



Children demonstrating for clean air outside the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi.

the new environmental activists

Fighting Pollution, Poverty, and Racism by Building Natural Assets

The New Environmental Activists

THE NEW ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS profiles 24 community-based groups in the United States that are fighting pollution, poverty, and racism by building natural assets. Among those featured are:

- residents of Louisiana's 'cancer alley' who are battling the corporate Goliaths of the petrochemical industry
- Native Americans and their allies who are fighting the spread of military poisons in Alaska
- inner-city Boston residents who won the power of eminent domain to reclaim vacant lots and transform them into community assets
- Hispanic farm families in southern Colorado who are struggling to retain

access to the water that is the lifeblood of unique agricultural ecosystems created by their forebears

- the descendants of immigrant workers in the meatpacking plants of Omaha, Nebraska, who are now fighting to break the hazardous government-business alliance that risks the health of their community

The New Environmental Activists is a joint publication of the Political Economy Research Institute at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst and the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice in Riverside, California. It is available online at: <http://www.umass.edu/peri/newenviron.htm>.

Defending the Right to Clean Air

DOES THE AIR BELONG TO POLLUTERS, or to people who breathe it? In major cities across the globe, air pollution has become an environmental nightmare and the cause of widespread respiratory illnesses and premature deaths. Low-income communities often suffer the most from air pollution. The poor cannot afford to live in affluent neighborhoods with better air quality. They cannot afford adequate med-

ical care when they fall victim to respiratory ailments. And often they lack the political clout to prevent industries and municipal authorities from siting hazardous facilities in their neighborhoods. Today, however, communities around the world are fighting to clear the air. They uphold the principle that clean air is a right for everyone – regardless of income, race, or ethnicity.

Photo Credit: CSE

Communities for a Better Environment

COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER ENVIRONMENT (CBE), based in California, works with low-income urban communities and communities of color to combat pollution of their air and water. In 1994, U.S. President Bill Clinton signed an executive order directing every federal government agency to identify and rectify 'disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.' Ten years later, however, African-Americans, Latinos, Asian-Americans, Native Americans, and low-income communities across the country still face disproportionate environmental hazards. The environmental justice movement rejects the 'not-in-my-backyard' approach that pits one community against another, instead advancing the demand: 'Not in anybody's backyard.'

For more on CBE's work, see www.cbecal.org/.



Photo Credit: Ford Foundation

In Los Angeles, California, community 'bucket brigades' test air quality.

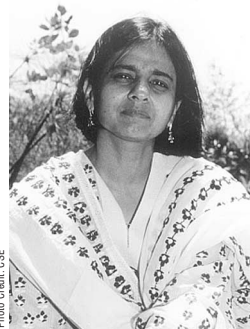


Photo Credit: CSE

Sunita Narain of the Centre for Science and Environment.

The Centre for Science and Environment

THE CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT (CSE), based in New Delhi, India, has been at the forefront of efforts to defend the right to clean air. CSE's clean air campaign began by exposing the sources of noxious pollutants in the nation's capital, where, according to health experts' estimates, a person dies every hour from air pollution. An initial focus of CSE's campaign was particulate pollution from trucks and buses. In a series of landmark rulings beginning in 1998, India's Supreme Court ordered New Delhi's bus fleet to convert from diesel to compressed natural gas, a cleaner fuel, and banned the entry of thousands of polluting trucks into the city. CSE is now working for 'second-generation' measures to address pollution from cars and scooters.

For more on CSE's clean air campaign, see www.cseindia.org/apc-index.htm#.