What Makes for Environmental Justice?

Reconsidering Cases Written Out Of The Narrative

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Introduction

On a clear day, the airplane descent into metropolitan Los Angeles is instructive and striking. To the north, the San Bernardino and San Gabriel mountains rise sharply above the valley floor and to the south, the Santa Anas loom in the distance. Below, acres of warehouses carpet the arid landscape of western Riverside County, fragmented only by snaking freeways and remnants of orchard land. Until the past decade, this area east of Los Angeles had a relatively marginal profile in the national imagination. Even for residents of Los Angeles, much of Riverside County was simply terrain to be driven through on the way to destinations like Las Vegas or Palm Springs. Starting in 2000, however, Riverside and San Bernardino Counties (often referred to as the “Inland Empire”) gained in prominence, as millions moved from coastal counties in Southern California in search of more affordable housing. With a booming home-building industry, Riverside and San Bernardino became among the fastest growing counties in California between 2000 and 2010, and Riverside was expected to be the second largest county in the state (behind only Los Angeles) by 2050. Then, the regional economy crashed more spectacularly than it had ever done before, drawing national attention for its

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1 This paper is written in light of my current book project on the Stringfellow Acid Pits. Relying on preliminary field work and comparisons to other well-known cases, this paper seeks to understand the absence of Stringfellow in the broader scholarship on environmental justice, and reflects on the potential consequences (for EJ) of overlooking similar cases of white, working class environmental activism.

stubbornly high rates of unemployment\(^3\) and its early status as “ground zero” for the foreclosure crisis.\(^4\)

Other distinctions predate these more recent claims to notoriety. Prior to the 2008 economic debacle, Inland valley politicians and developers promoted an aggressive growth agenda in which their region would become central to the logistics and goods movement industry. This vision saw the construction of over 159 million square feet of industrial warehouse space in Riverside and San Bernardino Counties between 2000 and 2008\(^5\), and a dramatic increase in the truck and rail transportation of goods from the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the rest of the country. Particulate matter generated by diesel engines at intermodal facilities, coupled with pollution blowing eastwards from Central Los Angeles exacerbated the already-poor air quality in the Inland area. In 2001, for example, the South Coast Air Quality Management District found that Mira Loma Village, a low-income Latino community in Riverside County had the highest levels of particulate pollution in the nation.\(^6\) Contaminated water supplies have also long been a cause for concern among region residents. A 2008 study by the Environmental Working

\(^3\) Unemployment in Riverside County peaked at 15.4% in August 2010, and stood at 14.7% the following year, well above the 9.1% national average in August 2011 (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, as reported in Google Public Data Explorer (http://www.google.com/publicdata).

\(^4\) In a tribute to financial reporter Mark Bittman of Bloomberg news, National Public Radio aired a clip where Pittman noted in 2006 that Riverside County was “ground zero of where the cancer was starting…we’d just drive by whole subdivisions where every other house had a brown lawn and [a realty sign] in front.” (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=120963360). Even as late as 2011, data from the real estate tracking firm Realty-Trac reported that Riverside County had the highest rate of foreclosures in California and the fifth-highest in the United States, with one in 30 homes under some stage of foreclosure during the first half of 2011. (http://losangeles.cbslocal.com/2011/07/28/foreclosure-rate-in-riverside-county-highest-in-california/).

\(^5\) Martha Matsuoka et al., Global trade impacts: Addressing the health, social and environmental consequences of moving international freight through our communities (Occidental College and University of Southern California, March 2011), 30, http://departments.oxy.edu/uepi/publications/GlobalTrade.pdf.

Group ranked Riverside Public Utilities 99th out of 100 large cities for its drinking water. Specifically, Riverside had the poorest water quality in terms of the total number of chemicals detected since 2004, percentage of chemicals found of those tested, and highest average level of each pollutant compared with legal limits or national averages. The traces of perchlorate (rocket fuel) and radioactive contamination in Riverside Public Utilities’ water bear testament to a history of weapons manufacture by companies such as Black & Decker and Lockheed Martin, revealing the on-going legacies of a militarized landscape.7

Perhaps the most prominent example of concentrated environmental harm in the Inland Empire, however, is one that stems from the late 1970s: the Stringfellow Acid Pits (SAP). As I detail below, the SAP were notorious for contaminating residential water supplies through the migration of industrial toxins. Community mobilization against Stringfellow was also remarkable in many respects. It led to the first Superfund site designation in California, on par with nationally renowned cases such as Love Canal, New York; it produced the largest toxic tort case settlement in the country; it led to the institutionalization of community participation in Superfund monitoring and compliance; and it enabled the community to later expand its activism to other environmental justice issues related to air quality and the goods movement industry. And yet, despite these central achievements in the realm of environmental justice, the Stringfellow case is surprisingly absent from most standard narratives of the environmental justice movement in the United States.

In this chapter, I use the Stringfellow case to motivate a larger question about the conceptual development of “environmental justice as environmental racism” over the past two decades. Noting, in particular, the importance of Warren County, North Carolina, I show that the central focus of much environmental justice scholarship has privileged environmental racism over and above other dimensions of marginalization/social inequality. While this development has rightfully provided a corrective to mainstream environmentalism and its universalistic conceptions of the public good, the conflation of environmental justice with one particular variant, environmental racism, has drawn attention away from cases such as Stringfellow and the important lessons they may hold for environmental justice scholarship and activism.

**Significance of the Stringfellow Acid Pits**

Glen Avon, a town 55 miles east of Los Angeles was, until the 1970s, a largely white, working class residential community. In the canyon above Glen Avon sat the Stringfellow Acid Pits, one of the largest chemical dumping operations in the country. Between 1956 and 1972, hundreds of companies emptied toxic wastes into unlined pits, erroneously assuming that the bedrock below would prevent the migration of toxins into groundwater. In 1972, unwilling and financially unable to comply with stricter environmental regulations, the dump’s owner, James B. Stringfellow declared bankruptcy and foreclosed on the property, which then passed to the state of California. Between 1969 and 1980, heavy rains coupled with poor site management led to several intentional releases of toxic waters into the surrounding area of Glen Avon. Particularly heavy flooding in 1978 resulted in the release of over one million gallons of toxic effluent from
the Acid Pits. This waste flowed through Glen Avon for five days, but government officials did little to warn residents about the hazards of contamination and human exposure.

As acute health impacts soon became apparent, Glen Avon residents, primarily led by women in the community, formed the Concerned Neighbors in Action (CNA) and began to demand cleanup of the Acid Pits and compensation for exposure. Glen Avon residents also played a critical role in shaping state and federal policies relating to toxics. CNA specifically pushed for and helped win the establishment of a State Superfund program and set forth a model for Community Advisory Committees. After years of persistent activism, in 1995, CNA also finally won favorable judgment for the largest toxic tort case in the country.

Community involvement around toxics continued with the formation of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ) in 1993, one of the largest community-based nonprofits in the region. This institutionalization of community activism not only facilitated continued monitoring of the Superfund clean up, but also enabled locals to address other issues related to social inequality and environmental justice in the region, with campaigns focused on air and water quality, to immigrant rights and Latino voter mobilization. CCAEJ also collaborates with a number of other coalitions throughout the state and actively participates in legislation to limit pollution and other harms. In this sense, CCAEJ members have moved significantly beyond NIMBYism, and incorporated the environmental justice principle of NIABY (not in anybody’s back yard) within their daily work.8

Despite successful community mobilization for the clean up of the Stringfellow Acid Pits, this case remains relatively invisible in scholarly narratives about the environmental justice movement. Its omission from the annals of environmental justice is all the more curious, given the pioneering role that Concerned Neighbors in Action played in the institutionalization of community participation in federal and state environmental regulation. Most cases of environmental litigation, if successful, usually lead to limited monetary compensation for affected individuals. By contrast, the Stringfellow story is unique in that local residents not only won monetary compensation, but also helped institutionalize statutory rights for communities to participate in decisions about toxic waste management. Specifically, Glen Avon residents were the first to establish a Community Advisory Committee that interfaced with state and federal regulators over the management of toxics, and the first to receive a Technical Advisor to facilitate information sharing about site contamination and remediation. Taken together, these achievements embody moves towards procedural justice (in terms of meaningful participation in decision making processes), a demand put forth by environmental justice scholars and activists alike.9

What Makes for Environmental Justice?

Why then is Stringfellow rendered invisible in the scholarship on environmental justice? Answering this question has two related, but nevertheless distinct, sub-queries:

1) Why is Stringfellow marginal in the scholarship on community toxic exposure when compared to cases such as Love Canal, New York and Norco, Louisiana?

2) Why are cases like Love Canal and Stringfellow more generally excluded from most narratives about environmental justice?

It is important to separate the larger question into these component queries in order to counter the claim that the marginality of Stringfellow in EJ scholarship is reflective of its unimportance relative to other cases of community toxic exposure such as Love Canal, NY and Norco, LA. I address this first question in another chapter of this book project, showing that limited scholarly coverage on Stringfellow belies its actual significance—not only in terms of environmental impact, but also in terms of policy implications and community involvement. I also explore possible reasons behind the perceived unimportance of the Stringfellow case, considering factors such as proximity to East Coast media markets, the presence and involvement of mainstream environmental movements, and the gender composition of movement leadership.

In this paper, however, I train my focus on the latter question, of why even well known cases like Love Canal are generally not viewed as central to the narrative arc of environmental justice scholarship. The general thrust of my argument is that cases like Stringfellow and Love Canal are typically excluded because they largely involve working class whites mobilizing against toxics, whereas EJ scholarship has predominantly been
concerned about the disparate impact of environmental harms on communities of color (with Warren County, North Carolina as a foundational case). Thus, even in the rare instances where cases like Love Canal are discussed in light of environmental justice concerns (see Elizabeth Blum’s Love Canal Revisited), the focus is on the political marginalization of African American renters within the larger community struggle. I argue that, while the predominant conceptualization of environmental justice as environmental racism is understandable (given past elisions), the conflation of the two concepts constrains the possibilities for both scholarship and activism. Finally, I argue for a fuller and broader conceptual mapping of the environmental justice terrain, extending David Pellow’s (2001) framework on environmental inequality by devoting more attention to understanding of why the conflation of concept (environmental justice) and subconcept (environmental racism) has come about, and the consequences of moving towards a more differentiated and expansive notion of environmental justice.

**Environmental justice as environmental racism**

The rise of “environmental justice” in scholarship may partly be understood as a reaction to the oversights of mainstream environmentalism. Critics have long noted the race, class, and gender biases of the mainstream environmental movement in the United States, with its substantive focus on the conservation or preservation of non-human nature, and predominantly white, male, and middle class constituency of its membership and leadership. Moreover, despite the historical specificity of particular environmental concerns, both “first wave” and “second wave” environmentalism have tended to present

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a universalistic conception of humans and their relationship to the natural world.\textsuperscript{11} Thus, for example, the concerns of 19\textsuperscript{th} century preservationists to secure open spaces for communion with nature, and post World War II alarms about the deleterious effects of pesticides (or climate change today for that matter) hail a generalized population, without acknowledging or accounting for disparities in effects by race, class, gender, and other markers of difference. Historical narratives about U.S. environmentalism have also typically ignored the mobilization of minorities and working class people to address concerns about public health in urban areas, thus perpetuating particular notions of “the environment” and “environmental activism” that are inherently classed, gendered, and raced.\textsuperscript{12}

Yet, the rise of environmental justice scholarship is more than just a reaction to mainstream environmentalism’s exclusions. It has also been a response on the part of scholar-activists to proactively document and make sense of environmental struggles in communities of color and forge alternative visions of what constitutes “the environment.” Bunyan Bryant, a prominent early scholar of environmental justice, staked out a holistic vision of what constitutes a just environment:

Environmental justice (EJ)…refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities where people can interact with confidence that the environment is safe, nurturing, and productive. Environmental justice is served when people can realize their highest potential…EJ is supported by decent paying safe jobs; quality schools and recreation; decent housing and adequate health care; democratic decision making


and personal empowerment; and communities free of violence, drugs, and poverty. These are communities where both cultural and biological diversity are respected and highly revered and where justice prevails.13

David Pellow uses Bryant’s expansive notion of justice to articulate the concept of “environmental inequality formation,” which considers the dynamic and varied intersections of environmental quality and social hierarchies/ axes of difference. As Pellow notes, environmental racism is one particular manifestation of environmental inequality, wherein communities of color are disproportionately impacted by environmental hazards.

Although Pellow deploys “environmental inequality formation” to urge a more complex understanding of the operations of environmental injustice, he does little to examine how prior EJ scholarship and the ways in which its predominant focus on race has led to a selective presentation of environmental justice cases as constituting a canon, and to a partial understanding of the ways in which even seminal cases of environmental racism also often invoke class and gender difference. While prominent EJ scholars acknowledge the role of the anti-toxics movement in raising the national profile on hazardous wastes, they also regard the larger anti-toxics movement as distinct from struggles for environmental justice (which is viewed as involving cases with a disproportionate burden on communities of color).14 Thus, despite the reference to multiple axes of difference, most EJ scholarship engages with the particular manifestation


of environmental racism, when policies, practices, or directives “differentially impact or
disadvantage [whether intended or unintended] individuals, groups, or communities
based on race or color.” This conflation is partly in response to the elisions of the
mainstream environmental movement, and may be seen as an intentional and conscious
move on the part of scholars to create a particular EJ narrative that avoids the trap of
minimizing or drawing attention away from institutional racism.

The environmental racism frame

The predominant concept of “environmental justice as environmental racism” (EJ
as ER) is associated with some basic characteristics. First, it primarily focuses on
“traditional” environmental hazards like pollution and toxics in urban and industrial
areas. Most EJ activists and scholars thus advocate for pollution prevention as a way to
improve quality of life for all people. Second, and closely related, numerous EJ studies
focus on the disproportionate impact of environmental burdens on low-income
communities of color. This has resulted in scholarship that is largely case study-based,

15 Bullard et al., Toxic wastes and race at twenty 1987-2007, 17.

16 This section focuses on a particularly narrow conception of environmental racism. While EJ scholarship
has certainly moved beyond a sole focus on the siting of toxic facilities, it is arguable that the literature still
primarily emphasizes the production of racialized environments, albeit in far more interesting and nuanced
bibliography with general overview, focusing on the U.S. literature, 1996-2002” (Berkeley Workshop on
Environmental Politics, University of California Berkeley, 2002); Julie Sze and Jonathan London,
“Environmental justice at the crossroads,” Sociology Compass 2, no. 4 (July 2008): 1331-1354; Ryan
Holifield, Michael Porter, and Gordon Walker, eds., Spaces of environmental justice (UK: Wiley
Blackwell, 2010).

17 Stella M. Capek, “The "environmental justice" frame: A conceptual discussion and framework,” Social

18 “The Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ)” (First National People of Color Environmental
with an emphasis on geographies of TSDF-siting. Partly because the EPA limits remedial action to “inequities that are still based on scientific data” and that are “measurable and quantifiable,” it is likely that EJ scholarship will continue to focus on ascertaining impact (often with a focus on methods of measuring distances of noxious facilities from communities, disaggregated by class and race). Third, EJ scholars and activists claim that procedural inequalities—which manifest in the exclusion/marginalization of racial minorities from decision-making processes and legislative polices—exacerbate distributional injustices. Simplistically put, in order to achieve environmental justice, it is necessary to have representation from people/communities most impacted by toxic burdens (the poor and minorities) in decisions about facility siting, production processes, and so on. Finally, there is a commitment to fostering and profiling the role of community activism in the struggle for EJ. While this does not preclude the role of and need for legislation and top-down policy as well, EJ scholars typically celebrate the role of collective action from the ground up.

Taken together, the EJ concept has been deployed by traditionally marginalized groups to make claims on the state and private sector for compensation, relocation, and site remediation, as well as to solicit resources for grass-roots organizing and to gain broader public support. An EJ as ER-oriented discourse has also increased mainstream awareness about the nature of environmental atrocities impacting specific regions and

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groups, and raised the profile of some community activists so that they may bring their message to larger arenas. EJ scholars and activists have also succeeded in getting policies such as Executive Order 12898 (also known as the Environmental Justice Order) passed, thus providing an institutional framework for addressing claims of environmental racism.\textsuperscript{22} Indeed, even when litigation brought forth on the basis of EO 12898 has not in and of itself demonstrated disproportionate impact, the litigious route has resulted in waste-disposal facilities locating elsewhere.\textsuperscript{23} Thus, there is moral (if not always legal) traction to the claim of environmental racism and it is has garnered results for various groups in the struggle for justice.

\textit{Constructing a particular narrative}

How did the narrative of “environmental justice as environmental racism” develop? Most writing on the “birth” of the environmental justice movement in the United States highlights a handful of watershed events including: mass protests by African Americans against the citing of a PCB dump in Afton, North Carolina (1982), the publication of a General Accounting Office report that found three quarters of toxic waste

\textsuperscript{22} Passed by President Clinton in 1994, Executive Order 12898 requires federal agencies to account for environmental justice within their projects. While the language of the Executive Order (see below) has been rightly criticized for its vagueness and lack of teeth, and while individual agencies often have few resources with which to implement or evaluate EJ concerns, the policy provides a basis for bringing forth EJ claims, thus potentially increases the avenues available to communities challenging environmental burdens: “To the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, and consistent with the principles set forth in the report on the National Performance Review, each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories and possessions, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands.” (http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/eo/eo12898.pdf)

facilities in eight Southeastern states to be located in primarily poor and minority communities (1983), the publication of the United Church of Christ’s seminal study, *Toxic Wastes and Race*, that noted race was the single most important determinant in the siting of toxic waste facilities (1987), and, the gathering of activists from across the nation at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in Washington DC (1991). These events together culminated in the federal government’s recognition (some would say cooptation) of “environmental justice” with President Clinton’s passage of the Executive Order 12898 (1994). Though these events are sometimes presented as discrete, often within a timeline format, they are integrally connected.

The Warren County protests in particular had a deep and lasting impact on many black leaders who had been active in the civil rights movement, and participation in Afton demonstrations proved to be seminal for future linkages between the concept of environmental justice and environmental racism. In 1982, the small town of Afton, North Carolina came to national attention when Governor Hunt approved the land filling of 6,000 truckloads of soil illegally contaminated with polychlorinated biphenyl, or PCB. Although studies suggested that Warren County was not ideal for the location of a landfill (due a high water table and porous soils), EPA officials claimed that superior technologies would ensure a “state-of-the-art, zero percent discharge landfill.” Warren County was also rural, predominantly African American, and among the poorest one

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24 The soil was originally contaminated when Robert Burns and his sons illegally dripped over 31,000 gallons of PCB contaminated waste along 240 miles of North Carolina highway, in an effort to circumvent EPA regulations.
hundred counties in the state. Politicians expected little resistance, especially because they framed the landfill as a source of economic development.

Yet, the Hunt administration ended up fighting a drawn out battle against a handful of residents who fiercely organized opposition to the landfill as Citizens Concerned (CC). Between 1979-1982, this group led a multi-layered strategy, using due process to criticize EPA regulations and the state’s biased science, as well as litigation. More importantly, CC successfully forged connections with non-local leaders in the black church, who connected them to experienced civil rights organizers. Although the residents of Afton eventually lost their fight against the landfill, the Warren County protests and ensuing arrests helped link environmental struggles and civil rights.

The two foundational studies that cemented the concept of environmental justice with the sub-concept of environmental racism—the 1983 GAO Report and 1987 UCC study *Toxic waste and race*—both directly emanated from the Warren County experience. In 1982, Walter Fauntroy, District of Columbia Congressional Delegate and then-chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, was invited by Reverend Joseph Lowrey, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference\(^{25}\) to participate in the Afton protests. A veteran organizer, Lowrey knew that the high-profile participation by a member of Congress would only increase media attention, and it certainly did—especially when Fauntroy was arrested for marching in a demonstration.\(^{26}\) Returning to Washington, Fauntroy used his high-profile position to request Congress' General Accounting Office to “investigate the demographic characteristics of communities near

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\(^{25}\) The organization associated with Martin Luther King and non-violent civil rights actions in the 1950s and 1960s.

\(^{26}\) Although Fauntroy was almost immediately released after a call from the Governor, the news made national headlines. It was the first time a member of Congress was arrested for protesting.
commercial hazardous waste facilities.” The report, which was limited in scope (focusing only on the southern states in EPA Region 4), found that three of four waste facilities in the South that required EPA permits had majority Black populations and were below the poverty level. Although the report was critiqued for not producing statistically significant correlations between siting and communities with a majority of people of color, organizers and activists nevertheless used it to suggest that poor, minority communities were bearing a disproportionate share of environmental burdens.

In order to address the weaknesses of the GAO report and further expand its scope, Warren County activists Ken Ferrucchio and Reverend Leon White allied with Ben Chavis (who had also been an Afton protestor). By this time, Chavis had been appointed executive director of the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice and had access to funds for a large-scale study. Given Chavis’ prior involvement in Warren County, it was important to him and other Afton organizers that the UCC Report focus on substantiating claims about the disproportionate impact of environmental harms in low-income communities of color. The statistical findings of the UCC study became landmark and demonstrated that “the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic persons residing in communities with commercial hazardous waste facilities is not a random occurrence, but rather a consistent pattern.” The study went on to conclude that “the Black population is not only concentrated in urban areas but disproportionately so in urban areas with large numbers of uncontrolled waste sites.”

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29 Ibid., 18.
2007, *Toxics at Twenty*, reinforced these findings and noted that not much has changed since the original UCC Report.

The UCC report is one of the most cited works in EJ scholarship and has spawned an entire literature based on spatial and census-tract analysis to evaluate the claim of racism in facility-siting and community demographics.\(^{30}\) Even studies that have *contested* the report’s conclusions have served to reinforce the hegemonic position of the environmental racism sub-concept in understandings of environmental justice.\(^{31}\) More importantly, the venue in which “environmental racism” first came out in public proved significant. Eileen McGurty notes that in presenting the UCC report at the National Press Club, Ben Chavis framed the findings as proof of “environmental racism.” Although Afton organizers had used this term openly in the past, it gained considerable traction in the larger post-civil rights context where government officials had to address charges of racism backed by substantive evidence.\(^{32}\) The framing of “environmental racism” resonated with a larger public haunted by legacies of slavery and on-going racial discrimination, and the charge fundamentally shaped the way in which agencies could respond moving forward.

\(^{30}\) Laura Pulido has aptly critiqued the predominant focus on citing because it ignores historically specific relationships between social space and society. Pulido, “Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California,” 17. Pulido goes on to advocate an analysis which highlights the systemic nature of environmental injustices as wrought by white privilege, rather than a narrow focus on proving racist intent.


Sociologist Robert Bullard, who many consider to be the “father of environmental justice,” has also played a central role in constructing a narrative of environmental justice predominantly associated with environmental racism. Bullard is the most cited scholar in the EJ literature, and his leadership in both academic and policy circles has set a research agenda largely focused on the proliferation of case studies about environmental racism. Along with other prominent EJ scholars and activists, Bullard was central in organizing the first national People of Color Summit on Environmental Leadership held in Washington D.C. in 1991. The Summit sought to connect activists from communities of color fighting environmental harms, foster the leadership of racial and ethnic minorities, and officially put forth the vision of the EJ movement as embodied in the “Principles of Environmental Justice.”

In her analysis of the “Principles,” Dorceta Taylor notes that although the concept of EJ acknowledges the ramifications and inequalities perpetuated by colonialism, genocide, slavery, and racism, it also moves beyond focusing only on the most oppressed, to invoke the need for larger social movements organized across class and race lines. She states:

A careful analysis of the principles of environmental justice will show a well-developed environmental ideological framework that explicitly links ecological concerns with labor and social justice concerns. The Principles is concerned with environmental issues as they relate to humans, nature, and rural and urban environs… The concerns are local, regional, national, and international in scope.


34 The “Principles” was a document developed by diverse EJ activists over a year-long period during which time numerous drafts were circulated among planning meetings. The final document, “The Principles of Environmental Justice,” was ratified by delegates at the 1991 Summit and continues to be referenced in relation to the larger concept of environmental justice.
crossing racial and social class lines.\textsuperscript{35}

Most generally, the concept of environmental justice strives to mobilize a movement for healthy and sustainable relationships with the natural world, and the liberation of communities from all forms of oppression.\textsuperscript{36} Clearly, this does not mean that particular struggles for environmental justice will have achieved these lofty ideals, or even come close. Yet, one would still expect EJ scholarship to acknowledge and seriously engage with the (often fraught) role of multi-racial and cross-class alliances within particular struggles, and more broadly consider the manifestation of environmental harm in a variety of communities. Although contemporary scholarship in environmental justice does not explicitly deny the importance of such thematic areas, it nevertheless constructs a more rigid concept of environmental justice by simply overlooking such formations.

Moreover, for some Summit organizers, a narrower conceptualization of environmental justice as environmental racism was an explicit agenda. In his remarks at the Summit in 1991, Bob Bullard did not mince words when he urged delegates to accept that environmental justice should first and foremost about race:

\begin{quote}
We can clearly document that the environmental problems that confront our communities cannot be reduced solely to class; it is not just a poverty thing. Middle class African American communities are just as affected by environmental racism as poor poverty-stricken urban ghettos and rural poverty pockets in the Deep South. It is not a class thing. Racism cuts across class. And we have to understand that and drive that point home every time some white media person tries to spin it into ‘it’s a class thing.’
\end{quote}

Bullard points about race vs. class are certainly legitimate and his intent was to keep the


\textsuperscript{36} “The Principles of Environmental Justice (EJ).”
focus on institutional racism and the historic marginalization of people of color from environmental policy and decision-making in the United States. Yet, as noted earlier, this prioritization of race potentially belies a tension with other stated principles of the EJ movement, including the goal of building cross-class and multi-racial coalitions for justice.

During the Summit, keynote speakers also repeatedly recounted stories about Warren County, and their own participation in the protests, almost ten years prior, to authoritatively construct one of the birthing moments of a particular narrative of environmental justice. Ben Chavis, for example, opened the Summit by drawing a direct line from the events at Warren County to the Summit, and reminisced how the activism of Dolly Burwell\(^{37}\) and “other African American sisters like her, along with Reverend Leon White…caused us to take seriously the life and death consequences of this struggle.”\(^{38}\) Eileen McGurty notes that Chavis’ reference to Burwell and other black activists was partly in line with the goal of the Summit, which was aimed at fostering the leadership of people of color. The somewhat monolithic representation of events and key players in Warren County was also strategically useful in framing a fight against environmental racism, and countering mainstream environmentalism’s hegemony.

Overall, the Warren County demonstrations merged civil rights and environmental concerns in the minds of many influential black male participants, and

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\(^{37}\) Dolly Burwell, who was a latecomer to the organizing efforts but played a crucial role in bringing black residents out due to her role in voter registration drives, in fact spoke about the multi-racial alliances of Warren County at the Summit. Her message, however, was eclipsed by the Summit’s need to show a unified environmental leadership for people of color.

these individuals went on to investigate these linkages through channels in government, the non-profit world, and academia. In this sense, the scholarly genealogy of EJ has been as much constituted by particular intellectuals as the events in which they participated and wrote about. While none of this may be particularly surprising, it is important to acknowledge the formation of an EJ epistemic community.  

And, like epistemic communities in other disciplines/fields, EJ scholars have understandably—given the racism and white privilege in both mainstream environmentalism and academia—emphasized certain issues, events, and players, to construct a particular conception of environmental justice as environmental racism. Because Warren County played such a formative role in the lives of EJ leaders and takes center stage in historical accounts of the EJ movement, it is instructive to also examine what gets left out of the story of Afton, North Carolina and note how strategic exclusions (which have also had benefits) help maintain a narrow conception of environmental justice as environmental racism.

**Warren County revisited**

A closer look at the Warren County struggle reveals that local organizers worked in a fragile but necessary multiracial coalition, initially mobilized by white residents, but soon expanding to partner with outsiders including leaders in the black church, black politicians, and experienced civil rights organizers.  

Residents Ken and Debra

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39 The EJ epistemic community I refer to includes prominent figures in the field such as: Robert Bullard, Bunyan Bryant, Paul Mohai, and Beverly Wright. These individuals have more than simply written about EJ within academia. They have also critically defined the field (for other scholars, activists, policy makers and the general public) by: creating institutes/ centers dedicated to EJ research, mentoring graduate students who have become scholars in their own right, organizing national conferences, serving on government task forces and advisory committees that inform policy, and being public commentators.

40 Incidentally, Lois Gibbs’ fledgling organization, Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes, allied with Warren County protesters and shared their experiences around fighting against toxics in Love Canal.
Ferruccio, who initially spearheaded the predominantly white group Concerned Citizens, were connected through black parishioners to Reverend Luthor Brown of Coley Springs Baptist Church. Given his standing as a black pastor, Brown was able to introduce Concerned Citizens to politically active minister Reverend Leon White of the United Church of Christ (and member of the UCC’s Commission for Racial Justice), and the broader community of civil rights leaders.

In her detailed account of Warren County, McGurty notes that the relationship between the predominantly white Concerned Citizens and the UCC worked both ways. While Concerned Citizens needed to broaden its base of support, the Commission also courted the group in order to politicize Blacks and increase voter turn out in the county.\textsuperscript{41}

The Warren County multi-racial coalition, while certainly concerned about the disproportionate impact of harm on minorities, was also about poverty and the marginalization of rural residents more generally. Yet, none of this complexity is apparent in most EJ narratives that reference Afton. As McGurty notes:

Advocates highlight the importance of civil rights leaders in linking environmental issues to social concerns. They downplay the role of Concerned Citizens, with its white leadership and predominantly white membership. However, both players and the bridge created between them were equally central to the actions that led to environmental justice.\textsuperscript{42}

Partly through an incomplete rendition of events at Warren County have numerous scholars and activists constructed EJ as a concept that emphasizes environmental racism.

\textsuperscript{41} McGurty, \textit{Transforming environmentalism: Warren County, PCBs and the origins of environmental justice}, 94-95.

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 95.
While this may be both strategic and understandable, it has also led to lost opportunities to explore and learn from experiences of multi-racial organizing more generally. In Warren County, for example, tensions arose when white residents opposed the appointment of a black member to an oversight committee on the grounds that he was a biased state official. While black members of Concerned Citizens also actively opposed the state, they were conflicted about vocally opposing a black representative (given the larger context of racism and black exclusion from politics). Similar tensions surfaced over the need to foster black leadership while at the same time resisting token politics. The point here is not to go into these issues in detail, but rather to highlight how a narrow construction of EJ potentially forecloses examinations of the need for, and simultaneous challenges of, multi-racial coalitions in fighting injustice.

**Environmental justice and cases written out of the canon**

What might a more expansive concept of EJ look like and what are the potential benefits of bringing in a larger repertoire of cases into EJ scholarship? Before getting into this discussion, I want to make clear that my argument here is not to “move beyond race” or advocate a politically regressive call for “color-blindness.” Racism today is alive and well and has far more subtle (and insidious) manifestations than any explicit act of intentional discrimination. To expand the EJ concept “beyond environmental racism,” therefore, is not a move to forego critical understandings of racism and the need for anti-racist practice. It is, however, to broaden the umbrella of consideration beyond only the

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most marginal groups and examine the ways in which multiple axes of difference come into play within struggles for environmental justice.

More centrally examining cases of low-income whites burdened by environmental injustice may dilute the claims-making potential of EJ, conceived primarily in terms of environmental racism. Yet, this assumes that communities are somehow racially monolithic and ignores investigating the existence of relationships between different groups in affected areas. Some might also worry that broadening EJ to incorporate environmental burdens in predominantly working-class, white communities would distract from combating pervasive racism. This is a valid concern, especially in a cultural and media context where stories like Erin Brockovitch are glamorized in Hollywood blockbusters, while other communities and activists are ignored.\(^4\) On the other hand, to broaden the EJ umbrella might encourage us to see the contingent links between ostensibly disparate issues (prisons, access to food, gentrification, clean air and water) and the ways in which various places and bodies are differentially impacted by and implicated within white capitalist hetero-patriarchy. This rendering would not let go of a critical understanding of racism, just as it also could not let go of understandings of classism, sexism, and so forth.

*Love Canal and environmental justice*

Although Love Canal is internationally known for its prominent role in launching the anti-toxics movement in the United States and motivating the passage of federal

\(^4\) This is not necessarily the doing of Brockovitch per se, but rather indicates the institutionalized racism and sexism of mainstream media portrayals. Such dynamics nevertheless hinder the formation of multi-racial alliances and fragment potential coalitions.
legislation on clean up of toxic wastes in 1980, it is not generally considered within the pantheon of EJ scholarship. Yet, this case holds important lessons about the need for, and challenge to, multi-racial and cross-class alliances.

Between 1920 and 1953, Hooker Chemical, a subsidiary of Occidental Petroleum, dumped chemical and municipal waste in Love Canal, a channel sixty feet wide and three thousand feet long. After filling in the canal, Hooker sold the land to the Niagara Board of Education for just one dollar. The Board then built an elementary school upon the site of the former dump and, over the 1950s, veterans from World War II took advantage of the GI Bill and settled in the area. By 1978, there were approximately 800 private single-family homes (owned mostly by working class whites) and 240 low-income apartments (housing mostly black and/or single parent renters) built around the Canal. The elementary school was located near the center of the landfill.

Although area residents periodically complained of noxious odors or substances oozing up out of the ground (which city officials would ignore or address with temporary fixes), Love Canal only began to make national headlines in 1978, when a New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) study found an increase in reproductive health problems among residents living on the canal’s perimeter and elevated levels of chemical contaminants in the air and soil. This study was done in response to the persistent activism of the Love Canal Homeowners Association (LCHA), an organization formed by working-class area residents in response to growing concerns about toxic

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45 The Comprehensive Environmental Remediation, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA, also known as Superfund).

contamination, human health, and plunging home values. During the crisis, media attention focused largely on the LCHA and white mother-turned-community leader, Lois Gibbs. Ultimately, the NYSDOH issued an emergency health order recommending the closure of the 99th Street School, evacuation of pregnant women and children, and spending limited time in basements. A couple of days later, the state agreed to purchase all 239 homes in the first two rings of homes closest to the canal. In 1980, President Carter ordered a total evacuation of the site and announced that the government would purchase homes at fair market value. Lois Gibbs went on to found the Center for Health, Environment and Justice (formerly the Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes) and continues to share the Love Canal story with other communities impacted by toxic waste sites.

This much of the Love Canal saga is fairly well known. Less prominent is the story of primarily black female renters in Griffon Manor, a low-income federal housing project adjacent to the canal. Elizabeth Blum has recently shown that Griffon Manor residents not only faced racism from city officials who resisted the relocation of blacks to white neighborhoods in Niagara Falls, but that renters also had to fight perceptions about welfare-recipients being able to “simply pick up and leave” and undeserving of monetary compensation because they had no property at stake. Interestingly, black media did little to highlight the plight of black renters at Love Canal and did not portray their crisis in terms of civil rights. In response, renters formed the Concerned Love Canal Renters Association (CLCRA), and worked closely with the local NAACP and primarily white, middle class Ecumenical Task Force (ETF).

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47 Elizabeth Blum, *Love Canal revisited: Race, class and gender in environmental activism* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2011).
ETF members, in particular, played a critical role in leveraging their race and class privilege to keep the Love Canal Area Revitalization Agency (LCARA) accountable for the relocation and compensation of all renters and CLCRA eventually went on to maintain a less tense relationship with the LCHA, partly because women in both groups were insistent on a more inclusive solution to the Love Canal relocation. Yet, any “victory” for Love Canal residents was fundamentally structured through racial and class difference. When the federal government agreed to assist the state of New York in purchasing homes and relocating residents in 1980, LCARA “allocated $500,000 for renters and $17.5 million for homeowners. LCARA began to purchase Love Canal homes well before the issue of how to deal with Griffon Manor, or even what benefits the renters would receive, had been settled.”48 At the same time, LCARA’s allocation of funds for relocation expenses and monetary compensation for the least privileged—black renters—was largely the result of anti-racist, cross-class, and multi-racial organizing. If it hadn’t been for “outsiders” like the NAACP issuing legal threats, and ETF members keeping in touch with Griffon Manor residents after the passage of Superfund legislation, it is quite possible that renters would have received no compensation at all.

In the now-conventional framework of environmental justice scholarship, injustice would be framed exclusively by the experiences of black renters: their livelihoods were the most impacted, and they were disproportionately unable to make claims for redress. It is undeniable that black renters were the most adversely affected group in Love Canal. At the same time, gender and class biases were also an important part of the story. For example, exposure to toxic waste posed particular harms to

48 Ibid., 78.
pregnant mothers. Given their central role in the social production and reproduction of labor, mothers also bore the disproportionate burden of caring for school children made ill from toxic exposure.

The environmental harm in Love Canal also had a disproportionate class impact. While the majority of those affected were homeowners, these were individuals of modest means, low education, and limited connection to avenues of political power. These disadvantages were apparent throughout the struggle to get government attention, relocation, and compensation. For instance, residents and advocates pressed the state government to conduct studies of soil and groundwater contamination, and their impacts on public health. The New York Department of Health resisted these calls, and consented only after residents initiated their own community-based studies. Thus, social movement organization was important in the case of Love Canal, to enable residents to overcome their political and educational disadvantages and press for redress against environmental injustice. Read more broadly, Love Canal also reveals how environmental racism simultaneously plays out in its intersectionality with class. Part of the story of black marginalization is the dynamic of renters generally having less political recognition and power than homeowners. Embedded within this class disadvantage, however, is a history of racial housing covenants and discrimination by realtors and lenders. Black women were also disproportionately harmed, and played a significant role in bringing the concerns of renters to the larger movement. While it may be tempting to focus on race as the ultimate form of marginalization in Love Canal, and to read the environmental justice struggle there as applying only to black residents, a more expansive framework of

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49 Blum, *Love Canal revisited: Race, class and gender in environmental activism*. 
environmental justice that incorporates race, class, and gender allows us to examine the ways in which these different dimensions of marginality intersect and produce varying aspects of injustice.

*Stringfellow and environmental justice*

When considered from a broader conceptualization of environmental justice, the case of the Stringfellow Acid Pits also holds some important lessons about the role of community anti-toxics mobilization in laying the groundwork for future organizing for environmental justice, and social justice more generally. More specifically, it demonstrates how multi-racial alliances against environmental racism can grow out of legacies of (more ethnically homogenous) organizing against environmental burdens.

At the time of the Stringfellow incident, the area of Glen Avon was a predominantly white, working-class community, although Census statistics show that Latinos made up 14% of the population in 1980. As told by many residents and activists, most had moved to Glen Avon from Los Angeles and other areas further west, in pursuit of cheaper land and a rural lifestyle in which to raise families. As long-time resident and active participant in the SAP struggle, Betty Stinton, reminisced:

> All the houses you see by Glen Avon and across the street, none of that was there. There would be times when one of our cars would be broken down and the boys and I would all walk to school. From our house to Glen Avon was right across the field, we had no paved roads or anything like that. They had horses and when they went down, they could ride their horses all the way into Rubidoux, the mountain in back of us. They’d ride the mountain on their four wheelers and ride their horses up there. It’s a wonderful place to grow up, the best. It was the best.50

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Although the Stringfellow Acid Pits had operated in Pyrite Canyon above Glen Avon between 1955-1972, most area residents were either unaware of the Pits’ existence or the potential dangers of toxic waste on public health. This all changed during the record rains in winter of 1978, when the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board intentionally released approximately one million gallons of toxic floodwaters through the community of Glen Avon in order to avoid the breaching of a dam in Pyrite Canyon.

James Anderson, then Executive Officer of the Board recalls the decision:

> The rain in ‘77 and ‘78 was abnormal...there was approximately thirty inches of rain...By the March of 1978 every pond was full to the brim... Considering that every inch of rain made two acre feet of water, and we had approximately thirty inches of rain at that time, we had a lot of water stacked up behind that dam...On inspections on Monday and Tuesday we discovered that the face of the earth above the concrete dam was cracking and saturated with rainfall and leakage, through all of the pressure behind it, was about to collapse...In order to take the pressure of the back of that dam and keep it from collapsing completely, we diverted the pumps to discharge down the hill, into Pyrite Creek and eventually it ends up in the Santa Ana River...We then estimated that about a million gallons of waste material, because it was all Class 1 Waste or toxic waste, was dumped into the flood control channels. During that period of time it was flooding, so it was quickly diluted, but it was still toxic waste that was discharged.51

The floodwaters coursed through the town and inundated pastures, farmlands, yards and the playground at Glen Avon Elementary School. Some locals tell stories of children playing in foam puddles created by the flood, and returning home with sores on exposed skin. In response to growing concerns about chemical contamination, Glen Avon residents came together to get informed about the potential dangers of the Stringfellow Acid Pits. The following year, in 1979, a handful of women from Glen Avon formed the Concerned Neighbors in Action (CNA), and began to draw sustained attention to the Pits and demand comprehensive remediation. As a result of CNA’s mobilizing efforts, the

state of California designated the SAP its top-priority site\textsuperscript{52} for the Superfund National Priority List, thus beginning the drawn out process of site cleanup.

In November 1984, CNA also filed a lawsuit against more than 250 corporate dumpers, the State of California, and the County of Riverside. At the time, the case was the largest toxic tort in the nation, with personally injury and damage claims made on behalf of 5000 plaintiffs. Plaintiffs were a diverse constituency, reflective of the numerous individuals impacted by Stringfellow and included Anglos and Latino residents as well as renters and homeowners. CNA strived to make the litigation process as accessible and transparent as possible to community members. Plaintiffs thus agreed to set up a Plaintiffs’ Steering Committee that would serve as a liaison between them and their attorneys. Penny Newman, then chair of CNA and a member of the Steering Committee, noted how committed to a “fair process” the litigants were:

In addition to the routine monitoring of the case, we [the Steering Committee] had to devise a distribution system that would be fair to all plaintiffs. It would take more than five years to create the distribution plan. We held dozens of meetings with the plaintiff population arguing over what was fair and not fair; weighing ideas for future health coverage; figuring out how to compensate for various damages from property diminution to wrongful deaths of family members. In the end the plan developed took into account the length of time each person had lived or work in the community; whether they attended Glen Avon school; whether their homes were in the flood area; how close they lived to the site; what illnesses or diseases they had, etc. The plaintiffs voted on the system before we had received any money. We knew that once there was real money it would be hard to get agreement on anything. By adopting the distribution plan prior to any settlements, it could be judged on its fairness to all and not on how much each person would end up getting.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} CERCLA legislation stipulates that “States or Territories are allowed to designate its top-priority site without the need to apply the Hazard Ranking. States may make only one such designation. The selected release should be one that the State has identified as presenting the greatest danger to public health, welfare, or the environment among the known facilities in that State.”
http://www.epa.gov/superfund/sites/query/queryhtm/nplss.htm Stringfellow was put on the NPL in 1983.

\textsuperscript{53} Penny Newman, "It's the pits": Remembering Stringfellow (Glen Avon, CA: Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice, October 2, 2004), 59.
In 1995, the lawsuit was finally settled for over $114 million. By this time, the CNA had expanded to form the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice (CCAEJ), and had begun identifying a broader range of environmental injustices in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. As the only “EJ” organization in the inland region, CCAEJ actively works with Latino communities impacted by the logistics industry, has fought against waste sites targeted for placement in the desert, and has spearheaded immigrant voter registration in the region. The organizational staff today is majority Latina, with Glen Avon local Penny Newman continuing as director. In July 2011, CCAEJ celebrated its role in helping to mobilize rural voters for the successful incorporation of Glen Avon and nearby areas into the City of Jurupa Valley. While it is still too early to say how incorporation will influence local struggles against environmental burdens, and what role CCAEJ may play in Jurupa Valley politics, cityhood is certainly preferable to the historic marginalization of the region’s residents, and brings new resources to these overlooked (and today predominantly minority) constituencies.

In what way is the story of Stringfellow a case of environmental justice, and do we run the risk of stretching the concept too far? Certainly, the concept of environmental justice is vulnerable to conceptual fuzziness or “stretching” if it is expanded to include any instance of community mobilization against environmental harm as a case of environmental justice. However, in order for EJ be a useful concept (and if claims are to have traction), it must be bounded—defined not only by what it includes but also what is

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54 CNA became a project of CCAEJ, and remains focused on the on-going remediation of the Stringfellow Acid Pits.
excludes. In this regard, mobilization on the part of wealthy communities against locally undesirable land uses—while certainly an example of organizing against environmental harm—is more about NIMBYISM than about challenging manifestations of social inequality. Indeed, when wealthy, highly educated communities have mobilized against the citing of toxics, or demanded cleanup of sites that pose contamination risks, they have generally been successful. At the very least, such communities have had access to resources (including media and political attention) to address their concerns in a meaningful and timely fashion.55 The same cannot be said for more marginalized communities.

In contrast to a narrow NIMBY politics, Stringfellow may be considered a case of environmental justice on the basis of several axes of marginalization, including gender, class, and geography. Just as in the case of Love Canal, mothers bore the disproportionate burden of taking care of ill children and advocating on their behalf. The gendered composition of CNA advocates was also a liability, as male government agency officials consistently dismissed their concerns and referred to them as “hysterical housewives.”56 State employees also obfuscated information on site risks and remediation options by presenting information at community meetings in highly technical jargon, incomprehensible to most non-experts. Similar dynamics pervaded Glen Avon litigants’ interactions with the legal community over the period of the lawsuit. In spite of such gender and class inequalities, CNA prevailed in their struggle for environmental justice. Indeed, activists were cognizant of these dynamics and made conscious moves to

55 Sources: Redlands vs. Rialto, etc. Marin county. Etc.

56 Interview with Penny Newman, June 2011.
defuse situations that perpetuated their marginalization. Penny Newman recounts one such instance. It is both representative of the larger unequal playing field faced by the CNA and indicates how women in particular countered class and gender privilege:

In an attempt to weaken the community’s resolve to attend the meetings [to hold polluters accountable], attorneys from the US Dept. of Justice, State Dept. of Justice, US EPA, and California State DHS requested a meeting with me since I was the spokesperson for CNA at the time. Anticipating that the meeting was intended to intimidate me, I arranged to meet them after school in the classroom where I taught second grade. As the nine attorneys arrived, they were seated at a second grade reading table. It was a bit difficult to intimidate someone seated in small chairs with your knees in your chin.57

Activists in Glen Avon also addressed the concerns of a broader swath of affected residents, including homeowners and renters, because they framed their organizing in terms of “neighborhood,” rather than on the basis of (racialized) property ownership. Although the demographics of the area in the 1980s was primarily working class and white, Latino residents were still part of the litigant pool and received compensation from the final settlement. This more inclusive vision for mobilization based on locality thus enabled multi-racial alliances among working class residents, rather than perpetuate dynamics of environmental racism within a larger context of class inequality. Moreover, this early multi-racial organizing enabled CNA to later incarnate as CCAEJ and have legitimacy in working with Latino communities fighting environmental racism a decade later.

Finally, the case of Stringfellow sheds light on the dynamics of geographic marginalization, especially for those living in rural and unincorporated areas. Unlike residents in incorporated cities who have proximate access to systems of political

57 Newman, "It's the pits": Remembering Stringfellow, 26.
accountability including mayors and city council members, those living in unincorporated areas often find it difficult to gain access to elected and appointed officials. County offices are often physically far from the unincorporated area, making it more challenging for government officials to relate to resident concerns, and for residents to attend meetings to hold officials accountable. Furthermore, county supervisors and planning directors are usually more beholden than their city counterparts to commercial groups and industries that generate significant tax revenue that are central to financing county services. (By contrast, city governments rely primarily on residential property taxes.)

The concerns of Glen Avon residents were thus neither visible to, nor prioritized by, decision-makers living in the county seat of Riverside. CNA activists responded to their geographic marginalization with a strategy of highly visible protests outside the homes of politicians and industrial polluters who lived in the city of Riverside. The group also made links to national groups, including the then-recently formed Citizens Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (founded by Lois Gibbs from Love Canal). The more recent incorporation of the City of Jurupa Valley is the latest in a string of strategies to counter the geographic marginalization of residents in the area. 58

Conclusion

I have argued that the scholarly conflation of environmental justice with environmental racism is an understandable and strategic response to the institutionalized racism of mainstream environmentalism (and academia). At the same time, this conceptualization forecloses from consideration other important cases of community

58 As noted earlier, the disadvantages of organizing in an unincorporated area prompted CCAEJ to push for the incorporation of Glen Avon. In 2011, the group conducted a vast voter education and mobilization effort that led to the creation of the City of Jurupa Valley from the unincorporated areas of Glen Avon, Mira Loma, Sunny Slope, and Rubidoux.
activism against environmental harm, and the potential lessons they hold for multi-racial and cross-class organizing. In the United States, a history of white privilege overdetermines the conditions under which groups experience vulnerability to environmental burdens.\textsuperscript{59} Bob Bullard’s point that “race continues to be an \textit{independent} predictor of where hazardous wastes are located, and it is a stronger predictor than income, education and other socioeconomic indicators” cannot be forgotten.\textsuperscript{60} This should not mean, however, that we (as scholar-activists) only focus on the struggles of the most oppressed, or simplify the dynamics of particular struggles. Solutions to environmental injustice in the United States need to be anti-racist, and anti-oppression more generally. They also require a broad coalition of forces, across race, gender and class lines. An examination of the actual experiences of particular cases of community mobilization against environmental harm shows that the formation of such coalitions is contingent, complicated, and often fraught with tension. Yet, such alliances are not altogether impossible and have achieved meaningful, if limited, victories for impacted communities. Broadening the concept of environmental justice to more fully engage with the operations and intersections of various axes of difference may thus not only crack open a particular scholarly narrative/canon, but also help sow alliances for social change.
