

ENVIRONMENTALLY SPEAKING

Peter Schwartzman

The Environmental Justice movement: its accomplishments and its future

Part II of II

The Environmental Justice (EJ) movement consists of a growing group of environmentalists who focus on human issues of health, justice, and equality. In this way, EJ advocates differentiate themselves from other environmentalists whose key concerns focus attention on other species, such as invasive ones (e.g., kudzu or zebra mussel), charismatic ones (e.g., penguins and baby seals), and endangered ones (e.g. Asian tigers including the Sumatran, Bengal, and South China varieties). Part I of this two part essay (published in the June 30 issue of *The Zephyr*) describes in greater detail the origin of the EJ movement and highlighted some of its more academically-focused pursuits. It outlines the evidence for modern environmental inequality, the role racism and classism plays in it, and the reasons why EJ concerns are ones that have relevance to all of us. Here, we will delve into the EJ movement's more recent developments and suggest areas and ideas for future growth and impact.

Since 1990, the EJ movement has witnessed many tangible accomplishments at the national level. EJ advocates were instrumental in convincing President Clinton to: (1) establish the President's Council of Sustainable Development; (2) create the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council; and, (3) sign the Environmental Justice Executive Order 12898 (Bryant). In 1994, under the direction and leadership of prolific EJ author and scholar Robert Bullard, the Environmental Justice Resource Center located at Clark University in Atlanta, Georgia was established (website: <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/Welcome.html>). Many post-secondary institutions, including Knox College, now offer courses in Environmental Justice. In 1991, the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit held in Washington, D.C. saw more than 600 community activists and EJ advocates. Eleven years later, a Second National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, held in October 2002, drew more than twice as many participants suggesting that the EJ movement is alive and well and, indeed, growing.

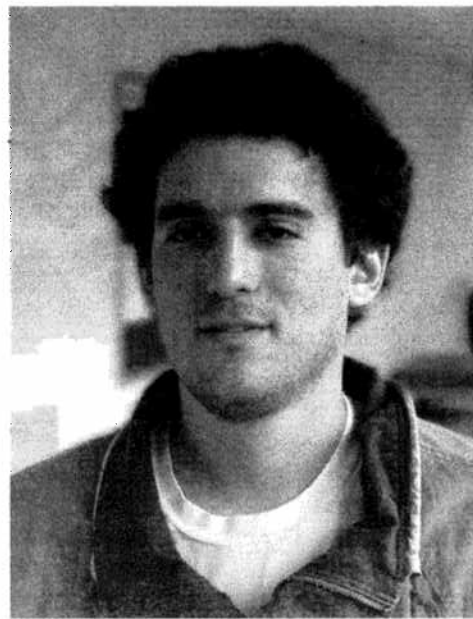
Many of the most important EJ achievements take place locally. Within the state of Illinois there are a growing number of environmental justice groups that are working diligently to ensure that the air and water that we inhale or drink is safe. Unfortunately, there are many communities in our state that have contaminated air, particularly those near heavily industrialized areas and locations near and downwind of coal-fired power plants. Fortunately, several of these communities have citizens that aren't sitting back and letting themselves be poisoned anymore, at least not without a struggle. Two such groups in the Midwest deserve particular mention, and both happen to be nearby in the "Windy City."

The People for Community Recovery (PCR) is based in Altgeld Gardens, a predominantly African-American low-rise housing development located on the far southern edge of the city limits of Chicago—only ~16 miles directly south of downtown and the legendary "Michigan Mile." Founded in 1979 by Hazel Johnson, a resident of Altgeld Gardens, PCR has been an active presence in furthering environmental awareness and demanding

change for more than 25 years. As a Knox College Environmental Racism class recently observed during a field trip to Chicago this past May, Altgeld Gardens and the residents of its ~1,400 row houses are completely surrounded by hazardous and toxic air effluence and pollution. From the headquarters of PCR, which is located in a small office behind a grocery store, one can go in any cardinal direction and find a seriously offensive LULU (locally undesirable land use) — anything from a 6-story landfill the size of 18-hole golf course to an industrial "park" spewing out all types of carcinogens and heavy-metals. Consistent with the euphemistic name "toxic donut," no matter how the wind blows, Cheryl Johnson, Hazel's daughter and the current director of PCR, and her community residents must breathe in (and have for some time) contaminants at very unhealthy levels. Yet, as bad as things may seem in Altgeld Gardens, PCR hasn't given up.

In the late 1970's when Hazel Johnson, sparked by her husband's early death, formed PCR, she set out to inform people of their surroundings. This initial effort led to an awakening of sorts within her community. Citizens began to make connections between their chronic health disorders (such as asthma and skin rashes) and the air pollution coming from their immediate surroundings. They took it upon themselves to educate their neighbors about how to minimize exposure (e.g., remove dust regularly from their window sills). They challenged the practices of demolition companies who took little or no precaution for the huge amounts of dust (most containing lead, asbestos, and other toxins) released into the surrounding air. For all her efforts, Hazel Johnson won a gold medal from President George H. Bush. Additionally, through the actions of all the PCR volunteers over many years (and other groups like PCR), President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice in 1994 which gives all citizens the right to know what potential environmental hazards confront them and their communities. And while this executive order was a major victory for EJ advocates, its lack of enforcement means that more EJ work will be required to make clear once-and-for-all that environmental protection needs teeth before the people of our nation will be free from untoward health effects due to misguided economic and political practices.

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) is a much younger organization whose youth belies its enthusiasm, understanding, and demand for justice. Located on the western edge of the Chicago city limits, only ~5 miles west of Michigan Avenue, in a neighborhood referred to as the "Little Village," LVEJO works out of a basement of a typical two-story row house. Despite its humble working space, its staff and volunteers have definitely put their community on the EJ map in a big way in such a short time. LVEJO has focused on issues that directly impact its more than 90,000 residents (~83% that are Hispanic). When city officials decided to build a new elementary school in their district (something that is sorely needed given the large numbers of children under 12 that live in the community), LVEJO recognized the site chosen was an extremely poor one because major industries abutted it on two of its sides. (On



our class field trip, we breathed first hand the poisons that a steel drum cleaning and processing plant release daily—a plant not more than a few hundred feet from the entrance for the proposed school.) LVEJO was successful in empowering its residents and after a struggle with city officials, the site was deemed unfit for a school. In another campaign, LVEJO had to respond to an unbelievable number of garbage trucks that began to drive weekly in a caravan down one of its neighborhood's streets—one bordered on both sides by two-story family homes. LVEJO's research revealed that below the radar of the residents, an enormous garbage facility had taken root just a few blocks from residential neighborhoods. Through LVEJO's unwavering commitment to improving the health and well-being of its neighborhood, the garbage trucks were diverted, the facility closed during weekends, and the horrid stench was lessened, so much so that families began to come back out of their homes and community spirits were lifted as well.

One of LVEJO's greatest struggles doesn't have such a positive ending, yet the organization hasn't given up or given in. Within a five minute walk from LVEJO's central office exists a coal-fired power plant, known as Crawford. The electricity from this plant and another similar plant just a few miles away serve people throughout the Chicagoland area, including some suburbs. Unfortunately, these coal-fired plants have been in Chicago from well before the Clean Air Act of the 1970's and thus they were not required to meet the stricter emission standards set out in these laws. Therefore, they still emit huge quantities of hazardous air pollutants. Now while this pollution does spread out in all directions, much larger concentrations of contaminants (including mercury and coal dust) make their way into the homes and lungs of Little Village's residents. And while LVEJO's campaign to get these plants to reduce hazardous emissions has fallen on stubborn ears so far, similar pressure by EJ advocates were at least partly responsible for the recent settlement (this past March) which orders Illinois Power (and its successor, Dynegy Midwest Generation) to spend ~\$500 million to reduce emissions in five of its coal-fired plants in the state. Something needs to be done in Little Village as well. Consider that a Harvard School of Public Health research study found that the Fisk and Crawford power plants (the Fisk plant is only a few miles to the east of the Crawford plant) "cause 40 premature deaths, 2800 asthma

attacks, and 550 emergency room visits every year" (LVEJO1). Shamefully, despite these atrocious statistics, Chicago's mayor Richard Daley wants to be considered the "greenest" mayor in the country even though these two outdated coal power plants still operate within the boundaries of the city he governs. (Contacts for the EJ organizations highlighted here are listed at the end of this essay.)

While the above examples illustrate that EJ organizations can make a difference in protecting the health and vibrancy of communities, there exist a few conflicts within the EJ movement that still haven't been fully resolved. NIMBY (or not-in-my-backyard) represents an attitude that governs many communities' reactions to the building of a LULU (like a landfill, incinerator, toxic waste producing industry, etc.) nearby where they live. This is understandable. However, given current political realities, if one successfully wards off the construction in one neighborhood, this doesn't prevent the LULU from moving to a politically disempowered, poor, more-often-than-not non-white community in the U.S. or elsewhere. So by lobbying against a polluting industry, we haven't solved the problems associated with it and have only shifted the burden farther down the socio-economic totem pole. Thus, we need to find alternatives that allow all of us to live healthily. Fortunately there are many ways to do accomplish this seemingly heroic task.

First, we need laws that prevent companies from using outdated, highly-polluting methods and technologies when more efficient and cleaner alternatives definitely exist. Two, we don't need to be producing many of the chemicals that we are—the primary reason we do stems from the fact that someone has found a way to profit from the sale of some dangerous chemical and society hasn't been given a democratic voice in deciding whether it is safe or if its risks are worth any gains we might get from it. In his fantastic book, *Cradle to Cradle*, Will McDonough, one of the world's more forward-thinking architects, makes clear the point that abundant safe alternatives exist if we would only provide incentives to those that want to pursue them (and major disincentives to those that want to continue to pollute unnecessarily). A related way to remove dangerous chemicals is to shift the onus of establishing their safety from the isolated victim who sues a company for producing a chemical that has caused a given illness (something that is nearly impossible to do when thousands of similar chemicals could be likely culprits and when life-threatening symptoms reveal themselves years after exposure) to the chemical producers themselves. Yes, shockingly, most industrially produced chemicals haven't been tested for the harm that they cause humans (especially children). If chemicals had to be thoroughly tested before they could be used (or emitted), there would likely be many fewer dangerous chemicals in use today. Three, if we reduced the huge amounts of waste that are imbedded in our lifestyle (in forms of energy, diets, and conspicuous consumption), we could likely reduce our production of dangerous chemicals by 50% or more without noticeably reducing our quality of life. In fact, there are many reasons to believe that the quality of our lives would improve as we ate more selectively and partook in more

social (less energy demanding) activities.

With these options available to us, there is every reason to be optimistic about the future. Unfortunately, especially with so many forces working against equity and social justice, it will take an informed and politically-active citizenry in order to make these changes. However, next time someone says something cynical like, "oh it has always been this way," or, "we don't have the technologies yet, but they are just around the corner," you'll have every reason to tell them that things aren't so bleak. Perhaps, you can direct them to a local environmental justice organization.

In closing, there are some serious environmental problems in the Galesburg area too and an EJ perspective and response is likely warranted here as well. Consider that Knox County has the highest number of lead-poisoned children among rural counties in the state of Illinois and Peoria County has the greatest percentage of children with elevated levels of lead in their blood (an amazing 15%) (Sampier). Peoria County is also among the top 10% worst counties in the entire United States in terms of Total Pollution Emissions and Total Air Releases of Recognized Carcinogens (Knox County is in the 50% percentile on both these measures which is also very disturbing given its relatively small population—54,500 versus Peoria County's 182,000) (Scorecard). It seems that Western Illinois could use an active EJ movement of its own. If this is something that you are interested in getting involved in, please contact the author. He will be looking into forming an EJ organization over the next year so please don't hesitate to let him know where your interests lie. Get involved.

EJ Organization Contact Info:

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO). 2856 S. Millard Ave., Chicago, IL 60623; phone: 773-762-6991; email: lvejo@sbcglobal.net; website: <http://www.lvejo.org/>

People for Community Recovery (PCR). Altgeld Gardens. 13116 S Ellis Ave, Chicago, IL 60827, Cheryl Johnson; email: hazelmjohnson@aol.com; website: <http://www.geology.wisc.edu/~wang/EJBaldwin/PCR/>

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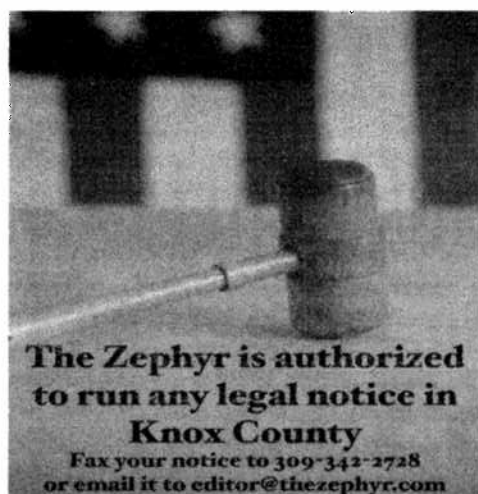
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Peter Schwartzman is associate professor and chair of the Environmental Studies Program at Knox College. He can be reached at the following email address: sfactor@grics.net.



Quoth the Raven

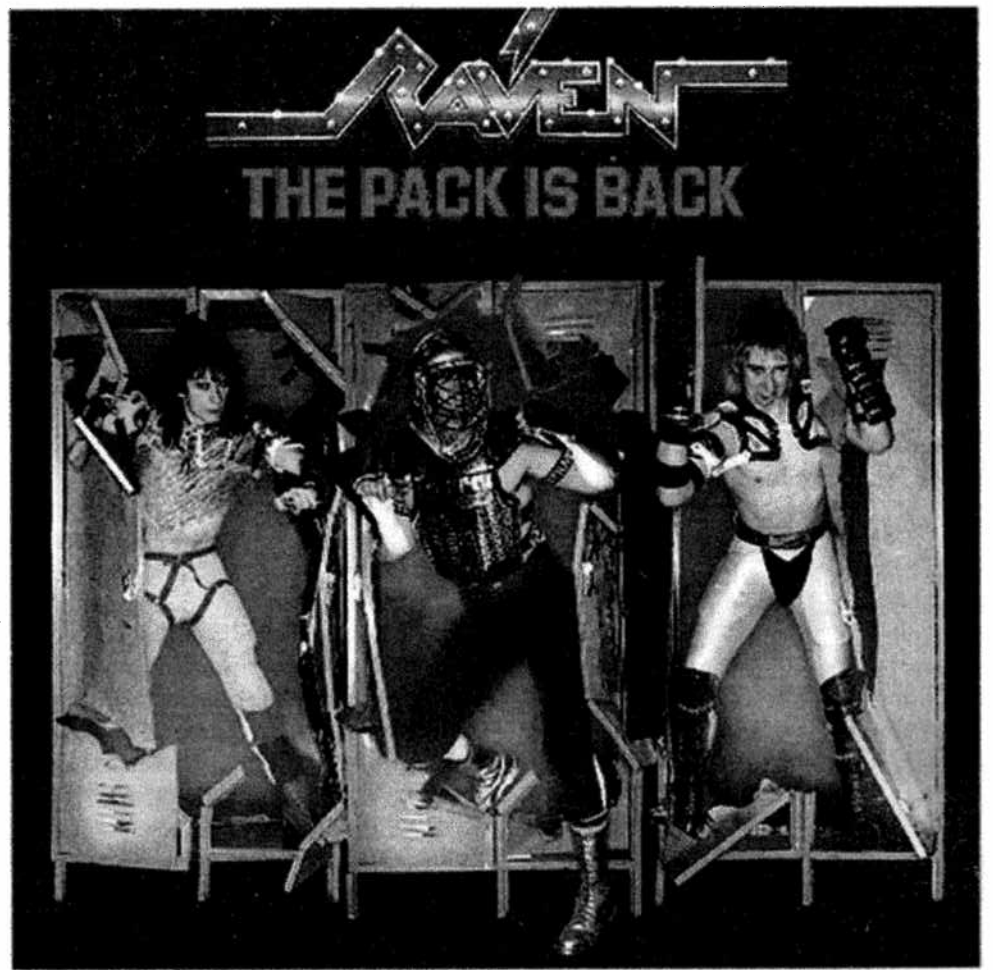
The circumstances surrounding this interview are something I'm not particularly proud of. As a long time fan of Raven and their classic brand of heavy metal I've had few negative things to say about the band, but a review I wrote for the bands last studio album, 1999's 'One For All' was scathing to say the least, but intended more for comedy than realistic opinion. The review, which was written for Kicked In The Face, fell into the hands of Raven vocalist and bassist John Gallagher, who sent an e-mail to the editor of the website claiming to be both amused/offended at once, the latter the more predominant of his thoughts.

I quickly made amends with John, as having a metal great such as himself thinking I was a severe critic of the band something I would have trouble living with. John read other pieces I had done on the band and seeing I was a fan agreed to be interviewed, a satisfactory conclusion to an unfortunate incident! Raven of course need little introduction, Newcastle's finest metal export led by the original Gallagher brothers John and Mark, who for over quarter of a century have created a distinctive brand of metal, energetic and always heavy, truly befitting the 'athletic rock' title they branded on themselves in the early 80's. Through albums like 'Rock Until You Drop', 'Wiped Out', 'All For One' and 'Nothing Exceeds Like Excess' the band have carved out a niche for themselves that has earned them the status of metal legends. With a wealth of history, memory and experiences behind his back John Gallagher talks with The Zephyr and enthusiastically fills in the gaps on Raven's career and updates the bands future.

Growing up in Newcastle in the 70's appeared to be a grim proposition for an outsider like myself, weaned on images of urban decay, bleak surroundings and rising unemployment, not to mention a mediocre football team. John and his brother developed a taste for music at a young age, which offset such harmful prospects. 'In the 70's heavy music was totally underground' begins John, 'we were introduced to music from 'Top Of The Pops' or the top twenty show on Radio One.' The heavier side of rock wasn't too long forthcoming however. 'Bands like Status Quo, Sweet Slade, Free, Purple, Sabbath, Queen, Zeppelin, Budgie and Heep all played the city hall in Newcastle so we would learn from the best! he explains, making clear their reasoning for pursuing heavy metal.

John could see early on that music was a way out, and viewing these bands made the passion and drive greater. 'Yeah music was one of the only ways out, but we were not smart enough to figure that out. We just wanted to play like our idols. We'd rehearse in a church hall for a few hours, then ritually throw our gear around and trash guitars, no audience, just us going apeshit! But Newcastle United's dubious performances did not affect us too much!' During the course of the 70's the band gradually developed their fast paced style although not initially as a power trio. 'We were a four piece from 1975 to 1980 until we went to a three piece. It was a revelation as we all had more responsibility. There are no passengers in a power trio, but so much more room!' As for the birth of the bands frenetic form of metal? 'The fast stuff we loved the best' says John, 'Highway Star, Breadfan....It was a gradual thing but we liked the high tempos and a lot of chord changes. I always point to the photo of Mark on the 'Don't Need Your Money' "7" single. That explains Mark's style totally. It's fuckin' nuts!'

Raven signed to Neat Records and with



drummer Rob 'Wacko' Hunter released their groundbreaking debut 'Rock Until You Drop' in 1981. One of the greatest debuts ever heard in metal, it established Raven as leaders of the NWOBHM, but despite containing a heavier and rawer sound than Iron Maiden or Saxon, it appeared Raven didn't receive equal recognition. How did this sit with John? 'The media likes it either real safe or real weird' John tries to rationalise. 'I like Saxon....Maiden also, but there were few real monster riffs, they wore their influences on their sleeves, like Wishbone Ash on steroids! I can't comment on whether we were more inventive, but the great thing was all those NWOBHM bands had their own sounds, and you can't say that about a lot of bands today.'

The raw nature of the first two albums almost suggested live in the studio affairs, leading me to ask John if the songs had been part of the bands live set prior to being recorded? 'Yeah, basically we went in and did our set for the first album. We were growing though with the way we played and our writing, listen to something like 'Over The Top' and 'For The Future' which were only a few months apart. The second album ('Wiped Out') was written quickly and recorded in a whirlwind one week session. A few were written in the studio on the spot, 'To The Limit' being one. This also includes the songs on the 'Crash, Bang, Wallop'. The energy was jussy insane!!'

Big things were expected of Raven after this pair of gems and third album, 1983's 'All For One' was expected to push them into the major leagues. Did John also think this would be Raven's big commercial jump? 'No' he states 'it was just a natural progression-although it sold well. The criticism of 'too fast, blah, blah, blah' had an impact so we figured we'd explore some medium tempos, as songs like 'Hold Back The Fire' and 'Hard Ride' always worked great live and helped set up the faster stuff'. The production values were noticeably improved as John confirms. 'We knew we did not want to record at Impulse Studios again, after the experience of recording in a 'real' studio in London for the Radio One session we did. We also wanted a producer, enter Michael Waegner and Udo Dirkschneider!'

'We did pre-production, recorded in London and it was so much fun! We knew we had a great album and the UK press trashed it as well! But with this album

we were able to tour the US which was a revelation'. How exactly did Udo come to be involved with the production of 'All For One'? 'Udo was on the outs with Accept and was doing work with Michael Waegner so they came as a package deal, but we loved the sounds on 'Breaker' and 'Restless And Wild' so we said let's do it Udo speaks great English now days...not so then! One night he was mortally drunk in the studio singing 'In Trance' by The Scorpions, 'I wake up in the zee morning and zee sun begins to shine.' Hilarious!' recalls John with candour. 'They helped us focus our sound' he continues 'we played for power and impact and the combination of those songs and that big sound was great.'

The second stage of Raven's career began in 1984 when they were signed by Atlantic, securing the all important major label deal. This inevitably led to Raven making concessions with their sound, with 1984's 'Stay Hard' toning down the heaviness of the earlier years. Was this done to satisfy the label or did you have the urge to continue in your usual manner? 'It's weird, it all developed from wanting to get off the Neat deal. We were working on an album and the idea was to do an album to give them to get out of our deal. That's when Atlantic became interested so we 'upgraded' the album ('Stay Hard') and started to listen to 'suggestions'. Although the songs are good and its a decent album, it's the 'Pack Is Back' album that took the cake:

A) Rob played to a click track by himself, then we did our parts, which killed the Raven feel on all but a couple of tracks

B) The idea was a high tech metal album, but it got poppier as it went on....

C) Instead of crazed American football players we looked like mutant hairdressers on the cover!

But live we still killed, it was just bigger and crazier.'

Were there any songs that you were hesitant to record during 'The Pack Is Back' sessions? 'Luckily there were one or two that were CHEESIER that thankfully got canned before being finished' John says relieved. 'Still I feel there's a few decent songs on that album that have some great parts, and some stinkers too! Initially a few were extremely heavy, 'Nightmare Ride' for one, but they got 'produced' a little, not Eddie Kramer's fault. I think he was looking forward to doing a rough and ready live