

16th Annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Summit Post-Summit Report 2014



Plenary Panel Session: [l to r] David Caldwell, Don Cavellini, Saladin Muhammad
(Photo by Manzoor Cheema)



Naeema Muhammad and Fred Tutman
(Photo by Manzoor Cheema)

*"I loved being able to meet and learn from people who are doing incredible work in their communities."
- Summit attendee*

The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) works to empower communities impacted by environmental injustices through organized forums, conferences, and the support of members and advocates on environmental issues that negatively impact community health and quality of life.

NCEJN's Annual Environmental Justice Summit is a forum to bring community representatives, organizers, political officials, and researchers together to help educate and inform one another about the history of environmental injustice in North Carolina. Each panel and research presentation is designed to help identify specific objectives for participants to take back to their communities and government agencies. These sessions also strengthen community resources to help protect and improve the quality of life for **all** North Carolina residents. *By working together, we can start building a better tomorrow today.*



Photo by Solomon Weiner

Community Speak-out and Government Listening Panel

This session was facilitated by Henry Lancaster of Lancaster Craig and Associates. Community members spoke to government officials about injustices occurring in their communities. Elsie Herring (pictured) of Duplin County expressed concern about the volume and density of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) in her community. Belinda Joyner vocalized the Concerned Citizens of Northampton County's concerns about air and sound pollution from a wood pellet processing plant in Western NC. Lewis Dozier spoke about the Royal Oak Concerned Citizens Association, limited access to water and basic amenities, and landfill sitings in Brunswick County, NC.

The government listening panel was composed of Sen. Angela Bryant (NC 4th Senatorial District), Dollie Burwell (Director of Constituent Services for Congressman G. K. Butterfield), Ellen Lorcheider (NC Division of Waste Management), and Cynthia Peurifoy (U.S. EPA).



Elsie Herring (Photo by Solomon Weiner)

Plenary Panel: The Role of EJ in the Forward Together/ Not One Step Back Movement in the Rural South

Saladin Muhammad, founder of Black Workers for Justice and a Moral Monday arrestee, said that Moral Monday protests are directly challenging seats of power and the oppressors. It is an important campaign. However campaigns focus on government policies, whereas movements focus on building mass power as a basis for self-determination and democracy for all. We need to better articulate the kinds of power we are trying to build and the relationships of power to the institutions that perpetrate the suffering of our people and communities. By identifying more clearly the kinds of power we need, we can contribute to transforming an important campaign into a mass grassroots movement.

David Caldwell, Project Director at Rogers-Eubanks Neighborhood Association, shared that the Moral Mondays are giving back power to communities of color. He created an image of the effect of Moral Mondays by holding his hand open, fingers outstretched. "This is how we were." Then he clenched his hand. "Throughout North Carolina and across the US, people see us coming together....This fist is power. We have power."

Fred Tutman, a Patuxent Riverkeeper in Maryland, has followed Moral Mondays in NC with avid interest. He thinks there are two approaches to social and environmental work: grassroots and top-down. The top-down approach is important but it cannot replace, and should be beholden to, grassroots organizing that promotes the power of local communities. Tutman says that EJ is often an afterthought in the top-down, main-stream approach, which is too bad since the EJ and grassroots movements have a much better story to tell as they are spiritually grounded to place and to one another. Tutman's mentor taught him that the key to success is to keep it real: keep the work grounded where some of the worst problems are. Start there and everything else will sort itself out. Moral Mondays show that there is power in dissent with the intention of getting things done. People say that EJ stuff is so negative. They want more upbeat campaigns. However, we should not support this. Upbeat chills the willingness to change; upbeat makes people complacent, leaving the natural and built environments disconnected. The EJ movement and Moral Mondays put a face on these problems. They keep it real by connecting the dialogue, the organizations, and the people to the communities that are most exploited by environmental injustice.

This panel was facilitated by **Don Cavellini**, a member of CAR and NCEJN.

You can watch the full panel at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hsFzh_1y2vY. (Go to YouTube then search for *Environmental Justice and "Forward Together/Not One Step Back"*)

Keynote Address

William Barber III, (pictured left) from the NC NAACP, gave the keynote address to the Summit Friday evening with a message of hope, fight, and unity:

*“We have no choice but to fight, when legislators are willing to risk the health and environment of our state under the false pretense of economic sustainability, by ushering in a detrimental practice such as fracking, so that a few individuals can make a quick dollar [...] We win when we come together. We win when we don’t allow ourselves to become isolated. We win when we stand with each other. We win when those individuals concerned with environmental justice begin to fight with those concerned with voting rights. We win when those concerned with women’s rights begin to fight with those concerned about students’ rights. We win when we come together and realize that the good of the whole is the only way to govern. When we become determined to move forward together. **And we will win. There’s too much at stake for us not to.**”*

Reverend Curtis Gatewood (pictured center) led the Summit in the lunchtime prayer. He brought the fire to the room by speaking about the importance of Moral Monday, Medicaid expansion, and the need for uniting movements for social justice.



William Barber III



Rev. Curtis Gatewood
(Photo by Manzoor Cheema)



Ruben Solis Garcia giving Lunch Keynote Address
(Photo by Solomon Weiner)

Ruben Solis Garcia (pictured right), from Universidad Sin Fronteras, addressed the summit with a message emphasizing the need for political education, dismantling existing systems of oppression, and asking ourselves: What does the new society that we want look like?

*“The power was in the ROOM! The wisdom and needed knowledge was PRESENT! The life road map of how people got to the SUMMIT indicated a long road to the 'awakening' and now the action for systemic change. The peoples movement assembly is the collective power of the people cause **the power of the people don't stop!**”*

Industrial Agriculture Panel

Panelists described how industrial agriculture creates environmental injustices.

- **Melanie Allen** set the stage with a stunning history of the role of white supremacy and racism in the loss of land and exploitation of labor of American Indians and African Americans. She explained how her organization, Conservation Trust for North Carolina, is involved in preserving farmland to protect the environment, food quality, economic independence, and cultural heritage in NC.
- **Chris Heaney** from Johns Hopkins University described how industrial food producers use antibiotics to speed up livestock growth, promoting antibiotic-resistant bacteria. New evidence suggest that antibiotic resistant bacteria are spreading from livestock to workers and other community members in areas of North Carolina.
- **Larry Baldwin**, North Carolina CAFO Coordinator for the Waterkeeper Alliance, provided graphic evidence of the negative environmental impacts of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in North Carolina and its relevance to global food production.
- **Jocelyn D'Ambrosio**, an attorney from the public interest law firm EarthJustice, explained that Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act prohibits government agencies that receive federal funds from administering programs in a racially discriminatory manner. She reviewed the Title VI complaint against the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources that EarthJustice filed with the United States Environmental Protection Agency on behalf of the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network and other complainants.
- **Elsie Herring**, a resident of Duplin Co. and member of Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help (another complainant in the Title VI action), vividly described how hog industry pollution of both the physical environment and the political system negatively impacts people's health and quality of life in one of the densest areas of hog production in the world.

Military, the Environment, and Justice Panel

This panel, facilitated by **Jill Johnston**, explored the social, environmental, and human health consequences of the military industrial complex. The panel started by conducting a round-table discussion, including panelists **Ruben Solis Garcia** and **Zach Robinson**, with participants sharing personal perceptions of the military industrial complex. Communities view the role of the military in different ways. For example, military installations can provide huge educational and employment opportunities for civilians as well as have positive impacts on the local economy. However, some also hold adverse perceptions of military installations by associating those installations with pollution contamination (within its boundaries and beyond) and lack of military accountability for clean up. To explore this concept, a few cases were discussed. The first case involved the Camp Lejeune Marine Base in NC, where from the 1950s through the 1980s, some people living or working at base were exposed to drinking water contaminated with industrial solvents, benzene, and other chemicals. The second case was at the Kelly Air Force Base (KAFB) in San Antonio, TX where in 1983 scientists released information that toxic waste was intentionally dumped by the Air Force for 50 years into the ground, which affected the groundwater. The contamination had gone as far as three miles from the fence line at KAFB into predominately Hispanic communities. Public health suffered and cancer rates dramatically increased. To demonstrate the rise in cases, families that had at least one family member with cancer put a small purple cross in their yard. As one drove around the area of KAFB, the visual of the purple crosses in the community was astounding and brought attention to the sickness in the area. Another local example from 2008-2011 was also discussed where communities joined together in the northeastern part of NC to fight the construction of the Navy Outlying Landing Field (OLF). The communities compiled narratives of how this installation would negatively impact the quality of life of residents. Due to the importance of the area's heritage and ecology, the Navy was unsuccessful in its efforts and cancelled the plans to construct the OLF.

Energy Injustice Panel

The 2014 NCEJN Summit Energy Injustice panel covered issues important to North Carolina communities including transportation, clear cutting trees in eastern NC for fuel abroad, and potential impacts of a gas pipeline through eastern NC along the I-95 corridor.

- **Tammy Hill** from the Stewart Creek Environmental Association in Charlotte discussed the negative impacts of High Occupancy Toll Lanes on her community. The proposed project would allow for wealthier people to pay their way out of traffic congestion, while those along the route in her neighborhood would still deal with the negative environmental impacts of increased traffic, construction, and gentrification.
- **Belinda Joyner** from Concerned Citizens of Northhampton County discussed the impact of clear cutting trees in NC to produce energy in Europe. The processing plants are noisy and dusty and have made her community a less tranquil place to reside.
- **Hope Taylor** with Clean Water for North Carolina presented on the most recent developments in hydraulic fracturing rules and regulation, highlighting the potential negative impacts to drinking water supplies. She ended her talk educating the session attendees on the path of a proposed gas pipeline through eastern NC along the I-95 corridor.
- **Connie Leeper** from NC WARN wrapped up the panel with a presentation on what we can do now to address the negative impacts to communities of color and low income communities from Climate Change.



Basic Amenities/Solid Waste Panel

The purpose of the Basic Amenities/Solid Waste panel discussion was to explore recent developments in community organizing to remedy problems caused by the presence of landfills in communities.

- **David Caldwell** of the Rogers-Eubanks Road Neighborhood Association (RENA) discussed the recent decision by the Orange County Board of Commissioners to close an existing landfill and to scrap plans to establishing a solid waste transfer site in the community. Caldwell also announced the upcoming opening of the newly constructed RENA Community Center.
- **Lewis Dozier** of the Royal Oak Concerned Citizens Association in Brunswick County discussed the community's journey to the defeat of the county's plans to establish a landfill in Supply, NC.
- **Elaine Chiosso** of the Haw River Assembly educated the audience on the harmful landfill byproduct of sludge, and how it contributes to the further contamination of communities near landfills.

Film Screening and Discussion of *Come Hell or High Water: The Battle for Turkey Creek*

This film follows a young African American man, Derrick Evens, who returns to his community, the all Black township of Turkey Creek, Mississippi to help protect the land and community he loves from the threat of developmental encroachment (via eminent domain) by the city of Gulfport, MS. Over the course of a decade, Evans and his family, neighbors, and friends stand up to powerful corporate interests and politicians while also enduring Hurricane Katrina and the BP oil disaster in their struggle for self-determination and environmental justice.

David Caldwell (RENA), China Medel (Working Films), Omari Wilson (NCEJN), and Omega Wilson (WERA) facilitated a discussion following the film. The film looks at the community's strategies, successes, and challenges in their fight against the city of Gulfport's designs for urban redevelopment, as well as Turkey Creek's intersection with larger issues of environmental and racial justice along the Gulf Coast south.

If interested in having a free screening of this film for your organization, the NCEJN has a copy to loan.

Research Presentations:

Landfills:

Residents in Greensboro, NC are concerned with the health and economic impacts of the nearby, unlined landfills. EJ analysis of the location of Greensboro, NC landfills suggests that the harmful effects of the landfills have the potential to disproportionately impact African-Americans (Nathaniel MacHardy, UNC).

Industrial Hog Operations (IHOs):

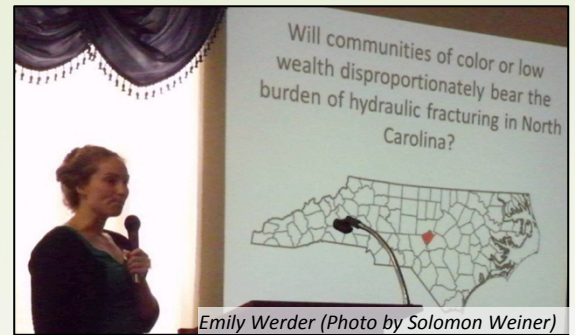
Jill Johnston (UNC) presented on the disproportionate impact of industrial hog operations (IHOs) on people of color in NC. This racial disparity is the subject of a Title VI Civil Rights Complaint against the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that has been filed with the US Environmental Protection Agency. DENR's lax oversight of IHOs means that neighboring communities are exposed to air and water pollution that impacts their health and quality of life. Johnston et al. quantified the relationships between race/ethnicity and proximity to IHOs. Results show that IHOs in NC disproportionately affect Black, Hispanic, and American Indian residents. This special pattern is generally recognized as environmental racism.

Elizabeth Christenson (UNC) presented research regarding the creation of a computerized database of NC fields where DENR permits hog manure to be sprayed. Sprayers create droplets of liquefied hog waste that can drift downwind into neighboring communities. The digitized maps can help residents and researchers identify threats to water and air quality from spray fields. Preliminary results include locations for 101 IHOs in Duplin County. Of 314 spray fields analyzed, 10 were in different watersheds than their farm. Future work will finish the spatial database and incorporate flow length distance to improve water quality assessment.

Jessica Rinsky (UNC) presented on research investigating the worker health implications of persistent carrying of livestock-associated, antibiotic-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. In a 14-day study conducted in 2012, researchers from UNC's School of Public Health and community organizers with the Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help evaluated whether IHO workers were colonized persistently by these bacteria, even after time away from work. Results showed that nearly half (45.5%) of the 22 participating workers persistently carried antibiotic-resistant, livestock-associated *S. aureus* over the 14-day study period. Although participants did not report symptoms of infection, persistent nasal carriage of *S. aureus* has been linked to an increased occurrence of infection in the hospital setting. Antibiotic resistance may disproportionately affect groups protected under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Hydraulic fracturing:

Hydraulic fracturing ('fracking') for natural gas extraction is a rapidly growing industry. Community members across the U.S. have expressed concern that hydraulic fracturing is negatively impacting their lives by polluting the air, contaminating the water, disrupting the community, and harming their health. **Emily Werder** (UNC) presented on research investigating leases for future hydraulic fracturing in Lee County, NC. Researchers matched the locations of leases for hydraulic fracturing to US Census units and compared information about race and poverty to the distribution of hydraulic fracturing leases. The study findings indicate that hydraulic fracturing in Lee County, NC will disproportionately affect communities of color, and may be concentrated in communities with more poverty.



Disposal of "biosolids":

Andrew Lindstom (EPA) presented ongoing research that shows some parts of the Cape Fear River system contain relatively high levels of persistent pollutants like perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS). While the sources of these compounds have not been completely evaluated, results suggest rivers and streams that are adjacent to fields that receive sludge applications from specific waste water treatment plants tend to have high levels of PFOA and PFOS. Cities and towns often dispose of their municipal waste water treatment plant sludges or "biosolids" by applying them to agricultural fields as fertilizer.

Review of 2014 Youth Summit

Because the first two presentations of the Youth Summit were focused on impacts to agricultural workers, a topic that we considered might be of interest to many of the adult attendees, a last minute decision was made to open up this session of the Youth Summit to all Summit attendees. Teenage and adult attendees were able to learn about many of the unknown, unseen, and unsung agriculturalists who grow and harvest much of the food for our tables.

Dan Derman, a recent graduate of Appalachian State University and representatives of Student Action with Farmworkers led the first presentation on farmworker rights. Through personal testimony and research, Dan informed Summit participants about the experiences, dangers, and injustices faced by adult, adolescent, and teenage farmworkers. This presentation served as a primer to agriculture in NC and was facilitated as an interactive Q&A. Dan discussed the barriers to suitable health care and protection from heat stress. He also talked about the important work of SAF, an organization that serves as an ally to farmworkers by advocating for better wages, working and living conditions, and health care access, among other things.

The second presentation was by **Daniel Mejia**, who is a community organizer with NCEJN, organizing communities in eastern NC around confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Daniel spoke about adverse social and economic impacts on NC agricultural workers. He also spoke about some of his own experience in working with poultry CAFO workers and the particular vulnerabilities of Latino agricultural workers. The session culminated with a very engaging discussion amongst the audience members about root causes of the inequities that agricultural workers face. The open format of this part of the Youth Summit allowed for interaction between the audience and presenters. It was also great to have adult attendees supporting presentations made by young conference presenters. Lunch followed this session, and it was great to see that many attendees had not moved from their chairs. They stayed another 30-40 minutes continuing the discussions that were sparked in the session.

Despite lower attendance than previous Youth Summits, this year's Youth Summit was as rich as prior gatherings. Our small group of youth from Edgecombe County High School and young women from Bennett College in Greensboro – who attend annually – contributed to intimate and honest conversations.

Facilitators engaged youth in two sessions, both of which took place outdoors. The first session began with introductions and was followed by a workshop led by **Manju Rajendran**, a Community Organizer with NC WARN, titled: "What is a Leader?". Manju asked our youth and young adults about characteristics they believe leaders exhibit. She also asked the youthful attendees who they considered to be leaders in their lives. Overwhelmingly, the youth and young adults mentioned family members (parents, grandparents, and siblings). The workshop was designed in order to facilitate leadership capacities in youth and young adults by helping them envision the ways in which individuals in their lives are leaders.

The session was followed up with a session on the school-to-prison pipeline led by **Q Wideman**, who is a youth organizer with the Youth Organizing Institute (YOI). Q engaged the youth from Edgecombe High School in an enriching conversation about policing within schools. The youth were prompted with questions like "Do you have police in your school?" and "Have you seen someone arrested before?". During this discussion students expressed that police and metal detectors have become an everyday experience at their schools. One student shared an experience of seeing a classmate arrested in class, which he referred to as "embarrassing" for the student and disrespectful to the class. Q's session on the school-to-prison pipeline provided a space for students to discuss and to critically analyze the placement of police in their school and the ways that their school – and the alternative schools used to punish students – are connected to the prison industrial complex.

NCJEN is truly grateful to Dan, Daniel, Manju, and Q for sharing their time and skills throughout the conference. We are equally grateful for our youth and young adult attendees for their sharing the experiences and skills with us all.

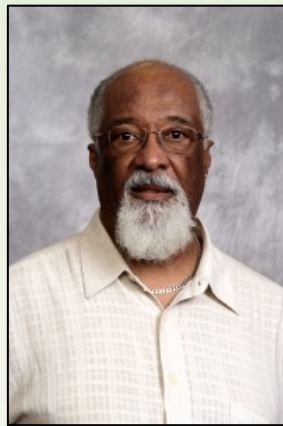
Hope to see you and your youth next October!



David Caldwell

Recipient of the NCEJN Community Resilience Award

David Caldwell is a longtime resident and organizer for the Rogers Eubanks Neighborhood Association (RENA). Mr. Caldwell, through community dedication and bureaucratic patience, has been instrumental in the closing of the Orange County Regional Landfill, securing funds from Orange County to connect homes to municipal water and sewer services, creating after school and summer enrichment programs for youth, and opening a vibrant and welcoming community center in the neighborhood. Mr. Caldwell has helped make promises made by the city decades ago become long-awaited realities today.



Irving L. Joyner

Recipient Steve Wing International Environmental Justice Award

Professor Irving L. Joyner has provided pro bono legal counsel to political, religious, and community organizations, leading many of the legal battles related to representing people arrested during the Moral Monday events, and working tirelessly on cases related to the recent NC voting rights legislation. His positive spirit has been an inspirational influence to many, as he has taken a lead in so many important recent legal battles in North Carolina.

Who attended?

The 16th annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Summit united community members, activists, environmental health researchers, legal advocates, and government officials at the Franklinton Center at Bricks in Whitakers, North Carolina on October 17th and 18th of 2014.

Total number of attendees: 112

Ages of attendees:

- 39% were aged 55 and older
- 16% were aged 35-54
- 40% were aged 20-34
- 5% were aged 19 and younger



Youth led panel (Photo by Fred Tutman)

Affiliation of attendees:

- 31 people identified as members of a community impacted by environmental injustice
- 8 people identified as local, state, or federal government employees
- 52 people identified as members of an environmental or social justice organization
- 32 people identified as students
- 9 people identified as researchers



Belinda Joyner (Photo by Solomon Weiner)



Conversation post-Plenary Panel; L to R: Don Cavellini, Saladin Muhammad, Elaine Chiosso, John Wagner, Sarah Rhodes, Alphonse Turner (Photo by Manzoor Cheema)



Photo by Solomon Weiner



L to R: Dollie Burwell and Cynthia Peurifoy (Photo by Solomon Weiner)

Special Thanks to Sponsors and Supporters

11th Hour Project

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League of Conservation Voters

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

NC Conservation Network

Rogers-Eubanks Road Neighborhood Association

Southern Environmental Law Center

Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation

Larry Baldwin for donating raffle prizes

Regina Barnes for child/adult care

Manzoor Cheema and Solomon Weiner for photography and filming

Henry Lancaster for help with the Community Speak-out & Government Listening Panel

EJ Summit Planning Committee (David Caldwell, Don Cavellini, Nate De Bono, Peter Gilbert, Dezma Lyons, Naeema Muhammad, Chandra Taylor, Marilyn Robinson, Pavithra Vasudevan, Ayo Wilson, Omari Wilson, Adrien Wilkie, Steve Wing, Courtney Woods, Willie Wright)

Franklinton Center and Kitchen Staff for hosting and feeding us

All keynote speakers, presenters, panelists, and facilitators for providing content

All attending community members, organizations, academics, and government officials for participating in the 2014 EJ Summit

We appreciate your donations and support!

The 2014 EJ Summit agenda and speaker/panelist biographies are provided in the program, which is available on our website under "History of EJ Summit".



L to R: Regina Barnes, Shafeah M'balia, Nick Wood
(Photo by Sol Weiner)

Interested in Getting Involved? Contact us!
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