Asian American Involvement in Environmental Justice

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What is Environmental Justice?

- The same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards
- Equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.
Interconnections with other Civil Rights Issues

Environmental Justice goes in hand with:

- Guaranteeing rights for minorities and low-income earners
- Securing diversity in leadership
- Improving accessible health care
- Reducing infant and maternal mortality
- Creating fair development and housing
- Ensuring occupational safety
- Creating equal access to our natural resources
Critical Questions in Environmental Justice

1. Do proposed policy solutions address the community’s specific disadvantages?
2. Are there possible avenues where policy can be exclusive?
3. Who will be dominating the conversation - residents or agencies/organizations?
4. Do those agencies/organizations have members with ties to the affected community?
Richmond, CA
1995 - Present

Chevron Oil Refineries vs. AAPI community of Richmond, CA

2001: Community multilingual warning system for chemical spills and hazards

2010: Stopped Chevron from expanding their refineries into the community

2012: Chevron ordered by court to pay $2 million for refinery fire
Housing and Urban Gentrification

- Led a decline in the Asian American population from a high of 3,000 resident in Chinatown D.C. to less than 300 now.
- This trend is going on all across the U.S., including in Philadelphia and Boston.
  - Only about 3 of the largest 15 Chinatowns in the United States are places where authentic Chinese people live.
- Some people lived generationally and it was a good environment for new immigrants.
Environmental justice is not only about reacting to injustice or disasters.

Diverse representative leadership can be better ensured.

Sometimes the necessary services exist but agency outreach is minimal.

**Pre-emptive measures:**

- Consistent communication through non-English channels and newspapers
- Pipeline employment opportunities to underrepresented communities
New Faces in the Movement

Staff Diversity in Environmental Organizations

**NGO**
- 12.4% people of color

**Government Agency**
- 15.5% people of color

**Foundation**
- 12% people of color

Center for Diversity and the Environment - Grassroots International - Green For All - Diverse Director Datasource


Conference on Asian Pacific American Leadership