



NC ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE NETWORK

ANNUAL REPORT

2025

I Am A Link In The Chain,
And The Link In The Chain Will Not Break Here



WHO WE ARE + WHAT WE STAND FOR

INTRODUCTION

The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network is a grassroots coalition of community organizations and their supporters who work with low income communities and people of color on issues of climate, environmental, racial, and social injustice.

The network commits to honoring community autonomy and wisdom, and recognizes and builds intersectionalities in struggle across various movements.

OUR MISSION

To promote health and environmental equity for all people of North Carolina through community action for clean industry, safe workplaces and fair access to all human and natural resources. We believe in grassroots education and organizing, grassroots-driven solutions, people power, democratic participation, and economic and political equity.

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“The North Carolina Environmental Justice Network (NCEJN) has been an invaluable ally to the Bingham Park EJ Team. They have worked tirelessly to help us magnify community voices and illuminate the injustice of Environmental Racism. Through their network, we have been introduced to researchers and organizations that provide critical resources and collaborative support. These connections have strengthened our ongoing advocacy for the full remediation of Bingham Park. The relationships we have built with NCEJN are so meaningful to our movement they continue to empower our work toward environmental justice. We look forward to a healthier Greensboro and beyond with NCEJN! We are truly grateful”. - Cheryl Johnson, Bingham Park Environmental Justice Team



A WORD FROM OUR CO-DIRECTORS

This year, as environmental pressures intensified—from the spread of biogas operations to the rapid expansion of AI-driven data centers—our work grew in scope.

We joined others in confronting a threat to us all: kidnappings through ICE and Border Patrol, and the erosion of all of our civil and political rights. We held a ‘Know Your Rights’ webinar, and uplifted those whose work is central to these issues.

We confronted another growing threat: the expansion of AI data centers, a new form of extraction that treats our communities as ‘sacrifice zones,’ and one that particularly worsens environmental and economic health for African-American communities. We centered this struggle in our Summit, and supported the fight against data centers. We are building a North Carolina network to coordinate strategy, share resources, and support resistance efforts nationwide.

We deepened our leadership within statewide EJ structures. Dr. Valerie Ann Johnson, our co-director, joined Senior Advisor Naeema Muhammad on the Governor’s Environmental Justice Advisory Council. Through EJAC and Network partnerships, we

joined the Heat Stress Round Table, addressing rising heat-related illnesses affecting vulnerable populations, especially farmworkers.

Our sold-out 26th Summit reaffirmed the strength of our statewide network and the commitment of our partners; together, “we are still here.”

We supported groundbreaking reporting on the impacts of mega-station development, including an investigative report on the Buc-ee’s mega gas station, co-organized the first People’s Hearing in North Carolina, drawing more than 460 people for two days of testimony, worked with communities and a network of researchers to implement rapid response monitoring, and expanded innovative research programs such as Spidey Sens-r and EJ-in-a-Box, underscoring that science, story, and organizing are inseparable tools in the struggle for justice.

While this year brought significant financial volatility, we did not waver. Together, we continue building power, protecting people, and shaping a future rooted in dignity and collective liberation.

FUTURE OF THE NETWORK

THE CHAIN WILL NOT BREAK HERE



The challenges we have faced this year have emboldened us. They strengthen our resolve for equity and collective justice. To best do so together, we welcome the new year by listening to feedback from our NCEJN Member Survey and by strengthening relationships within our Network.

This year, we will launch our community mapping initiative, E-I-E-I Oh No!. Through participatory research, communities will identify poultry CAFOs and swine waste digesters threatening their well-being and use that knowledge as a foundation for organizing.

To strengthen the bridge between students, research, and frontline organizers, we plan to hold an inaugural Academic Convening. We will also develop our internship program, with an intentional focus on students from HBCUs and Tribal Colleges.



We will continue building collaborations to increase organizing power. We aim to form a network of progressive, elected local policymakers to strategize and create policies grounded in community health and environmental justice.

We celebrate our twice-weekly newsletter—called “epic” and a “major success” by readers—and will make it stronger and more useful for organizing.

We will continue to reject anticipatory compliance and defeatism. Forward together.

“The staff of NCEJN have been extraordinarily supportive partners in 2025. NCEJN connected me with other people and organizations who are fighting a myriad of environmental issues throughout NC and the U.S., and invited CCAEJ and me to give testimony and tell our story at the People’s Hearing this past June.

As a current cancer patient exposed to high levels of PCBs inside NCSU’s Poe Hall, I was new to the world of environmental justice and advocacy but had to learn fast. By connecting our work to others across NC, NCEJN is a critical resource for ordinary citizens like me, to learn about advocacy, learn from the experience of other environmental advocates, and build confidence and courage to speak out about environmental injustice. Thank you to Dr Masri and the entire staff of NCEJN for your support.” - Sandy Alford, The Campus Community Alliance for Environmental Justice

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

COMMUNITY EVENTS



3

QUARTERLY MEETINGS

QM 1: Confidential Community 37 Attendees

QM 2: Bingham Park EJ Project 29 Attendees

QM 3: Mutual Aid 3-Part Virtual Meetings 46 Attendees

26TH SUMMIT

198 Attendees

77 Orgs., Gov. Agencies, & Universities

25 Volunteers

14 Org. Donors 23 Individual Donors

Sessions on Community Research, Data Centers, Militarization, Solidarity Economy, & Local & International Solidarity

Language Equity: Spanish Interpretation & Booklet Translation

460

ATTENDEES

PEOPLE'S HEARING
FOR EJ

Co-hosted with the People's EJ Advisory Council, NC Climate Justice Collective, NC Disaster Resilience & Response Network, Tishman Center for Environment & Design, & Communities First Fund

Outcomes: Identified local organizing committee to support & execute local, & state advocacy strategies. Set the stage for additional regional hearings in Arizona & Pennsylvania

4

COMMUNITY GRANTS

VALUED AT

\$100K+

2

RESEARCH READINESS WORKSHOPS

to help communities identify
their research questions

2

SUMMER INTERNS

PLACED IN
COMMUNITIES

4

FISCAL SPONSORSHIPS

VALUED AT

\$200K+

CAPACITY BUILDING



329

SAMPLES
COLLECTED & ANALYZED

4

PARTICIPATORY
MAPPING EVENTS

8

COMMUNITIES
SUPPORTED

3

COMMUNITIES
SUPPORTED

83

OBSERVATIONS
COLLECTED

PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH



PARTICIPATION IN 5 SCIENCE ADVISORY BOARDS
AT 3 UNIVERSITIES & NONPROFITS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



90

NEWSLETTERS

39 Reflections & Report Backs

1557 Subscribers 7% Increase from 2024

2

WEBINARS

Know Your Rights

46 Attendees

Understanding Data Center
& Their Impacts

145 Attendees

IN PRINT

3 Reports & Booklets

7 Flyers & Posters

61

PRESENTATIONS

27 Presentations at Conferences &
University Guest Lectures

20 Presentations to Communities

9 Presentations to Ally Organizations

6 Presentations on Virtual Panels

3300 Total People Reached

PUBLIC NEWS SERVICE

8 Public News Service Articles
Amplifying The Work of 5 Communities

6,714,191 People Reached

Distributed to 32 News Outlets



6

PUBLIC COMMENTS

SUPPORTING

5

COMMUNITIES

36

PETITIONS & LETTERS

SIGNED

1

PETITION

CO-AUTHORED

2

NCEJN STAFF

ARE MEMBERS OF

GOVERNOR'S EJ
ADVISORY
COUNCIL

ORGANIZED THE NC DATA CENTERS RESISTANCE NETWORK (NCD CRN)
WITH 130 NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS.



19

INTERNS, FELLOWS,
POSTDOCS, & STUDENTS

PROJECTS

38

STUDENTS PARTICIPATED IN

PROJECTS

SUPPORTING

8

COMMUNITIES

THROUGH THE UNC-CH EJ CLASS

2

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

DEVELOPED

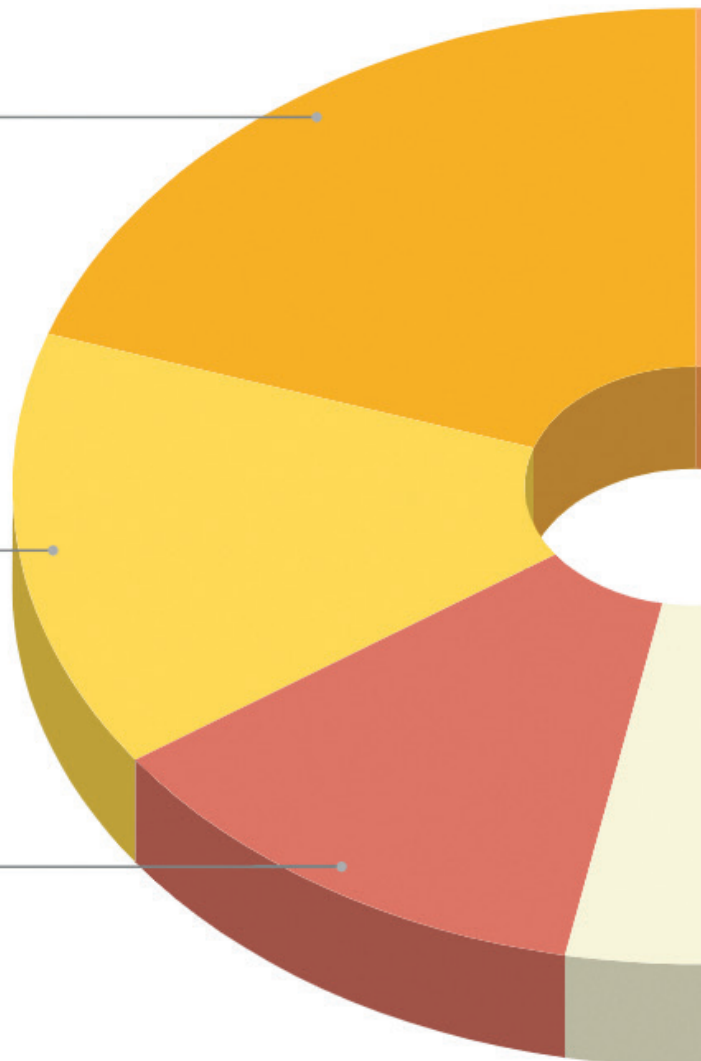
EJ IN A BOX TOOLKIT TEACHES ABOUT EJ
K-12 CURRICULUM TEACHES ABOUT CAFOS

% CONTRIBUTIONS TO NCEJN IN 2025

11th Hour Foundation
19.8%

Grace Communications Foundation
14.9%

Commission on Environmental Cooperation
12.2%



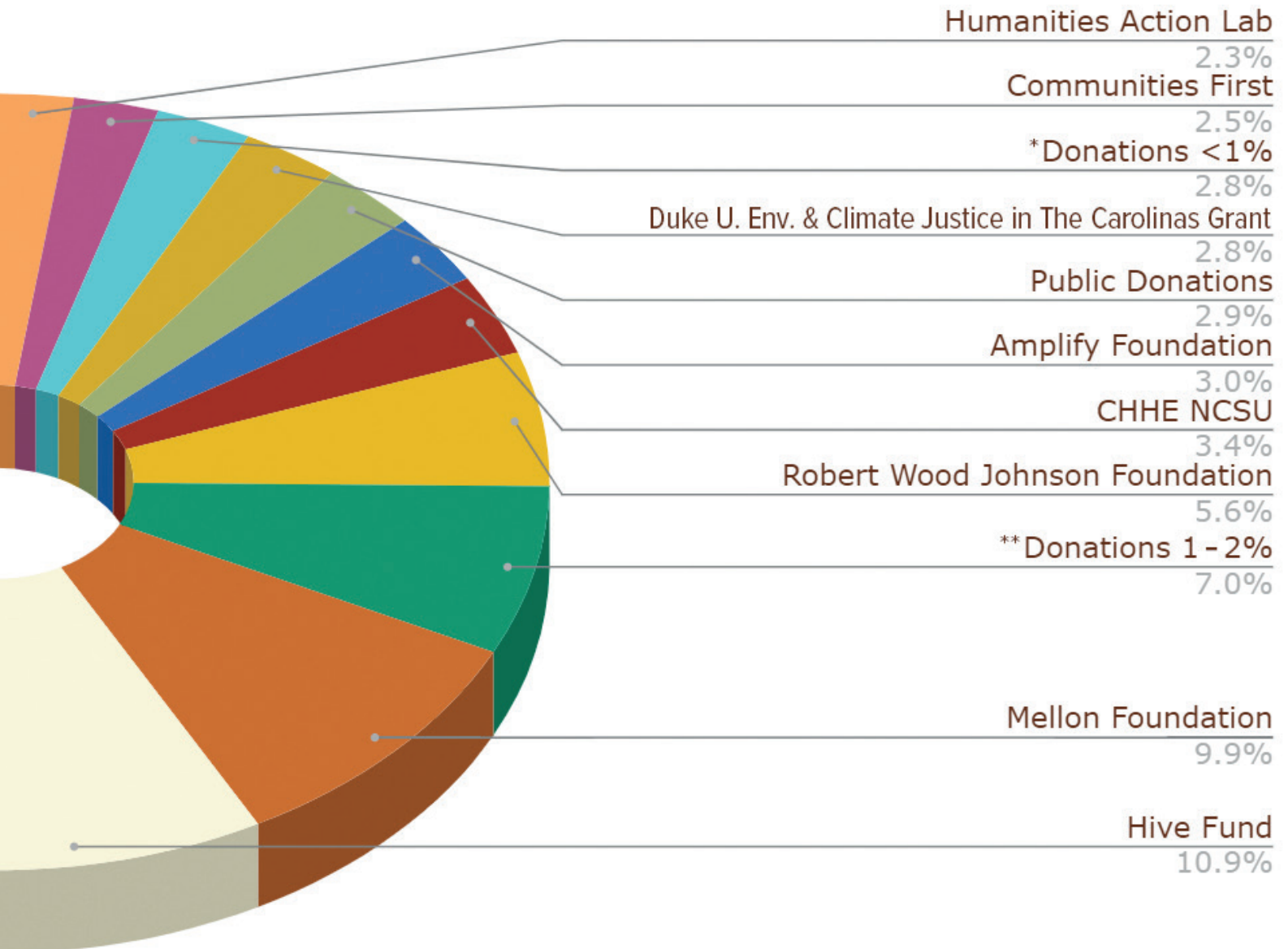
WITH GRATITUDE

The political and economic landscape of 2025 created significant funding disruptions across the nonprofit sector; NCEJN was no exception. In the first quarter alone, our income was reduced by 30% due to the federal claw-back of awarded research funds and the loss of a long-standing foundation partner, following our commitment to intersectional justice and collective liberation.

The vast majority of our funds serve as pass-through support for grassroots partners, including stipends for community researchers, travel support for public participation,

materials for quarterly strategic meetings, and assistance for policy engagement. We safeguarded our role as a sub-intermediary funder even as external pressures intensified.

We also strengthened accountability to partners and funders by enhancing reporting, offering transparent updates, and collaborating on strategic responses to the shifting political climate. By mid-year, we had signed more than a dozen joint letters to decision-makers, ensuring the collective voice of the EJ movement remains strong and visible.

45% OF CONTRIBUTIONS FROM NEW SOURCES (2025)

Recognizing the need for fiscal sponsorship, we took on four projects: Campus Community Alliance for Environmental Justice, Richmond County Coalition for Justice and Black Empowerment, Bingham Park EJ Project, and the newly-founded Community Land and Power which secured its first funding from the Marguerite Casey Foundation.

As demand grows, we vow not to use fiscal sponsorship for revenue, but to serve communities.

We are grateful to funders who supported us during this

volatile period. NCEJN remains steadfast in directing resources where they have the greatest impact—to support communities most affected by environmental injustice.

***Donations < 1%:** Summit Donations, Neo Philanthropy, Ej Classes - UNC, Labor Sustainability Foundation, Strategy Energy Innovations, & Bryan Fellow Funds.

****Donations 1 - 2%:** Nopalito Verde, Civic Media Action, AARC, Deep South Center for Environmental Justice, Laughing Gull Capacity Fund, & Sustain Our Future Foundation.

2025 STAFF



Dr. Chris Lamont Brown
Director of Research and Education



Dr. Rania Masri
Director of Organizing and Policy



Dr. Valerie Ann Johnson
Director of Infrastructure and
Development



Dr. Dani Lin Hunter
Research and Education Manager



Luma Kennedy
Communications Manager



Naeema Muhammad
Senior Advisor

2025 BOARD



Yesenia Cuello
Co-Chair



Ajamu Dillahunt-Holloway



Peter Gilbert
Co-Chair



Kamaria Kaalund



Sherrod Z. Knox



Mikki Sager



North Carolina
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE NETWORK

THANK YOU!

*“NCEJN has been a trusted partner working with our four neighborhoods in Durham for more than two years on the issue of contaminated parks. Their understanding of interconnected, parallel efforts in the region helped us to understand how our problem fits into the fabric of EJ work in the state. The technical expertise of Dani in particular has been a blessing in helping to make sense of literally thousands of pages of technical reports produced by the state that are very difficult for the average person to parse. More recently, they have helped us translate some of this data into more easily digestible FAQs and maps of all five parks that greatly simplify loads of data so that park users can understand exactly where the risk lies.” - **Danielle Doughman, Durham Contaminated Parks Organizing Group***






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