

Timeline

KEY:

NCEJN History

Community EJ History

Injustices and Tragedies

1982:

- Warren County residents protested the dumping of PCBs in their community, sparking the Environmental Justice Movement, which rapidly spread around the world.¹

1987:

- The United Church of Christ published “Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States: A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites.”²
 - [Report linked here](#)

1990:

- Robert Bullard published *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*.
 - [Image of original cover](#)

1991:

- The Concerned Citizens of [Tillery](#) (CCT) began organizing against concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in Halifax County.
 - Interesting very old historical photographs of Tillery:
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017767840/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017762420/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017717084/>
 - <https://www.loc.gov/item/2017762417/>
- October 24-27, 1991: First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit - Over 1,100 environmental justice leaders met in Washington, D.C. to build solidarity for the movement.³ Among them were Gary Grant, Nan Freeland, and Steve Wing.⁴

¹ <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement>

² <https://omeka.middlebury.edu/fyg/items/show/316>

³ <https://kresge.org/news-views/roundtable-30th-anniversary-of-1st-national-people-of-color-environmental-leadership-summit-looking-back-looking-forward/>

⁴ Interview with Naeema Muhammad. Interview by Emma Jo Donnelly. June 26, 2024. Zoom. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DNTxqn3yZvowvwGy3r_LC5HkLpaaRB-J-vINRNweQTc/edit?usp=sharing.

Attendees wrote the Seventeen Principles of Environmental Justice, which continue to guide the Environmental Justice Movement to this day.⁵

- Great photos at the bottom of [this article](#).

1992:

- CCT hosted Hogfest II. CCT hosted Hogfest II, a large event which mocked Hogfest, a pork industry propaganda event designed to indoctrinate communities. Hogfest II educated communities on the public health and environmental injustices that resulted from CAFOs in nearby counties.

1993:

- 1993-2001: CCT led the Hog Round Table. The Concerned Citizens of Tillery led Hog Round Table meetings in Tillery, where concerned residents, organizers, environmentalists, and scientists discussed collecting data and pushing for regulations.

1994:

- CCT successfully pushed Halifax County to pass an ordinance prohibiting the siting of additional hog CAFOs.

1997:

- The State of North Carolina passed a moratorium on industrial hog farming operations, due to years of organizing by CCT and its allies.⁶

1998:

- October 1998: The first Environmental Justice Summit took place at the Historical Franklinton Center at Bricks in Whitakers, North Carolina.⁷ Around seventy-five to eighty community members attended.⁸ During the Summit, community members decided to found the North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN).⁹ Gary Grant, Nan Freeland, Don Cavellini, and Steve Wing were among the founders (Interview With Naema Muhammad and Don Cavellini, 4). NCEJN formalized decades-long

⁵ <https://kresge.org/news-views/roundtable-30th-anniversary-of-1st-national-people-of-color-environmental-leadership-summit-looking-back-looking-forward/>

⁶ <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-quality-permitting/animal-feeding-operations/program-summary#:~:text=In%201997%2C%20North%20Carolina%20implemented,lagoons%20as%20primary%20waste%20treatment.>

⁷ "NCEJN 2009 Organizational Planning Session 8-12-09" (North Carolina Environmental Justice Network, August 12, 2009),

https://drive.google.com/file/d/10bok_LyFBWS0lqjdjdB1XJWP8ojAzyQ4/view?usp=share_link.

⁸ [slatin-scammell-2014-no-justice-no-peace-and-the-right-to-self-determination-an-interview-with-gary-grant-and-naeema.pdf](#)

⁹ [slatin-scammell-2014-no-justice-no-peace-and-the-right-to-self-determination-an-interview-with-gary-grant-and-naeema.pdf](#)

partnerships among communities, researchers, and social, political, economic, racial, and environmental justice organizations.¹⁰

1999: NCEJN hired Naeema Muhammad, a seasoned grassroots leader of Black Workers for Justice, to lead community organizing for the Network.¹¹

- September 16, 1999: Hurricane Floyd made landfall in North Carolina.¹² [The hurricane flooded the region](#), destroying homes, businesses, and other structures.¹³ The *Janesville Gazette* reported that, “many residents lost all that they had.”¹⁴
- NCEJN joined the Workers Relief and Aid Project, a coalition of community organizations created to support hurricane survivors.
- November 1999: Over one hundred Hurricane Floyd survivors attended the Second North Carolina Environmental Justice Summit.¹⁵
- December 1999: Black leaders in the Environmental Justice Movement from across the United States attended a meeting of the African American Environmental Justice Action Network in Arlington, Virginia to organize and build their networks. Gary Grant and Steve Wing represented NCEJN.¹⁶

2000: Professor [Steve Wing](#) created the Integrating Epidemiology and Environmental Justice course at UNC–Chapel Hill. Wing co-taught the course with Naeema Muhammad. Eight years after Wing’s passing, the course remains.

2002: Devon Hall and Dethula Baron-Hall founded the Rural Empowerment Association for Community Help (REACH).

2006:

- Coalition was formed to fight hog CAFOs. NCEJN, REACH, the Waterkeeper Alliance, and Riverkeeper began meeting monthly to develop a plan to secure a permanent extension of the moratorium on hog farming, which the State of North Carolina had the option to renew in 2007.¹⁷

¹⁰ Fiona Morgan, “Activist’s Passing Leaves Many Stunned,” *INDY Week*, November 17, 2004, <http://indyweek.com/news/archives-news/activist-s-passing-leaves-many-stunned/>; Valerie Johnson, PhD, interview by Emma Jo Donnelly, Zoom, July 2, 2024.

¹¹ Valerie Johnson, PhD, interview by Emma Jo Donnelly, Zoom, July 2, 2024.

¹² NOAA US Department of Commerce, “Hurricane Floyd” (NOAA’s National Weather Service), accessed July 2, 2024, <https://www.weather.gov/mhx/Sep161999EventReview>; Martha Waggoner, “Treading Water: Hurricane Floyd, Flooding Hit the Poor and Minorities,” *The Carolina Times*, February 12, 2000, North Carolina Digital Heritage Center.

¹³ “Hurricane, Flooding Hit Poor, Minorities,” *Janesville Gazette*, February 6, 2000, Newspaper Archive.

¹⁴ “Hurricane, Flooding Hit Poor, Minorities,” *Janesville Gazette*, February 6, 2000, Newspaper Archive.

¹⁵ Martha Waggoner, “Treading Water: Hurricane Floyd, Flooding Hit the Poor and Minorities,” *The Carolina Times*, February 12, 2000, North Carolina Digital Heritage Center; “Organizational Planning”; Interview With Naeema Muhammad and Don Cavellini, 4.

¹⁶ Organizational Planning.”

¹⁷ Interview with Naeema Muhammad. Interview by Emma Jo Donnelly. June 26, 2024. Zoom. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DNTxqn3yZvowvwGy3r_LC5HkLpaaRB-J-viNRRNweQTc/edit?usp=sharing.

2007:

- June 19-21, 2007:¹⁸ Community members engaged in a **Fifty-One Hour Hog Vigil at Halifax Mall** to pressure legislators to extend the moratorium on hog CAFOs. North Carolina policy makers made the moratorium permanent later that year.¹⁹

2009: **NCEJN began working with the Rogers and Eubanks Neighborhood Association** in their decades-long efforts to fight against the public health impacts that resulted from a landfill installed in their community in the 1970s.²⁰

September 12, 2013: **The Concerned Citizens of West Badin Community formed to formalize decades of organizing against the hazardous impacts of the Alcoa aluminum smelting facility.**²¹

2014:

- **500+ North Carolina community members filed lawsuits against Smithfield Foods** for damages to their property, health, and wellbeing caused industrial hog operations²²
- June 16, 2014: **The Royal Oak Concerned Citizens Association successfully blocked Brunswick County's plan to expand its landfill**, located in the majority African American Royal Oak community.²³

2016:

- October 2016: **Over twenty community members traveled to Washington, D.C. to speak with EPA and other governmental officials about the discriminatory impacts of hog CAFOs on Black communities** in southeastern North Carolina.²⁴ They carried with them a petition signed by 95,000 people that demanded that EPA Office of Civil Rights investigators travel to southeastern North Carolina to witness these hazards themselves.²⁵
 - Photograph from this event [here](#).
 - Undated [photograph](#) that looks to be from the same event as the photograph above.

¹⁸ <http://h2opodcast.com/rk.html#hv>.

¹⁹ <https://www.deq.nc.gov/about/divisions/water-resources/water-quality-permitting/animal-feeding-operations/program-summary#:~:text=That%20moratorium%20was%20made%20permanent,1307%2D>.

²⁰ "Organizational Planning."

²¹ <https://ncejn.wordpress.com/2013/09/18/ncejn-congratulates-the-concerned-citizens-of-west-badin-community/>

²² <https://thefern.org/2019/12/rural-north-carolinians-won-multimillion-dollar-judgments-against-the-worlds-largest-hog-producer-will-those-cases-now-be-overturned/>

²³ <https://www.fairhousingnc.org/2014/settlement-of-royal-oak-concerned-citizens-assn-et-al-v-brunswick-county-lawsuit/>

²⁴ Haddix, Elizabeth. Interview by Emma Jo Donnelly. North Carolina Environmental Justice Network Internal Archive. Zoom: August 23, 2024.

²⁵ <https://waterkeeper.org/news/north-carolina-communities-impacted-by-cafos-ask-epa-to-make-a-finding-of-discrimination-by-years-end/>

- Mid-November 2016: Directly motivated by the October petition and in-person organizing efforts, EPA Office of Civil Rights investigators traveled to southeastern North Carolina to research the impacts of living near industrial hog operations.²⁶

2017:

- January 12, 2017: In a nationally unprecedented move, the External Civil Rights Compliance Office of the EPA issued a formal letter of concern to what is now the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) about the Title VI Civil Rights complaint made by NCEJN, REACH, the Waterkeeper Alliance, and Earthjustice regarding the permitting of hog CAFOs in Black communities.²⁷
 - On website, link to EPA letter: https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/documents/letter_of_concern_to_william_g_ross_nc_deq_re_admin_complaint_11r-14-r4_.pdf
- The North Carolina General Assembly amended the Right to Farm Law to limit the damages that could be awarded in nuisance lawsuits to losses in property value.²⁸

2018:

- May 2, 2018: DEQ created the [Environmental Justice and Equity Board](#). Naeema Muhammad was among the environmental justice leaders appointed to the Board.²⁹
- May 3, 2018: NCEJN, REACH, and Waterkeeper Alliance agreed to a settlement with DEQ regarding the Title VI complaint the groups had filed with the EPA in 2014.
 - [Photograph of prayer circle during the REACH meeting following the settlement](#)
 - [Photograph of REACH members addressing the press at REACH headquarters](#)
- June 15, 2018: The Farm Act of 2018 amended the Right to Farm Law to severely limit agricultural and forestry nuisance lawsuits by 1) restricting these lawsuits to plaintiffs owning property within half a mile from the operation and 2) requiring that property owners file within one year of the opening or major changes of operation.³⁰ The passage of this law followed soon after community members received multi-million dollar verdicts in their lawsuits against Murphy-Brown of Smithfield Foods.³¹
- August 3, 2018: A jury awarded North Carolina community members \$473.5 million in their lawsuit against Smithfield.³² However, due to the recent amendment of the Right to

²⁶ <https://waterkeeper.org/news/north-carolina-communities-impacted-by-cafos-ask-epa-to-make-a-finding-of-discrimination-by-years-end/>

²⁷ https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2018-05/documents/letter_of_concern_to_william_g_ross_nc_deq_re_admin_complaint_11r-14-r4_.pdf.

Haddix, Elizabeth. Interview by Emma Jo Donnelly. North Carolina Environmental Justice Network Internal Archive. Zoom: August 23, 2024.

²⁸ <https://onerural.uky.edu/right-to-farm/NC>

²⁹ <https://ncnewslines.com/briefs/deq-announces-members-of-new-environmental-justice-equity-board/>

³⁰ <https://farmlaw.ces.ncsu.edu/land-use-and-zoning/land-ownership-and-liability/north-carolinas-right-to-farm-law-after-smithfield-litigation/>

³¹ <https://farmlaw.ces.ncsu.edu/land-use-and-zoning/land-ownership-and-liability/north-carolinas-right-to-farm-law-after-smithfield-litigation/>

³² <https://thecounter.org/north-carolina-jury-fines-smithfield-foods-nuisance-lawsuit-hog-farm-manure/>

Farm Law, the U.S. District Court in Raleigh lowered the amount to around \$98 million.³³ Even so, Smithfield appealed this nuisance award.³⁴

- Early August 2018: Northampton County Citizens Against Coal Ash successfully pushed their county planning board to deny rezoning for a coal ash landfill.³⁵ Over 300 community members attended that meeting to protest the landfill.³⁶
- September 14, 2018: Hurricane Florence made landfall in North Carolina, devastating the southeastern part of the state with [floods](#) and [hog waste overflow crises](#).³⁷

2019:

- February 13, 2019: Energy Justice NC: End the Duke Monopoly campaign publicly launched. [Bobby Jones](#) of the Down East Coal Ash Coalition made the announcement.³⁸
 - [Photograph of protest at the North Carolina State Legislature](#)
- October 31, 2019: The North Carolina Senate unanimously passed SB559, a win for Energy Justice NC organizers as that bill excluded Duke Energy's ratemaking provision.³⁹

2020:

- Early May 2020: A North Carolina Judge ruled that Animal Waste General Permits are not exempt from the North Carolina Administrative Procedures Act, meaning these permits required annual reporting, water quality monitoring, and Phosphorus Loss Protection Tests.⁴⁰
- Summer 2020: Residents of Robeson County successfully organized against the siting of a wood pellet facility in their county.⁴¹
 - [Photographs from community organizing events](#)
- November 19, 2020: Smithfield Foods agreed to a settlement with the community members who had sued the company for damages from industrial hog operations near their properties.⁴² The settlement followed soon after the decision by the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Virginia to reject Smithfield's appeal of a lower court's decision to award millions of dollars of damages to the plaintiffs.⁴³

³³ https://thefern.org/ag_insider/north-carolina-advocate-who-successfully-fought-hog-industry-dies/

³⁴ https://thefern.org/ag_insider/north-carolina-advocate-who-successfully-fought-hog-industry-dies/

³⁵ <https://ncnewsline.com/2018/08/10/local-officials-residents-deal-setback-to-proposed-coal-ash-storage-site-in-northampton-county/>

³⁶ <https://ncnewsline.com/2018/08/10/local-officials-residents-deal-setback-to-proposed-coal-ash-storage-site-in-northampton-county/>

³⁷ <https://www.weather.gov/ilm/HurricaneFlorence>; <https://earthjustice.org/article/hog-waste-creates-problems-for-north-carolina-residents>

³⁸ <https://appvoices.org/2019/02/13/groups-target-duke-energy-to-end-monopoly-control-of-nc-electric-system/>

³⁹ <https://energyjusticenc.org/2019/10/31/public-opposition-wins-on-sb559-despite-duke-energys-monopoly-influence/>

⁴⁰ <https://farmlaw.ces.ncsu.edu/2020/05/animal-waste-court-rules-general-permits-are-not-exempt-from-nc-administrative-procedures-act/>

⁴¹ <https://dogwoodalliance.org/2020/06/a-pandemic-of-injustice-in-the-rural-south/>

⁴² https://thefern.org/ag_insider/smithfield-settles-suits-over-north-carolina-farms-after-losing-appeal/

⁴³ https://thefern.org/ag_insider/smithfield-settles-suits-over-north-carolina-farms-after-losing-appeal/

2021:

- The National Academy of Science published a study investigating the number of deaths in the United States caused annually by agricultural pollutants.⁴⁴ The study found that 80% of the 17,900 deaths caused by agricultural air pollution resulted from pollution generated by industrial animal operations⁴⁵ and that 25% of these deaths resulted from industrial hog operations.⁴⁶

2022:

- September 24, 2022: The EPA announced its creation of its Office of Environmental Justice and External Civil Rights.⁴⁷ [The announcement was made in Warren County, North Carolina.](#)⁴⁸ (Sacoby Wilson is in that linked photograph)

2023:

- January 2023: NCEJN launched Spidey-Sens-r, a community science project to monitor air quality using spider webs.
- September 2023: NCEJN and twelve other environmental groups sued the EPA for failing to regulate industrial animal operations.⁴⁹

2024:

- Summer 2024: [Greensboro residents](#) successfully blocked the city's plan to move waste from the preregulatory landfill underneath Bingham Park to the White Street Landfill.⁵⁰
- October 18-20, 2024: Twenty-Fifth Annual North Carolina Environmental Justice Summit

⁴⁴ <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/06/02/environmental-racism-and-the-pork-industry-the-vindication-of-epidemiologist-steve-wing/>

⁴⁵ <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/06/02/environmental-racism-and-the-pork-industry-the-vindication-of-epidemiologist-steve-wing/>

⁴⁶ <https://www.counterpunch.org/2021/06/02/environmental-racism-and-the-pork-industry-the-vindication-of-epidemiologist-steve-wing/>

⁴⁷ <https://sph.umd.edu/news/epa-elevates-environmental-justice-new-national-office>

⁴⁸ <https://sph.umd.edu/news/epa-elevates-environmental-justice-new-national-office>

⁴⁹ <https://portcitydaily.com/latest-news/2024/04/27/local-environmentalist-joins-factory-farm-pollution-lawsuit-against-epa/>

⁵⁰ [Triad-City-Beat-Jun-13-2024.pdf](#)