A Path Toward Justice
The NIEHS Environmental Career Worker Training Program
A Virtual Presentation of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Inc.

Host Organization:
National Institute of Environmental Health Science Research Triangle Park, NC

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Presented by Beverly L. Wright, Ph.D. Executive Director

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The Mississippi River Chemical Corridor

- An 85-mile tract of land along the Mississippi River located between New Orleans and Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- Lined with 136 petrochemical plants and 7 oil refineries
- It produces approximately 1/4 of the nation's petrochemicals
The Mississippi River Chemical Corridor
Prior to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita in 2005:

- approximately 37% of the population of Louisiana was living within 11 parishes lining the Mississippi River Chemical Corridor

- 1.7 million people

Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, Iberville, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist and West Baton Rouge Parishes
CITIES ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER CHEMICAL CORRIDOR
CHEMICALS PRODUCED ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER CHEMICAL CORRIDOR

Photo from Kate Orff, “Ecological Atlas to ‘Petrochemical America’” depicting the kinds of toxic emissions emanating from petrochemical plants along the MRCC.

http://dabrownstein.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/mapping-the-cancer-corridor-along-louisianas-gulf-coast/
The Mississippi River Chemical Corridor

Industry leaders call it the Chemical Corridor...

Responsible for turning small rural towns into brick homes and shopping centers

In other words, prosperity
The Mississippi River Chemical Corridor

- Locals call it “Cancer Alley”
- Seeing themselves as a vast human experiment....
- Blaming the millions of pounds of toxic chemicals pouring out of smoke stacks for:
  - Miscarriages
  - Cancer
  - Respiratory ailments
  - Other serious diseases
Cancer Alley
Concerns of the Residents...

• People living closest to these plants in Cancer Alley
• wondered if their health was being compromised by the chemical emissions

but had no way of determining what was being released or how much
Cancer in Louisiana

- Louisiana has one of the highest cancer mortality rates in the nation
- 160 people die from cancer in the state every week
- Approximately 22,780 new cancer cases (excluding some skin cancers and carcinomas) occurred in Louisiana in 2011
- 60 Louisiana residents receive the diagnosis of cancer each day
- 8,360 people in Louisiana died from cancer in 2011
- 23 people die of cancer every day in Louisiana
Cancer in Louisiana

- The combined mortality rate for Louisiana residents with cancer is 30% higher than the national average.
- The combined cancer mortality rate for African Americans in Louisiana is approximately 30% higher than the national average.
Who We Are

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
Our Mission

The DSCEJ provides opportunities for communities, decision makers and scientific researchers, to collaborate on programs and projects that promote the rights of all people to be free from environmental harm as it impacts health, jobs, housing, education, and a general quality of life.
The essence of this model is an acknowledgement that for effective research and policy-making, valuable community life experiences regarding environmental insult must be integrated with the theoretical knowledge of academic educators and researchers.
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

WITH THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER AVATAR COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

The purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to formalize and strengthen the ties between the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and the Mississippi River Avatar Community Advisory Board to enhance the understanding of environmental issues. Within the limitations of the funding for these activities, the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice and the Mississippi River Avatar Community Advisory Board agree to jointly conduct the following activities:

1. Workshops/semesters within the community to discuss pollution prevention and health-related environmental hazards
2. Access to environmental data and other related analytical tools available at the Center
3. Access to the Center’s technical personnel to answer questions related to environmental justice issues
4. Access to local and state health departments for lead screening, lead analysis, and testing in the homes
5. Workshops on toxic waste minimization
6. Workshops to address and mitigate stormwater pollution
7. Workshops to address community concerns
8. Workshops to address community concerns
9. Workshops to address community concerns
10. Workshops to address community concerns
11. Workshops to address community concerns

The goal of these cooperative activities is to help the community characterize their current environment and improve management skills of community leaders.

The Mississippi River Community Advisory Board agrees to assist in the characterization of the community, identify community leaders whose involvement and management skills will help execute this project, recommend individuals for training, return to the community to teach and advise community leaders to attend meetings, and provide access to facilities and technology to conduct neighborhood training as necessary.

The underdaged agreement on the 23rd day of March, 2002 to the cooperative agreement described in this Memorandum of Understanding which will be in effect for a period of two years and renewable on the 23rd day of March 2004. We further agree that either party shall notice the right to withdraw from this program upon thirty days notice to the other parties and upon the completion of the current obligations.

Ellen B. Battle
Concerned Citizens of Agriculture St. Landriff
New Orleans, LA

Pricilla Edwards
Control City Economic Opportunity
New Orleans, LA

Edward Jackson
African American Citizens Against Toxics
Gulston, LA

Mary Bole
Parent’s Outreach for Youth
Destrehan, LA

Janet Hayes
People’s Institute
New Orleans, LA

Giaci Roberts
St. James Citizens for Jobs and Environment
Convent, LA

Mary M. Smith
Concerned Citizens of April St. Landriff
New Orleans, LA

Doreen West
St. James Citizens for Jobs and Environment
Convent, LA

Elaine Williams
Concerned Citizens of Algiers
New Orleans, LA

Beverly H. Wright, Director
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice
New Orleans, LA
Our Objectives

• The DSCEJ strives to achieve three key objectives:
  – Partnership between Universities and Communities
  – Interaction among Program Components
  – Legacy
Our Methodology

• We have three components for reaching our objectives:
  – Research and Policy Studies
  – Community Assistance, Training and Education
  – Primary, Secondary and University Education
What We Do

Research and Policy Studies
Primary, Secondary and Higher Education Initiatives
Community Education & Training Initiatives
Workforce Development
Workforce Development

Bending toward Justice
Worker Training Programs

DSCEJ’s MWTP (ECWTP) began in 1994 and has a 23 year history of successfully training minority, disadvantaged, and environmentally impacted community residents in hazardous waste remediation and responding to training needs of communities after disasters.
DSCEJ Environmental Career Worker Training Programs
1994 through 2016

Previous Training Sites
- Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
- Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- West Dallas and Houston, Texas
- Hattiesburg, Mississippi
- Shreveport, Louisiana
- Biloxi/Gulfport, Mississippi
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Savannah, Georgia

Current Training Sites
- New Orleans
- Pensacola
- Detroit
- Houston

The Center’s ECWTP, formerly known as the Minority Worker Training Program, has engaged universities and communities successfully over the last 22 years.
DSCEJ Minority Worker Training Program

Previous Training Sites

- Texas
  - West Dallas
  - Houston
- Louisiana
  - Baton Rouge
  - Shreveport
- Mississippi
  - Biloxi/Gulfport
  - Hattiesburg
- Louisiana
  - Baton Rouge
  - Shreveport
- Mississippi
  - Biloxi/Gulfport
  - Hattiesburg

Current Training Sites

- Texas
- Louisiana
- Michigan
- Detroit
- Georgia
  - Savannah
- Florida
  - Pensacola
- Louisiana
  - New Orleans
- Texas
  - Houston
- Louisiana
  - Baton Rouge
  - Shreveport
- Mississippi
  - Biloxi/Gulfport
  - Hattiesburg
Comments or Questions
Deep South Center for Environmental Justice

The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice was founded by Dr. Beverly Wright in 1992 in collaboration with community environmental groups and other universities within the southern region to advance environmental justice. Since that time, the center has become a powerful resource for environmental justice research and education as well as health and safety training for environmental careers.
About This Presentation...

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The Deep South Center for Environmental Justice (DSCEJ) is not responsible for any outcomes as a result of how the information is used by viewers or how assessments are conducted in the field.

The content in this presentation is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institutes of Health.
For further information:

Contact

Kim Dunn, Technical Training Director

Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Inc.
9801 Lake Forest Blvd.
New Orleans, Louisiana 70127

Office: (504) 272-0956
E-mail: kimd@dscej.org
Website: http://www.dscej.org
THANK YOU