Environmental Justice/ Racism

I. Environmental justice movements have emerged, one of those is the Environmental Racism movement

A. Environmental Racism first used as a term by Rev. Benjamin Chavez with the release of "Toxic Waste and Race in the United States"

B. Summary of argument

1. Race is the variable that determines to the greatest degree whether or not

a community and its members will be exposed to and suffer from the health consequences of negative environmental practices

2. **toxic or** **hazardous waste sites**, legal and illegal, are more likely to be located in or near minority communities

3. minorities in urban areas more likely to live in areas with highest **air pollution**

4. minorities more likely to live in areas with worst industrial pollution

5. government regulatory power is less likely to be used effectively in minority communities

a. laws and regulations enforced less vigorously

b. lower fines in minority areas, 1/5

c. slower to put toxic waste sites on Superfund list

d. employ policy of containing waste, rather than removing it

C. Environmental racism as Institutional Racism

1. difference between personal racism and institutional

racism

2. cause of environmental racism is institutional racism

a. personal racism

b. institutional racism

i. ways in which society's institutions are

arranged

ii. different power arrangements

iii. differential treatment and consequences

c. both US and global social arrangements are

organized in such a way

i. certain groups are affected to a greater

or lesser degree by environmental

practices

ii. deprived of environmental rights

D. Consequences of Environmental Racism in Urban American

1. social construction of the urban ghetto

2. environmental racism/injustice in urban area

a. highest levels of air pollution are in minority urban America

because of concentration of commercial and commuter traffic, and public transportation (hub of bus traffic in NYC is in Harlem)

i. 50% of A-A children in urban Harford, Conn have asthma

ii. A-A die of asthma at 3x the rate of whites

iii. minorities more likely to get and die from cancers related to air pollution

c. site of most toxic and hazardous dumps

i. South side of Chicago which is African American is surrounded by a triangle of toxic and hazardous waste sites

ii. majority of illegal toxic and hazardous waste dumping is in urban minority areas

80% of illegal dumping in areas that are 65%

minority

People of color are three times more likely than Whites to live near one of the largest toxic waste dumps in the country

iii. minorities more likely to get cancer from toxic waste

\* African-American community of Anniston, Al polluted with

PCBs and created cancer cluster

d. slum lording and lead poisoning

i. in Chicago ten areas with highest rate of poisoning 70% minority, 90% of cases

ii. 37% of black urban preschoolers suffer from lead poisoning

iii. California and Dutch Boy

` e. Hospital waste dumps

i. hospital waste sites located in minority urban areas

ii. NYC main site is in Harlem (after upper class white neighborhood said NIMB)

E. Environmental Racism and Industrial Pollution

1. 5 of the 6 areas with worst **industrial pollution** in the U.S. are 78% minority

2. People of color are twice as likely to live in counties with highest levels of industrial toxins

3. "Cancer Corridor" 50 miles of Mississippi River in Louisiana, St. James Parish a Black community

4. See examples: Native Americans

F. Native Americans

1. long time policy of toxic and hazardous waste dumping on reservations

2. main sites of uranium mining and nuclear testing

3. pollution from fracking (chemicals used in fracking have polluted the drinking water and the land and the animals of NA)

4. oil pipelines leak thousands of gallons of oil on native lands

4. pollution from mining gold

5. examples: see below

G. Migrant workers

1. more likely to be exposed to pesticides

2. more likely to be sickened or die from exposure to toxic pesticides

3. less regulation and enforcement

II. Environmental Racism - Native Americans

A. Nuclear Waste

1. 104 US nuclear power plants

2. 22 in Canada

3. Waste

a. 80, 000 metric tons high level

b. millions of gallons of high level liquid nuclear waste

c. spent fuel rods

d. tailings

e. mines: 1000 alone on Navajo land

f. affected: Hopi, Navajo, Lakota, Apache, Laguna

Ojibwa, Ok tribes, Alabama-Coushatta, Yakama, and

Spokane

B. Western Shoshone

1. 1951 AEC created a nuclear test site in Nevada within

W Shoshone Reservation

2. 1951-1992 US and GB 1054, 220 above ground tests

3. government claim very little exposure, equivalent of

chest x-ray

4. 1997 National Cancer Institute study:

a.160 million persons 200x to 3000x the amount govt claimed

b. 75,000 cases of thyroid cancer, many still at risk

because of long latency period

5. AEC and DofE would wait until winds would blow

north and east so radiation wouldn't blow towards

Vegas or La, but toward the Shoshone

a. they would duck and cover

b. structures not air tight

c. work outside and hunted when clouds came over

d. gather water outside

e. not even evaluated by DoE

6. Government wants land

a. Shoshone title has been recognized

i. Treaty of Ruby Valley 1853

ii. Indian Claims Commission offered to buy

land based on 1873 value $26 million now

$91 million

7. Shosone refuse to sell

8. Govt wants to put nuclear waste dump there

a. Monitored Retrieval Site

b. govt and nuclear industry have been funding

Native tribal organizations research into turning

reservations into MRS

9. Govt has decided to dump all nuclear waste in W

Shoshone land at Yucca mountain

a. Nuclear Energy Institute ( nuclear industry) spent $12.8 million to their congressional delegates to get this through

b. get it out of our back yard 1997 Nuclear Waste Policy Act

Sen Rod Grams of Minn: "We in the Senate have done our part in trying to restore the promises made by the federal government to the ratepayers of this country to move nuclear waste out of our home states."

DOE: "Native responsibility to hold nuclear waste emanates from the 'superior Native understanding of the natural world' and the fact that we are 'our brother's keeper.'

c. operating reactors still have to store waste for

five to ten years

d. 15,000 shipments + will lead to 268 accidents as

shipments pass through areas with 50 million

C. Navajo and uranium mining - 1950 to 1980

1. The birth of the atomic age created the need for

uranium ore

2. some of the richest deposits of uranium ore are found

on the Navajo reservation and the Laguna Pueblo

a. Four Corners

b. Colorado Plateau

3. between1950 and 1980 uranium was mined

a. mining companies heavily subsidized

b. Kerr-McGee

4. many of the workers were Navajo, in both mines and

processing mills

a. who were poor and desperate for the wages that mining pays

b. and responding to the appeal of their country

5. however, neither the tribal councils nor the miners were told about the dangers

a. by the start of the Manhattan Project, it was

known that uranium and radium caused

lung disease, cancer, and other fatal problems

b. studies by Public Health Service confirmed this

beyond a doubt but the AEC

i. sole purchaser said it had no responsibility

for the safety of the mine

ii. and the mining companies resisted taking

any safety measures

iii. Secretary of the Interior took no action to

protect the workers

"They dug the uranium ore with pick and shovel in the small mines called 'dog holes' or blasted the rocks with dynamite, breathing radon gas and silica-laden dust. They ate food tainted with uranium oxide and drank the contaminated water that dripped from the mine walls. They carried uranium home to their wives and children on their shoes, clothes, and bodies."

iv. no ventiliation system

v. no protective gear

vi. 20 years to impose limits for radiation

exposure

vii. after the deaths, mining cos and the gov

argued over who should compensate the victims or if any compensation was due

( few years after closing 1 in 5, cancer of

lungs, pulmonary fibrosis)

viii. deaths are particularly bad

decimate small communities

leave families in poverty

c. Navajo fought congress and the courts in

70s and 80s

i. disregard for the rights of native peoples

ii. "discretionary function" - no court review of certain court functions (Federal Tort Claims

Act)

d. in 1990 Congress passed Radiation Exposure

Compensation Act

i. bureaucratic nightmare that natives have to

traverse

ii. slow processing of claims

iii. demands which subvert the intent of the

law

iv. this included the human guinea pigs,

fallout victims, other workers exposed

6. Not just death

1. left behind over 1000 mines uncapped

2. piles of radioactive mine waste ( tailings)

3. rain leaching uranium into ground water

4. small open pit mines filled with water inviting children to swim

5. Laguna Pueblo

i. 3000 acre open pit mine

ii. untouched for seven years after operations stopped

iii. Pueblo started own reclamation

6. Shiprock

i. radioacative mill

ii. 70 acres of spent uranium with 85% of radioactivity

iii. about 20 yards from the San Juan river

7. Durango

i. Mt. Uranium tailings pile 2300 feet high

III. Environmental Racism - Native Americans

A. Mohawk

1. Akwesasne "Land Where the Partridge Drums"

2. 25 sq miles on St. Lawrence border between NY and

Canada

3. home to 8,000 Mohawks

4. GM factory Superfund site

a. 823, 000 cubic yards of PCB-contaminated

materials

b. land , water, and bodies

5. Traditionally fishers

a. whales polluted

b. turtles polluted- Mohawk legend - *Turtle Island*

"This used to be a fishing village. That's all gone now. There's only one family that still fishes. We can't farm here because of all of those air emissions. Industry has pretty much taken the entire traditional lifestyle away from the community here.

c. 65% of Mohawks on Adwasnes have diabetes

d. from fish to spaghetti

5. history of polluting Mohawk land

a. 1900s Aluminum Company of America factory

b. 1950s cheap power from St Lawrence and Moses

Sanders Power Dam lured giant coporations

i. GM and Reynolds

6. Reynolds

a. 400 pounds of fluorides per hour, reduced in

1973 to 75 pounds per hour

b. but

i. stock losses

ii. vegetation

7. Today 25% of all NA industry is located on or near the

Great Lakes which are drained by the St Lawrence

8. Canada as designated Akwesasne Mohawk Res as most

contaminated

9. US side, GM had 258 acres near res

a. five saturate lagoons

b. numerous PCB laden sludge pits

c. lead, chromium, mercury, cadmium,

9a. GM one of the worst polluters in the world

a. 1994 Multinational Monitor Top Ten worst corp

b. potentially responsible for 200 Superfund sites

10. EPA fined GM for multiple violations of the Toxic

Substances Control ACt and added site to Superfund for

cleanup

11. EPA resolve has weakened from "treatment" to

"containment"

a. limits amount of cleanup to 1/3

b. saves GM $15million

12. GM cleanup

a. sand and gravel over contaminated areas

13. Women's Milk Project

a. women are first environment

i. baby, mother, family

ii. everything the mother feels, eats, and sees

affects the baby

b. bioaccumulation analysis from fish to wildlife

to breast milk

c. 200x the PCP levels for mothers who ate fish from the St. Lawrence

i. example one woman: PCBs, HCBs, DDC,

mirex (a flame retardent)

ii. fish is traditional food

d. same in studies of fetal umbilical cords

14. GM fights every step of the way

a. did some dredging in 1998-99

b. but shipped them off to some unlucky site in

Utah

c. may identify more hot spots, and may do more

remediation

15. fight is going international POPs, persistent organic

pollutants "dirty dozen"

16. Every one carries 500 measurable chemicals in their

body that were not in existence prior to 1920

a. effect brain development and behavior

b. endocrine functions

c. immune systems

d. reproductive systems

e. 72,000 are used on a regular basis, less than

20% have been tested