



REUSE IN RHODE ISLAND
A State-Based Approach To Complex Exposures



Brown University Superfund Research Program: Community Engagement Core work on Environmental Justice



Phil Brown,
Brown SRP Community Engagement Core

Early groundwork in EJ work contested successes
Research Group
Conceives Providence Environmental Justice Educational
Forum

Activists' Workshop

Providence Environmental Justice Educational Forum

November 19, 2004

First Session

Quita Sullivan (Alternatives for Community and Environment), and Matt Wilson (Toxics Action Center) *"Environmental Health and Justice Networks: How it works in Michigan and Massachusetts, How it could work in Rhode Island"*

Second Session

Gail Corvello (Environmental Neighborhood Awareness Committee of Tiverton)

"Victories and Setbacks: ENACT's Ongoing Effort to Clean Up Hazardous Waste Under our Homes"

Third Session

Sandra Neugen (Alton Community Action) *"ACA's Campaign for Clean Air and Clean Water"*

Gina D'Ambra (Bradford Citizens Against Pollution) *"BCAP's Campaign to Clean Up the Bradford Textile Dyeing Company"*

Eric Garcia (Rhode Island Minority Asthma Collaborative of American Lung Association) *"Tracking Asthma in Rhode Island"*

Fourth Session

Discussion: How can we build an Environmental Justice Collaborative in Rhode Island?

Early groundwork in EJ

We help write successful EPA proposal to fund Providence Environmental Justice Education Forum, which later transformed into Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island – organization-building assistance from ACE and Toxics Action Center

SRP includes EJ as central feature of community involvement

We provided service learning students in several courses to work on EJ projects:

- Freshman Seminar: Environment and Society
- Environmental Justice
- Health Social Movements
- Qualitative Methods



Developing a Culture of EJ Work on Campus

Accumulation of service learning in various classes

Presentations to

- student groups
- Graduate School forum for postdocs and grad students
- departments and centers

NIH and NSF ethics training grants (Dianne Quigley) – included 2003 conference on Research Ethics and CBPR, featuring keynote address by NIEHS's Shobha Srinivasan (head of then-operating EJ Program) – see *researchethics.org*

Funded positions for students on various grants, including SRP

Engaged Scholars Program of Swearer Center for Community Service

- Phil Brown helped design it and put across EJ perspective
- approx. 8 faculty per year funded to do service-learning

Leads to



Brown Engagement Core

A 'one-stop shop' for Brown student engagement in youth-related community environmental justice initiatives

- 20 dedicated students from various departments who help coordinate and implement community projects of Superfund Community Engagement Core and Children's Environmental Health Center Community Outreach and Translation Core

Supporting Brown environmental leaders to get off "the hill" and into the community



Funded Partners are EJ groups or EJ-oriented

**Environmental Neighborhood Awareness Committee
of Tiverton (ENACT)**

Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council

Environmental Neighborhood Awareness Committee of Tiverton (ENACT) – EJ in white working-class community

The CEC supports ENACT's efforts for adequate clean up of the manufactured gas plant contamination in neighborhood of 120 homes – discovered 2002 during sewer construction

ECHO Home Loan Bill- RI Housing provides up to \$25,000 home equity loans (2006)

Penalties Bill – Fines raised to \$25,000/day from \$1,000 day for corporations not complying with Dept. of Environmental Management Notice of Violation (2009) – statewide effect

Supporting efforts to deal with flawed clean up plan

Local demonstration



Gas plant waste found in soil



Disrupted lives



Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council – urban watershed group with commitment to EJ issues

- Helped to plan educational events concerning the development of site clean-up plans for the Centredale Manor NPL site
- Convinced EPA to sample dioxin contaminated sediment deposited from floods in highly used public parks
- Provided critical feedback on EPA Remedial Action Plan
- Proposing procedure for future catastrophes

Cleanup



Flooding dislodged toxic sediment



Recreation



Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

- Gorham cleanup and Urban Pond Procession
- Weatherization Open Houses
- Science Café
- GreenStage theater group at the MET Schools
- Brownfields Environmental Equity Stakeholder Workgroup (Dept. of Environmental Management)
- Community Environmental College (adding third class in summer 2011)
- Providence Healthy Corner Store Initiative
- Eco Youth – after school program



Weatherization Open Houses

Healthy recipes for the community



Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island



- EPA CARE grant – Community Action for a Renewed Environment
 - In 2008, EJLRI was one of only 13 groups nationwide chosen to receive a Level CARE grant (\$100,000)
 - Create and coordinate a 30 member stakeholder group, the CARE Alliance, to identify toxic hazards in Providence and to develop an action plan to reduce toxic exposure for residents citywide.

- Additional grants enable hiring second full-time staff person in late 2010
 - EPA Environmental Justice Small Grant – weatherization - \$25,000
 - Attorney General’s Vitamin Antitrust Litigation settlement - Healthy Corner Store
 - Boston Public Health Commission – access to healthy food
 - Morning Glory Foundation
 - Ben and Jerry Foundation
 - Patagonia Foundation



Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

- Recognition: Community Engagement Core and EJ League were selected by NIEHS as major speakers for inaugural conference of Partnerships in Environmental Public Health (PEPH)



Diesel Pollution Patrol

Community Environmental College

Creating a shared knowledge base about environmental justice issues in the community

- 5 years so far: 8 week- summer courses for 35 Providence youth: *The basics of Environmental Justice, The Basics of Food Justice* and *Multimedia Community Educators*
- Field trips to local farms, landfill, wind turbine, toxic tour of Providence
- Expanded into a year-round environmental justice leadership program (ECO-Youth)

Guest speakers



“Toxic tour” of Providence



Rosasharm Farm



Eco Youth: Multimedia Community Educators

An after-school program that transforms youth from 'educated' to 'educator' and turn knowledge into leadership

- Media and presentation training
- The Green D(RI)VE – biodiesel bus
- Green Teenz – video production



Eco Youth: Education and Community Advocacy by Providence High School Students

□ **PEPH WEBINAR June 2, 2011 3:30 pm**

Phil Brown, Director, Community Engagement Core,
Brown University Superfund Research Program
Julian Rodríguez-Drix, Programs Coordinator,
Environmental Justice League of Rhode Island

ECO Youth representatives:

Jesus Holguin - Providence Academy of International Studies

Jummy Olagundoye - Johnston Senior High School

Otera Ortega - Exeter - West Greenwich Regional

Yanilka Hernandez - The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center

Yamah Dolo - HST (Health Science Technology) Cooley

Providence Healthy Corner Store Initiative

For equal access to healthy foods in urban areas:

- Student and community leadership teams
- Three corner store makeovers in 2010, Twelve more smaller ones 2011
- Statewide policy initiative

Working with store owners

Engaging the media

Shifting to healthy foods



Science Café

A community space to build literacy on pressing environmental health and justice issues

Environmental
pollution and breast
cancer



Bringing climate change
education to the classroom



Producer
responsibility in RI



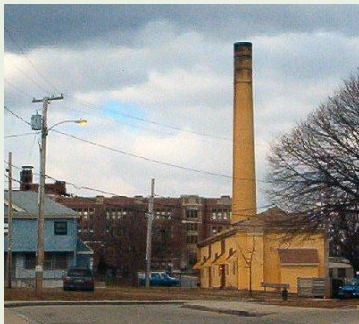
School Siting Bill 2012

First in US – Prohibits siting schools on vapor intrusion sites

-results from several struggles over school siting since 1999

NOT IN MY SCHOOLYARD:

Avoiding Environmental Hazards at School Through Improved School Site Selection Policies



A Model for SRP Community Engagement on Environmental Justice Issues

- General philosophy of community-centered engagement and principles of ethical treatment of communities in CBPR (a central feature of academic-community partnerships around EJ)
 - Address issues affecting community partners
 - Build community capacity
 - Report findings using accessible language
 - Be respectful of community needs
 - Adhere to ethics of mutual respect, open communication, and recognition of knowledge, expertise, and resource capacities of all partners

Working with government on EJ

- RI Department of Environmental Management
 - Brownfield Environmental Equity Stakeholders Group
 - Individual consultations with top-level officials on EJ issues
 - Successfully press for DEM to seek EJ training by EPA Region 1
- RI Department of Health
 - Collaboration on EPA CARE grant
 - Collaboration on EJLRI's Healthy Corner Store Initiative
 - Collaborative grant-writing for health impact assessment, etc.
- EPA Region 1
 - EJ Program
 - Healthy Communities Program

Lessons learned

- .We can spread EJ as practice, teaching, and scholarship across campus, into community, and into government agencies**
- .We can build capacity of local residents and groups on EJ issues**
- .Bold vision can create continuous stream of new partners and projects**
- . Coordination with Children's Environmental Health Center increases our SRP capacity**
- . We've managed to overcome potential problems of working with partners on both sides of the fence**



A Healthy Corner Store opening