and Christine Pierce. *The Environmental Policy Ethics and Policy Book*. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, 2003. p. 552.

⁵ Grossman. p. 551.

⁶ Shrader-Frechette, Kristin. *Environmental Justice : Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy*. Oxford University Press: London, 2006 p. 202

intentionally covered up by the government.⁷ Assuming that governments can be biased, it is also necessary for a third party to be involved in environmental research. In a situation such as this in which there are many vested interests in opposing environmental justice, it is imperative that alternative sources be in place.

Even with a long history of environmental policy failures, there are a few positive government policies that should be mentioned. An important development in the Environmental Justice Movement came in 1994 with President Clinton's signing of Executive Order 12898. The stated purpose of the order was to have each federal agency, "make achievable environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations." In an attempt to do this, the order mandated that an interagency working group comprised of 17 federal agencies be created. The working group would report to the President to ensure that environmental strategies were in fact being created.⁸ By signing the order, President Clinton was taking the lead in addressing environmental injustices within government systems. Unfortunately, after Clinton left office, the EPA, under the auspices of the Bush Administration, has widely ignored the executive order. In 2004 the Office of the Inspector General of the EPA released a report titled, "EPA Needs to Consistently Implement the Intent of the Executive Order on Environmental Justice." The investigation found, among other things, that the agency had not integrated environmental justice into its day-to-day operations, the agency had not identified the minority and low-income groups addressed in the order, and there was no comprehensive

⁷ Shrader-Frechette, Kristin. Environmental Justice : Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy. Oxford University Press: London, 2006 p. 204.

⁸ United States White House. Executive Order 12898 11 February 1994.

strategic plan. This lack of federal guidelines resulted in an inconsistency between regional offices that were forced to create their own plans in response to the problem.⁹ The assessment does acknowledge the creation of “Green Community Toolkit” which is meant to provide a resource for communities attempting to become more sustainable. There is no mention in the toolkit, however, of environmental justice. While significant steps were made in the signing of Executive Order 12989, there has been no accountability for the lack of implementation. This has resulted in an absence of federal support for environmental justice causes and a lapse in government leadership.

One of the issues that is a point of contention regarding environmental justice is whether it is fair to place highly dangerous industry and waste in places where the community has allowed for such placement. In fact, much of the dumping and waste sites have been agreed to in some way by community leaders. This point is debatable on a number of points. Firstly, it can never be certain that all of the affected parties are participating in the decision making process. Children, for example, are often left out of the debate process even though they have a higher probability of being effected by pollution or waste sites.¹⁰ In addition, many communities and poorer nations agree to take on hazardous materials or industries because they are in dire financial need. Just because a community is in financial need, often the result of bad public policies and a history of exploitation, does not mean it is morally permissible to further exploit the financial distress of these communities. In the United States it has often been the case that poor communities have allowed for their neighborhoods to be in close proximity to

⁹ EPA Office of the Inspector General. EPA Needs to Consistently Implement the Intent of the Executive Order on Environmental Justice. Report No. 2004-P-00007. 1 March 2004.

¹⁰ VanDeVeer, Donald and Christine Pierce. The Environmental Ethics and Policy Book. 3rd ed. Belmont, CA: Thomson Learning, 2003. p. 36

dangerous industrial sites or waste sites, because some see it as a necessary economic opportunity. These places may provide jobs and extra income into the area, but often at a high cost to safety and health. Some have reasoned that putting such sites in these neighborhoods is permissible because the community has agreed and they are actually doing a service to the local people by providing jobs. This argument, however, is faulty, because it is often due to a history of exploitation that these communities are put into a position in which they have no other choice but to allow for dangerous facilities to be placed in close proximity. The United States government and companies have a sordid history of doing just this to low-income people and especially Native Americans. Not only are Native American communities among the most poor in the country, but they have something else which further places them in a position of exploitation. Native American Reservations are sovereign land, which means that they do not have to abide by all federal laws, including laws set up for purposes of safety. For this reason the government and some industries have sought out Indian Reservations as places to dump unwanted, hazardous material. Because of financial need, Native Americans are forced to allow for the disposal of dangerous waste on their land. Similar cycles of exploitation have occurred in places across the country, including New York City and the Bronx.

Environmental Justice in New York City

With minimal investigation it can be quiet apparent to most that New York City has certain areas in which environmental injustice are heavily concentrated. One such area of much contention is the Bronx and particularly the South Bronx. With a

population of 1,361,473 according to the Census Bureau's 2006 review, Bronx County is the second smallest borough in terms of population. The Bronx has a far lower median yearly household income than the other New York City boroughs at a mere \$31,494.¹¹ In the 2006 Census review 79.86% of Bronx residents were reporting an ethnicity other than white. With these demographics it may become clearer as to why the Bronx is underrepresented in city politics. Another disturbing fact is the Bronx's high concentration of traffic, including an abundance of truck and shipping routes. New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service found that half of pre-kindergarten to 8th graders go to schools within 500 feet or about two city blocks from a highway or truck route.¹² Additionally, while the northern Bronx has substantially large parks, the South Bronx has relatively few urban open spaces. Trends such as these have arguably been the cause of the extremely high number of child asthma cases in the Bronx. One of the organizations created in response to such issues as these is Sustainable South Bronx.

Sustainable South Bronx (SSBx) was created in 2001 by a South Bronx resident, Majora Carter. Her goal was to create an organization that could address the many environmental injustices occurring in the South Bronx. The mission of the Sustainable South Bronx is to address poor air quality, water quality, and economic disempowerment through better waste management, increased urban spaces, and monitoring of South Bronx businesses and their practices.¹³ It is important to note that the founder of SSBx is

¹¹ United States Census Bureau. Accessed on 4-20-2008.

<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US36005&-qr_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_DP3&-ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_&-_lang=en&-_sse=on>.

¹² "South Bronx Environmental Health and Policy Study" Wagner Graduate School of Public Service/ Institute for Civil Infrastructure Systems (ICIS) New York University October 16, 2006.

¹³ Sustainable South Bronx. <http://www.ssbx.org/mission.html> April 20, 2008.

a resident of the South Bronx. This is a person with an intimate connection to the community and the environmental problems which they face. In the past it is often those in control of political systems, usually white-middle class, politicians, who generate environmental policy. Robert Bullard, scholar and director of the Environmental Justice Resource Center in Atlanta, writes that, “the voices of the marginalized groups must be heard and respected, and their vision must be acted on before real changes take hold.”¹⁴ The creation of organizations such as Sustainable South Bronx is imperative because it provides an outlet for the community to have their voices heard and their concerns recognized. The intention of the people of these communities is a genuine desire to protect their families from the undue burden of pollution. Among this and other reasons, women have become an essential part of the Environmental Justice movement. So much of the movement is based on the work of grassroots organizations, and it is often women who are behind such organizations. Women are seeking a safe home environment for their family and environmental injustices and environmental racism are a threat to that safety. In fact the United Nations Habitat stated in 2001 that women are the biggest levers for positive change in society.¹⁵

In general the Sustainable South Bronx operates under a belief that all people have the same right as any other person to live in a healthy community. Just because the people of the South Bronx may have less money, does not mean that they do not deserve clean air and clean water. Additionally, Sustainable South Bronx is combating the unfortunate trend of environmental racism, a form of environmental injustice. This type

¹⁴ Bullard, Robert. Growing Smarter: Achieving Livable Communities, Environmental Justice, and Regional Equity. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007.

¹⁵ UN Habitat. “Good Urban Governance Campaign” 4-6 September 2001. Ashoka Convention Hall, New Delhi. <www.un.org.in/unnew/iawg/Decntz/onactivity/guccpage1.doc>

of racism is that which places an unfair burden of pollution onto people of color or minority status. As stated before, 79.86% of Bronx residents are non-white.¹⁶ With a fact such as this and the state of the environment in the South Bronx it would be almost impossible to argue that environment racism is not at work in these neighborhoods. In order to reverse a long history of environmental exploitation, Sustainable South Bronx has embarked upon a series of projects which will provide the South Bronx with a cleaner environmental and healthier place to live.

One of the Sustainable South Bronx's most ambitious plans is for an extensive greenway in the Hunts Point area. The greenway would be comprised of green streets and waterfront pathways. The Hunts Point neighborhood and peninsula is one of the areas in the South Bronx which includes high levels of industry and commercial traffic. A large portion of the peninsula consists of industry, including a 39-acre water treatment plant.¹⁷ The plant is currently undergoing an expansion, however plans have been into place to try and curb the smell associated with the plant.¹⁸ Hunts Point is also the location of a produce terminal market, a fish market, and a food distribution center which all bring in high amounts of truck traffic which must go through the residential neighborhoods of the South Bronx. Sustainable South Bronx is working to combat the expansion of this type of industry and is pushing for much cleaner projects in the future. Just recently the plans were dropped for a new jail to be built in the neighborhood. It is unclear exactly why the plan was dropped, however, significant community opposition is

¹⁶ United States Census Bureau. Accessed on 4-20-2008.

<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/ADPTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=05000US36005&-qr_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_DP3&-ds_name=ACS_2006_EST_G00_&-_lang=en&-_sse=on>

¹⁷ Sustainable South Bronx. <http://www.ssbx.org/solid_waste.html> April 20, 2008

¹⁸ Lombardi, Frank. "Wastewater plant approval is sweet victory for Hunts Point" The Daily News 12 September 2007.

undoubtedly partly responsible. Sustainable South Bronx has proposed other plans for the area and hopes that a green-industry will be brought in that can provide green-jobs to Bronx residents. The greenway which the organization has begun work on has been approved by the city and probably will be incorporated into any new building plans. At this point \$28.5 million dollars in funding has been acquired for use on the Bronx Greenway. Adding much needed green space to the area will likely clean out the heavy polluted air in the South Bronx.

Sustainable South Bronx has widely embraced the idea of greenroofs in the Bronx as a solution to many of the environmental problems they are currently facing. While the greenway is a major infrastructure project, the greenroof project is something that can be directed at individual families and businesses in the area. Green roofs not only help offset pollution, but they decrease energy use in the building, provide open spaces, diminish the heat-island effect and reduce the amount of storm water runoff. Greenroof installations are relatively cheap, easy to install, and can be applied to a variety of roofs. New York City is currently running a pilot program which provides a tax abatement of up to \$5,000 for the implementation of a greenroof.¹⁹ Sustainable South Bronx also claims that they are currently lobbying the government to place a value on the benefits to air quality and storm water reduction provided by greenroofs.²⁰ Additionally, Sustainable South Bronx provides demonstrations and assistance to Bronx residents who wish to install greenroofs on their homes or businesses. This is important, because they are working at all levels to ensure the success of their project.

¹⁹ New York State Assembly. Bill Summary - A10234. 11 March 2008.
<<http://assembly.state.ny.us/leg/?bn=A10234>>.

²⁰ Sustainable South Bronx. <<http://www.ssbx.org/greenroofs.html>>

The Sustainable South Bronx clearly states that their goal is environmental justice and that they are working to improve the quality of life for a group of people that have too often been overlooked by the city. Instead of standing by and letting the government use the South Bronx as a dumping ground for unsightly and dangerous industry they are making it known that they are no longer going to continue being treated unjustly. Hopefully if the city sees that the community is working to improve air and water quality in their neighborhoods they will be forced to also follow suit and support sustainable and safe development.

Another organization which is also attempting to rectify environmental injustices in the Bronx is the Bronx River Alliance. The organization claims that promoting environmental justice is one part of their goals and has focused on the Bronx River as a way to reach that goal. According to their mission statement the Alliance hopes to provide “healthy ecological, recreational, educational and economic resources for the communities through which the river flows.”²¹ The Bronx River Alliance works to achieve many of the same goals as Sustainable South Bronx, but they also include another important component. That component is that everyone should have access to natural areas. Even in urban areas, nature should be evident. This requires a type of redefinition of cities and nature. Instead of seeing urban areas as a place devoid of nature, the Alliance is reestablishing nature’s position within the urban context. Many theories within the environmental movement believe that nature can be used as a learning tool in which to learn about symbiotic relationships and coexistence. Additionally, the environmental justice movement embraces the idea that everyone has a right to green spaces and pristine nature and therefore access to all of the benefits that nature can

²¹ The Bronx River Alliance. <<http://www.bronxriver.org/whoWeAre.cfm>>. 20 April 2008.

provide. The restoration of the Bronx River is another step in a historical movement to restore nature to urban areas. The call for additional open spaces in cities has been a reoccurring theme since the 19th century and one well known in New York. In 1858 Fredrick Law Olmsted made his proposal for central park and stated that its purpose was to provide a place for the working classes to enjoy nature.²² Other motives for implementing parks in cities include public health, recreation, and common gathering areas. In the 1980's another trend, which scholar Rutherford Platt deemed 'The New Urban Commons' emerged. This particular movement recognized the necessity in protecting ecological sites in cities. Instead of creating parks and well-defined open spaces, 'The New Urban Commons' sought to promote naturalness and randomness in urban settings. The restoration of the Bronx River could be classified under this type of thinking, because it seeks to restore what was originally there without highly constructed designs. If returned to its natural state, the Bronx River would be a tremendous natural resource for the Bronx.

The Bronx River flow begins in Westchester County and flows for 24 miles south until it reaches the Long Island Sound. The river flows through the center of the Bronx, including the New York Botanical Gardens and the Bronx Zoo. The Bronx River is, in fact, the namesake for the Bronx borough and county. The Bronx River's past is one of misuse and industrial abuse. Much of the river's course has been changed and its natural riverbanks replaced with cement banks. In many places the river is so hidden that it is barely noticeable to a casual driver or passersby. The Bronx River Alliance hopes to

²² Platt, Rutherford. "From Commons to Commons: Evolving Concepts of Open Space in North American Cities" *As it appears in* Platt, Rutherford H, Rowan A. Rowntree, and Pamela C. Muick eds. The Ecological City: Preserving and Restoring Urban Biodiversity. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1994.

change all this by reestablishing the river to a place of prominence in the community. Through political means and community activism, they hope to restore the ecology river so that it can once again be a valuable resource for Bronx residents.

In order to follow through with their goals the Bronx River Alliance developed an “Environmental Justice Implementation Strategy.” The plan outlines nine points in which to bear in mind while attempting to reach their goal. Some of the steps include lobbying local politicians, monitoring water quality, and of course general fundraising for their many projects. One of the important points within this strategy that is worth highlighting is *Community Ownership and Stewardship*. This is described by the organization as a “commitment to environmental justice, the Alliance will support community ownership and management of property along the River.”²³ This is imperative to the Alliance’s mission. If a community is to embrace a project as large as the restoration of the Bronx River there must be some attitude of ownership. Once the idea of ownership is instilled a sense of responsibility is also introduced. This can then spurn more action by a wider group and the community itself can take over the long-term care of the river. When addressing the needs of a river there is very high level of involvement required if the water is to be restored and then maintained. The Alliance, along with a few other organizations, has already created programs for Bronx residents to get involved in the upkeep of the river. Through a series of workshops the Alliance has taught adults and young adults how to conduct water quality tests in order to monitor the health of the river.²⁴ By involving community members in the maintenance and monitoring of the river they are establishing groundwork for the river’s future.

²³ The Bronx River Alliance. <<http://www.bronxriver.org/whoWeAre.cfm>>. 20 April 2008.

²⁴ The Bronx River Alliance <<http://www.bronxriver.org/calendarNews.cfm>>. 22 April 2008.

The Bronx River watershed is roughly a third of the Bronx, and the actions of many communities directly affect the health of the waterway. By instilling ownership in low-income communities such as those of the South Bronx, residents may experience a new feeling of pride in their community which can manifest itself in other positive ways. Furthermore it is extremely important that the Alliance include Community Ownership in its strategy plans because the organization is not necessarily community-based. The Bronx River Alliance is under the auspices of the New York Department of Parks & Recreation and thus partly responsible to the city. In the Alliance's goals they state that they want to work with and support community groups to take on many of the responsibilities of cleaning the river and thus providing a sense of accomplishment and ownership. In fact the board of the Bronx River Alliance is comprised of people from a wide-spectrum of non-profit and community based organizations in the area. In the book Cities as Sustainable Ecosystems: Principles and Practices, authors Newman and Jennings claim that participation is important because it helps people to, "understand the complexities in certain issues and feel a sense of ownership toward the outcome." (157) For Newman and Jennings empowerment is a fundamental necessity in solving environmental problems and this can be particularly applied to Environmental Justice issues. In communities such as the Bronx, most of the people have been consistently disempowered politically, economically, and even socially. By rallying around an issue such as the restoration of the Bronx River, community members have an opportunity to regain ownership of a vital part of their community. Additionally for a project as large as the restoration of the Bronx River, community members are absolutely necessary in

providing ideas, support, and the amount of human resources needed to complete such a large task.

The Bronx River Alliance created an in-depth, extensive plan and has already achieved many successes since its creation in 2001. They have created stewardship programs for classrooms, created 15 miles of a 23 mile greenway along the river, and put on many successful events to raise awareness for issues concerning the river. One of the symbolic successes of the river clean-up effort was the 2007 citing of a beaver and a beaver lodge on the river. Overall the Bronx River Alliance, along with Bronx residents, has taken significant steps in order to restore the integrity of the Bronx River for the people of the Bronx. They continue to believe and fight for the idea that all people have the right to enjoy natural areas in their neighborhoods.

A Plan for the Future

Environmental Justice is not only about fairness, equality, and human rights, it is also a movement of action. It is impossible to argue that environmental hazards are not disproportionately placed on minorities and minority communities, this has already been addressed and now it must be remedied. The solution is not about repositioning and redistributing environmental hazards, as some might claim, but rather about eliminating them. Some scholars believe that the solution to Environmental Justice is this so called “repositioning.” These advocates believe that if pollution were evenly spread there would be greater public response for the elimination of harmful pollution. No matter which side a person takes, however, each side must be proactive. In Kristin Shrader-

Frechette's book, Environmental Justice: Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy, she rejects the idea that being objective on the issue of environmental justice requires neutrality. She warns that too often people confuse the two which leads to inaction and ethical relativism. She states that not all ethical positions are equally defensible and that if one believes this to be true it allows for injustices to prevail. Environmental injustices are unacceptable, just as abuses of civil rights are unacceptable. If one group of people is unfairly exposed to higher levels of pollution just because they are a minority or has limited financial means, it is a violation of their rights.

Governments and businesses must take responsibility for their errors and aid these communities in cleaning up the problems that they created. Businesses should be responsible for the harmful environments that they have imposed on historically exploited communities. A new and sustainable approach to businesses needs to be implemented and the environmental costs need to be factored in to future development plans. A business should leave the area as they found it or better. The negative effects that they produce should be their responsibility to fix and not the government's or the community's. Each person has the right to live in a place that is safe and healthy and no business or government has the right to take that away. In order to get to the point of true corporate responsibility and government responsibility, we need organizations such as the Sustainable South Bronx and the Bronx River Alliance to be leaders in their communities. They must be educators and lobbyists, working on a local level as well as on a larger level, correlating with businesses and governments. These organizations have the ability to pool resources and rectify environmental injustices. The non-profits which are leading the movement, are more often than not community-based which means they

are comprised of individuals who are willing to volunteer their time and money to take a stand against the injustices done to them. Through these organizations those who have been exploited have a chance to become politically active and start convincing others that fighting for the safety of their communities is an absolute necessity and an obtainable goal. Grassroots organizations have the ability to mobilize communities to action and make substantial gains in the Environmental Justice Movement. For the residents of Warren County they made a significant accomplishment when in 2004 the \$17.2 million cleanup of the PCB landfill was complete.²⁵ While the health effects to that community will undoubtedly continue and their fight is not over yet, they have a considerable victory to claim. The mistakes already made need to be rectified and the institutions in place that allowed for such injustices needed to be reexamined and corrected. Once individuals stand up and make their voices heard, business and the government will be forced to respond and obligated to make positive changes in these communities.

²⁵ North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources. "Warren County PCB Landfill Fact Sheet" <http://wastenot.enr.state.nc.us/WarrenCo_Fact_Sheet.htm>. 28 April 2008.

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